

This Old House



LAWN & GARDEN

Expert advice from
This Old House
landscape contractor
Roger Cook

BEAT THE WEEDS
BACKYARD PONDS
GARDEN TOOLS
DECK REFINISHING
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Over the past 25 years they've gotten safer, stronger, and more comfortable—and the future looks well, futuristic

WEY FIVE OLD HOUSE ONLINE AT www.fiveoldhouse.com. AOL Keyword: THE OLD HOUSE.
COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY KELLER & KELLER

ON THE COVER

Our man Roger Cook stands ready to help you reclaim your lawn, plant a tree, and choose the essential garden tools.

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We think you should have a car in where your vehicle goes. That's why the Santa Fe LX *FXD* comes with a standard 4-wheel Direction Control System. It works with electronic 4-wheel drive to minimize wheel spin and maintain control. And along with other standard air and lock brakes, it's one more reason you see more Hyundai on the roads today. Usually The Santa Fe LX. [215-488-8888 shown.]

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The Old House

THIS MONTH ONLINE



HOW TO BUILD A HOUSE IN 5 DAYS

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10 Things You May Not Know About Us

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How do you know? Enter your home's approximate contact. You'll find out in a few minutes.

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So stop by one of over 7,000 GM dealerships nationwide and ask Mr. Goodwrench about Simplified Maintenance and inquire if your 2004 vehicle is equipped with this technology. You'll see—car care may be no laughing matter, but it certainly can be simple.



LETTERS

THAT OLD House IT'S PERFECT!



AN EMBARRASSMENT OF RICH'S
Richard, you old glamour puss. What's next, the cover of *Vogue*? Seriously, *TOH* is one of the best programs of its kind on TV. Keep up the good work.

JOHN FROHMAN, BARTLETT, IL

I love the January cover! That hottie Richard Trethewey can come sit in my bathtub anytime.

PROBY BARNES, BUREAU HARBOR, IL

Who's next? Possibly Roger Cook as a fountain in the landscape? It's perfect to garden.

BETH KOCKOS, COHASSET, NY

Backstabbed—and have been screwing them down. Thanks for the tip!

DAN GERRICK, MINNESOTA

SALVAGING IDEAS

I want to let you know how much my husband and I enjoyed the January/February 2004 issue. We currently live in a Cape-style home built in 1938. In our efforts to restore some of its original details, we have visited salvage yards, and going forward we will take along ("These are Hauls") from this issue. Also as far as the article on "A New Old House" in Minnesota. Wow! Is all we could say. We now have some really solid ideas on what to plan for and who to go to in order to get it done.

Thanks, *TOH*. We love your magazine, show, and Web site.

BRENDA EYRE, BIRMINGHAM, AL

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

After reading "Fire Fighters" (Talking Shop, January/February 2004), I felt compelled to comment on fire extinguisher location. Near an exit is not always the best location. Our chemistry professor in high school told me something I will never forget: "By the time you get to the door, you don't need a fire extinguisher. Just get out of the room." Therefore, the fire extinguisher in the client lab was always kept at the back of the room, farthest from the door. For convenience and safety the extinguisher should be kept close to potential sources of fire, but also consider how you would get out of that room should a fire occur. Place extinguishers where they can be easily accessed if you need to suppress a fire in order to make a safe exit.

BOB MURPHY,
LANSING, MI

www.thisoldhouse.com

BACKSTABBED WIRES

The article "Shedding Trouble" in the January/February 2004 issue couldn't have been more timely. While troubleshooting a recently installed 5-way light switch I discovered that a backstabbed wire—which I had secured only days earlier—had somehow come loose. Taking your advice, I've been checking and retightening the switches and receptacles—all of which were



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As both a professional firefighter and a general contractor, I found this article very informative. In the case of extinguishers for auto use, consider this: Many newer model cans contain far more plastics and carbon fiber-based materials in their manufacture. Many of these materials produce deadly by-products when on fire. If your automobile catches fire, no matter how small it starts, think twice before displaying an auto fire.

(English) It would be better to take your cell phone as you exit the vehicle and call the fire department. This is a job best left to the pros.

Jim Whitten, Kalamazoo, Mich.

HACK CONDOY REPLIES Regarding automobile fairs and extinguishers, I agree that these are tricky fees, even for firefighters who are trained and equipped to handle them. The primary objective should be to get the oppo-

points out of the vehicle and its safe location. It is usually not worth the risk of injury to see how much property can be saved.

Respectfully Mr. Kuzmicki's letter there is no general principle with subtenants and fire is installing. Never be in a position where the fire between you and the exit. This way you will not be cornered by the fire. Placing an extinguisher in the back of the room could compromise this basic premise. That's why the recommended location is new this. It would add, once you've gotten out, STAY OUT! Many injuries and fatalities are the result of people going back in to save valuable pets or to even fight the fire. And are something close the door behind you it will help prevent the fire from spreading to other parts of the building.

Mark Conroy is senior fire protection engineer at the National Fire Protection Association. For more information on fire safety, go to enr.com.

REVEALING A DOOR EDGE

I always enjoy learning from Tom. Take Bill's tips and the depth of his experience. The January/February 2004 *Macromodel* Heraldists, however, left out the word that should be located on the latch side of the main door edge: Animate the actual profile part of a door large offset from the door face, a square cut edge door will "graze" in width as the door moves through its arc—its over 5/8 inch for a typical 30 inch-side door. (Think of the hypotenuse on a long, shallow triangle.) To compensate for this, one should locate the latch-side door edge slightly so that the linear door face is slightly narrower in width than the outer door face. This will prevent the door from sticking on its edge with high clearance interference.

U. J. Rasmussen, Newcastle, R.I.

MORE DOOR INSTALLATION ADVICE

Wow, January/February 2008's *Writer's Handbook*, "Resolving an Interior Dilemma" was very informative. I recently looked at this exact project and wish I had this information before I started. As an average homeowner with decent carpentry skills, I would not

amazed that anyone thinking of replacing their doors (lets only purchase a hinge and roller roller template. While installing the first door, I tried the old method and found it inaccurate, and impossible to create the misaligned corners necessary for many of today's door hinges. Two templates allow the average homeowner like myself the ability to construct hinges that look professional and operate perfectly. Hinge templates (available at home centers and hardware stores) range from \$25 to \$200 and are well worth the money. I purchased the \$25 kit, which includes the template, and was very satisfied.

Alan A. Cyren, Rochester Hills, Mich.

RAPID NAIL PULLING

Your "TOV Technique" on page 18 of the January/February 2004 issue of Shop 3 demonstrates an unsafe method for pulling nails. Your illustration shows the reader to evaluate the tool into another nail point. This could cause an unintended person to include muscle

since I have actually done that to drive his fat
down into the soil point, I have learned to be-



gin at either end, as you have shown, but to rotate the pulley away from any red points.

BUY LOCAL

As an avid reader of your magazine I cannot count how many times we as consumers are pointed in the direction of the "nearest home center" to look for materials, ap-

nment, or even advice on projects. I don't believe that the local hardware store or lumberyard should be overlooked. I've found that those smaller businesses are usually more hands-on, can easily get what you're looking for in a couple of days (if they do not stock it), and are generally comparably priced to the "big box." I try to do as much as I can with my local stores and encourage others to do so as well.

Days: Monday, West Wharfedale, NY

search list

Definition: A set of items. Formally, does or doesn't begin its EBNF as a construction job.

is a number of photographs taken from the roof of a bus with the photo in the January/February 2004 On the Job column "The Concord Drive" is not of a major view - it's a side view. The major view is actually just off campus (you can see a bus stop too) and

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structor Roger Cook
believes that the best
landscapes are the
ones that involve a
little experimentation.



COMING IN THE MAY ISSUE

- Outdoor kitchens
- Germade TV project plans
- America's first houses
- Planting for privacy
- Deck materials
- Getting rid of bugs and pests

ON SALE APRIL 19

Gardeners are extremely lucky people, because we get to play. As long as we follow some of the simple rules of design—

considering layout, function, and flow—we have a blank canvas to work with. We can add pretty much whatever we want for colors, textures, and forms, showing bold lines or unusual shapes that we truly love.

While keeping a garden is a time-honored tradition, the best gardeners are the ones who are willing to throw tradition aside and experiment a little. If a plant doesn't work in one spot, dig it up and put it somewhere else. Or trade with a neighbor who has one that you'd like to add to your design. (Gardeners love to share.) If something thrives, think about what factors made it work—sun, shade, moisture, heat—and look for other plants with similar characteristics. The best part about a garden is that little you do is permanent. And as I always say, you can't truly become a gardener until you've killed a few plants.

One of my greatest rewards has been creating landscapes for people who never considered themselves gardeners before, then watching them discover the joy of being outside. They're drawn into their landscapes by the constant change. From the seasons to size to color, from bulbs to annuals to fall-flowering perennials and trees, the only thing that stays still in my garden is me, sitting on a bench and enjoying it!

So personalize your garden to meet your expectations. Use grass or ground-cover, perennials or annuals, plants with fragrance or ones entirely in the same color. All that matters is that you enjoy it. Take it from a guy who likes purple and yellow together. You just have to have fun doing it.

ON THE JOB



Busted!

Men with his car/born's counterpart.

Spolk Valley, Washington, police officers descended on a home in the Pandemonium neighborhood, guns drawn. They'd been called to the scene shortly after 10 a.m. for a reported burglary in progress. A woman claimed her garage door was open and she could see a man standing there, and a police department spokesman said described him as thin, 4 feet tall, and wearing a dark shirt and blue pants.

After they closed in on the garage, the three responding officers discovered the suspected burglar was actually a Christmas tree. The man was actually a Christmas tree. The man was actually a Christmas tree. The man was actually a Christmas tree.

Source: The Spokan Falls Police Department, Washington

PRODUCED BY DAN OLSZEWSKI

Free Tree

Arra, 10 of them, if you join the National Arbor Day Foundation as time for the big April 30 celebration. Besides the tree growing, the foundation is selling saplings for just three bucks a pop on orders of 50 or more. Why not get the whole community involved? You might even catch J. Smiling Morn, founder of the holiday. Back in 1872, Morn inspired his fellow Nebraska settlers to plant over 1 million oaks, maples, and more across the then Indian state. For more information, visit www.arborday.org.



THE GIVING TREE
Great as gifts, the saplings are shipped in plastic tubes and include a custom-sized label.

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY; ART: JENNIFER COOPER/ALAMY

Bring out the Beauty with Light



Tips on home decorating with Philips Lighting

One of the most overlooked elements of home design is lighting. It can make a more peaceful and comfortable atmosphere and enhance or diminish the beauty of the interior. It depends on more than just the fixtures. You also need to choose bulbs that produce the best quality of light.

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For landscape lighting, Philips halogen indoor/outdoor floodlights can create beautiful shadows throughout your landscape and on your home's exterior. For a magical effect, draw them up through your shrubbery at night.

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BEFORE & AFTER Porch Restored

An impressively unimpaired addition had raised this once-charming 1924 cottage in Haddon, Pennsylvania, into the neighborhood's finest. With 45 hours of closing on the house, Tim Campbell and Ray Whitcomb saw down the vinyl-sided enclosure. They then restored the exterior to the facade, installing new windows and doors (with authentic wooden frames and true divided light) as well as ornamental porch pillars. The front lawn benefited from 30 yards of topsoil, spread and seeded, plus an arrangement of low-maintenance plants that includes Shasta daisies, Scotch broom, and ornamental dwarf pine.



Have you dramatically altered the look of your house? If so, send photos and/or drawings, plus a brief description of the project, to: The Editors, ENR, 160 Avenue of the Americas, 27th Floor, New York, NY 10038.

Small but Worthy



Trim Gauge is a handy tool in one ideal for setting the depth of cut on saws and routers, marking reveals on door and window casings, making repetitive measurements and more. There's even a built-in level so your work will go on straight as well as flat. \$9.99 from www.trimgauge.com

A New Show From This Old House



Why watch the MBA playoffs when you can catch the latest episode of *Inside This Old House*? The new, behind-the-scenes series, airing on A&E on Sundays at 4 p.m. (ET), pairs vintage FOX clips and moments with new insights from the show guys on the latest materials, techniques, and technologies to hit the home-improvement industry.

LESSON LEARNED



Creature Comfort

BY SARAH LAURITSEN, FERRISVILLE, VT

When I first moved back to my hometown in Vermont, a friend and I agreed up a cute little outbuilding on my parents' property. We installed a carefully crafted wood frame, and put in wide-plank hardwood floors. Upstairs, we added a large gable dormer to bring in more light and replaced the old roof shingles. We even sided the exterior in wooden clapboards and painted them colonial white. One thing we never got around to, though, was enclosing the corner with a soffit box.

After living there for one season, we moved on, and the little outbuilding became a storage shed. A few months later I returned to restore some furniture. I climbed the ladder to the upper level to find the plastic lining that covered the exposed rafters sagging down halfway into the room, the pink fiberglass insulation matted with black' nests, droppings, and against bark.

This cleanup was one of the greatest jobs I've ever had to tackle. I didn't think soffit boxes were important for my little project until I realized what an eating house I had left wide open for the local wildlife.

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PHOTO: STEVE HART/STUDIO CITY; ILLUSTRATION BY JIM HANSEN

[FLASHBACK]

Tongue-tied Tom



Tom Hanks knows quality construction like nobody's business and practices it to perfection. Well, it's nice to find out that your heroes are humans, which is exactly what happened back in 1991 on the Wayland project. We were getting ready to cut a hole in the wall for a new window. Tom had two jobs. One was to do the actual work, the other was to explain it to the audience. As ever, job number one was no problem. Job number two, however, required Tom to say "As you know, whenever you remove a window, you have to replace it." Well, say as he might, he just couldn't get that sentence out of his mouth.

For visual access, we began every take with a close-up of Tom's face. Dick cutting a short length of 2x4 with his saw was. Take after take, a little piece of wood would fall to the floor, and take after take, Tommy would stall for time. It seemed to look as if Dick was making a set of dentures. I think we hit around 21 takes, much to Tom's chagrin, before the magic words were spoken. To this day, one of the times that the term "straw-bale" gets used around here, Tom will suddenly disappear out, "As you know, whenever you remove a window..."

