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HOMEOWNER'S UPDATE

Pet Parents: Spring Cleaning Essentials

If you're a pet owner, be sure not to overlook your furry companion's domain during your spring cleaning efforts. Devote some time to sanitize and organize your pet's space and belongings.

Bedding – Vacuum as much hair as possible off comforters and blankets. Wash with hot water and a mild detergent, then dry outside in the sun if the items are not dryer-safe.

Toys and dishes – Wash plush toys in the washing machine with a scent-free, natural detergent, and allow to air dry. Rubber toys and food/water bowls can either be washed on the top rack in the dishwasher or scrubbed with a solution of equal parts water and vinegar. Organize clean toys in a tub with a lid, and rotate which items you give your pets in order to keep them from getting bored.

Litter box – If you have cats, give the litter box a deep clean. While wearing gloves, empty the box completely and scrub clean with warm water and a pet-safe dish soap. While it air dries, vacuum and disinfect the entire area surrounding the litter box.

Carpeting and furniture – Sprinkle baking soda on upholstery and carpeting to absorb pet odors. Let sit for 20 minutes, then vacuum thoroughly. Treat any spots or stains with an animal-friendly carpet cleaner.

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Also in this issue...

Give Your Yard an Eco-Friendly Makeover

Tile Trends To Watch

Styling Above the Sofa

Rice With Chicken & Asparagus

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Give Your Yard an Eco-Friendly Makeover

This Earth Day, take some time to appreciate nature all around you, including your own yard. Consider these steps you can take to live more sustainably and protect the environment at home.

Plant Wisely

- Plant perennials (which bloom every year) rather than purchasing annual flowers each season.
- As much as possible, choose plants that are indigenous to your area. Native plants are more likely to thrive in your yard, plus they provide food and shelter for local birds and insects.
- Reduce your contribution to the landfill and treat your plants to rich, healthy soil by starting a compost bin. You can add food scraps as well as grass clippings, dried leaves and trimmed flowers.

Conserve Water

- Only water your lawn during the coolest part of the day to allow the moisture to sink in rather than evaporate.
- Replace some of your grass with hardy ornamental grasses, groundcover plants, shrubs, or even a stone patio. Cover flowerbeds with mulch to help them retain as much moisture as possible.
- Collect water from a downspout into a rain barrel to use on your landscaping.

Go Organic

- Opt for natural, eco-friendly solutions to deter weeds and pests.
- Try your hand at growing organic produce in your garden.
- Spread organic lawn food on the grass instead of chemical-based fertilizers.

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Tile Trends To Watch

Wood-look – Give your home the appearance of hardwoods paired with the durability of tile. With a variety of textures and finishes, wood-look tiles are surprisingly realistic.

Geometric patterns – Add personality to your space by incorporating tiles shaped as hexagons, triangles or arabesques. Intermix different colors for an even more eye-catching design.

Neutrals and cool tones – White, gray, black, and cool shades of blue are all popular color options this year. Keep things interesting by laying neutral-colored tiles in an attractive pattern.

Faux stone – Using tile that mimics the look of marble can add polish to your home without the hefty price tag. Tile created to look like concrete is a modern, industrial option that doesn't require pouring concrete.

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Styling Above the Sofa

If the wall above your couch is empty, it can seem like an overwhelming expanse of space to decorate. Use these style ideas to help inspire your design.

Create a bold statement by painting just the wall behind the couch in an accent color. Choose a color that adds vibrant interest while still complementing the rest of the room. Alternatively, purchase one extra-large piece of colorful artwork to display above the sofa.

Utilize the empty wall by installing a few floating shelves at varying heights to display decorative items, small houseplants, family photos, or flameless candles. A larger shelving unit could be used to show off collector's items or filled with brightly colored books.

Give the illusion of more space in smaller rooms by hanging mirrors. You could choose between one large mirror in a decorative frame or a collection of smaller mirrors arranged as a gallery wall behind the couch.

Add some depth to the wall by hanging three-dimensional items in varying sizes. An assortment of woven baskets, hanging planters, faux animal mounts, or macramé wall hangings are all easy to install. Another option is to create texture on the wall through carved wood, engineered stone tiles or raised wall paneling.

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Rice With Chicken & Asparagus

Ingredients

- 1 bunch asparagus
- 2 Tbsp. avocado oil
- ½ yellow onion, chopped
- 1 cup jasmine rice

1 tsp. salt
½ tsp. pepper
1 tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. onion powder
2 cups chicken stock
Juice of 1 lemon
2 cups cooked, shredded chicken

For garnish:

Parmesan cheese, shredded
Fresh parsley, chopped
Fresh arugula

Directions

Trim off ends of asparagus and cut into 1-inch pieces. Set aside. In a large pan with a lid, heat oil over medium. Add onion and cook for 3-4 minutes. Add rice and spices, and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Stir in stock and juice. Bring to a boil, cover and reduce heat to low.

Simmer for 8 minutes, stir and add asparagus. Cook an additional 5-7 minutes, or until asparagus is tender. Stir in shredded chicken and cook until warmed through.

Sprinkle garnishes on top and serve warm.

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