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## HOMEOWNER'S UPDATE

### 4 Easy Projects That Add Value

You don't have to take on an expensive renovation to add value to your home. Here are four simple projects you can tackle in a weekend to spruce up your home and make it more attractive to future buyers.

**Update your switch plates.** Are your outlet covers and light switch plates getting dingy from age? Swap out these covers and plates with modern ones for an inexpensive upgrade.

**Choose new hardware.** Refresh your doors and cabinets by switching out the hardware. Replacing doorknobs, hinges, and cabinet and drawer pulls will give your space a new look without the time and expense of painting doors and cabinetry.

**Upgrade light fixtures.** You can transform a room by simply changing out builder-grade light fixtures for more trendy, eye-catching models. Not only will new fixtures add visual interest to a room, you can also improve the ambience by choosing the warmth of the light.

**Swap out your thermostat.** Smart thermostats are ranked as one of the top most-wanted home technologies. Replace your outdated thermostat and enjoy the convenience and the energy savings now, while also knowing you're investing in something buyers will appreciate in the future.

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### Also in this issue...

Keep Your Kitchen Pest Free

How To Declutter Your Home

Make the Most of a Backyard Shed

Homemade Raspberry Ice Cream

### Print this issue.



### Keep Your Kitchen Pest Free

With warmer weather comes outdoor fun, fresh produce and pesky insects. To keep bugs and pests out of your kitchen, consider these suggestions.

**Clean thoroughly and often.** Wipe down counters daily, and make sure to clean shelving and the area under the sink often as well. Regularly vacuum floors (especially around the fridge and stove) to pick up any insect-enticing crumbs.

**Make natural pest repellents.** Bugs tend to be repelled by pungent herbs. Try placing a bay leaf on top of items in the pantry or keep a basil plant on the counter. Essential oils like lemongrass, peppermint and tea tree can also help keep insects away. Mix a few drops of oil with water in a spray bottle, and apply the solution around windowsills and doors.

## How To Declutter Your Home

Recent studies have revealed that a decluttered space is linked to lower stress levels, yet a clutter-free home can be challenging to achieve. Practice these four simple tips, and enjoy relaxing in a tidier home.

**Create a plan.** Getting started is often the biggest hurdle to overcome. Start by making a list of the most important rooms or surfaces to declutter. Then choose realistic, attainable timelines to tackle one project at a time.

**Keep, give away and throw away.** Label three boxes as keep, donate and trash. As you approach an area, evaluate the value or necessity of every possession. If you haven't used an item in 9-12 months, it's probably safe to assume you don't need it.

**Invest in storage.** After you've gotten rid of unnecessary clutter, concentrate on finding proper storage for your remaining items. Give everything a home by using solutions such as spice racks, under-the-bed storage, filing cabinets, and over-the-door organizers.

**Declutter regularly.** As life progresses, you'll continue to accumulate more things, but don't let this discourage your efforts. Make it a goal to sort through your belongings regularly, and you'll reap the benefits of living in an orderly home.

## Make the Most of a Backyard Shed

Need a place to get away or pursue a hobby? A backyard shed can be a great solution. New prefabricated sheds as well as existing ones can be transformed into inviting spaces just steps from your back door. Use these five tips to turn your backyard shed into a place you may never want to leave.

1. **Add a coat of fresh paint.** From whimsical to contemporary to serene, a fresh coat of paint can transform your backyard shed. Don't limit yourself to matching your home. Be creative and choose paint colors that inspire you.
2. **Choose compact-size furniture.** Make the most of your space by choosing smaller pieces, such as old patio furniture or folding chairs. Consider mounting a workspace to the wall with hinges so it can fold up when not in use.
3. **Scour thrift stores and flea markets.** An inexpensive way to furnish a backyard shed is with secondhand items. Look for unique pieces you love but might shy away from displaying in your main living spaces. Paint used items in a color that complements the space.
4. **Make it livable.** If your budget allows, consider adding conveniences such as electricity, air conditioning, heat, and running water. If you want your shed to double as a guest house, be sure to add a small bathroom.
5. **Enjoy the outdoors.** Windows and doors that open to the yard let in sunlight and the view. Potted plants near your shed's entrance can make the space feel homey. Consider adding string lights or lanterns as a charming and functional lighting element.

### Consider using this creative backyard space as a:

- Home office
- "She shed"
- Art studio
- Hobby nook
- Potting shed
- Writer's retreat
- Guest house
- Musician's den

- "Man cave"
- Reading room
- Yoga studio or home gym

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## Homemade Raspberry Ice Cream

### Ingredients

5 cups fresh raspberries  
1 Tbsp. lemon juice  
1½ cups heavy whipping cream  
1½ cups whole milk  
1 cup sugar

### For serving:

Ice cream cones  
Fresh raspberries  
Mint leaves

### Directions

Place raspberries in a blender and mix until smooth. Pour puree through a fine mesh strainer and discard seeds. Add lemon juice to puree and stir to combine. In a large bowl, whisk together cream, milk and sugar. Add raspberry puree and mix well.

Follow the directions on your ice cream maker to mix and freeze. When done, transfer ice cream to a container and freeze for several hours before serving.

Serve in ice cream cones or in bowls topped with fresh raspberries and mint leaves.



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