

Spring Home

March 2016

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Delaware Gazette



The Air In There

3 ways to improve
indoor air quality

Clean Your Slate

Spring cleaning
pointers

Safety First

Simple ways
to make
bathrooms safer



Find and maintain the right carpet for you

Carpets provide both practical and aesthetic appeal inside a home. In winter, carpets help keep homes warm, and the right color carpet can add to design schemes. While rugs may have originated in the Far East, North America also has some rich carpet history. According to The Carpet and Rug Institute, the United States carpet industry began in 1791 when the first woven carpet mill opened in Philadelphia. Others soon followed suit. Tufted carpets and machine-powered manufacturing helped churn out yards upon yards of carpeting, making it a popular, affordable and common addition to homes, especially after the post-World War II housing boom.

Carpeting remains a go-to flooring material in modern homes. In fact, many homes offer a blend of both carpeting in some rooms and

different flooring choices in others. Upon choosing carpet, it is important that homeowners follow some guidelines to prolong a carpet's longevity and maintain its style. The following are some common carpeting dos and don'ts. DO consider the room's purpose and foot traffic before shopping for carpeting. Make a list of the attributes desired (e.g., soundproofing, easy care, high pile) and present these to the salesperson so he or she can help you make the best choice.

DON'T rush into flooring choices. Unlike paint colors, flooring materials are more permanent choices that are only updated every several years or more. Weigh all of your options before diving in.

DO consider conservative colors and styles. Neutral hues and patterns will blend better with furniture options. This means you



Homeowners should consider as many variables as possible, including foot traffic in a given room, before installing carpeting in their homes.

can change furniture out and still keep the existing carpeting, which complements any new pieces. Also, if there's a chance you might sell your home in the near future, buyers tend to look for a neutral color scheme they can make their own.

DON'T skimp on padding to

save a few dollars on the carpet installation. The carpeting needs a solid foundation to last and look its best. Inadequate padding can lead to extra and noticeable wear and tear. Invest in a good foundation for the carpeting, like firm, dense padding in high-traffic areas.

DO become knowledgeable about

different carpet styles, such as frieze, Berber, Saxony, textured, and more. This will help ensure you make the most educated decision.

DON'T purchase at the first store you visit. Shop around to investigate different pricing and specials. Also, consider the professionalism and expertise of the staff responsible for carpet installation. High-cost carpet may not look very good if it isn't installed correctly.

DO stain-protect rugs and carpeting, which can help repel stains that would otherwise become permanent and can prolong the longevity of the flooring.

DON'T forget to vacuum carpets frequently to prevent ground-in dirt and debris.

DO pick textured carpets to conceal footprints and vacuum track marks.

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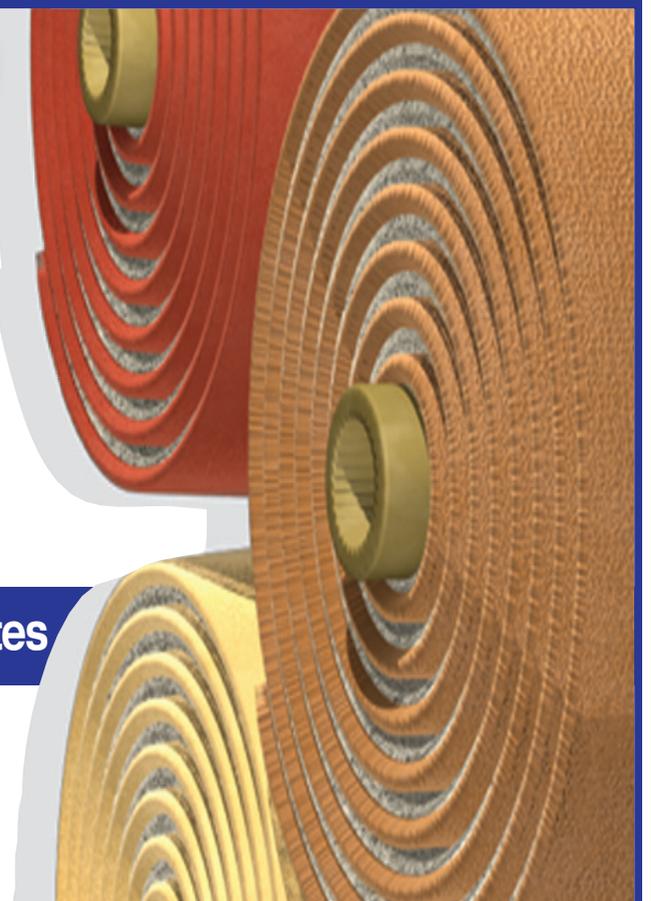
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Spring cleaning projects you don't want to forget

