

This Old House

DECEMBER 2007

Where to Buy the Best

fireplace mantels, stair railings, hardwood floors, and more



SEE INSIDE

TO START AN EVERGREEN
FAMILY TRADITION

Plus:

Pick the right paint colors
Vintage-style kitchen design
Retrofit radiant heat
83 holiday gifts


HYUNDAI presents

FAMILY-TIME FUN

Go to www.thisoldhouse.com/family-projects to vote for your favorite family project and **ENTER** for a chance to **WIN!**

TWELVE (12) FIRST PRIZES (selected randomly from all entries)

- \$100 gift certificates from The Home Depot

ONE (1) GRAND PRIZE (chosen by *This Old House* editors from the First Prize finalists)

- Winner's choice of one of the featured family projects
- Tools and materials needed to construct the project
- Construction assistance from a *This Old House* expert
- Opportunity to have your family photo in a future family project booklet



A Tree for All Seasons

Why relocate your Christmas tree to the mulch pile when all the yuletide family fun is done? Instead, buy a living specimen that you can decorate, then plant in your yard later. Not only will you improve your landscape, you'll have a reminder of the annual festivities, one you can watch grow year after year — right along with your kids. Once the tree has taken root, the whole clan can gather outside to trim it once more—with edible garlands for wildlife to feed on or strings of all-weather lights. If space allows, continue the tradition through five years to cultivate a Christmas grove all your own.

TURN TO
PAGE 76 TO
LEARN HOW TO
GROW AND
PLANT YOUR OWN
LIVING
CHRISTMAS
TREE



■ STEP STOOL



■ WALL CUSHIES



■ EISEL



■ SWING



■ BIRD HOUSE



■ TOOLBOX



■ LEMONADE STAND



■ SOCCER GOAL



■ SANDBOX



■ PORCH



■ BIRD FEEDER



■ TOY CHEST

REGULATIONS

**IF FAMILIES THAT
PLAY TOGETHER STAY
TOGETHER, WHAT ARE
YOU WAITING FOR?**

Hypack wants to help families get off the couch and away from the video games for some quality time together. Beginning next month, we're sponsoring a series of booklets that include easy-to-follow instructions, safety tips, and shopping and tools lists for projects that parents and kids can build and enjoy together.

Look for the first Family Project booklet in the January issue of *This Old House* and visit thisoldhouse.com/family-projects for how-to videos and more ideas to help you lead the winter home.

< CONTINUED (Over Page)

FAMILY PROJECTS

Watch for the first Hyundai-sponsored booklet featuring how-to plans for a handy toolbox in next month's issue of *This Old House*.



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If you saw the size of my grandson, you'd be impressed.



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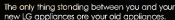
Three weeks ago I looked outside and said, "Today's the day I'm taking my grandson Brian fishing." So I fished out my Citi card to buy the worms,  the sure-fire lures,  and Brian picked out a brand-new rod. We spent a lot of time getting to know each other on that lake.  And while we weren't able to reel in the Big One, it didn't matter. Because wouldn't you know it, I ended up getting hooked on an 8-year-old kid. Whatever your story is, your Citi card can help you write it.

What's your story?



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When was the last time you felt inspired by your kitchen? Inspired to host a party, locate a new recipe or just sit back and admire the view? Perhaps it's time to experience the new LG kitchen Series. It's a collection of appliances that balances elegant design with a luxurious set of features. The French Door refrigerator boasts auto-defrost doors and the tallest water dispenser available. The range offers an accelerated preheat time* and the dishwasher is any of the quietest on the market. Isn't it time your dream kitchen became your kitchen? LGUSA.COM



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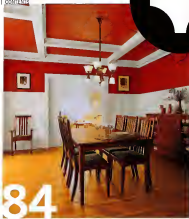
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CEN 1108-1.1965

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Cover photographs by
Michael Ochs
Cover by Ingrid Lauer

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letter FROM THIS OLD HOUSE

The Hoboken Horror

"MYBROTHERS!" my contractor said with a worried look on his face. He missed my house. "We were standing outside looking at the latest problem, a 120-year-old, cast-iron fence that has suddenly begun to drop pieces of itself like crazy fruit."