—Dean Jones, TCM senior producer

Vacuum Packed

Even more DIY repairs can make a room. Instead of dragging your dog vacuum through the house, the portable Tank Vac from Tanko lets you bring the vacuum along with your tools. Its 6-watt motor can handle more than the average household vacuum cleaner—easily sucked up the handful of screws we threw as way—but it won't make the neighborhood. Available from www.tankovacu.com for \$29.99.



[DID YOU KNOW]

Approximately 50 minutes to reach this point in today's single starts to roll, even with the drum rotating. If a driver is using the time limit, he'll pull over and pump the truck's 50 gallons of wastewater into the drum. This is the bucket but, sure, it's a vehicle. If a mechanical failure prevents use of the pump, the material will remain in the drum. And that, we're told, is the very worst day in the life of a concrete-truck driver—the best solution is to replace the barrel.



The design for this California straw house came from a local bus driver. An exchange with bus also, via a web carved into the wall interior wall.



Houses Made of Straw?

Huff and puff all you want, they're not going anywhere

Straw-bale houses really stand the test of time. The building technique was pioneered by well, pioneers—late-19th-century Hokkaido, to be exact, who used the cheap, abundant resource to frame homes across the barren plains. Some of those first straw houses are still around today. And new ones are still being built, especially in colder climes, where energy costs can be 50 to 90 percent lower than for a traditional home.

Covered with stucco on the outside, straw-bale houses can look traditional or trendy. Across New England, in particular, many have a handsome, post-and-beam feel. In the Southwest, the designs tend to be more exotic, including curved walls and undulating roofs. Whatever their appearance from the outside, most straw-house interiors take creative turns, with sculpted staircases, super-thick archways, and window seats carved into the walls. To check out some exciting projects from recent years, pick up *The New Straw Book* by Catherine Wanek (\$39.95, www.globe-america.com).

PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES; STRAW HOUSE: JEFFREY M. HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES

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ROGER COOK
LANDSCAPE
DESIGNER



TOM SILVA
GENERAL
CONTRACTOR



RICHARD TRETHEWEY
PLUMBING
HEATING EXPERT



ADAM CARLINI
MASTER CARPENTER

TREE ROOTS VS. PATIO PAVERS

I recently purchased an older house that has a gigantic oak tree in the middle of the back patio. The tree's roots have pushed up the patio's large stone pavers, creating a tripping hazard. Also, many of the pavers tilt toward the house, directing water toward the basement. Can you suggest a solution that doesn't call for cutting down this magnificent tree?

HUGHES BRIDGE, BIRMINGHAM, N.J.

ROGER COOK REPLIES: Cutting the roots might seem to be the most obvious solution, but that can lead to rot in the tree. Besides, cutting the roots may awaken the tree to the point where it could topple over. So let the roots do what they will and look instead at changing the patio.

Here are four tree-saving solutions to consider:

1. Remove the pavers, cover the roots with a new layer of cutting material such as sand or flower dust, and then reset the pavers, now somewhat higher with a slight slope away from the house. This will leave a raised edge that you'll have to trim at some kind of edging.
2. Get rid of the pavers entirely and create a permeable patio, which can adapt to whatever the roots do. The downside is that pea stone is not as neat as a paved patio, and requires some maintenance: You'd have to rake it and add stone periodically to maintain a level of top-free surface.
3. Replace the pavers with an anti-grade deck. The only intrusion into the root zone would be the footings, which should be camouflaged to avoid the larger roots.
4. If none of these options are to your liking, how about moving the patio to a sunny area farther away from the house? Then you can create a garden under the tree by adding 2 to 3 inches of soil and planting perennials or ground covers between the roots. And if you want a pathway through the garden, place the stepping stones between the roots too.

REPLACING GLASS FROM THE INSIDE

I broke a pane in a window of our 1876 house, but because of the way our lot slopes, I can't reach the window with a ladder. I was able to pick out the glass pieces and remove the glazing compound from in-



When tree roots spread beneath a stone patio, consider removing the pavers and planting ground cover.

side the house, but I can't figure out how to put in the new glass. Any ideas?

SEA FORTH, BIRMINGHAM, MO

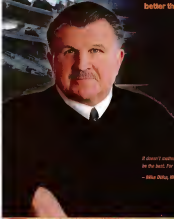
TOM SILVA REPLIES: If you can't reach the window from the outside, then the only way to make this repair is to remove the sash. On some windows, flexible tracks called jumbo liners allow you to pull the top of the sash into the room and then rotate it off the jumbo. On other windows, the sash is held in place with strips of wood both inside stops, which are usually nailed around the inside of the window opening. These have to be removed before the sash can come out.

First, you'll have to pry off one or both of the inside stops, followed vertically against the inside of the window opening. Before removing a painted stop, use a utility knife to slice through the paint. It covers the joint between the stop and the window casing—that will prevent the stop from breaking as you pry it. Once one stop is off, you should be able to pull the lower sash toward you, take it out, and make the necessary repairs. The upper sash is held in place by stops called parting beads, which are embedded in the joints. You'll have to pull out one or both of the vertical beads in order to take out the top sash.

While you're replacing the glass, you might as well in-

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ASLI THIS OLD HOUSE

spend the rest of the such a make any repairs or touch up the paint. Then, when the repair is complete, put back the exterior in reverse order the last one removed is the first one back.

QUIETING DRAINPIPS

The existing is low bathroom in the second floor and have to install a new waste stack. I've been told that cast-iron drainpipes are a lot less noisy when water runs through them, but the plumbers I've talked to prefer to use plastic pipes, and the idea of using plastic on main lines makes them look like for the same work with cast iron. I want quiet pipes that don't cost a lot. What are my choices?

BO ALAN, MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

RICHARD TRETHERWEY REPLIES: Cast-iron drainpipes is worth every penny in terms of its cashness, but I'm not surprised that your plumbers don't want to mess around with it. Plastic piping, whether it's PVC or ABS, is far less expensive, easier to handle, easier to cut, and easier to join. It also tends not to dent or rust.

While there's no way to entirely eliminate those annoying plumbing sounds, there are a few ways to reduce them. One thing to look at is where the pipes will be routed. It's always better to go through a closet wall instead of a living room wall if you have the choice.

You can also reduce noise transmission by insulating around the pipe with sheets of sound-absorbing foam (www.soundproof.com) or with acoustical spray foam insulation (www.henrymccoy.com). Both of these insulation treatments seem enough to be good if soundproofing.

Another option is to use drain materials the way we did at the TV project in Atlanta. Plastic drainpipes. There's the trick: use all plastic except for a vertical length of cast-iron that sits beside the existing main vent. Turn this into that drain pipe that spray-painted all around it, so to make sure that pipe would never be heard.

COOLING A HOT FLAT ROOF

We are slowly fixing up a 1937 International single house built by architect Louis Behrens! Although the modern design might seem more at home in Manhattan than Michigan, we love it, but we do have a problem: In the summer the sun bakes down on the flat roof and melts us in the bedrooms below. The roof, which is covered with silver-painted inorganic and regularly maintained, is only about 10 years old, so we'd hate to tear it off. Also, there's very little insulation in the cell-

ing. We thought of putting in skylights to let the sun heat but take the idea of cutting into a roof that doesn't leak. Help!

CARMON MCGEEHAN,
 Grosse Pointe Park, Miss.

TOM SAVA REPLIES: Cutting into a flat roof is something you do only when there is absolutely, positively no other choice. Besides, skylights don't do a thing to stop the main problem, heat radiating through the ceiling. In fact, they would probably make it worse by allowing the sun's rays to heat up exterior surfaces.

There are several strategies for blocking radiant heat gain in a house. According to Denys Parker, a research scientist at the Florida Solar Energy Center, "You can usually avoid a radiant barrier on the surface more effectively." He also says that shading surfaces is effective although I don't see any way to do that in your case.

The insulation I generally recommend under flat roofs is a spray-on open-cell foam insulation, which is a very ef-



Painting the flat roof's exterior with a white elastomeric coating will help keep the upstairs rooms of the International-style house cooler in the summer.

fective and doesn't have to be ventilated. But you'd have to tip out your ceilings to do that—not a great option. Adding a radiant barrier, which has a coating of reflective aluminum, would be a great solution if you had an attic but isn't practical on a flat roof.

Your best option, therefore, is to change the reflectivity of your roof simply by painting it with a white elastomeric coating. Parker says that this paint chemically increases a roof's reflectivity and reduces the amount of heat it absorbs. By the way, Parker says you don't need the ceramic beads that some manufacturers add to their elastomeric paints to



SLIPPING CHUCK Drill bits offer slip is the keyless chuck of my new portable drill. When I've asked the folks at my local home center about this, they've said, "It's

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Ask THIS OLD HOUSE

but they don't have a solution. Do you?

Wes Howe, Boise, Idaho

NORM ABRAM REPLIES: Keyless chucks are convenient, but they do seem to slip more than keyed chucks. I've also noticed that they're getting better so manufacturers seem to be addressing this problem.

To tighten a keyless chuck, you need to get a good grip on it. Larger chucks with aggressively knurled rollers improve your grip, while smaller chucks with relatively smooth rollers make tightening more difficult. Others incorporate a ratcheting mechanism that clicks when you've tightened it enough.

Don't forget the bit side of the problem: Although a chuck with serrated jaws will grip better than one with smooth jaws, it isn't easy for any chuck to hold tight to a smooth cylindrical surface. Using bits with hexagonal shafts solves that problem, but if buying off-size bits doesn't appeal to you, consider replacing the chuck, either with a better keyless model or one that requires a key. Making the switch isn't difficult, and it's a lot less expensive than buying a new drill. You can find replacement chucks at most home centers or order them through woodworking catalogs or the Internet.

CLEANING STAINED PATIO BRICK

How should I clean the green and brown stains on my brick patio? I tried power washing, but it didn't work.

MARCIA COOPER, Gower Hills, N.J.

BOSSE COOK REPLIES: Power washing is usually enough to remove moss. Occasionally your green stain(s) as well as mildew stains (usually black) from brick and other patio surfaces. You'll get better results when the moss is actively growing, but you should be able to remove the stains even in cold weather. Just be careful not to use nozzles with a tightly focused spray or too high a pressure—anything above 3,000 psi may damage the brick.

For stubborn stains, try a 10-percent solution of chlorine bleach to water; scrub the area with a stiff-bristle brush, and then rinse thoroughly with clean water. Be sure to wear rubber gloves as you scrub, and don't forget eye protection—scrubbing and spraying can splatter the bleach mixture toward your face. Try that approach on a small sample area first,

however, and wait a week to see if there are any unwanted color changes in the brick.

As for the brown stains, it could be something that was spilled on the patio, or it may be leaching out of the brick itself. Without knowing for sure what the stains or the kind of brick you have, I can't recommend a simple approach. So before you do anything, take a look at the Brick Institute of America's Web site (www.brick.org). It has a good section on how to get rid of a variety of stains. There, no matter what solution is recommended, be sure to test it first on an inconspicuous area of your patio.

WET-GARAGE FRAMING

My house was custom-built four years ago and I truly love it, but I'm very concerned about the severe-rain rotting the bottom of the studs just west entry. I'm sure it's not, but I don't want to have extensive repairs when I'm 80 and can't afford to deal with them.

GEORGE MARINO, CHARLOTTE, R.I.

TOM SEAN REPLIES: Don't worry, Gene. As long as you're at least 75 right now, if you're



YEP: On the inside, water stained steel studs and rot directly on the concrete. On the outside, **UNMOVED**, the siding and sheathing are too close to the driveway pavement. That spells trouble for this four-year-old garage.

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nel, then I'd say you're right to be concerned.

I can see by the stains in your photo that the studs have been sucking up water regularly, which is a great way to encourage rot. What you can't see—yet—are problems with the wall sheathing, which is much too close to the driveway. It should be 8 inches above the pavement at least.

At this point, you can't do much about the studs except cut the bottom of the garage door framing off just enough to stop periods of excessive-frequent studs underneath. (You'll need to take the load off the studs first.) Just slipping a piece of foam or sole or plastic or even 30-pound felt paper under the ends of the studs would add to their life.

The sheathing will eventually be a trouble spot too. So if you want to tackle the problem now, you'll have to remove a few courses of siding, then cut out the rotting sheathing and replace it with pressure-treated plywood held with stainless steel nails. Then reseal the siding using stainless nails.

That rot of columns is going to rust out eventually too. If you want to squeeze more life out of it, sand off the rust, apply a metal primer, then paint it.

HALTING GROUT CRACKS

We just remodeled the upstairs bathroom in our 140-year-old house. The contractor did a fine job, but there's one thing that doesn't seem

right: The grout is cracking in the shower where the tiled walls meet, and where the tiled walls meet the tiled floor elsewhere in the bathroom. The contractor has been back a few times to put more grout in the joints, but they still crack. What's going on?

RICHARD BROWN, WILMINGTON, MASS.

JOE FERNANDEZ REPLIES: Walls and floors in wood-framed houses are always moving a bit. That's just the natural result of changes in indoor temperature and humidity along with wind and snow loads on a house. Unless certain precautions are taken, grout can't keep up with the movement and will continue to crack.

I always start with filling jobs by screwing a metal backboard to the framing, taking particular care to be joints to make sure that every corner has a stud. Then I pack the corners with benevoldite (a heat-resistant mortar) and immediately surface the joint with self-adhesive nylon mesh joint tape. Finally I blow a thin coat of the mortar over the mesh on each side of the corner and seal it a day before tiling. That gives me a solid corner and a good base for grout.

Since your tile is already in place, try a different grout—one mixed with a latex-based grout additive instead of water. This makes the grout stronger and more flexible. I prefer it to caulk because it's easier to touch up later if necessary.