Spring cleaning is an annual tradition in many households. After a winter spent cooped up indoors, spring cleaning can rejuvenate a household and provide a great chance to rid a home of a season's worth of clutter. Donating old clothes and cleaning out the garage are popular spring cleaning projects, but there are a host of additional tasks homeowners can tackle to freshen up their homes this spring.

Floors

Simply vacuuming or sweeping the floors might not be enough to banish some of winter's most uninvited guests. Dust has a way of settling into a home over the course of a typical winter, and it's easy for a home's inhabitants to track dirt and debris inside as well. After vacuuming or sweeping floors, go over them with a mop. Doing so can remove any lingering dust, dirt, debris, and allergens the vacuum or broom failed to pick up. Apply wood cleaner and polish to wood floors to make them look even cleaner.

Baseboards

Though baseboards might not seem all that dirty, upon closer inspection homeowners might notice substantial accumulations of dirt and dust. Such dirt and dust may not be removed so easily, so homeowners might need to use hot water and a sponge to remove any debris that is clinging.

Curtains

Curtains also may have absorbed substantial amounts of dust, dirt and debris over the winter. This might be more

visible near the end of winter when more sunlight begins to shine through. Clean the curtains in adherence to the manufacturer instructions before you open windows for the season so any wind that blows in does not spread debris onto nearby furniture. Once the curtains have been washed, opening windows may help them dry more quickly.

Bathrooms

Bathrooms also tend to bear the brunt of winter weather, as mold and grime can accumulate throughout a season in which it's too cold to open bathroom windows to let fresh air in after bathing. Inspect ceilings, tubs, shower stalls, and floors for any signs of mold growth or grime. Mold growth in a home can lead to respiratory problems and exacerbate existing conditions such as asthma, so it's best to inspect bathrooms for any signs of mold growth throughout winter. If you have let that slip, prioritize such inspections come spring cleaning time.

Furniture

It's easy to overlook furniture when tackling spring cleaning, but dust and dirt can quickly accumulate on couches and chairs over the course of winter. When possible, vacuum furniture to remove any debris that might have accumulated while windows and doors were kept shut, and shampoo any cushions or seat covers that don't pass the smell test.

Spring cleaning encompasses a host of tasks, and homeowners who want a truly clean house should not overlook smaller tasks that can produce big results.



When cleaning their homes in the spring, homeowners should not forget to inspect their curtains, which can accumulate dust and dirt over the course of winter.

Did you know?

The home improvement market, which includes both improvements and maintenance, has rebounded considerably from its most recent low point in 2011. The Joint Center for Housing Studies (JCHS) of Harvard University indicated in early 2015 that the upcoming year would surpass the \$324 billion spent on improvements during the peak of the housing boom a decade ago. Even though homebuilding and the home industry in general is still not at complete recovery, trends within the home improvement industry do suggest that homeowners have once again become comfortable investing in their homes.



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Modifications to make bathrooms safer

Few areas in a home can prove as perilous as bathrooms. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says every year around 235,000 people over the age of 15 visit emergency rooms in the United States because of injuries suffered in bathrooms. The majority of these injuries — many of which require hospitalization — result from falls. Injuries sustained in bathrooms typically occur in and around bathtubs, usually when a person is getting in or out of the tub. Falls occur when people slip on wet surfaces or get dizzy and lose consciousness within the tight confines of the bathroom. Although bathroom injuries are mostly associated with the elderly, anyone is susceptible to such injuries. Debilitating diseases, instability from an accident or injury or even impaired vision can trigger a bathroom accident. Thankfully, some minor modifications can make bathrooms safer for everyone.

