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HOMEOWNER'S UPDATE

Affordable Backyard Privacy

After being cooped up at home for months and months on end, many people have a newfound appreciation for their outdoor spaces. However, spending time in the backyard, whether you're relaxing or hosting a get-together, could mean less privacy from your neighbors.

Consider adding more privacy to your backyard space with these affordable suggestions.

Plants: Surrounding your backyard with tall greenery will create your own beautiful oasis. With options ranging from bamboo and ornamental grasses to hedges and evergreens, be sure to research which plants will flourish in your location.

Outdoor curtains: Attractive, waterproof curtains provide a convenient way to enclose a small patio space. Look for durable, weather-resistant fabric in a color that complements your home's exterior.

Lattice fencing: A more affordable version of the traditional privacy fence, woven latticework can be made with wooden planks, colorful laminates or classy metals. Add climbing plants to create a living wall and provide shade.

Large planters: For a low-maintenance way to create separation without completely shutting out your neighbors, consider large planters rather than planting tall vegetation in the ground. Autumn is the ideal time to sort through seasonal markdowns in order to find budget-friendly deals.

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3 Uses for Baking Soda

Although commonly known as a baking ingredient, baking soda has a number of other uses. Here are three alternative ways baking soda can assist you with household tasks.

1. **Neutralize odors.** You may already have baking soda in the refrigerator to absorb odors, but its neutralizing power goes even further. If you've been chopping garlic or another pungent food, wash your hands with water and baking soda to eliminate the lingering smell.
2. **Remove stains.** Make a paste by combining equal parts water and baking soda, and use it to scrub crayon off walls. You can also coat stained plastic food containers with the paste, let sit for 24 hours and then wipe clean.

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3. **Decrease acidity.** A tiny pinch of baking soda sprinkled on tomatoes or added to coffee or orange juice can lessen the acidic effects on your stomach.

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Inspiration for Fall Decor

As temperatures cool outside, give your home a cozy makeover with these fall decor ideas.

Foliage: Swap out those bright summer flowers with autumnal flora, such as amaranth, mums, eucalyptus branches, and witch hazel. You can also arrange feathers and dried flowers for texture and varying heights.

Colors: The color orange is nearly synonymous with autumn, so consider adding pops of this eye-catching color with throw pillows, vases or wall art. Try incorporating dark greens, reds and purples to mimic the changing leaf colors.

Layers: On a sofa or bed, group together neutral throw pillows of varying sizes with one or two patterned pillows. You can also layer fall flowers, gourds, candles, leaves, and other seasonal accents on a shelf or mantle.

Blankets and throws: Nothing says fall quite like a cozy blanket. Try draping faux fur throws over the backs of chairs, bundling rolled-up flannel blankets in a basket or folding a sherpa blanket at the end of a bed.

Wreaths: Heading into the holidays, your front door may get more foot traffic than usual. Hang a wreath with warm earth tones on your front door for an inviting touch, or place one on the dining table as a textured centerpiece.

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Home Maintenance: When To Hire a Pro and When To DIY

When it comes to home improvements, you can often save money by doing it yourself. However, the following projects are almost always best left to professionals.

- **Home additions or major remodels** – While the cost savings of undertaking these large projects can be hard to resist, it's easy to get in over your head. A skilled professional will keep the project up to code and moving along, especially when unexpected problems arise.
- **Driveway repaving** – Without the proper equipment, you're likely to experience cracks and settling. A concrete contractor will ensure a level surface.
- **Roof repairs** – Professional roofers have the knowledge, experience, ladders, and tools to quickly and safely complete repairs or replace the entire roof.
- **Tree removal** – For your own safety, hire a tree trimmer to cut down large trees, particularly near power lines.
- **Major plumbing or electrical work** – Plumbing and electrical projects often require permits, and a mistake could cause extensive damage to your home. It's best to hire a licensed worker for any significant repairs.
- **Foundation work** – An improper foundation can threaten the structural integrity of your home. Hire a qualified contractor to ensure it's done right.

For smaller projects around the home, the following questions can help you determine whether to do it yourself or hire a pro.

- **Are permits required?** A licensed professional will understand the permitting process and can ensure your project complies with city requirements and local building codes.
- **Will I be happy with the result?** If you make a mistake, will you be able to live with it? If you are a perfectionist who will be irritated by small blemishes or inconsistencies, it may make the most sense to pay a pro.
- **Do I have the necessary time, talent and tools?** It's important to conduct an honest assessment of your abilities and resources before starting a project. If you fall short on any of these, hire someone who can help you achieve your vision.

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Apple Crumble

Ingredients

For the filling:

4 green apples
1 Tbsp. lemon juice
5 Tbsp. granulated sugar
5 Tbsp. brown sugar
1 tsp. cinnamon
¼ cup flour

For the crumble:

1 cup brown sugar
1 cup flour
1 cup quick oats
½ cup cold butter, cubed
1 tsp. cinnamon

Directions

Preheat oven to 375° F. Lightly coat a 2-quart baking dish with cooking spray. Peel, core and slice apples. In a large bowl, combine apples with other filling ingredients. Pour into prepared baking dish.

In a separate bowl, add all crumble ingredients. Use a pastry blender or fork to cut in butter until mixture is crumbly. Sprinkle over top of apple mixture and press lightly. Bake for 45-50 minutes or until bubbly and lightly browned. Serve warm with ice cream, if desired.

Serves 8-10



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