Just one more straw in a long list that started the day I bought the place. "It's a disaster, man, a bloody landlocked Titanic!" My contractor is Australian, which means he uses words like *mate* and *bloody*. It also means he's grown used to seeing gossamer, or sort of a national sickness.

But as I stood there picking off the unfortunate things that have happened in the handful of years I've been on the Times... on the block, I mean, I almost had to agree.

Tons of water in the basement. Several times. Tons of water through the roof. Several times. Water soaking and seeping behind the walls. A tree-sized structural collapse from decades of unseen termite damage. Roofs growing up through the basement floor. Swarms of flying ants that hatch out of nowhere in the spring and fall. "You know what this is?" my contractor said. "It's the bloody *Americville* Horror!"

I've taken my lumps, too. After a lifetime of insect bites and an *unlabeled* infection, DYING had had one low with a concussion, a broken toe, a cracked rib, and a wrist so badly fractured that I needed built-a-dinner metal pins to hold the darn thing together. And now? I've gained 55 pounds, though my wife insists that most likely comes from eating too many Little Debbie Chocolate Marshmallows. Yes, that's from my cure.

Let's say, that home-improvement thing could make a grown man (or woman) cry. That's one option, anyway. Another option: Throwing myself into the fireplace, though given my luck I'd get stuck just long enough to create a chimney fire, but not rolling back out and saving the carpet.

That leaves only one (fortunately healthy) option: to laugh. Which is exactly why we debut, on page 52, the 70th Department of Funny. It's a collection of contractor and home-improvement jokes we like. We hope you'll like them too. Maybe even enough to make your own *Americville* list a bit more like Philadelphia.

Scott Chellman

SCOTT CHELLMAN
@SCOTTCH

P.S. Happy Holidays to you, and, if I may be so bold, I'd like to ask for a present: your story ideas. The best will be used, with all due credit, in our reader-edited next issue: *June*. (Special mention paid to whoever knows how to fix a car.) You can reach me at scott@hugoboss.com



The author, at home in the fireplace, has been overwhelmed by the flying ants and the chimney's propensity to burn.

Terrants of water in the basement.

Wires sparking and sputtering behind the walls. Decades of unseen termite damage. Swarms of flying ants.

It's enough to make a grown man cry.

Drywall Screws

I just read your item on the many and varied uses of drywall screws ["10 Uses." Around the House, October]. They are a great asset, and should be in every toolbox. One word of caution, however: They are brittle and have no ductility. When they fail, they fail suddenly and without warning. They should never be used for any structural purpose.

GERARD O'DONNELL, ROCKFORD, ILL.

Native Wood vs. Bamboo

I was confused by the mixed "green" messages implied in the October issue of *TDN*—specifically the promotional advertisement (pages 32 and 50) as some new superior to our own woods. The composite forests of North America produce on a sustainable basis a variety of beautiful, durable and most of all, local products. The U.S. has over 30,000 certified tree farms that are managed by dedicated landowners with a long-term vision for their forests.

Here in New Hampshire, most harvests are done on a selective and sustainable basis. The work is accomplished by trained loggers with certified licenses. Much of the wood is sent to only two companies that provide stable jobs and support our economies. To suggest that bamboo



is which is intensively managed as a production crop, highly manufactured and transported halfway around the world, is somehow greener than a local product is simply not accurate.

DAVID SMITH, FOREST INDUSTRY SPECIALIST
UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION, DUBUQUE, N.H.

town of Portland, Kentucky, have been away from there for nearly 60 years, but I remember the place well. I walked to it frequently as it was only two-and-a-half blocks from my home on Fourth Street. I knew the Galloway family too, but not how owner Dr. Savary, as she had it, felt about them.

BARBARA STAFFORD WEBB, WEST COLUMBIA, SC

Bulkhead Doors

In the October Ask This Old House column, a homeowner asked for suggestions on replacing rolling bulkhead doors. We had the same issue a few years ago and our carpenter, who knew we wanted a finished look, shortly suggested using PVC bulkhead. It's not strong in certain directions so he needed to build a weak internal support frame, but it still looks great about six years later.