To fix your cracks, have your contractor take all the grout out of the existing joints—and I mean all of it. Then have him install new

grout mixed with flexible grout additive. If the corners were mortared and tiled as I just explained, they shouldn't have any more cracking. But if the new grout cracks, then caulk—I use a medium-resistant silicone—may be your only realistic option, short of ripping out the corners and doing them over again the right way.

Joe Fernandez has been busy tiling for This Old House projects for the past 15 years.

SANDING OLD FLOORS

In the process of remodeling my house, built in 1914, I uncovered Douglas fir flooring that appears to be in good shape after being hidden for nearly 40 years under red shag carpeting. But I have received conflicting advice about how to refinish the floor. One contractor told me to rent a commercial floor sander, then finish with a rotary sander. Another contractor said the big machine has a tendency to damage a floor, so I should work only with the rotary sander. What do you think?

MURRY BRUNSON, CHICAGO, ILL.

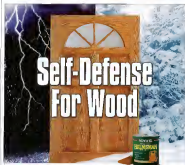
TOM BOWEN REPLIES: Why would you want to get rid of red shag? It's a great conversation starter. Seriously, I bet the Doug fir will be beautiful. Flooring that old is bound to have tighter grain than anything that's affordable these days. But if you have a whole room to refinish, the fastest way to tackle this is with a commercial floor sander, often called a drum sander. These high-powered sanders, widely available at rental centers, are also quick to destroy a wood floor, particularly one as soft as fir. So be very careful—or turn the job over to a professional.

Or instead of a drum sander, I'd consider a relatively new type of floor sander with low-impact sanding heads. It's not as aggressive as a drum sander and so takes longer to get the job done, but makes it more forgiving of inexperienced operators, particularly when a floor is uneven. The homeowner of the Salem, Mass. FOX TV project used this kind of machine as

his old pine plank floors and they came out looking great.

I suspect the rotary sander you refer to is actually a floor buffing machine, a single head fitted with an abrasive screen. A "screening" as it's called, is much too slow to remove a finish. It's for smoothing bare wood, or roughing up the finish on slightly worn floors before applying a new coat of finish.

For an overview of what's involved in refishing a floor, see "Refinishing School" (www.thisoldhouse.com) or check the Web site of the Wood Flooring Manufacturers Association (www.woodflooring.com). ■



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Room for Two

A new, expanded kitchen plan accommodates a cooking couple.

BY KAREN KILGUS PHOTOGRAPHY BY HENRIK WILSON

The cherry kitchen in Emily Parker and Christopher DeVan's 1936 Seattle bungalow plays host to two serious cooks who like to cook together—a plus for a place that's a little smaller than most. "It had never been updated, so there was no storage and no dishwasher—not even a place to eat," says Christopher.

Working with architect David Root and a \$75,000 budget, they borrowed space from adjoining areas of the house to nearly double the kitchen's size. This allowed the way for three workstations, including a central island equipped with a range and breakfast bar. Christopher, an amateur carpenter, designed the custom cabinetry to fit the couple's needs and the period era of their house, using glass-front doors, brushed-back on some pieces, and brushed nickel hardware. He carefully chose a range yellow-and-white color scheme to offset Seattle's drab weather. "David was to create an inviting, modern kitchen that suited the age of the house," says Christopher. "And we love to entertain but hate to cook the party. The design lets us do both."

The new kitchen divide painted white cabinetry and a subway-tile backsplash for a period look with new, high-end appliances. It's anchored by a central island with honed granite countertops that houses an air-burner range, a microwave, storage on three sides, and a breakfast bar.

Clean and Simple

Stainless steel appliances add a contemporary touch to the period feel of this kitchen.



BEFORE The gloomy galley was far too small for a couple who like to cook together.

AFTER Peter Piroch's clients in the deeper, brighter kitchen open to the porch. Left of the island is a food prep area with butcher block top and a second sink. A built-in hatch in the island serves as a dining center.

WHAT THEY DID

- 1 ENLARGE THE SPACE** The 59-by-129-foot kitchen was nearly doubled by claiming space from an adjacent closet, an unused chimney port of the porch (which was replaced with a new one), and the breakfast nook, which were relocated. In the process, an adjoining bedroom was also turned into a mudroom.
- 2 ADD AN ISLAND** A 5-by-7½-foot multifunctional island provides plenty of work surface for two cooks. It also houses the range and microwave, which allows more wall room for cabinets and counters.
- 3 CREATE THREE WORK ZONES** The primary work triangle is formed by the range and, on the opposite wall, the main sink and the refrigerator. A second prep area with sink and pantry is across from the breakfast bar and a third designed specifically for baking includes a lower counter for kneading and single storage below for a stand-up mixer and baking supplies.
- 4 BRING IN MORE NATURAL LIGHT** The single double-hung window over the sink was replaced with two double-hungs. A wall behind the prep sink was kept to half height, and the doorway to the dining room was aligned with new French doors on the opposite wall to bring in light and create sight lines into both rooms.

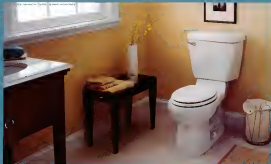
BEFORE



AFTER



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARCHITECT



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The Details

Old-time touches that are functional for today



1 **A BUNGALOW-STYLE PLATE RACK** spans upper cabinets (like the new French doors) providing storage and display. Painted poplar cabinets help support the 12-inch-deep HOF shelf. This clock is a 1930s reproduction.

2 **A BUTCHER-BLOCK-TOPPED BARI CABINET** is used for jiggling vegetables. The sink is outfitted with a Nightmark bar faucet to minimize splashing. Knives are kept handy on magnetic rack on the pretty cabinet.



3 **THE REPRODUCTION BRIDGE FRIG** with porcelain-felicit mounted area subway-tile backsplash is a perfect complement to the original enameled cast-iron sink.



4 **SLOTTED OPEN SHELVES** in the island organize trays and cutting boards. Brushed-nickel hardware adds vintage character to the island unit, and the black granite countertop provides an ideal landing spot for hot dishes.



5 **THE PANTRY**, like all the kitchen's cabinets, is made of painted plywood with poplar trim, painted white. The top unit is outfitted with four deep shelves and additional shallow shelving on the doors. The base unit has pull-out shelves.

For more kitchen design ideas, trends, and products, go to www.thisoldhouse.com or AmericasOldestHome.com. This Old House and select kitchen in the Power-Wire section.



High cholesterol comes in all shapes and sizes.



Here's a tip: You can be active, thin, young or old. The truth is that high cholesterol may have as much to do with your family genes as food. So, even a strict diet may not be enough to lower it. The good news is that adding LIPITOR can help. It can help lower your total cholesterol 20% to 45%*. And it can help lower your bad cholesterol 30% to 60%*. (*The average effect depends on the dose.) More than 18 million Americans have talked to their doctor about LIPITOR. Maybe you should too. Learn more. Find out if the #1 prescribed cholesterol medicine is right for you. Call us at 1-888-LIPITOR. Find us on the web at www.lipitor.com.

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LIPITOR is not for everyone. It is not for those with liver problems. And it is not for women who are nursing, pregnant, or may get pregnant. It has not been shown to prevent heart disease or heart attacks.

If you take LIPITOR, tell your doctor if you feel any new muscle pain or weakness. This could be a sign of serious side effects. Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take. This may help avoid serious drug interactions. Your doctor may do blood tests to check your liver function before and during treatment. The most common side effects are gas, constipation, stomach pain, and heartburn. They tend to be mild and often go away.

Read or additional important information on next page.



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 FOR CHOLESTEROL

Refresh Your Deck

Bringing luster back to weather-beaten wood

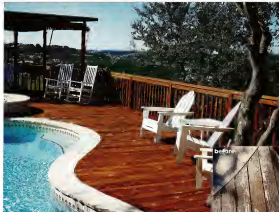
BY SCOTT H. SCHILLING PHOTOGRAPHS BY PAUL BARDOLLY

Professional refinisher Keith Spedth has been rejuvenating weather-worn decks in and around Austin, Texas, for 15 years. Equipped with little more than a power sander and a pump sprayer, he can clean and resain even the most decrepit of the best deck in just two days. "You'll be surprised at how easily and efficiently a homeowner can restore plunk the same thing," he says.

On the following pages, Spedth shows his technique for bringing an old deck back to life. The keys are simple: Use the right cleaners, work methodically, and go easy with the power washer. "It'll gouge the wood real badly if you're not careful," he says (see "Power-Washing Cautions," page 38).

Depending on the type of finish you use, your cleaners, and how much sun your deck gets, a newly finished deck can go about two to four years before it needs retreating. All a homeowner has to do is the maintenance a sweep-off (twice a year) and routinely hose and brush off pollen and dirt.

After nine years of baking in the hot Texas sun, this redwood deck was gray with oxidized and oxidation (B&B). But after a day of cleaning, bleaching, and power-washing followed by a new finish, the old deck looks as good as new.



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Day One: Cleaning and Bleaching

First, line up the gear needed:

- **Power washer** (3,000 psi) with a 40-degree fan tip
- **Pump sprayer** (2-gallon) with fan tip, which covers better than an adjustable cone tip
- **TSP** (trisodium phosphate), or a TSP substitute
- **Nonschlorine bleach**, such as OxiClean (hydrogen peroxide and sodium carbonate)
- **Wood brightener** (oxalic acid, for cedar or redwood decks only)
- **Boots and PVC-coated silk pants** (you're going to get wet!)

Next, replace any cracked or damaged boards with the same species of wood, and secure them with stainless steel decking screws. Trim any foliage that may be in the way, and thoroughly wet down nearby plants.



(1) **WASH** Wet the wood with water from a hose or a power-washer tip held at least 18 inches from the surface. (A wet deck allows the cleaning solution evenly.) Mix the deck cleaner according to the directions on the container and apply it to the wet wood with a pump sprayer. Wait about 10 minutes for the cleaner to work.



(2) **WASH** Holding the spray fan perpendicular to the gaps between the boards, power-wash sideways and dirt from the wood using long, smooth, overlapping strokes. To avoid gouging the wood, hold the wand at least 4 to 6 inches from the surface. Keep it moving continuously and lift the tip up at the end of each stroke. For ridges and buttresses, hold the tip 3 to 5 inches away (not at the corners), and blast two sides at the same time.



(3) **BLEACH** Working from the railings down, aim the power washer to spray away any loose debris and wood pulp. Hold the tip at least 18 inches from the wood surface, but this time, aim the fan with the gaps in the deck. This enables you to dislodge any debris between the boards. Rinse two or three times to ensure that there's no debris to interfere with the bleach's action. Also, wet nearby foliage to prevent it from the bleach used in direct contact.



(4) **BLEACH** To kill mold, mildew, and algae, mix a dilute solution of nonschlorine bleach on the wet wood. For cedar, redwood, or tropical hardwoods, mix 6 parts water to 1 part bleach; for pine, mix 2 parts water to 1 part bleach. Wait 10 to 20 minutes and rinse thoroughly with water. To lighten cedar or redwood, follow with a solution of wood brightener (oxalic acid), applied to the wet wood with the pump sprayer. Wait 10 minutes and rinse.

POWER-WASHING CAVEATS

Power washers certainly save time and water, but the high-pressure stream can gouge wood, break glass, and cut through skin in an instant of carelessness. Take time to get used to the machine and make sure to aim only the 40-degree fan tip. If you don't feel comfortable directing that much power at the wood, try using a stiff-bristle scrub brush. It will produce the same result, although it will take longer and require more muscle.

- Protect your legs and feet with boots, and never point the wand at yourself or anyone else.
- Take a foot run on your driveway to get a feel for how a power washer works. Practice keeping the wand in continuous motion, using smooth, long strokes at a consistent distance from the surface and feathering up at the end of each stroke.
- If your power washer has adjustable pressure, set it to 3,000 psi, the level recommended for 40-degree fan tips. A lower setting will work, but the job will take longer. Higher settings are more likely to cause damage.



GRAB LIFE BY THE HORNS



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Day Two: Applying the Finish

Once a deck is thoroughly dry (after at least three consecutive days with out rain), it's time to apply the finish. Wait for a day with no chance of rain and little wind, then drape plastic sheets or tarps over plants, grass, and nearby structures to protect them from overspray.

Here's what you'll need:

- **2-gallon pump sprayer** with a fan tip (a different sprayer from the one used for cleaning and bleaching)
- **Foam applicator pad** with extension pole
- **Knough finish to cover decking and railings.** Before spraying, mix it all in a bucket to ensure a consistent hue over the entire deck.



① **COAT THE RAILINGS.** Working from the top down, spray the railings and balusters first with a foam applicator pad. Watch for any drips that form on the rail's underside and immediately wipe them away.



② **COAT THE DECKING.** Using a pump sprayer, apply the finish in long, even, slightly overlapping strokes along the length of the boards. Be sure to spray between the boards too to protect their edges. Stop spraying about 12 inches from the sides of the deck to keep any uncovered surfaces from getting splattered.



③ **SPREAD THE FINISH.** After spraying four or five boards, go back and smooth-out the wet finish with a foam applicator pad. Along the edges, carefully cut in the finish with a pad or brush. Repeat spraying, spreading and cutting in every four or five boards until the deck is finished. Keeping a wet edge prevents overlap marks. Let the finish dry for two days before walking on it.

THE FINISH LINE

When it's freshly scrubbed, even an old deck looks pretty handsome. But the wood won't stay that way for long unless it gets a good coat of finish that repels water, blocks ultraviolet rays, and prevents rotting. (Yeah, some tropical hardwoods, like teak, are so dense that a finish is optional.)

Deck finishes come in three basic types: sealers, semi-transparent stains, and solid-color stains. The key difference among them is the amount of pigment they contain.

SEALER SEALERS are pigment free and so let the wood's natural color show through, but they provide little UV protection.

SOLID STAINS have so much pigment that the sun's rays can't reach the wood surface, but they also hide the wood's grain. (Solid has lots of pigment too, but isn't suitable for decks because it forms a film that inevitably chips and peels in maintenance nightmares.)

SEMI-TRANSPARENT STAINS occupy the middle ground between the two, with enough pigment to block most UV rays, but not enough to completely obscure the wood grain. Even within this group, there are different amounts of pigment and transparency; visit www.benjaminmoore.com for more information.