Grab bars

Unsteady individuals may rely on towel bars or shower knobs to provide some balance when maneuvering around bathrooms. But such items were not designed to support a person's weight and can be slippery,

making grab bars the safer choice. Look for bars with slip-resistant surfaces instead of chrome plating. Bolted-in bars that are fixed to the studs in a wall, provide more reliable support than bars that employ suction to stay connected to the wall. Install the bars where they provide optimal leverage and stability, such as close to the shower and on each side of the toilet.

Chairs

A bath/shower chair can make bathing safer. Pharmacies and medical supply retailers carry these sturdy, plastic chairs and stools which can fit inside of a shower or tub. They enable a person to rest his or her legs and sit while bathing. When remodeling a bathroom, have a seating area built into the design of the shower enclosure so that the addition looks seamless.

Transfer bench

Many injuries occur when people are attempting to get in and out of the tub or shower, but a transfer bench can greatly reduce the risk of such injuries. The bench is placed outside of the tub, and users just sit on the bench and then swing their legs over the ledge of the tub rather than



This bathroom can be made safer with the addition of grab bars, a bath seat, non-slip flooring, and a transfer bench.

stepping over while standing.

Walk-in showers

Some homeowners are eliminating tubs from their homes altogether. A walk-in shower provides a barrier-free entry into the shower, making it safer for those who have difficulty stepping into and out of bathtubs.

Lever-style fixtures

Knob temperature controls on faucets can be challenging to grasp for people with arthritis or poor grips. Lever-style fixtures are easier to maneuver and can help prevent scalding. These levers also are easier for children to manage. The National Kitchen and Bath Builders Association

recommends installing pressure-balanced and temperature-controlled valves in the bath and shower.

Forgiving flooring

Tile may be preferred around the bathroom, but it can be cold and slippery. Investigate other water-resistant flooring materials that may be softer underfoot and offer greater traction. Rubber flooring made from recycled tires is one option that is gaining ground for its practicality and sustainability. Changes around the bathroom can alleviate many of the risks that contribute to the hundreds of thousands of injuries that occur in bathrooms every year.

Doing away with dining rooms

Formal dining rooms are no longer as coveted as they once were. Family dinners, if they manage to be at home, are now just as likely to be served in the kitchen or in another space, such as on the patio or in the living room while watching television, as they are in formal dining rooms. Trendy homeowners have begun to ditch dining rooms in favor of using the space for other purposes. Homeowners with a passion for literature can outfit the room with floor-to-ceiling bookcases to turn one-time dining rooms into the ultimate library. Those who need a bit more family

space can use a dining room as a family room, outfitting the room with all storage nooks, a flat screen TV and a comfortable couch to make it more inviting. Because dining rooms are often located next to the kitchen, the removal of walls can make expanding the kitchen even easier. If their kitchens are cramped, homeowners can look into ways to spread out into the space allotted for the dining area. There are many ways to repurpose dining rooms so they are functional to homeowners' specific needs, especially if those needs do not include formal dining areas.



Reclaimed wood adds instant appeal to home projects

Repurposing salvaged wood is a popular trend in the home improvement industry. Not only can using salvaged wood give a home a one-of-a-kind look, but it's a handy way to incorporate the three Rs of green living into your lifestyle: reduce, reuse and recycle.

Reclaimed wood is often used in flooring, beams, wall treatments, and doors, but it also can be turned into furniture or home accent items. Reclaimed wood adds warmth and historical interest to a home's decor that newer materials may lack. Although finding wood that can be salvaged takes time and some legwork, such efforts can quickly pay off. Many businesses are now devoted to reclaimed timber, which can help make the process of finding and using salvaged wood even easier.

