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## HOMEOWNER'S UPDATE

### 7 Clever Cleaning Hacks

Keeping your home clean and tidy can be very time-consuming, not to mention exhausting. But making some new habits can simplify your cleaning process and keep your home sparkling year-round. Here are seven quick and easy hacks.

- Place two doormats at each entrance to your home, one inside and one outside, to trap dirt and keep your floors clean.
- Clean ceiling fans with a pillowcase. The fabric traps dust and other particulates, preventing them from falling onto your floor or furniture.
- Wrap a rag around the end of a paint stir stick to clean the area surrounding your dryer's lint trap.
- Scrub bathroom nooks and crannies with an old toothbrush.
- Group similar tasks together. Dust blinds while you clean windows, or mop floors after vacuuming.
- Keep a soap-dispensing dish brush in the shower. When you shower, scrub away spots on the walls, taking advantage of the moisture.
- Use a leaf blower to quickly clear dirt and debris out of your garage.

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### Repel Pests. Attract Beauty.

Insecticides aren't the only way to prevent insects from ruining your flower garden. Mother Nature offers alternatives that add beauty while keeping pests at bay. Create a charming flower display with plants that do double duty. These plants are some of nature's hardest working and best-looking blooms.

### **Petunias**

Brightly colored blooms celebrated for producing alkaloid substances that deter squash bugs, beetles and aphids.

### **Chrysanthemums**

These spectacular blooms fend off mosquitoes, ticks, roaches, beetles, cockroaches, and silverfish.

### **Lavender**

Lovely purple blossoms emit a scent that's soothing to humans but is repulsive to moths and mosquitoes.

### **Marigolds**

Sunny flowers that release limonene, a substance that can repel flies, mosquitoes and aphids.

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## **Working With a Remodeling Contractor**

You know how important it is to choose the best professionals for a home remodeling project. Whether you're getting ready to sell or want to update your home, the right skills and personality of the contractor can make the difference. But did you know the way you work with contractors can also influence your project's outcome? Homeowners typically fall into three categories when it comes to how they work with contractors and other remodeling professionals. Which one are you?

**The hands-off homeowner** trusts their contractor to manage the project and make good decisions. Contractors generally like this approach because it frees them to complete the job as they see fit. However, if the hands-off approach goes too far, it can hinder decision-making and slow down the timetable. When "laid back" crosses over to "indecisive," project delays can easily crop up, leading to budget overruns and other problems.

**The manager** likes to follow the big-picture aspects of overseeing the project. This might include tracking finances, reviewing records and regularly checking in on the progress. If this is you, be careful not to overstep and impede the project. Remember, you hired these professionals because you trusted them to do the job. Upfront due diligence usually pays off.

**The micromanager** focuses on the smallest aspects of a project. It's important to keep an eye on the details, but over-involvement isn't helpful to the contractor or the other workers. If taken too far, micromanaging can cause delays because it's hard to finish the work and keep on schedule when frequent change orders are being requested.

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## **Breathe Life Into Your Living Room With Feng Shui**

Feng Shui is the ancient art of creating harmonious surroundings to encourage positive energy flow.

"We almost always feel better in a beautiful, balanced space, and when we feel good that's already a step in the right direction to health, wealth and happiness," said author Cliff Tan in *Feng Shui Modern*.

Here are some tips from *GoodHousekeeping.com* to help transform your living room into a calm, welcoming retreat.

1. Determine the purpose for the living space by deciding if it will be used for quiet relaxation or hanging out with friends and family.
2. Choose harmonious colors, textures and shapes that balance the five elements of earth, wood, metal, water, and fire.
3. Place the couch facing the entrance of the living room, welcoming people as they come into the room.
4. Create clear pathways, eliminating furniture if needed.
5. Balance lighting with a mix of natural sunlight and artificial sources.
6. Open windows when possible, and decorate with living plants.
7. Minimize or eliminate clutter.

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## Whipped Garlic and Feta Dip

1 cup Feta cheese, crumbled  
4 oz. cream cheese, softened  
5 Tbsp. plain Greek yogurt  
3 cloves garlic, minced  
Dash of dried dill  
Dash of dried oregano  
1 Tbsp. lemon juice  
Fresh dill sprig, for garnish

Combine Feta, cream cheese, yogurt, garlic, dill, oregano, and lemon juice in a food processor. Blend mixture until thoroughly combined and scoop into a serving bowl. Top with dill and lightly sprinkle with pepper, to taste. Serve with assorted crackers, pretzel sticks, pita chips, or sliced peppers.



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