The look of a semi-transparent stain varies considerably depending on the kind of wood it's applied to. To make sure you'll be happy with your choice, first buy a small sample, brush it on a piece of scrap decking, and let it bake for a few days outdoors.

For more on designing, building, and maintaining a great deck, go to www.benjaminmoore.com or America's Online Deckyard. The Old House and Top Deck® are trademarks.

CLEAR SEALER

SEMI-TRANSPARENT

SOLID COLOR



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GARDEN HAND TOOLS

A beautiful garden rarely grows by itself. You have to get in the dirt and churn the soil, bed the plants, and pull pesky weeds. For that, you need some basic tools: a cultivator to turn the earth, trowels for digging and planting, and a weeder for attacking invaders.

"You have to get well-made hand tools because they really take a beating," says Roger Cook, This Old House landscape contractor. Look for tough handles and thick metal blades, and make sure the blade-handle connection is strong, because that's where tools usually bend and break. "If the handle wiggles in the store, don't buy it," Roger advises. Brightly colored tools also help because they're harder to lose.

Once you've got the basics, add extras to suit your situation. If you have a rock garden, consider a narrow trowel for tight spaces. Heavy clay soil can be easier to plant with a dibber to punch seed holes. Roger's must-have extra is a pocket multitool that has a knife, screwdriver, and pliers to help him maintain his garden tools while he's working.

The gardener's basic kit should include, from left, a cultivator, a dibber, and a trowel. The ones shown here are from a set of six hand tools from Restoration Hardware, \$49.



BY JOHN KELSEY PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAURA JOHNSON

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Preparing the Soil

HAND HOE

FOR: Breaking up soil, making trenches, clearing out weeds from between plants. Comes in several shapes, including bent and square.
SHOWN: Generic hand hoe, \$5.

Digging and Planting

TROWEL

FOR: Digging to break up soil or make planting holes.
SHOWN: Lifetime Trowel from Gardener's Supply, \$15.

TRANSPLANTING TROWEL

FOR: Scooping plants from pots. Flat, and sold frames for transplanting, digging in light spaces in rock gardens (but not for prying roots).
SHOWN: Softouch transplant trowel from Fishers, \$5.

BULB PLANTER

FOR: Lifting out a perfectly sized plug of soil from prepared beds to plant bulbs.
SHOWN: Wacom bulb planter from Smith & Hawken, \$19.

CULTIVATOR

FOR: Breaking up and mixing soil before planting, weeding between plants.
SHOWN: Cultivator from Old Good Graps, \$8.

WIDGER

FOR: Prying out small seedlings for transplanting, sliding weeds down weeds into a hole.
SHOWN: English widger from Dethlefsen, about \$17.

CHISEL

FOR: Pushing holes in prepared soil to plant seeds (a finger or broken tool handle could do in a pinch).
SHOWN: Lifetime dibber from Smith & Hawken, \$12.

Weeding and Cleaning

HAND RAKE

FOR: Clearing between plants without disturbing them. Some hand rakes have an adjustable head to change the width of the head.
SHOWN: Garden hand rake from Smith & Hawken, \$15.

CAPE COD WEEDER

(Also known as a fork-weeder or snake weeder)
FOR: Scooping weeds out of cracks between paving stones or cracks.
SHOWN: Cape Cod weeder from Hilti, about \$15.

TAPROOT WEEDER

(Also known as a grabber or demolition weeder)
FOR: Levering out thick roots or stubborn weeds.
SHOWN: Gery grabber from Dethlefsen, about \$17.

RUSTAIL WEEDER

FOR: Levering small weeds out of the ground by the root.
SHOWN: Rustail weeder from V & S-Haus, about \$12.

GARDENER'S PROTECTION

If you're going to garden with hand tools, get yourself something to protect your hands and wrists: gloves, supports for your wrists, or a cushioned mat to give your joints some relief from the hard soil.

SHOWN: Wornmark Original Glove, \$25. Ultra-light knee pads (\$16) and kneeling cushion (\$14), both from Fishers.

For a complete guide to the essential tools you need to stock any home workshop, go to www.smithandhawken.com or America Online Keyword: This Old House and select the 25th Anniversary link on the home page.



Oriental Rugs

Where they come from and how they're made distinguish these timeless beauties from all others

PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAM A. BOVD JR.

Since their first appearance more than 2,000 years ago, Oriental rugs have been prized for their rich colors and beautiful designs. And in all that time, surprisingly little about them has changed. They're still handwoven in the same places—including Iran (formerly Persia), Turkey, India, Pakistan, Nepal, China, Afghanistan—by craftspeople who have passed down the tradition for generations. Some of the methods are even carefully guarded family secrets.

These two things—handcrafting and geographic authenticity—are what distinguish a true Oriental from machine-made imitations. They're also what account for its often steep price tag. If you're contemplating a purchase, here's what to look for to make sure you're getting a quality rug.

(continued)

Oriental rugs come in styles from India, Pakistan, China, Afghanistan and more. Some are even carefully guarded family secrets.



He's not the first person in the world to be frustrated with vacuum cleaners.

Just the first to actually do something about it.

Like many of us, James Dyson was frustrated with his vacuum's lossy suction. So, he decided to develop his own. After testing over 5,000 prototypes, he created the first vacuum cleaner that doesn't lose suction. And now, it's here in America. So, come and see a Dyson today. It's the vacuum. Reinvented. For retailers near you, visit dyson.com



dyson



TYPE: SUZANI
MADE IN: Egypt
SIZE: 10 ft. by 10 ft. PRICE: \$10,000
DESCRIPTION: The suzani rug is loved most in the region of Persia's Sultanabad (currently Iraq) rug. The local floral designs were first introduced to the Western market in the late 1800s.



TYPE: CAUCASIAN
MADE IN: India
SIZE: 8 ft. by 9 ft. PRICE: \$1,400
DESCRIPTION: Though made in India, this tribal rug features its design from the Caucasus (the region stretching from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea). Natural dyes and handspun wool add to the rustic look.



TYPE: TIBETAN
MADE IN: Nepal
SIZE: 8 ft. by 10 ft. PRICE: \$1,000
DESCRIPTION: Tibetan rugs often feature contemporary designs. This new one, woven in Nepal by Tibetan refugees, is made of wool and silk and has a simple pattern woven into the pile.



TYPE: FARSI
MADE IN: Iran
SIZE: 7 ft. by 9 ft. 10 in. PRICE: \$15,000
DESCRIPTION: This circa 1990 rug was made by highly skilled weavers of the time. The floral motif is traditional, but its subtle color palette marks it as probably made for Western tastes.



TYPE: GABARD
MADE IN: Iran
SIZE: 3 ft. by 8 ft. PRICE: \$100
DESCRIPTION: Gabardi typically feature bold, abstract designs like this contemporary abstract pattern. Because these tribal rugs are usually unstained, they tend to be less expensive.



TYPE: SHIRAZ
MADE IN: Turkey
SIZE: 10 ft. by 10 ft. PRICE: \$2,000
DESCRIPTION: This new rug is woven in classic Shiraz colors—black, red, navy and ivory. Traditionally, Shiraz rugs are known for their open, sprawling designs in rich colors.

A TALE OF TWO RUGS

Subtle differences in dye and weave Oriental rugs in, much like the two below, make big differences in price. Consider the two below designs below. Though both are made with hand-spun wool and natural dyes, the Iranian rug has finer quality, which adds to the cost.



IRANIAN RUG

\$14,700 (\$732 per sq. ft.)

Highly prized Persian wool

280 gsm sq. ft.

More labor-intensive technique

Iranian rugs have more historical cachet

PAKISTANI RUG

\$1,500 (\$60 per sq. ft.)

Visual

200 gsm sq. ft.

Less labor-intensive design

Pakistani rugs are a newer market

WHAT MAKES AN ORIENTAL

Oriental rugs have several traits in common. Although the differences can be subtle, handcrafting means that no two look exactly alike. Here are key factors that determine a rug's quality and cost.

WHAT IT'S MADE OF: Most Orientals are woven of sheep's wool or silk, loomed onto a firm fabric backing. Whether the pile is spun by hand or by machine will affect the look, and when the value, of the rug. Hand-spun wool produces the strongest, subtle texture and color variations (because hand-spun wool absorbs dye unevenly) that add one-of-a-kind charm and can drive up cost. A rug made with machine-spun wool will have a more uniform appearance and tend to be less expensive.

TYPE OF DYE: Traditionally, piles were colored with natural dyes made from plant extracts and other ingredients. Lustrous and long-wearing, natural dyes are still prized by many collectors and are considered a premium. But many of today's synthetic dyes look and perform nearly as well. In fact, differences between naturally and synthetically dyed rugs can be so subtle that only a laboratory analysis can tell them apart.

HOW IT'S CONSTRUCTED: The rows of knots and the backing form the rug's pile. (Decorated rug that are flat-weave, without knots, are called kilims.) A good rug will have at least 70 knots per square inch, and some can have as many as 1,000. In general, the greater the knot density, the more expensive the rug. The rug merchant should be able to tell you this figure. Another good way to check for quality is to push your finger into the pile; if you can't feel the backing, you know it's dense enough that will probably wear well.

CHOOSING A RUG

Whether your taste leans toward traditional or contemporary, formal or casual, there's such a great variety of styles within the Oriental market that you're bound to find something you like. If you prefer symmetry and perfection, consider the refined look of a formal. (Formal refers to the style, not the size of the rug.) For a more homogenous style, check out a tribal rug like the Gabardi of southern Iran. These coarsely loomed rugs, woven by villagers or nomadic tribesmen, are distinguished by bold, geometric blocks of color and pleasant irregularities in texture and color. Classic rugs often feature embossed designs or symbols carved into the pile.

From very trendy to antique, according to Ziauddin Edalat, author of *Oriental Rugs*. Today and owner of the Oriental Rug Company in Berkeley, California, a new rug averages \$45 to \$70 per square foot, with some going as high as \$300 per square foot. As a rule, vintage rugs (those made before 1920) in good condition, passed for their heritage and sold out, cost two to three times more than new ones. An older rug in good condition will fetch up to \$1,000, but those with minor damage, such as staining or fading, can be relatively affordable. Before buying any rug, test it out first. For a small deposit, most merchants will let you take a rug home to see how it fits in with your decor and, if necessary, arrange to exchange it for one you like better.

For more advice on choosing an Oriental rug, visit our rug guide at www.bonobobooks.com or America's Online Keyword: **This House and You: Oriental** in the search bar.

HOW TO SHOP



FRINGE: ends, strands of a hand loomed rug that have been gathered and tied (in machine-made rugs the fringe is sewn in)

FIELD: main pattern inside the border

MEDALLION: central design motif (only be repeated at the corners)

BORDER: decorative design framing the rug; there may be several borders

CORNER BRACKETS: designs in the corners of the field

This vintage rug is a Persian Sarak (8 ft. 8 in. by 8 ft. 8 in., \$75,000) is named for the region in Iran where it was made. Sarak rugs often feature angular floral motifs and vivid coloring.



Grand Openings

Tom Silva's best practices for buying and installing windows and doors

BY MAX ALEXANDER

From the Ground Up: 25 Years of Building Experience

In this special year-long series celebrating the 25th anniversary of *The Old House*, we highlight each of the different systems at a house, from the foundation to the roof. You'll learn best building practices from an experienced TGH team member and discover some new materials and technologies we've got our eye on. By year's end, you'll know how to build the Old House way.



Like your Tom Silva fix a huge wood window, it's an opening it's carefully weatherstripped against leaks.

Walk a list of our windows and doors. We were given permission enough to let us the standard you referenced enough to cross imper and block debris, and sophisticated enough to prevent heat loss or gain. We were historically accurate styles that look and act like wood but never need painting. And we were sure that seal tight when closed—and we were lots of us, and then we expect them to open with the flick of a finger.

Buzzing all those needs seemed impossible 25 years ago, when homeowners were actually willing up dirty windows to save on heating bills. But now, to an amazing degree, today's windows and doors let us have it all—style and better performance. The biggest improvement has been in energy efficiency, thanks to double-pane insulated glass and low-e coatings, which substantially reduce heat transfer. Hardware has also improved, says *The Old House* general contractor Tom Silva. "Innovative systems for double-hung windows you get better and better, like in such climates the need to work windows from a hidden and adjustable down baffle allow fine tuning of the house series. All of these things are a huge benefit to the homeowner."

Of course, one of these improvements is that a window or door less air leaks. For Tom-to-look insulation techniques, turn the page.

—TOM SILVA

WINDOW FACTS

Windows sold for U.S. homes Q3/Q2: **23.7 million**

What windows are made of:



Window area as a percentage of floor space

1973: 10%
2002: 15%

Window costs as a percentage of total construction

1980: 3-5%
2002: 8-10%

Average cost of a double-hung window: **\$250**

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*PERMA-WHITE contains a mildewicide to prevent the growth of mold and mildew on the paint film only. Existing mold and mildew must be removed before painting. If you are concerned about mold growth on other surfaces and/or unseen places, contact a mold removal specialist.

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Worth a Look

Window and door ideas from TDF project houses



BULKY ALUMINUM CASING

Windows with integrated exterior casing come to the job site with the exterior trim already attached, saving hours of fussy carpentry. Typically, integrated casings have been lots more than pieces of pine tacked to the window frame. But the window for the Manchester house project have integral aluminum casing, a thick metal extrusion welded to the window frame to create a seamless, factory-painted surround that's impervious to the weather.

ON THE HORIZON

OUTTING-EDGE GLASS

The greatest advancements in windows in the coming years will be in the glazing. In the weeks ahead, there's the six-sided clasp as TV screens, touch-screen monitors, and speakers for home theaters. But here's a lot of high-tech glass already on the market that does a lot more than just let light through.

• **RAJAHAS** Heat-producing glass makes even window-filled outdoors cozy on winter nights. Already popular in Europe and now available here.

• **SELF-CLEANING** Embedded titanium dioxide dissolves surface dirt when exposed to the sun's UV rays. Rain washes dirt away, reducing the need for manual cleanings by half.