Homeowners considering reclaimed wood may be interested to learn that such wood can serve various functions

aside from benefitting the planet.

Match old-growth wood. New regulations may prevent certain species of trees from being cut down. That means it can be challenging to match old wood in a home, particularly if you're looking to maintain historical value and authenticity. Relying on salvaged wood items can alleviate this concern, ensuring that you can find rare woods that are no longer available brand new.

Salvaged wood has character. It's difficult to mimic the natural age marks and character that older wood may have. Instead of being raised on farms, wood harvested decades ago probably grew in natural environments, making the wood both durable and strong. The color and grain of salvaged wood may also be unique.

Look at objects in a new way. Doors are versatile pieces of reclaimed lumber because they're already flat and rather large. Doors can be turned

into headboards, tables or benches. Staircase or porch posts can be turned into candlestick holders, and wood shutters can dress up walls and provide a place to hang artwork and other wall items.

Reclaimed wood can be found everywhere. Most people do not have to look too far to find wood they can salvage. Check salvage yards, landfills, dumpsters in front of older homes being renovated, or older, unused barns in rural settings. You also can collect driftwood or discarded shipping crates.

While some reclaimed wood can be used as-is, some pieces may require millwork, including sanding, cutting, shaping, and finishing. If you do not have these skills, you probably will have to hire someone who does.

The Internet is awash with ideas for putting salvaged wood to use. Get inspired and then find the pieces that will fit your project.



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Freshen up your home for the spring season

After a few months of chilly temperatures, come spring, many homeowners are eager to throw open their windows and doors and breathe new life into their homes. Simple changes made now — even before the weather begins to warm up — can improve interior spaces and brighten the atmosphere of a home.

Go plant shopping. Research from NASA suggests adding at least one plant in your home per 100 square feet is efficient enough to clean air. Fresh foliage also makes a home feel warm and inviting. Watering and misting plants introduces moisture into indoor air, which can make rooms overcome with dry air from heating systems feel comfortable. Just be sure to avoid overwatering plants, which can lead to mold growth.

Swap out throw pillows. Accent pillows on beds and sofas are quick and inexpensive ways to add new bursts of color to rooms. You may be able to make over a room's entire color scheme with new pillows. Invest in

pillows that you can switch with each season so your decor will never look tired or dull.

Clean existing light fixtures. Another way to brighten the mood in a home is to periodically clean light fixtures to make sure they are working effectively. Spend time dusting them and cleaning off any accumulated debris. If need be, switch out old lamp shades for newer ones that let more light shine through. If inadequate lighting is a problem no matter how many lamps you have, consult with an electrician about installing more overhead and accent lighting.

Give rugs and floors a deep cleaning. Recirculated air may be full of dust and other microscopic particles that end up blowing throughout your home. Also, it's easy to track in dirt and other materials on your shoes that become imbedded in carpeting. At least once a year, rent or enlist the services of a professional carpet and upholstery cleaners to give floors a thorough cleaning. You may be surprised at how clean and fresh a home looks and smells once rugs and carpets are deep-cleaned. You also



Fresh flowers, new throw pillows and lightweight draperies are some easy ways to transform a home in time for spring's arrival.

can make a dry carpet cleaner using baking soda, corn starch and desired fresh herbs for fragrance. Sprinkle and then vacuum up after a few hours.

Color-coordinate bookshelves. Group all books with similarly colored covers together for an instant and eye-appealing look.

Simmer some homemade home deodorizer. In a large pot, boil water and

some scented herbs, such as rosemary, citrus rinds, vanilla, or lavender. The aroma will waft through the home, creating a pleasing scent.

Invest in new window treatments. Lightweight draperies or new blinds or shades can transform the look of a room. Be sure to keep curtains and blinds open during the day to maximize the hours of sunlight. Homeowners can make some simple changes while they're stuck indoors and reap the benefits when the weather warms up again.

