

Homeowner's UPDATE



Seasonal Décor Ideas

The light and airy motifs of summer are gone – it's time for the luxury and richness of fall and winter décor. Incorporate the seasons by bringing some of these themes into your home designs.

Color
This is the time for full, rich colors – think deep reds, browns, greens, and oranges. Have fun by throwing in some bronze and gold highlights or maybe some sparkling beading on your couch throw pillows.

Accents
Bring the outdoors in by using colorful leaves, branches, acorns, and pinecones to accent your decorations. Adorn a mantel or sofa table with a garland of greenery and berries.

Flowers
Bring beauty inside your house by incorporating potted flowering plants, such as chrysanthemums, azaleas, kalanchoes, or amaryllis.

Candles
As the light outside fades, add to the cozy ambience inside with candles. Choose warm colors and seasonal scents like cinnamon, apple, clove, cranberry, or peppermint.

Texture
Mark cool weather's return with thick and dense textiles, such as a shaggy area rug, velvet drapes or a chunky-weave afghan draped across a living room chair.



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6 Laundry Tips to Save Your Clothes



Don't let your clothes become victims of laundry abuse! Follow these best practices to give your fabrics a full life.

- 1. Sort by fabric**
Sort your laundry by fabric and keep delicates fine by washing them separately from coarser fabrics like denim or towels.
- 2. Dab, don't rub**
Rubbing stains out can make the stain worse and wear down the fabric. Instead, dab gently and contain the stain by working from the outside in.
- 3. Use minimal detergent**
Using too much can leave a residue that can actually collect dirt and lead to bacteria build-up.

Cut the amount you use by half and see if it still does the job.

- 4. Zip it**
Make sure zippers are zipped all the way up before washing to prevent the metal teeth from snagging on other clothing.
- 5. Unbutton**
The action of the washer and dryer can pull at buttons that are in their buttonholes and possibly pop them off, so unbutton before you wash.
- 6. Refresh a stale load**
If you've forgotten a load in the washer for more than 24 hours, rewash it with 1 cup white vinegar (and no detergent) to eliminate the mildew smell.

Step-by-Step Gutter Cleaning

A gutter's job is to carry rainwater away from your roof and your foundation. When gutters get filled with leaves and debris, backed-up water can get into your house and cause significant damage.

If you clean your gutters out twice a year, you can prevent a lot of problems down the road. It's probably not your favorite task, but just keep it simple and you'll be done before you know it.



Tools You'll Need: ladder, gloves, small hand rake or trowel, hose, garbage bag or bucket.

- Step 1:** Set up your ladder on a flat surface near the downspout.
- Step 2:** Remove large debris using the hand rake or trowel and put it in the garbage bag or bucket.
- Step 3:** Moving the ladder and repeating Step 2, work your way along the length of the gutter.

- Step 4:** At the far end from the downspout, flush the gutter with the hose, using a high-pressure nozzle or gutter-cleaning hose attachment.
- Step 5:** While the water is running, check for leaks and make sure the water runs freely through the downspout.
- Step 6:** Clear any downspout obstructions with the hose or a plumber's auger ("snake").



Easy Upgrades to Make Now



Most of us have our dream remodeling projects that we'd love to have done to our house, but don't have the time, money or energy. But there are still little upgrades you can make today that can help you keep current and maybe even save you a little money.

- 1. HVAC filters**
According to Angie's List, 60 percent of furnace and air conditioner service calls are for problems that are rooted in a dirty filter. Change your filter once a month and you can lower your utility bills up to \$100 a year. If you suffer from allergies, consider upgrading to a higher-tech filter that traps additional

- 2. Light bulbs**
Incandescent bulbs are so 10 years ago! Get a lot more bang for your buck by switching to CFL (compact fluorescent lamp) bulbs, which use 75 percent less energy and are designed to last up to 9 years. "Consumer Reports" estimates that for \$1.25, you can purchase a store-brand 60W CFL and save \$60 in energy costs over the life of the bulb.
- 3. Thermostat**
Many houses are already equipped with a programmable thermostat, but if yours isn't, you should invest in one soon.

- 4. Locks**
Almost 30 percent of home break-ins are no-force entries, meaning the thief just comes in through an open door or window. Take advice from the National Crime Prevention Council and protect your belongings by outfitting every exterior door with a dead-bolt lock, which includes a bolt that passes at least one inch into the doorframe.

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Super-Moist Mayo Cake

- 2 cups flour
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup Miracle Whip or mayonnaise (regular)
- Pinch salt
- 4 Tbsp. cocoa
- 1 cup water

Thoroughly blend all ingredients. Line bottom of one 9" x 13" or two 9" round baking pans with parchment or waxed paper. Bake at 350° for 25-30 minutes. Cool in pans for 10 minutes, then remove from pans to cool completely. Frost with prepared frosting of your choice.

For spice cake, instead of cocoa, add 1/2 tsp. cloves and 1 tsp. each ginger, nutmeg and cinnamon.

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