DAVID GALT, TAMMUN, N.Y.

Fence Adaptation

I just wanted to share a photo of the fence my husband Adam Blasen built, which was inspired by the project in "Small Tree, Big Impact" (April 2007). It isn't quite finished yet, but I think you will agree that he has done a great job. Keep up the good work in putting out a great magazine and inspiring people to build great things!

WENDY H. KOWEN, E-MAIL



The editors reply: We featured bamboo products in the October issue but did not imply it as a premier material over hardwoods certified by the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council). One of those the back of the calendar on page 32 was also featured (bamboos, however, a sustainable and greener choice than many pine FSC-certified exotic hardwoods). But your point is well taken: true "green" represents a complex web and various options as to which products and products are superior are sometimes too easily made.

Kentucky Post Office

I want to thank you for the article "Post Cards" (September) and the amazing photographs of the restoration of the post office in my home-

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HOW TO ESCAPE MORTGAGE DISASTER

2007 was a scary year for homeowners, especially those who benefited from the easy mortgages and now shrinking subprime mortgage market. The Center for Responsible Lending says that 2.2 million households will struggle to make their mortgage payments in the next several years. If you're having trouble making your mortgage payments next year, don't panic—there are options out there to help you stay afloat.

1. Delay the inevitable. If you can't make a payment, call your lender pronto. "It's better to come in the door before the door is closed," says Elizabeth Fazel, author of *The Frugal Housewife*. This person can help you design a payment plan with options like lowering monthly payments or interest amounts (though you probably have to look over a lot for this one).

2. Stretch out your savings. Ask your lender if you can extend your amortization schedule. Switching from a 30-year to a 40-year plan lowers your monthly payments. Some lenders might even let you make payments on a biweekly basis.

3. Get a fresh start. If you're having trouble making your payments, you might want to consider a loan modification. This means you'll have to pay a fee, but it could save you a lot of money in the long run. Remember that lenders would rather receive payments than foreclose on you, so the latter is usually the last best option.

4. Ask about a short sale. They're not common, but ask your lender anyway. Some lenders will forgive a portion of your debt. Do this only when you're sure you can't make the payments.

5. Sell. If your payments are making it impossible to make, then it's time to sell. Some lenders will forgive a portion of your loan for less than the outstanding balance. They'll forgive the remaining debt.

6. Move on if you're having trouble. Remember that it's not the end of the world. "There's a lot of options," says Fazel. "Just find a place to rest that fits your budget. If you take the time to retool your credit, you can start over." —JENNIFER HANCOCK

...ORDING QUESTION

Shredding leaves is no fun, but it's necessary. So naturally, it was a chore before the invention of the Husqvarna Leaf Shredder. The first shredder was a single-cylinder engine that made the task of shredding leaves a tedious and time-consuming one. Through the years, the shredder has evolved into a more powerful machine. The Husqvarna Leaf Shredder is now a more powerful machine. The Husqvarna Leaf Shredder is now a more powerful machine. The Husqvarna Leaf Shredder is now a more powerful machine.

A. 2002 B. 2005 C. 1946 D. 2003

Source: Husqvarna Leaf Shredder

10 0558

SAWDUST

Manufacturers use this common by-product in countless ways. To make paper, for example. If you're working on a home-improvement project, chances are you've got a few piles of sawdust around your garage. But there are some ways to keep it out of the trashbin. —MARK PERLIN

1. MAKE PAINT SHINE. Mix sawdust with white paint and glue to clean holiday crafts with streaked paint.

2. GET A GRIP. Winter loggers spread sawdust on their truck paths. It provides traction and absorbs the compacted snow on the path.

3. MAKE UP SPILLS. Keep a bucket handy for accidents. Sawdust is highly absorbent and can quickly contain spills of oil or paint.

4. FEED YOUR PLANTS. Sawdust mixed with manure or a nitrogen supplement keeps your plants healthy and moist.

5. MAKE A FIRE STARTER. Most sawdust is in a moist state and will not burn. If you have a pile of sawdust, you can mix it with a little oil or kerosene and use it as a fire starter.