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3 ways to improve indoor air quality all year long

As winter wears on, it's not uncommon for people living in cold weather climates to experience some cabin fever. Winter weather confines many people to their homes, making many antsy to get out once the first signs of spring begin to appear. In addition to contributing to cabin fever, winter weather can have a negative impact on indoor air quality. While air pollution is something most often associated with densely populated cities, the air inside homes is not immune to pollution, especially during long winters when windows are often closed for months at a time. Though open windows in spring and summer can vastly improve indoor air quality, there are ways to ensure that air stays fresh and healthy regardless of which season it happens to be.

1. Clean the floors.

Dirty floors are one of the chief contributors to poor indoor air quality. Dust, dirt, pollen, and pet dander can accumulate on floors,

leading to poor air quality and potentially aggravating respiratory conditions such as asthma. When vacuuming, use a vacuum with a HEPA filter, which is a uniquely designed mechanical air filter that traps harmful particles such as pollen, pet dander and dust mites. When you finish vacuuming, mop floors to gather any dust or allergens that escaped the vacuum.

2. Control indoor air moisture.

Moist air is great for dust mites and mold, both of which are very bad for humans, so do everything you can to maintain healthy levels of indoor air moisture. Dehumidifiers can reduce indoor air moisture and control allergens, but it's important to take additional steps as well. When bathing, try to keep a bathroom window open on a slight crack to prevent mold growth. When preparing meals in the kitchen, make use of your exhaust fan. In addition, don't overwater houseplants, as they can become breeding grounds for mold.



Mopping after vacuuming can remove any lingering allergens and improve indoor air quality.

3. Resist synthetic fragrances.

A home that smells good tends to feel more pleasant, especially during winter months when windows are closed. But synthetic fragrances, such as those found in detergents and air fresheners, may be providing that welcoming scent at a heavy cost to a home's inhabitants. Such fragrances may be emitting various chemicals, including volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, into the air, affecting

indoor air quality and possibly even human health. When buying laundry products, look for those that are fragrance-free, also choosing home cleaning products that do not include any artificial fragrances. Indoor air quality tends to suffer in colder months, when windows are closed and doors are open only briefly. But homeowners can take a handful of simple yet effective steps to ensure the air in their homes is healthy all year long.

How to clean and maintain stainless steel

No matter the style of a homeowner's kitchen, be it modern, traditional or farmhouse, stainless steel appliances can add a pop of shine and a touch of class. Proponents of stainless steel appliances note their easy maintenance, stylish look and durability. Plus, the neutral tone of stainless steel helps it blend in with just about any color palette. Stainless steel is lauded for its strength and resistance to corrosion and rust. These attributes make it a popular choice in kitchens, where moisture is an issue. Although they are certainly durable choices, stainless steel appliances require maintenance to keep them looking and performing at their best. Considering that stainless steel also costs more than other finish options, taking the time to learn proper care can help protect homeowners' investments.

Avoid chlorine bleach or other products containing chloride. Although stainless

steel is highly resistant to corrosion, it is not completely impervious. Chlorine products can damage the surface of stainless steel appliances and stain them if the chlorine is left to sit.

Do not use metal scourers or coarse abrasives on the stainless steel because such products may scratch the steel. Steel wool pads can leave behind a residue of small metal particles that may eventually rust.

Baking soda mixed with a little dish soap can be used to remove some tough dirt and stains. Rinse well and towel dry to avoid streaking.

Clean and wipe the steel in the direction of the "grain." Usually this means working from the top of the appliance and moving down toward the floor.

Consult with the owner's manual before undertaking any maintenance or cleaning. The appliance may have a



special coating over the stainless steel to help protect it, and it's best to know what you're dealing with before getting your hands dirty.

If you will be trying a cleaning product or scouring method, always test it first in an inconspicuous spot to see if it is effective or harmful.

Julien, a leader in commercial kitchen equipment, recommends applying cleansers with a soft cloth or sponge. Then wipe dry with a soft, clean cloth or allow to air dry.

Stainless steel remains a popular material in kitchens for sinks and appliances. With care, stainless steel can look like new for years to come.



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