• **SWITCHABLE** A layer of liquid crystals sandwiched between glass sheets switches instantly from clear to opaque when low-voltage current is applied.

• **DARKENING** Electrochromic technology slowly darkens glass at the touch of a button to control glare, reduce solar heat gain, and protect interiors from UV, but not enough for complete privacy.



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A HIGH-FIBER DOOR

Strike-in-entry door, where the chief concerns are security and weatherproofing, interior doors are selected mostly by aesthetics and by price. A door made of MDF (medium-density fiberboard) will be an easy choice. The same goes for a solid wood door (about half the cost of a 1 1/2-inch model). MDF has to be painted, but it doesn't warp or swell or suffer from paint cracks. No surprise that all the interior doors at the Belloc project were MDF.



A TIGHT INTERIOR STORM

After opening hundreds of manholes, securing the historic windows in the front facade of the Belloc project, we thought it would be a shame to hide them behind modern storm windows, needs TDF senior producer Bruce King. The solution: custom-made vinyl storm panels that snap in place against the inside casing—event of the windows are out of square—ensuring a virtually airtight fit.

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ON FURNITURE, FURNISHINGS, STYLE, AND DESIGN

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exposed joinery with dovetail, sliding doors

handmade hardware (cylindrical knobs, chains or levers)

quarter-sawn oak (spindle bed, queen also, by Richardson Hardware: \$1,395; 800-363-1000; www.richardsonhardware.com)

Antique L.A. 33 Stickley bookcase (Photo No. 643, sold at auction for \$4,600 in 2005)

Arts and Crafts Furniture

A century-old style that's a favorite once again

If you come across Gustav Stickley bookcase in the 1960s, you were most likely in an attic or even a barn, thus a living room. Furniture of the American Arts and Crafts movement was extremely popular in its heyday, between about 1900 and 1915, but then it fell into near complete obscurity for over half a century. So as Leigh and I were growing up and becoming an action-governor in the 1960s and '70s in upstate New York—Stickley's old stomping grounds—Arts and Crafts work was mostly in short supply. By 1962, though, when Barbara Stussman paid \$24,500 for Stickley's own adobe house, collectors had rediscovered the style, and so had contemporary craftsmen and the general public. (overlaid)

Antique experts Leigh King and Leigh King are hosts of *Find It Now* (Thursdays 8-9 PM) on PBS, exploring the world of design, style, antiques, and furnishings (for more, see www.finditnow.org). Leigh is host of the PBS best-selling *Arts and Crafts* series. A Manhattan-based author, Leigh is host of the American Furniture Department at www.americanfurniture.com in New York City.

RE-CREATE THE LOOK



Queen-size oak spindle bed, queen also, by Richardson Hardware: \$1,395; 800-363-1000; www.richardsonhardware.com



Folding screen: available with either top of leather or top of wood. From Stickley: \$2,692; 212-669-5500; www.stickley.com



Large quarter-sawn white oak sideboard, handcrafted by Hile Studio, \$8,000; 609-899-7770; www.hilestudio.com

PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE



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Sickley's stark, straight-lined style was shared by the majority of Arts and Crafts furniture makers. Such furniture is often called Mission, in reference to the evident furniture of California missions. Although most Sickley pieces were factory made, hand craftsmanship was suggested by the use of mitered end-iron joints, dovetails, and other exposed joinery and by the use of handcrafted metal hardware. Oak boards were often quarantined to display the wood's signature ray fleck figure.

Some of the best, and most collectible, work in this vein came from Gustav Sickley himself, also from Charles Lambert, who borrowed design ideas from Europeans to produce striking variations. Other highly collectible forms include those from Gilbert Hubbard's Rosecroft, from Gustav's brother-in-law J.G. Sickley, from Charles Rohlf's, whose extensive furniture included Mission-like rectilinear work with smooth lines reminiscent of Art Nouveau, and from Frank Lloyd Wright. In

California, Charles and Henry Greene designed pieces that blended solidly with Oregonally inspired curves and a sensuous use of mahogany, ebony, alder, and kauri.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

The most prominent makers marked their furniture with labels, drops, or burned-in or carved logos. Labeled pieces bring higher prices. As with other antiques, pieces also jump when a piece has its original finish, hardware, and upholstery.

Pieces for Arts and Crafts furniture vary widely. According to our friend Greg Kabanis, a Milwaukee-based expert in 20th-century decorative arts, unlabeled pieces might sell as flea market fare for less than \$250, while the same piece by the best manufacturers can bring thousands of thousands in a auction. The majority of pieces, including those with labels and original finish, sell in the \$2,000 to \$25,000 range. To simplify the hunt, there are books, price guides, and reports of many original



American Arts and Crafts furniture and accessories are equally at home in vintage bungalows or in more modern settings.

manchesterer" endings.

If you prefer new pieces, there is also a vigorous trade these days in reproductions of Arts and Crafts furniture and in designs using the Arts and Crafts vocabulary.

PHOTO: JAMES H. HUNTER

Q & A

Curious about your collectibles?
Our experts have the answers

NAKASHIMA CHAIR

I bought this chair as a yard sale. It was sold as an early George Nakashima chair. Is it?
RANCOA DIERKS, NEW HAVEN, CT

ROBERT ABEL REPLIES: Most likely this chair was indeed made by George Nakashima, an American architect and furniture craftsman who lived from 1905 until 1990. Called a Cushion Chair, it originally had a black cushion as well. It was popular in the 1960s and 1970s but was discontinued around 1976. Like most of Nakashima's work, this chair is made of American birch, walnut. However, without the original invoice or some documentation it is always possible that a piece was made by someone who was taught by Nakashima. Value for this chair is typically \$2,000 to \$3,000 in excellent condition.

RECOMMENDATION: George Nakashima's studio operated today by his daughter, Mei Nakashima, and produces George Nakashima's furniture designs on a custom-order basis. For more information visit www.nakashimawoodwork.com or call 203-862-3070.

Robert Abel, owner and director of the Modern Gallery in Philadelphia, is a considerable listing dealer of George Nakashima works.

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Q & A

VINTAGE JUKEBOX

I found this jukebox in my father's home. Can you tell me something about its history and value? There is broken glass on the right side. Should I have it replaced, and if so, who could do it?

KARL HENSON, KANSAS, MO

RON KENO REPLIES: This jukebox is a 1940 Wurlitzer Colonial Model 1080 and plays 78 rpm records. Wurlitzer's chief designer, Paul Feller, gave it beautiful painted and inlaid graphics in a curvaceous, Colonial-style cabinet that prompted some observers at the time

to call it the "New West." This model was often found in fine restaurants and wealthy households rather than soda fountains. Today a restored Model 1080 will sell in the \$7,000 to \$8,000 range. For one in good "restorable" condition you might expect to pay \$4,000 to \$5,500. Experts recommend that all 110-volt wiring on old jukeboxes be replaced, as it tends to become brittle with age. The National Jukebox Exchange (888-522-7272; www.nationaljukebox.com) has replacement kits for the translucent panels of the Model 1080 (\$300 to \$400) and also offers complete restoration of vintage jukeboxes.

Garyette Hunkert, antique dealer Ron Keno has been a buyer, seller, and collector of vintage jukeboxes for many years. He and his wife, Linda, and his daughter, Michelle, are in Kansas, MO.

LIONEL TOY TRAIN

My husband won this toy train as a child. It's heavy and is labeled 262 Lionel Locomotive and "Q" gauge. What is its value?

NANCY NORMAN, BOSTON, N.Y.

HOWE BARRETT REPLIES: This train is from the 1930s and is incomplete. If complete, it would be worth \$200. As is, a collector might pay a fair price for about \$75. Lionel first made his trains in the early 1900s, and the perfect stuff today is the most valuable. Trains from the 1930s and 30s are highly collectible too, since they were made out of heavy tin or



SPENDING MY YOUNG FINGER

To submit a question on furniture, furnishings, style, or design, go to www.findtreasures.com or write to: Find, 1845 Avenue of the Americas, 8th Floor, New York, NY 10019. Include complete address and daytime telephone number. If you're submitting photos of an object, please send a copy with white background. (Color images may be emailed as JPEG files.) Questions will be edited for clarity and length and may be used in other media. Photos and any other materials submitted will not be returned. We expect that due to the volume of mail received, we are not able to reply to unpublished questions.



PRINTED FRAKTUR

I inherited my great-grandparents' heirloom baptismal certificates, dated 1848 and 1849. One is inscribed "Reading, Pa. Printed & for sale by John Rater & Co." with the German expression on the sides. The printed forms were then hand-colored and lettered. They're in good condition, with some minor tears on the sides. What is the best way to conserve and display them?

D. FOSTER, LEICESTER, Pa.

DAVID WEINSTEIN REPLIES: Your printed fraktur appears to be in very good condition, with a few minor stains, which should be left as they are. Unless a fraktur is very valuable, it is not worth the time and money to conserve. Although the monetary value of these printed fraktur is not high (it would put it at \$100 to \$200 each), they should be preserved for their sentimental and decorative appeal. To protect them, I recommend putting them in a totally acid-free mat that has a high rag content. This frame the mat in glass, sealed with tape in back so no air gets in. Printed fraktur were produced in great quantity throughout the middle of the 19th century and were popular with the typically frugal Pennsylvania Germans. After being printed, the fraktur were hand-colored. There are instances where famous fraktur artists are known to have colored a printed fraktur. The record price for a completely hand-colored fraktur is \$80,000, which was paid for a large fraktur including an entire allegorical motif by artist Daniel Otto. The word fraktur comes from the Latin for "broken" and originally referred to the "broken" fancy medieval-style lettering of the documents. Among collectors today, fraktur has come to represent all Pennsylvania German writing that was illuminated.

David Weinstein is an antique dealer with a specialty in American folk art, including fraktur work. He is located in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.



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This large sun uplight island dominates its kitchen, providing a clearing and entry way and also relieving traffic flow.

Building a Better Island

A veteran architect shares his strategies for marrying function and style

STORY AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY DUO DESIGNSON

For a lot of my clients, no kitchen design is complete without at least one island. The island has become the star of the modern kitchen—the 21st-century replacement of the old-fashioned hearth. It's easy to understand why. First, islands work because they can be accessed from all sides like the old kitchen table, they're ideal for a variety of kitchen tasks (see "Function First," right). Second, these interesting pieces naturally become the focal point of a kitchen because they can have the look and feel of furniture rather than components in a domestic laboratory. Third, islands help kitchens adjust to some of the big changes in American life in the past few decades. In Jane Clavin's 1990s kitchen, all the appliances and cabinets were tucked in the walls of a closed-in room. Today's kitchens are not only open to other rooms but they also have to accommodate multiple cooks, kids doing homework, and even party guests. The phrase I hear most often—just of my own house as well—is "Like it or not, everybody ends up at the kitchen." A well-designed

Duo Designson has been a residential architect for 26 years and practices in Medford, Connecticut. His third book, *The House You Build*, is due out in the fall.

FUNCTION FIRST

Islands have to work to make them earn the space they occupy. Here are the four things islands can do and some design suggestions for each function.

CLEARANCE

- Clearance for the dishwasher door in the open position.
- Pull-out garbage and compost bins next to the sink.
- Easy access to dish and silverware storage.
- Storage for dish towels, dish soap, etc.
- Dual-height counters to help chilly dishes from view.

FOOD PREP

- Outlets for small appliances.
- Refrigerator and cooling close by.
- Access to compost bin or drip-pail.
- Prep sink and butcher block counters are good additions.

COOKING

- Heat-resistant countertop below the island for hot pans.
- At least 18 inches of space on either side of cooktop or range.
- Overhead vent hood or downdraft fan (with second exhaust fan in ceiling).
- Recessed seating area out of the range of splatters.

INFORMAL DINING

- Counter height/width designed for standard-size chairs/benches.
- Softly contoured edge profile is most comfortable for leaning on.

PHOTO: MICHAEL GOODMAN

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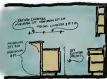
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GETTING THE HEIGHT RIGHT

Dual-height islands can create informal eating areas, hide dirty dishes, protect nannies from spitups and spitsores, and make kitchens more interesting. Here are the dimensions that make them most comfortable, useful, and pleasing.



The height of your island's seating area dictates the type of seating you'll have. A 28- to 30-inch-high counter works best with a chair; a standard-height 36-inch counter is suited best by a bar stool; and a 42- to 48-inch counter requires a bar stool.

be seated on the cabinet below. One way around that is to use the ends of the island. Round ends are perfect for lazy loaves, and slanted end caps accommodate open shelving or even a shallow cabinet.

LIGHTING

When you have activity, you need light. For islands, that means dedicated lighting—you can't count on ambient light to illuminate your workspace, and you don't have upper cabinets to hide task lights, so you do elsewhere in the kitchen.

As with most task lighting, you want the light to come straight down onto the island. The most common choice is recessed lighting, which is relatively easy if you have standard-height ceilings but tricky with high ceilings. If the distance from the countertop to the ceiling is greater than 6 feet, you'll need to use fixtures or balls specially designed to project light down rather than spread it out.

Another option is pendant lights, which hang from the ceiling. Be careful with these, though. It's easy to end up with chaos at the wrong height, which can either block your view from the island or blind you with a high-intensity bulb shining directly into your eyes. Whatever type of lighting you choose, make sure it can be dimmed when you don't need maximum illumination for working.

VENTILATION

It'd be nice if you could just ignore ventilating an island dedicated to cooking—but you can't. The most common scheme is to install a downdraft fan behind the cooktop, in some cooktops and ranges it's incorporated into the appliance. That solves the visual problem of an overhead hood sending up sight lines. But even the best downdraft fan is not up to the worst cooking odors. If you really want to keep the lived-in smell, install a second exhaust fan mounted to the ceiling. It will also help heat the amount of moisture condensing on the inside of your windows at the winter when you use a tall cooktop.