6. FILL HOLES AND REPAIRS. Limit by professional woodworkers, sawdust is a "wood filler." It makes an excellent substitute for wood when mixed into a putty with sawdust.

7. FILL A POLE. Sawdust mixed with a little kerosene and a little oil makes a great fire starter. It's a great way to start a fire in a pole or a wooden structure.

8. MAKE A FIRE STARTER. Sawdust mixed with a little kerosene and a little oil makes a great fire starter. It's a great way to start a fire in a pole or a wooden structure.

9. MAKE A FIRE STARTER. Sawdust mixed with a little kerosene and a little oil makes a great fire starter. It's a great way to start a fire in a pole or a wooden structure.

10. CLEAN UP SPILLS. Mix a pile of sawdust with water and use a push broom to sweep it around the outside of your garage. Use it to clean up oil or paint. The sawdust will absorb the oil and paint and keep it out of the trashbin.

The refined, yet fun to drive, midsize Kia Optima.

Can a spacious midsize sedan with the standard airbags, a 5-star crash safety rating and a 4.0 engine, all in a package that's 177 inches long, be that much fun to drive? The answer is yes. The Kia Optima is a midsize sedan that's fun to drive. It's a midsize sedan that's fun to drive. It's a midsize sedan that's fun to drive.



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DESTINATIONS

WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT

Finally, you can get yourself into a house in one of America's most affluent zip codes. At least for a couple of hours.

The 20th Annual Holiday House Tour in Westport, Connecticut, takes place on Sunday, December 2 from 2 to 4 p.m. Americana (near the Westport Historical Society) has teamed up to showcase for the holidays houses of varying periods and styles, including the oldest home in Westport—an early 1700s Shingle style farmhouse—and a 1935 Fieldstone Tudor Revival on three streets of scenic hill top. Bonus: Most of the homeowners are top collectors of jewelry and antiques, making this tour as much about art, style and architecture. Admission for an entire day, you can peruse it in a couple of hours, or see one of the featured houses. Tickets are \$25 to \$25. For more information, visit www.holidayhouse.com.

Can't make the tour? Stop by Westport anyway to browse your holiday shopping in its historic downtown (and avoid a traffic jam) or take in a performance of *A Christmas Carol* at the legendary Westport Country Playhouse, located inside a converted leather tannery barn. Call 203-337-4277 for details. christmascarol.com



TCP Traveler's and 2000
green design studies for a
festival are during the
holiday season. All of
these projects are being
completed by the end of
the year.

ORIGINS ANSWER

3. Price: Priced at just under \$200 and dubbed the StreetBowl, the machine could pave through a patch of white powder to create a 17-inch-wide path. Telling similarly sized consumers can cost more than five times that price, but they offer larger areas and remove up to 2,000 pounds of snow per session. (Parklet has clearing that ability in its base unit, but even more



GETTING SCREWY

NEWBILLS AND DRIVERS
BOAST LIGHTWEIGHT POWER

Shiny, sexy, design-sexy: This month's dolls and figures sound more like runway models than toys. They're pulled by L'Oréal Paris hairbrushes, which pack as much power as their nickel-cadmium-cartridge hot-waxers. We're fans of these candylike facemasks either way: we use 'em and we love 'em. Use them to slick across and smooth enticed locks.

MAKITA IMPACT This 7.2-volt driver has 177 inch-pounds of torque—enough to drive a 3/8-inch bolt. The forged housing works in the traditional configuration, or straighten it out for an alternative. \$100, makita.com

BLACK & VEATCH
INCORPORATED The new tool for
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 tooling is interchangeable with regular
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/// HELMHOFF OUTCOMPT
The most versatile of the bunch, the 12-volt driver can drill holes up to 1 1/2 inches wide. It can handle 150 screws on a single charge and recharges in a speedy 30 minutes. \$190. helmhoffout.com

—SALLY KAY VETZ

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THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE

KITCHEN DESIGN

Problem: The kitchen lacked elbow room, storage space—and charm.

