

Brought to you by

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Homeowner's UPDATE



Dress up plain bookcases by thinking outside the shelf

Bookcases can be an elegant focal point and a practical storage place in your home. However, the prospect of organizing your bookshelves can be daunting without a clear vision.

Don't be afraid to give the bookcase a makeover by re-painting or stripping it. Painting the inside of the bookcase a different color than the shelves or the outside adds immediate impact to the piece. Explore creative ways to repurpose items like old wine crates or plumbing pipes to craft a bookcase that's full of character.

Gather your books and take an inventory of what you want to highlight. Arranging the books by color can give your shelves a rainbow effect. Or, turn some of the most colorful covers to face outward in order to change up the look. You can also stack the books both horizontally and vertically to combine interesting textures.

Incorporate decorative items such as air plants, small paintings and vases to add pops of color or to create definitive themes.

You can also arrange objects like rocks and geodes on the shelf

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with the corresponding books on archaeology and geology. Placing wire baskets among your books adds practical storage space for less visually artistic items. Decide on your vision, think outside the shelf and transform your bookcases from boring to beautiful.

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Defeat frustrating household stains forever

It's spring cleaning season and you know what that means: time to invest in some powerful stain removers to vaporize the unsightly marks on your home furnishings. Commercial cleaners might be your go-to products. But, with a little planning, try making your own. It's more cost-effective, kinder to the environment and does the job well, if not better, than the toxic chemicals you may have been using.

Tired of battling those everyday food stains on your favorite button-down shirt? A tomato soup splash on the couch? Or a wall-turned-into-canvas by your 3-year-old artist in residence? With these essentials, you may now assume the role of hero in your stain-fighting saga. Your cleaning weapons should include white vinegar, baking soda, bleach, laundry detergent, and rubbing alcohol.

Now, let's get down to the nitty-gritty. Determine what kind of stain you're targeting, mix the ingredients and then make the attack. (Be sure to check a small, inconspicuous area for colorfastness before treating the stain.)

Clothing

Remember when the filling in that blueberry pie ruined your favorite shirt? Try this trick the next time: Wet the stain with white vinegar and let it sit for a few minutes before washing. For stronger stains, mix white vinegar with your detergent for a more thorough cleaning.

Upholstery

Nobody wants to watch cartoons or the latest TV series without some munchies. But drippy Popsicles and chocolate-covered pretzels melting into your cushions make formidable foes. Wet the area with equal parts of white vinegar and rubbing alcohol, and let sit for two minutes before gently blotting.

Carpeting

For lighter stains like soda or tea, you can use a simple concoction of white vinegar and water.

For heavier stains like grape juice or a smashed strawberry, adjust the recipe by adding a tablespoon of laundry detergent.

Walls

Magic sponge erasers may have been your holy grail, but have you tried baking soda? Known for its powerful stain-lifting properties, you need this in your arsenal. For your toughest wall stains, mix white vinegar and baking soda to create a paste and then apply to the stained area. Use a wet cloth to wipe away and let dry.

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Plant your vegetables now for vibrant summer eats

While it's more pertinent for some regions of the country than others, it's still a good idea to start tending to your garden as soon as weather conditions allow.

As the ground warms up, gather your vegetable seeds and prepare your soil. If you have potted herbs like rosemary, sage and thyme, keep them indoors until the risk of damaging spring storms is reduced.

Consider creating a theme with your garden this year, such as a "salsa" garden with peppers, tomatoes, onions, basil, cilantro, beans, and corn. Some other vegetables to plant in the early spring are cabbage, carrots, summer squash, cucumbers, beets, peas, and sweet corn.

Your local lawn and garden center is a convenient option for buying your seeds, or you can save the seeds from the vegetables you use, like squash seeds and sprouted potatoes. There are also many websites that sell seeds, such as *seedsavers.org* and *burpee.com*. Do some research to see which option best fits your budget, scale and schedule.

While the weather can be unpredictable, with the right care and attention to detail, your garden will be ready to flourish. Now, it's time to find those gardening gloves!

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Get organized with a home command center

Are you constantly misplacing your keys or losing track of the kids' schedules? You're not alone! Get organized this spring by creating a custom command center equipped with all the tools you and your family need to stay on track. Here's how to get started:

1. Choose the location wisely. Place the command center in an area such as the kitchen or entryway that's easily accessible to all members of the family. Don't stress about needing a large space. With the right resources, you can transform a small, empty wall into a functional and efficient display.

2. Equip your command center with essentials that keep your family organized. A large calendar that's easily updated can serve as your base. Add hooks to keep keys from going astray, a basket to catch loose papers and mail, and a magnetic whiteboard to leave notes for others.

3. Pick items that coordinate with the style and color scheme in your home. This space should add organization and attractiveness to your home at the same time. Visit a specialty paper store for your calendar and add art prints or a favorite framed quote to make the space more appealing.

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Festive Matcha Pound Cake

½ cup butter
½ cup sugar
½ cup applesauce
2 eggs, beaten
1 cup flour
½ tsp. baking powder
1 Tbsp. matcha baking powder

Glaze

2 cups confectioners' sugar
2 Tbsp. water (add more as needed)

Preheat oven to 350° F. Cream together butter and sugar. Add applesauce and eggs, blend well. Sift together flour, baking powder and matcha baking powder. Add to wet ingredients and mix until smooth. Pour batter into a buttered loaf pan. Bake 30-40 minutes.

To make glaze, mix sugar and water together until it thickens.

Drizzle glaze over freshly baked loaf.



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