The other option is an overhead hood that comes up through the ceiling. Because it's exposed on all sides, it must be completely finished (wood exposure), and it becomes a dominant element of the design. You can opt for manufactured versions, or get a hood custom-built and finished in just about any material. The big caution here: It's easy for the mass of a hood, placed low enough to be effective, to take the joy of having open space above the island. I recommend



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Island Aesthetics: Four styles for kitchen islands



1. INVISIBLE

You can make an island nearly disappear to anyone not working in the kitchen by extending the "public" face of the island (the one that doesn't face the kitchen) 4 to 8 inches above the countertop and covering it in the same surface material as the rest of the interior walls. (The island shown here, one of the author's designs, is configured as an "invisible" island but is faced with cabinet doors for a "blended-in" look.)



2. BLENDED-IN

Islands that mimic the rest of the kitchen, typically by using cabinetry in the same finish and from the same manufacturer, don't call attention to themselves. Most islands in American kitchens use this scheme.



3. CONTRASTING

This scheme allows an island to have an identity of its own. Although the color may be similar to the rest of the kitchen, the island can be given a contrasting shape, a very different color or finish, or a countertop in a different material. Multiple levels, pendant lights, or an overhead vent hood also bring attention to an island.



4. EXTRATERRESTRIAL

This type of island intentionally looks as if it's from another planet than the surrounding kitchen. The goal is to break out of the long, rectangular scheme and make the island truly a unique piece of furniture with shape, color, and texture. Antique tables and industrial design have been frequently used. For the more adventurous, consider a high-contrast material like stainless steel (the island above is also the author's design) in an otherwise wood-dominated kitchen.

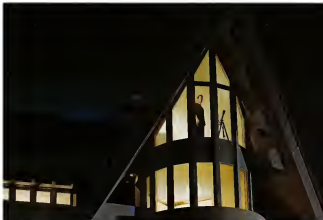
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PLANTING A TREE
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C O N T E N T S



Photo: Cook installs details in newly planted 'Golfball Glory' yew shrub. (Shown in background) Winter 'Black Magic' impatiens in the foreground.

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army of gardeners

You can have a yard that makes people think _____

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you have a
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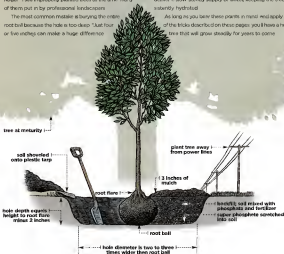
Planting a Tree

(AVERAGE COST \$300 TIME 3 Hours)

Planting a tree isn't particularly difficult because you don't need any special tools. With a shovel, tape measure, and garden hose, plus the strength and patience to dig a hole, it should take only a few hours. Planting it right, however, does require some attention to detail. Here, The Old House landscape contractor Roger Cook shows how to add a shade tree to a sunny front yard.

Surprisingly tree planting is often done incorrectly, says Roger. I see improperly planted trees all the time: many of them put in by professional landscapers.

The most common mistake is burying the entire root ball because the hole is too deep. Just four or five inches can make a huge difference.



BY JOSEPH DEBISI PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRIAN WILDER
ILLUSTRATIONS BY GREGORY NEMEC

Roger explains: You can end up covering the tree's root flare, where the trunk spreads out into the roots. Burying the root flare can severely stunt the tree's growth and, in some cases, even kill it. Roger offers this bit of rhyming advice: "Plant it low and it won't grow, plant it high and it won't die."

Not watering enough after planting is another common mistake. Roger suggests tying drip-irrigation bags to the tree and refilling them every day. The plastic bags deliver a slow, steady supply of water, keeping the tree consistently hydrated.

As long as you bury these plants in mud, and apply some of the tricks described on these pages, you'll have a healthy tree that will grow steadily for years to come.

TOOLS



1. Tree
2. 3-4-3 fertilizer
3. Superphosphate
4. Pointed shovel
5. Pickaxe
6. Bolt cutters (to cut wire basket on root ball)
7. Tape measure
8. Bypass pruners (to trim broken branches)
9. Plastic tarp (to hold dirt shoveled from hole)
10. String
11. Drip-irrigation bags
12. Spray paint (to mark the hole outline)
13. Utility knife (to cut away the burlap)
14. Cultivator (to loosen the root ball)

WARNING: Before digging the hole, contact a one-call center and have them mark the locations of any buried electrical cables, gas lines, or water-supply pipes.

For an archive of Homeowner's Handbook from installing bookshelves to laying a stone patio, go to www.theoldhouse.com or America Online Keyword: The Old House and select Homeowner's Handbook in the Knowledge section.

STEP BY STEP: PLAN 1



1 Mark the ground

- Circle where you want the tree. Stay at least 15 feet away from the house, sidewalk, driveway, and other trees. Also, watch out for overhead power lines—most shade trees will grow at least to the height of residential power lines. Drive a stake into the ground in that spot.
- Measure the diameter of the tree's root ball.
- Use a can of brightly colored spray paint to mark a circle around the stake that's two to three times wider in diameter than the root ball (ABOVE).

TIP: Use special marking paint, which has a spray nozzle that works when the can is tilted upside down.



5 Position the tree

- Carefully carry or roll the tree into the hole.
- Stand back and vine the tree as a helper slowly rotates it. Look for the tree's best, back-facing side (its own) and position it so the face is aimed in the most pronounced direction—typically toward the street.
- Remove the wire basket from the root ball with bolt cutters or metal snips (ABOVE).

TIP: To avoid damage, have a helper support the crown of the tree as you move it.



2 Measure the height of the root ball

- Stand the tree upright and undo the burlap from around the base of the trunk.
- Use a cultivator or garden trowel to carefully remove the soil from the top of the root ball. Expose only enough soil to expose the root flare, which is where the trunk spreads out into this individual roots.
- Now, measure the height of the root ball from the ground to the top of this exposed root flare (ABOVE).

TIP: Don't undo the burlap beyond the root flare at this point.



6 Loosen densely packed soil

- Remove any haws. Then peel away the burlap. It's not necessary to remove the burlap or burlap from the very bottom of the root ball.
- Use a cultivator to loosen the tightly packed soil around the ball and expose the handsets of tiny roots (ABOVE).



3 Dig the hole

- Subtract 2 inches from the height of the root ball; that's how deep to dig the hole. It's critical that you don't go any farther, since deeper holes will bury the root flare.
- Use a pointed shovel to cut through the grass at around the perimeter of the desired outline. Remove the grass and discard it or transplant it elsewhere; don't use it to backfill the hole.
- Spread a plastic tarp beside the hole and shovel the soil onto the tarp (ABOVE), not directly into the grass, so you can easily get it back into the hole when the time comes.



7 Backfill the hole

- Sprinkle superphosphate and 3-4-3 fertilizer onto the soil pile; wrap the amounts recommended for your size tree on the packaging, and scratch it into the soil.
- Thoroughly mix up the soil, then start shoveling it into the hole. Be careful not to bury the root flare.
- When the hole is full, use the blade of the shovel to form a 6-inch-high curbing around the tree (ABOVE).
- Next, use a garden hose to fill the center you created with water (INSET). As the water absorbs into the soil, knock down the curbing and smooth out the dirt.



4 Measure the depth of the hole

- Drive a stake (or your shovel) into the ground beside the hole and tie a string to it at grass level.
- Pull the string taut across the hole and measure down from it to the bottom of the hole (ABOVE).
- If necessary, dig out more soil to reach the desired depth. Then use the shovel to scrape the bottom of the hole flat.
- Dust the hole with superphosphate, which will promote a healthy root system, following the directions for your size tree on the packaging.



8 Set up drip-irrigation bags

- Spread 3 inches of bark mulch over the exposed dirt around the tree, but keep it away from the tree's trunk. Mulch can keep moisture and promote rot.
- Loosely tie two drip-irrigation bags to the tree. Fill each with water (ABOVE).
- Refill the irrigation bags each day, or as necessary, for two to eight weeks to give the root system enough time to become established.

TIP: If you don't use drip-irrigation bags, be sure to water the tree every day for at least six weeks.

Roger Cook's three-year tree plan

A tree's root system needs three to five years to grow back to what it was prior to being harvested and shipped to the nursery, so proper care during this time is essential to the tree's health. Here are Roger Cook's thoughts on caring for young trees.

HYDRATION

Water, water, and water: Keeping the root system hydrated is essential to helping it establish itself.



PRUNING

Prune only broken or rubbing branches. Top-pruning to compensate for root loss is no longer recommended. It's important to leave as much foliage as possible because carbohydrate reserves produced by photosynthesis are necessary for root-system regeneration and development.

FERTILIZING

If you added phosphate and fertilizer to the backfill, then there's no need to fertilize again for two years. When it's time to fertilize, sprinkle an organic or slow-release fertilizer (using the amount recommended on the package) into 6- to 12-inch-deep holes every 6 to 8 inches along the tree's drip line.



STAKING

A staked tree may develop a smaller root system and decreased trunk size. If you must stake the tree because the root ball was unstable when it was planted, thread a wire through a foot-long section of garden hose, wrap the hose around the tree, twist the wire into a close the hose into a slack loop, and attach the wires to the stake. The distance between the stake and tree should be the same as the height of the hole loop on the trunk, angling the wire at 45 degrees. Wrap another hose loop around this trunk, and tie it to a stake on the opposite side. Be sure to remove the stakes after one growing season.



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PUTTING IN A POND

WATER FEATURES DON'T HAVE TO BE BIG TO MAKE A SPLASH IN YOUR LANDSCAPE

BY DONALD MCKAY PHOTOGRAPH BY KELLER & KELLER

Not only are the sight and sound of water in your backyard soothing, but ponds and other water features also create an eye-catching focal point in the landscape. Filled with fish or ornamental plants, a pond becomes a mini ecosystem. Add a waterfall and enjoy the melodic rush of moving water. You don't need a lot of space to make an impact—even a patio can accommodate a small goldfish pond. "But if you've got the yard space, build one as big as your budget will allow," advises Massachusetts landscape designer Monique Allen. "Most of my clients fall so in love with their ponds that they wish they'd made them bigger." Here's a look at different pond styles and what it takes to build and maintain them.

A stepping stone (arrow) is the central piece of a pond's garden. The red stepping stones were salvaged from an old stone wall. See page 146 for details.



SERENE SCENE

(above) Lotus and ponding plants

WHAT WAS DONE: The pond was excavated with a backhoe, then back-filled with clay and sand to form shelves for ponded rears, lotus, lilies, and other plantings. Next came a filter, protective liner (from the local pond liner), smooth river stones on top of the liner, planted it, from large pumpkins to the family dog, when the pond is done. A stone-lined spillway connects the pond to the main body of water. The pond is located in a wooded area, and the pond is located in a wooded area.

MAINTENANCE: The water's pH level is tested twice a year. Every three years, the pond is drained and cleaned and the stones are power-washed to remove sediment and algae. During the cleaning, grasses and plants are kept in containers filled with pond water.

COST: \$40,000 (includes excavators, construction, materials, fish, and plants)

Deepen river beds (above) the flexible liner and gravelly anchoring for ponded lilies.

BASIC POND STYLES

Ponds can vary in size and shape from big, free-form bodies of water that provide beauty or even fish to a formal reflecting pool. From the smaller size, from less than \$1,000 for a small fish pond to \$25,000 and up for larger ponds with fountains or waterfalls.

The most common choices of homeowners are flexible-lined or precasted fiberglass ponds, both of which are relatively easy to install. They don't require a natural water source, so you can put one just about anywhere. (If you do have a spring or stream on your property, you can build a earth-bottom pond, but you'll need the help of a professional.) "Fiberglass forms are like pond, long-lasting, and simple enough for a few friends to do in a weekend," Allen says.

Allen says: Just dig a hole, set the form into leveled ground, and fill it with a garden hose. Finish up by adding an aeration pump to keep the water level from rising and add some decorative plants to conceal the edges of the form.

What fiberglass can offer is ease, however, they lack in size, coping out at about 15 feet across and 25 inches deep. For a larger pond and a more naturalistic look, a flexible liner is the way to go. These can take on whatever size and shape you want. Many are sold in kit form, complete with liner, pump, filter, and circulation directions. Kits from range from \$200 to \$1,000, depending on pond size, or you can purchase the components separately at garden centers and pond supply. Web sites (check out www.pondlife.com).

To construct a liner pond, dig the hole by hand or backhoe, then back-fill with a cushioning layer of clay and sand, and top with a felt-like pond fabric to help protect the liner from punctures. "You may want to know about the liner with clay and sand to create varying bottom depths for placing pond water plants," says Allen. Then finish the sides with a surround of rocks or landscape plants.

PLANNING AND DESIGNING

The initial cost to put in a pond is just the beginning. Ongoing maintenance has to be factored in, along with all the extras—plants, fish, fountains, waterfalls, fountains, and fountains (a legal requirement: some places ban ponds over a certain depth). In addition, a pond is a permanent feature in the landscape, so it must be the right proportion and style to fit in with your house and the surrounding property. A landscaping professional or expert from the garden center can help with design and siting. Just make sure to choose someone who has experience installing ponds and a good track record.

If you expect to stock the pond with plants and fish, be sure to pick a location that gets a balance of sun and shade, away from deciduous trees, decomposed fallen leaves can not only

FORMAL POOL

WHAT WAS DONE: This pond, the centerpiece of a garden, was dug by hand. Wooden forms, strengthened with rebar, were set into the 4-foot-square hole. The pond was lined with concrete, a drain-cum-water overflow, and a waterproof electric connection under the brickwork between the fountain and circulating pump. Pits of fish and goldfish add color. (Designed by artist Margaret Kerr and Robert Koenig for their home on Long Island, New York.)

MAINTENANCE: After 10 years of operation, it no longer needs annual cleaning. The plants, fish, and water pump (founder together own a self-aerating aeration pump).

COST: About \$4,000 in today's dollars.

succulent fish, they'll also suck up the water. The site should be clear of any roots that could clog the filter or your debris into the pond, where it may harm plants and wildlife. And while you don't need a water source, you do need electricity to power the pump and any accessories. Allen recommends grounded outlets within 5 to 8 feet of the pump.