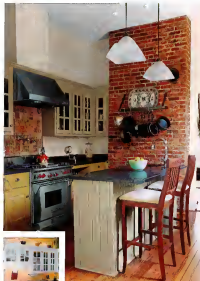
Solution: Add an island and a second sink, then zone the space for food prep and cleanup. Here's how >>

BY MARJORIE E. BADE PHOTOGRAPHS BY SARA EDELL

NICE RUNNING INTO YOU. It's a friendly enough greeting, but not when it's what's happening literally—and dirty—in your kitchen. For years, Judson and Brenda Adams tried to go out of their way to avoid stepping on each other's toes when cooking in their late Victorian-era home in Nashville, Tennessee. Name the layout: With three active doorways, a brick chimney wall, and a floor-to-ceiling window so radiant, walls, all the kitchen's contents—including the chef's cook and head dishwasher—found themselves pushed up against the room's sole unobstructed wall.

"They have a very efficient division of labor—we does all the cooking and he does all the cleaning," says designer Beth Haley of the couple. "But the kitchen wasn't functioning at their level."

Haley helped improve the flow by reconfiguring the space into distinct stations devoted to prep, cooking, and cleanup. By removing a short peninsula and a cabinet that was shoved in front of the one window to serve as additional work area, the designer made way for a granite-topped island with a prep sink, under-cabinet storage, and bar stool seating. Period-style accents such as galvanized-steel and beadboard combine with four well-coordinated shades of green, gray, and gold paint to create a vintage look. "A little inconsistency adds the 'collected' character of old-fashioned homes," Haley says. "And any kitchen can benefit from a little extra elbow room."

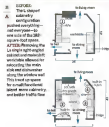


BEFORE: The white brick cabinets were shiny but boring, and too few in number to keep surfaces clear of clutter.
AFTER: A fresh coat of paint gave the units much-needed character while custom-built bars provide additional storage.



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The Plan

» Create balanced workstations by putting space once gobbled up by a table to better use

What They Did

- 1) INTEGRATED EXISTING CABINETS** with new, custom-fitted cabinets by local cabinetmaker Roger Givens, painting them varying shades of gray. The not only stretched the life span, it spent perfectly good materials a needless trip to the landfill.
- 2) RECONFIGURED THE LAYOUT** to create a one-sided island and a new sink and island. Sliding the range into the spot freed up by the sink and removing the short, single-sided peninsula that stuck out into the room provided space for an island with a second sink, storage, and seating.
- 3) RELOCATED THE MAIN SINK** to directly in front of the rear's tall, sunny window for a cheerful, efficient cleanup station. Now dirty dishes are easily transported to the dishwasher from the adjoining dining room.
- 4) VARIOUS COUNTER HEIGHTS** and surface materials—like the polished zinc around the main sink and the honed marble behind the new range—to give the kitchen a built-over-time look. Four well-coordinated paint colors blend the old and the new in an effective, unobtrusive fashion.



The Details

» Smart storage solutions and better lighting result in a cleaner, brighter workspace

- 1) THE CUSTOM WASHING HAND** designed to hold the Roll-Top for a new, curved legs, will open, disengage, and hold the Roll-Top in place, and a new counter and a Roll-Top for a new, curved legs, will open, disengage, and hold the Roll-Top in place.
- 2) SLIDE-OUT DRAWERS** built in the space around the dishwasher keep dry goods neatly organized and handy near the range.
- 3) A GLASS-FRONT ISLAND** with open shelves, a raised butcher block surface and a breakfast bar with a style that is a blend of old and new. Perched Benjamin Moore's White Dove Gray, the pieces have the look of fine furniture and a made-to-measure fit. The lighting control mounted under the island's upper cabinet provides a warm glow, and the new lighting scheme is surrounded by a new, curved legs, will open, disengage, and hold the Roll-Top in place.
- 4) A RECESSED BUILT-IN** outside the dining room has shelves to display on evenings, target painted doors below serve as pantry space. The piece again added architectural interest with the same casing that surrounds the former doorway.

