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HOMEOWNER'S UPDATE

Keep Your Garden Flourishing

You've invested hours of work into preparing, planting and feeding your garden to give it a healthy start. By keeping a watchful eye on it now, you can ensure it prospers and produces for the remainder of the season. Here are five mid-summer tips for a healthy garden in any region.

1. **Weeds go wild in high temperatures.** Vigilance in controlling them now can keep your garden thriving.
2. **Look out for insect infestation.** Slugs, snails and spider mites are just a few of the pests that can wreak havoc.
3. **Watch out for common diseases.** Leaf spot, rust fungus and mildew can quickly take over your garden bed and ruin your hard work.
4. **Harvest vegetables as they ripen.** Zucchini, for example, will keep producing if you pick them often.
5. **Prune suckering water sprouts from fruit trees.** They grow from the trunk and branches and can sabotage the tree's energy.

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Also in this issue...

Target Your Home's Top
Energy Wasters

Decorating Small Spaces

Earth-Friendly
Renovations That Save
Money

Flank Steak With
Chimichurri

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Target Your Home's Top Energy Wasters

Residential power usage is expected to ease slightly in 2022 after an all-time high in 2021. But with commercial and industrial use predicted to rise, it benefits everyone to look for ways to reduce our own individual energy consumption. Americans typically waste around 35% of their home energy, so we can bank on meaningful results with a few simple adjustments. Consider your home's top energy wasters along with countermeasures from BlueLineInnovations.com.

HVAC System

The furnace, air conditioner and air ducts represent the largest percentage of home energy waste. Keep your HVAC system clean and operating efficiently with periodic inspections by a certified professional. Change your air filters every three months. If you have pets or live in a dusty climate, consider changing them more often. Check seals around windows and doors to make sure heated or cooled air isn't escaping.

Lighting and Electronics

Switch to LED light bulbs wherever you can, and look for ENERGY STAR®-certified products, known to be efficient and long-lasting. Remember to unplug lighting and electronics when not in use. These "energy vampires" consume power, even when turned off. Common culprits are laptops and printers.

Water Heater

Consider investing in a more efficient water heater. Tankless water heaters may be expensive upfront, but their high efficiency will save you money over time. If a tankless upgrade isn't an option, reduce energy consumption by lowering your water heater's standard temperature and improving insulation around the tank and waterlines.

Washer and Dryer

Reduce energy consumption by washing laundry in cold water and line-drying rather than using your dryer. If this isn't feasible, limit dryer usage to only partially drying items before hanging them up.

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Decorating Small Spaces

Consider these helpful tips to design and decorate your small space to the max.

Think vertical. Free up valuable floor space by utilizing your walls instead. Install sconces in place of table or floor lamps, and use shelving as nightstands, entry tables or in place of bathroom or kitchen cabinets.

Create division. If your home features an open floor design, try to establish a clear division of uses. Adding an open bookshelf to your bedroom helps create a home office, and placing a buffet table behind a center couch can separate the dining and living areas. Clearly defined spaces help give your home the impression of multiple rooms rather than one open space.

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Earth-Friendly Renovations That Save Money

Growing numbers of homeowners are paying more attention to the ecological effects of renovations. Some eco-friendly projects can even reduce utility bills. Here are a few home improvements that can lower your carbon footprint and monthly bills at the same time.

Solar Panels

Although roof-mounted solar panels can be costly upfront, they often pay for themselves over time through tax credits, rebates and lower electric bills.

Insulated Windows

Dual-pane windows reduce energy costs by retaining warmth in the winter and keeping your home cooler in the summer.

Programmable Thermostat

Programming your thermostat is an easy way to slash your annual energy usage. In cooler months, you can lower the thermostat by a few degrees at night. As outdoor temperatures warm up, you can program the thermostat to reduce your air conditioning usage during the hours when nobody's home.

Responsibly Sourced Flooring

Flooring that's environmentally friendly often costs less than hardwood, which may not always be responsibly sourced. Sustainable choices include reclaimed wood, recycled tile, bamboo, linoleum, cork, and stained concrete.

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Flank Steak With Chimichurri

Ingredients

2 lbs. flank steak (about 1-inch thick)
1 cup olive oil, *divided*
3 Tbsp. brown sugar
4 garlic cloves, minced, *divided*
1 cup fresh cilantro, finely chopped
½ cup fresh parsley, finely chopped
¼ cup fresh oregano, finely chopped
¼ cup red wine vinegar
½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. pepper
¼ tsp. crushed red pepper flakes

Directions

Place steak in a large baking dish. Mix ½ cup olive oil, brown sugar and 1 garlic clove in a small bowl. Pour over steak and marinate in refrigerator for 2 hours.

Preheat oven broiler on high. Broil steak on top rack for 5 minutes on each side for medium doneness. Slice into narrow strips. For chimichurri, combine cilantro, parsley, oregano, and 3 garlic cloves in a small mixing bowl. Stir in vinegar, remaining olive oil, salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes. Spoon over sliced steak and serve.

Serves 2-4



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