ONGOING MAINTENANCE

Taking care of a pond is similar to maintaining a swimming pool. In addition to a pump to aerate the water, most ponds use a filter to remove excess sediment. Some more complex designs also include a dammer to suction debris from the surface. The main filtration system needs to be cleaned at least once a year. And some pond specialists suggest having off filters every six weeks or so to cut down on buildup. Every three to five years, the pond should be completely drained for a thorough cleaning.

Depending on your climate and creek flow, you can stress in a mulch of other pond peripherals, from bacteria-killing UV lights to a small de-aerator to heater to keep the water from freezing over in winter. A pond vacuum is handy for getting rid of muck, and scrubbing a flat cover over the pond during the winter keeps spring cleaning to a minimum.

PLANTS AND WILDLIFE

Adding plants to a pond enhances its beauty and also helps keep the water clean by controlling algae and providing oxygen for fish and other pond life. Some oxygenating plants, such as elodea (also known as anacharis), grow completely underwater and consume



A clean-lined, concrete-lined pond (above) looks just right in a formal brick-lined herb garden. A pond can fit just about anywhere. This view of water (below) with an unexpected decorative touch is a pond in a pond.

PATHWAY POND

WHAT WAS DONE:

This front yard pond was dug 2 by 4 feet and 18 inches deep, was dug by hand and lined with a 1/2-inch-thick liner. After the pond was lined, the pump was hooked up to electrical outlets directly in place in the garden, and the power cord to the pump was buried under the walkway. (Built by Santa Monica, California, landscape designer Nicole Lopez for her front yard.)

MAINTENANCE: With no fish and few plants, the pond requires no maintenance. The pump filter is changed every two months.

COST: About \$1,300.





FALLING WATER

WHAT WAS DONE: Built on two levels, this three-tier pond complements the waterfall. Each 35,000-gallon tier cascades from the top, or "header," pond down a stone-lined spillway into the lower pond where a pump recirculates it back to the top. To divert rain runoff, the excavator was used to build bermed areas around the pond and flower beds. A stone retaining wall slanting the path keeps any pond overflow from flooding the slope area. Drawings of rocks around the perimeter and put trip out of the water give the setting a natural feel (built by Kenneth Squire, Prince Georges, landscape designer, White Males).

MAINTENANCE: Pump filters are turned off every six weeks to prevent sediment buildup. The pond is checked and cleaned every four years.

COST: \$35,000 (including stone retaining walls and spring house).

Adding ponds to a backyard garden is the best way to create a peaceful retreat. This landscape project also includes a spring house for garden-tool storage.



nutrients that would otherwise feed algae. Others, like water lilies, drift on the surface and provide shade that inhibits algae growth. Unless the pond has a natural-oak bottom where plants can root, they must be placed in pots. That makes for easy maintenance—just remember to take non-aquatic plants in before winter so you're not scooping decomposed gunk out of the pond come spring.

Most ornamental fish are types of goldfish or koi that require almost no care besides daily feeding and can live as long as 15 years. Make sure your pond is big enough to support the size and number of fish you want—2 to 50 gallons of water is the minimum for a few small goldfish; larger koi require 1,000 gallons or more. Depth matters, too. If the fish are going to winter over underneath a layer of ice, the pond should be at least 36 inches deep. Tap water must be treated with a dechlorinating agent (available at garden centers) before you can add fish. After that, you'll need to test the chemical balance of the water periodically to keep it healthy for fish and plants life. ■

For more ideas about landscaping your property, go to www.thespruce.com or America's Online Magazine, The Old House and also The Old House and Garden in the Know-how section.



TV Project

[Concord, Massachusetts]

The Concord cottage underwent a major renovation with an inviting exterior. **OPPOSITE PAGE** HOMEOWNER JACQUELINE DUCKLEY (bottom) and her husband, JAMES, are seen with Jeff and Janet Diamond. High ceilings allow for a dramatic staircase. The finished cottage photographed in January.



HOME



TO STAY

THE TV CREW FINISHES TRANSFORMING
A BARN INTO A COZY COTTAGE

BY BRUCE IRVING, THE OLD HOUSE SENIOR PRODUCER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOSHUA MULLER STYLED BY JILL GOTO

If there's one follow-up question, one might be forgiven for asking that Jane Bennett is putting her neck out to get it. After all, the winner of the Concord design will look like the Twinkledown house was. But one look inside the completed TV project house and it's clear that Jane and her husband, Jeff, have created a lovely comfortable and efficient home where Jacqueline Buckley can live in comfort, luxury, and close proximity to her family.

This discrepancy between exterior and interior is intentional. The 1894 building was once a flourishing hotel, complete with a horse stall and a livery, and the town of Concord, Massachusetts, would not allow drastic changes to the shell of the historic structure. So architect Hilary Crutsky designed a house that essentially keeps the form while swathing functions, from livestock storage to a design for life.

The small dining room can still floor-driven as quiet as a library. Concise is a space-saving replacement for a library cabinet.



That required some gross adjustments, bringing windows in from the street, lowering the second floor to enlarge the loft space for a bedroom, belching the building's light frame with engineered lumber to support a fully equipped home, providing light and air via new windows and doors, and installing a heating and cooling system for year-round comfort.

But these days, designing a house for older—be even middle-aged—clients means considering not just how they will live in a new but what they'll need for the future, when technology might be an issue. Crutsky asked Jacqueline, who is 72, about room-climbing, about cooking and bathing, about aesthetic preferences, and more. From those answers he designed a home with a bedroom suite on the second floor but all the pieces in place to convert to first-floor living. "Living on the ground floor was an eventually emergency wanted to plan for, and worry too," says Crutsky. A powder room downstairs is rough-plumbed for a shower, so floor cannot cover on a reversible drain currently hidden by tile, and the living room has pocket doors to close it off as a bedroom.

The construction crew did a few other things to ensure that the house could become even accommodating over time. Jacqueline loves to take baths, so to make sure she will always be able to do that with ease, TGH general contractor Tom Silva put 2x10 blocking behind the walls all around the bathroom's perimeter, ready to anchor additional grab bars as the fixture. Electrical outlets are about 12 inches off the floor—higher than needed for the less-worried. And the floor entry was designed so that a gently sloping ramp could easily bridge from the walkway to its threshold. As for thresholds elsewhere in the house, door set none.

Lighting designer Susan Arnold worked hard to balance an older person's need for more light against the risk of overlighting and glare. For example,

SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



ABOVE: The floor plan shows how the wide-open bare space was divided into cozy rooms. **LEFT:** The kitchen gains natural light through sliding windows into the dining room. The cabinet built by Tom Silva includes a clever angled drawer **UPSET** designed to clear the oven handle.



The cottage retains some of the farm's open plan floor, a view from the entry way through the dining room (plush wicker seats are visible on the left) into the living room and out to the patio.

LEFT: The second-floor bedroom shows the stoned outlines of the old beams left.

BELOW: The Coconut Village planning team was predominantly female. From left, standing: landscape architect James architect Abby Cribble; lighting designer Susan Arnold; TCH producer Deborah Dohd design engineer Helen Green; homeowner Jacqueline Buckley; landscape architect Sheelana Hubbard; interior designer Ticia McDonald; and project manager Nancy Dickinson.



instead of an excess of downlight, the kitchen is lit by fluorescent strips mounted beneath the cabinets and large multi-glass pendant globes hanging from the ceiling. The black granite kitchen counter-top is beveled rather than polished, further reducing glare.

[illegible]

Like many other people, Jacqueline is downsizing from her previous home, and she's moving, finally, her husband, Les, across town in November. "To allow her to keep as many of her cherished items as possible, and to keep this house cozy day in, day out, she's a shrewd collector of storage space everywhere, from the spacious upstairs down to a window with such a nice 'bench' as the entry hall, on the rear landing, and in the kitchen. And speaking of the kitchen, it was how that Conley and interior designer Tasha McQuinn made sure that Jacqueline, a self-confessed wine person, could indulge herself with minimal stress and expense. The large square table with banquettes is perfect for laying out the newspaper and sits in a corner illuminated by three readables and globe bulbs with a warm, 200-watt bulb.

And does there's the biggest and best design element of all: Jacqueline's new house is just a few steps away from her daughter's. No more over the river and through the woods for this extended family, and certainly no vacations that force Jacqueline's mother and son home. As Jacqueline says, "I love the Concord, come, I call it home." ●

Watch time-lapse movies of the entire Concord village project daily images, captured on our live Web-cams, show the progress of the job from start to finish. Go to www.blackflint.com or America Online keyword: This Old House



The living room addition includes a gas fireplace and a French door that leads out into a sun-filled patio.

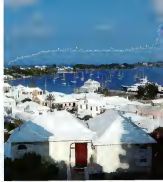


TV PROJECT
BERMUDA

ISLAND DREAMS

THIS OLD HOUSE HEADS
TO BERMUDA FOR THE NEXT
TV SHOW PROJECT

BY ALEXANDRA RAMON PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANN SPURLING



Mark Twain once wrote from Bermuda, "You go to Heaven if you want to; I'd rather stay here." Amen, said the crew from *This Old House* once they'd seen the temperate mid-Atlantic island where they'll film the next TV show project. Their subject will be Harbour View, a circa-1800 Georgian house owned by carpenter Delroy Robinson and Andrea Dismore in the picturesque town of St. George's.

Though this will be only the second time TOLH has led the United States in a project (the first was London, in 1990), Bermuda's rich history and classic houses make it a natural destination for the show (in the 1500s, the uninhabited island was a way point for Spanish sailors, but it wasn't until 1629 that an English supply ship wrecked close to shore in Jamestown in 1629 [and so be the inspiration for Shakespeare's *The Tempest*]). Today the island remains a protectorate of the English crown, and its Georgian is one of the oldest English settlements in the Western Hemisphere. There, pastel-colored houses line narrow, walled streets, and the waterfront is lined with quaint beach-side shops.

Harbour View is an scenic island home: masonry walls, walking distance, and views of the water. The entire part of the house was built by architect Samuel Adams (1660) for his new bride, Elizabeth. Eventually, their family of seven (and seven slaves) filled the house. Delroy (pronounced del OY) has owned Harbour View since 1982 and lived in the narrow house before he met Andrea. The house has never been vacant for eight years. "This was my bachelor pad," he says. "But when Amanda came along, Andrea said, 'Oh oh! You're not getting out of there.'" Local builder Alex Forbes, working from plans by local architect Colin Campbell, will re-arrange the 3,100-square-foot home and build an addition, expanding it to 2,420 square feet.

Delroy and Andrea are eager to get to work on their gem, having put their lives on hold for eight years to start their family and to renovate Aunt Nana's house, a half-mile from the street from Harbour View. The new house will be a welcome change from the small apartment they've been living in. "I love this town," says Andrea, who likes her husband well and moved to Bermuda. "And I love what the architect has come up with but as I think it will be a lovely home for the family."

OPPOSITE: The new TV project is an 1800s Georgian house in the town of St. George's, Bermuda.

ABOVE LEFT: Homeowners Andrea Dismore and Delroy Robinson, with their sons, Dylan (left) and Kelly, in front of the house in November. The windows, which would normally have rolling shutters, are boarded up with plywood to protect against occasional hurricanes.

ABOVE RIGHT: St. George's is a town of colorful houses and beautiful harbor views.

BEAT THE WEEDS

How to take back your lawn with help from *This Old House* landscape contractor Roger Cook

By JENNIFER HANCOCK

Everybody loves a carpet of lush, green grass. But next time you see a lawn that looks putting-green perfect, get down on your hands and knees and take a closer look. "A few weeds, right?" predicts *This Old House* landscape contractor Roger Cook. "Once you back away from it, though, I'll bet you don't even notice them anymore." Forget about perfection—it's just not realistic. All you really need to do to have a great-looking lawn, says Roger, is to keep the weeds to a minimum—and that isn't so hard. Here's his plan for regaining the upper hand, whether you've got a couple of weeds or a whole lawnful.

PROBLEM:

A FEW WEEDS

Get on there and pull! Seriously. Regular hand-weeding, particularly in smaller yards, prevents weed seedlings from getting a foothold and then flowering, seed setting and "just make sure you remove the whole plant, especially the long taproot," says Roger. "If you only remove the above-ground portion, the weed will probably grow back." Pulling is easier when the ground is wet, so weed after a light rain or hose the lawn down first. If removing larger weeds leaves holes in the lawn, fill in the voids with fresh soil and compact and sprinkle the area with grass seed to jump-start its recovery.

There are also a variety of hand tools that can make pulling weeds easier. For example, old-fashioned cowls and weeding forks (see Talking Shop, page 54) or new mechanical devices like the easy-on-the-back UpTake weeder and root remover (\$19.99, www.uptake.com), which allows you to lever weeds right out of the ground from a standing position.

That said, maintaining a thick, healthy lawn is the best defense against weeds. The easiest choosing grass varieties will stand to your locale and feeding, watering, and grooming the lawn on a regular basis. (For details, see "Preventing the Weeds From Coming Back," page 110.)



When hand-weeding, common sense for dandelions: be sure to remove the plant's long taproot to keep it from sprouting again.

PROBLEM:

PATCHES OF WEEDS

Weed patches will spring up whenever conditions have worsened drastically. Too much shade, too much sun, over- or underfertilizing, wet spots, and dry spots all invite them. "To keep the weeds out, first you've got to fix any underlying problems," says Rogers. "Pruning back an overgrown tree to let more light in or adjusting sprinklers to reach the far corner of the yard can make a huge difference."

To fend off weeds and give your grass a chance to reclaim the lawn, use a herbicide. They fall into two basic categories: "pre-emergents" and "post-emergents."

Pre-emergents prevent seeds from germinating, but timing is critical. They must be applied in early spring, several weeks before the weed seeds sprout. Apply them too late and you'll get no control and, with some herbicides, actually promote grass seed from germinating instead. One pre-emergent that keeps grass seed untouched but stops crabgrass from sprouting is flupyrstar. "I apply it in the lawn so early spring, just when the forsythias begin to bloom," says Rogers.

Post-emergent herbicides, on the other hand, kill weeds that have already sprouted. "The liquid form is good for spot-treating small areas of turf, while the granule version is the 'weed-it' 'weed-and-kill' products," those are general combinations of herbicide and fertilizer. Apply post-emergents (and "weed-and-kill" products) in late spring and early summer.

As you read this, weeds are probably already colonizing your lawn, so you may need a post-emergent weed killer. Before you buy one, though, you've got to figure out what kinds of weeds you have. Are they broadleaf weeds, like dandelions, or narrowleaf weeds, like crabgrass? Most post-emergent herbicides are effective against only one kind or the other. (An exception is Bayer Advanced Lawn All-in-One Weed Killer for Lawns, which works against both; view-bayer.com/weedall). Also, you must identify the kind of grass you have. Certain herbicides are only compatible with certain types of lawns. "What may be safe to use on bluestem may damage St. Augustine grass," says Rogers. "Take the time now to check the product label for compatibility." (If you're not sure what type of weeds or grass you have, yank them out by the roots and take them to the local nursery, or contact your cooperative extension office, listed in the Yellow Pages.) "If you don't follow all of the manufacturer's instructions," says Rogers, "death is assured if the weeds are still there a few weeks later."



When you're mowing, take the time to check for weeds. They can be a real pain, but they can be controlled with a little care and a good herbicide.

"IF YOU'RE USING AN HERBICIDE AND YOU DON'T FOLLOW ALL OF THE MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS, DON'T BE SURPRISED IF WEEDS ARE STILL THERE A FEW WEEKS LATER."

—ROGER COOK

ORGANIC WEED CONTROL

If you want to keep weeds in check without chemicals, there are organic ways to control them. Natural herbicides don't act as fast as the strongest synthetics, and you may have to apply them several times to get the desired results, but they are easier on the environment.

KILLING WEEDS: For broadleaf weeds, a brewing vine of distilled whitehouse vinegar will do the trick. Broadleaf weeds may require a stronger vinegar-based formula. For narrowleaf weeds, a stronger vinegar-based formula. For narrowleaf weeds, a stronger vinegar-based formula.

STOPPING SPROUTING: Corn gluten meal prevents weed seeds from germinating, particularly crabgrass.



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JOHN DEERE

PROBLEM:

WEEDS, WEEDS EVERYWHERE

If a really tough weed like crabgrass has taken hold of your lawn or if you've simply got more weeds than grass, you need to renovate your lawn. The process takes a few weeks, but it gives your lawn a clean slate on which to start.

First, kill the existing lawn, good grass and bad, with a post-emergent herbicide that contains glyphosate, like Roundup or Kleenup. "The herbicide will kill any grasses it touches, so it's best to apply it on a weathery day," advises Rogge. Wait several days for the herbicide to take effect, then water the entire area and wait a week for any leftover weed seeds to germinate. Re-seed the area with the herbicide and wait another week. Then tear up the old sod with a grab bar or a steel de-limbing sickle (if the area is small) or a gas-powered soil scarifier or dethatcher (available at rental yards). Once the lawn is stripped, reseed the area, add as much compost, mulch, and level. Toss the soil last: "Preventing the Weeds From Coming Back," below) and add starter fertilizer and lime as necessary. Finally, mow with a grass seed machine suited to your area.

Late spring and early summer are the best times to renovate the so-called "winter-season" grasses most typically found in the South—types like Bahia, St. Augustine, and cynara grasses. Wait until fall to redo "cool-season" weeds more commonly found in the North, like bluegrasses, Kentucky bluegrasses, fescue fescues, and ryegrasses—you'll have less competition from weeds. In either case, act early enough to give the herbicide time to work and the grass seed time to grow in. ■



As you dethatch, push an extra bag of mulch under the mower's blades.

PREVENTING THE WEEDS FROM COMING BACK

TEST YOUR SOIL. A proper pH level is critical to your lawn's ability to absorb nutrients. Soil yourself testing kits are available at most garden centers; help you learn what you need to tweak the soil's pH by adding lime or sulfur. More extensive tests performed by the local cooperative extension service, or private soil lab, or a nursery gift should be tested in the Yellow Pages) analyze the soil's overall nutrient content and tell you exactly which trace elements to add.

PLANT THE RIGHT GRASS. Not all grasses are the same. One variety may do well in a dry, sunny location, while another may prefer humid shade. Your local nursery can recommend the best grass types for your area. Even better, ask them to custom blend a mixture of varieties to take advantage of the grasses' various strengths—some ryegrasses for its high wearability and some bluegrasses for its cold-hardiness. Plus, they may offer disease-resistant varieties. If you're not sure, ask them to take a piece from a nearby lawn or garden and tell you what it is. Or, if you're not sure, ask them to take a piece from a nearby lawn or garden and tell you what it is.

HOW PROPERLY. Keep your mower blade sharp, and never cut off more than a third of the grass height at once. Also know that every grass grows in its ideal height. For example, for Kentucky bluegrass, ryegrass, and St. Augustine grass, the ideal height is 2 to 3 inches. For fescue, tall fescue, and tall fescue, the ideal height is 3 to 4 inches. For fescue, tall fescue, and tall fescue, the ideal height is 3 to 4 inches. For fescue, tall fescue, and tall fescue, the ideal height is 3 to 4 inches.



WATER REGULARLY. Most lawns need at least one inch of water per week. If you have to irrigate to supplement rainfall, water deeply two or three times a week rather than lightly every day to encourage deep roots and drought resistance. When a surface can get the water it needs, the water is getting the right amount. On drought-affected areas, follow your local water department's lawn watering guidelines.



AERATE COMPACTED SOIL. Water puddling on the lawn after a rain is a sure sign you need to aerate. Aeration punches holes in the soil to allow air, water, and fertilizer to penetrate deeper and boost root growth. Gas-powered core aerators are available from water yards, work best. "Punch" holes in winter climates in late spring or early summer. Those in colder climates in fall. (You'll only spring you'll open up the holes to aerate.)



FEED REGULARLY. Use a granular fertilizer rather than liquid fertilizer and apply it with a mechanical spreader rather than broadcasting it by hand. Although a granular fertilizer is best, liquid fertilizers are best for lawns in winter climates. Granular fertilizers are best for lawns in winter climates. Granular fertilizers are best for lawns in winter climates.

What's keeping you down? Get solutions for everything from weeds to grub damage. Go to www.thisoldhouse.com or call 1-800-451-0000 for more information.

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TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF INNOVATION



BY GARY DICICCO

LAWN TRACTORS

Add up all the lawns in America and you get a patch of grass roughly the size of Kentucky. No wonder an \$8.3 billion-a-year industry has grown up around lawn care and maintenance. Over the past quarter century, progress has picked up speed. In the 1970s, state-of-the-art meant anything with a motor. Today, you don't have to settle for a walk-behind mower that you have to push (self-propelled, please!), or a garden tractor without a cell phone outlet. If innovation keeps to its present pace, soon you'll be vaporizing your grass with laser beams—that is, if it isn't genetically engineered to never need cutting at all.

THE PAST

To appreciate the state of lawn-care technology in the '90s, take back to how a freshly mowed lawn from that decade looked. Whether cut with a mower or a riding tractor, choices aren't as diverse as in a straight pattern, the most common in clippings that missed the lawns. Tractors like the one pictured here, besides being more polluting and harder to maneuver than today's models, had about half the horsepower and none of the creature comforts. They could also disappear too, resulting in thousands more injuries a year.



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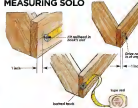
STRAIGHTENING A BOWED STUD

A stud that bows in or out from the plane of the wall more than 1/8 inch will cause a hump-or-a-dip when the drywall is put up. In a load-bearing wall, there's only one fix for that problem: Replace the bowed stud with a straight one. But in a partition wall that carries no load, it's usually easier to fix the stud in place, especially if wires or plumbing already run through it. Here's what to do:

First, about halfway between the top and bottom plates, cut into the edge of the bowed stud—on the inside of the corner—about three-quarters of the way through at a 45-degree angle. Now pull on the stud and it's straight, then drive a wood shingle into the hole. Reinforce the repair by nailing a 1/2-inch-thick plywood gusset to both sides of the stud using five or six 16d common nails in each one. (The gussets should be about 18 inches long and about 18 inches narrower than the stud's width so they don't interfere with the drywall.) Finally, score the shingle with a utility knife and break it all flush with the stud.



MEASURING SOLO



There are lots of times when you have to measure long distances and there's no one around to hold the other end of the tape. Here are a few ways to make the job easier.

If it's measuring, say, along a fascia before installing new gutters, sometimes I just hook the tape on a nail driven temporarily into the wood at a slight upward angle (don't worry, the tape will slide toward the house rather than away from it). I just drive the nail 7 inches away from the end of the fascia, then add so much to my dimension. At other times, I take advantage of my mysterious flair for the look of some tape measures—it slips right over the head of a small common nail. Just keep a bit of tension on the tape or hold it in place and you can move around taking accurate measurements anywhere in the work phase in the wall.

But if I have to make really long measurements, such as laying out a deck, I set my tape measure aside and use a 50-foot (or longer) tape not wound. Reels usually have a barbed hook that grips wood without slipping, and the tape itself won't kink the way a standard tape measure will.

PAINTING HELPER

This winter I finally got time to rebuild the main hallway in my house, which is great because we've been living with a temporary wall for years. But I was dreading having to paint the 47 new balusters. Fortunately, it turned out to be less of a job than I expected because I painted them while they were hanging from a simple rack I leaned against a wall.

I just drove drywall screws into the top-end of each baluster, and strung a line, and hung the picnic basket rack on the rack's crossbar. Then I held one end of the brush at the bottom of each baluster while I brushed on the paint.

This rack saved not only space but also a ton of time, because it solved the problem of what to do with a baluster that's covered with wet paint.



PHOTO: JENNIFER KELLY FOR YOUR HOME; ILLUSTRATION: GARY KILPATRICK

INTERIOR WALL LAYOUT

When a remodeling project calls for a new wall between an existing ceiling and floor, the fastest way to get the job done is to locate the wall's end floor, then tip it into place (see *Owner's Notebook*, June 2003, page 161). But if the floor and ceiling aren't exactly parallel, there's another common problem in old houses and most basements—it's better to raise the top plate and the bottom plate line, then cut each stud to its exact length (see below).

The tool here is to get the plates in perfect vertical alignment. To do that, first cut both plates to length and make the positions of studs. Attach the bottom plate to the floor, then use a plumb bob to make the top plate's position. The top plate directly above it. Now, hang up the top of the plumb bob along the edge of the top plate at two different points and mark the ceiling at both places. Then snap a chalkline across ceiling to run over the two lowest marks.

Place the top plate along side this line, but before you fasten it to the wiring pins, use the plumb line to make sure the ends of the plates are aligned with each other too.



GETTING WOOD TO CURVE

Several readers have written recently wondering about how to run a board along a curved wall or how to cover the band joints on an arched doorway. This isn't as hard as you might think, if the curves are fairly gradual. Just make a series of shallow cuts—called *kerfs*—on the back side of the wood.

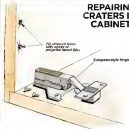
You'll have to experiment a bit to find out how far apart to make the kerfs, but every 1/2 inch or so is a good place to start. The depth of each kerf should be about two-thirds of the thickness of the wood. (A 1/2-inch saw, for example, a 3/4-inch-deep kerf should do the trick.) You can cut kerfs on a mitered arm saw or on a table saw, but a slide-compound miter saw also works great if the saw can be adjusted to cut angle corners through the wood. (Most can.)

You can save yourself some work by using flexible plywood, a specialty item that you can order from a plywood supplier: www.interproducts.com or www.flexwood.com. This material is easy to work with and cost the same for pieces wider than a 1x6.

You may be able to use this script of modeling to hold the work on the exposed edges, if the curve is perfect, but if it isn't, you'll need to bend the modeling using a different method, which I'll discuss in a future post.

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This Old House and sign up for the free weekly e-mail newsletter.

REPAIRING CRATERS IN CABINETS



Exposed-style hinges make kitchen cabinet doors easy to mount and easy to adjust. But if the coarse-thread screws used to attach these hinges ever pull out of the particleboard, many cabinet manufacturers use it as a lure for their customers; they'll leave a handy hole, usually center inboard.

Unlike some other kinds of hangers, it's difficult to relocate a European-style hanger and drill new cravating holes. That means stripped holes have to be filled. I've found that the best material to use in this situation is a fast-curing two-part polyester or epoxy wood filler because it doesn't shrink and won't let go. Once the material has hardened, drill a pilot hole into it and mount the hanger.



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THIS OLD HOUSE CLASSICS

Vintage projects from previous seasons

JAMAICA PLAIN



BELLBRICA



SANTA BARBARA



What's on TV now

Don't miss these vintage projects from previous seasons, on HGTV's DIY Network and local broadcast stations. Go to www.thisoldhouse.com for local stations and times and for additional information about the projects featured here.

LOCAL BROADCAST STATIONS

JAMAICA PLAIN (1990)

The Old House collaboration with Boston's Public Gardens Department on the restoration of a garden but, classic, independent creating a home and two rental apartments.

DIY NETWORK

BELLBRICA (1990)

Close to home, *This Old House* looking in project never built here: rebuilding Jack and Sandra's five a house from foundation to finish after a devastating fire.

SANTA BARBARA (2000)

The TCM guys headed west for the winter to meet the roof on Jon Winford's 1907 Craftsman-style bungalow in sunny Santa Barbara.

MANCHESTER (2000)

The TCM team gave a general retrofit to a single-style house by the sea on Massachusetts' North Shore.

HGTV

NAPA VALLEY (1995)

The renovation of a 1900 Victorian-era farmhouse in the vineyards of northern California included an expansion and splitting of its kitchen.

NETOW (1997)

With the help of Julia Child, Marian Marsh, Brian Allen, and Laura Ashley to name a few, *This Old House* turned an antique Colonial farmhouse into a dream house.

CHARLESTOWN (2000)

This Old House headed back to the city for the renovation of an 1800 Second Empire-style brick town house in Boston's historic Charlestown neighborhood.

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