Help for the Holidays

» 46 great around-the-house gift ideas for the man of leisure, the tool-toter, and everyone in between

BY BETH PARSONS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW MCGRAW

Holiday shopping can be a grim assignment. But it's a whole lot more fun when you put yourself in the shoes of the person you're buying for. What's his passion? What does he need right now to make his life easier? To simplify the task, we've done some of the thinking for you. On the following pages, you'll find dozens of our favorite gift ideas for all the personalities on your list. There's the Leisure Lover, who'd rather sit back and enjoy the house than work on it. The Proud Parent is geared toward mens, pops, and jammers who like to do projects together. We've also included plenty of gotta-have-it tools and accessories in our New Homeowner package. And our Garage Guy gallery is packed with ideas for men (and women) who want to take aim at clutter. Now get out there and start shopping.

For the LEISURE-LOVER

1 | WIRELESS ENTERTAINMENT

Address the family from the Lu. 2 Boy with this sleek, by-remote voice-activated interface. \$400.95. barni.com

2 | GEAR-UP SLAPYON

Spill-beverage. \$29.95. spillbeverage.com

3 | DETAILING DETECTOR

Don't want to get up? Flip over the padlock top of this detailing brush holder and reveal a tray for TV remote, DVD, or iPod. \$100. detailingdetector.com

4 | UNIVERSAL REMOTE

The ultra-remote lets you control your TV, DVD, or cable without lifting a finger. Literally. It's more. \$59.95. universalremote.com

5 | HEADPHONES

Put out on-the-go noise-canceling headphones from Bose, and the world will melt. Use them to relax and hold your phone, or plug them into your stereo and crank the Decibel. \$249.95. bose.com

6 | HOME THEATER. Sure, the great full-size speakers are small. But they pack a wallop. They're made for the house, not the foundation. (Podcast excluded). \$500. sony.com

7 | LAPTOP COMPUTER

Not much like comfort of your sofa with the Dell Inspiron. Although colors, there's bound to be one that matches your choice. Starting at \$249. dell.com

8 | REMOTE BACKUP

Do less than a half hour! The DriveSpace and it's backed up paper clips, word documents, and nearly anything a computerer. (Image subject will be 10 years old. Service. \$299.95. www.aim.com)

9 | WHISTLEBLOWER

It's easier to whistle away the hours. So it with the right tool. Whistleblower. \$49.95. whistleblower.com

10 | LAP KICKER

From modern plywood with two 800-watt speakers. \$29.95. kick.com





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hotels, visit 123petfriendly.com
or call 800-852-2626.

3. **DOUBLE LEVEL:** Two beds frame the 24-inch bed table, a convenient 3-inch level and stud-saver in its frame. \$25. bedandbreakfast.com

3 **5** **Journal of Value** \$30
storybooks.com

4 **✓ SUPER SAM** The 34
cuneiforms make short
work of snellouts. \$30
pdrillamtools.com

5 **✓ HEALTHYBOY** The Chug
takes on these snell-driving
plying, and out eg bite that
have nipped at you not
your first walk through
\$30 walther.com

6 **FLUOREN-2-OL** is hydrophilic and an adjustable anion. It binds anything and the rest is OK.
goopenhandbooks.com

7 **STANDOUT TAP** is a tape out 11 feet before it is used, so you'll be able to measure long-run single-headed \$25. stanleytools.com

8 **WASH TAP** is the only

9 **PAETECHE** When we go out to quick job to do, we go with a 2000 cc car, which charges in just 15 to 20 min. \$200. maketools.com

10 **LASER MEASURE** Ordering? Easy! The Laser

11. BANGIN' IN THE FUTURE Square footage shoots the data and frequency and the technology. \$2,000. jacobmiller.com

1



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LOFT DESIGN

THIS OLD HOUSE MAGAZINE SHOW LOFT 2007

The Ultimate Open-Plan Kitchen

How to turn a makeshift mess into a sleek, one-wall cooking zone >>

BY KELLY BEJIN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY KENNETH CHEN
PRODUCTION BY GALETTE SCARFON

LIKE MANY HOMEOWNERS, Sam Lopezgole and Ed Wood live loving the kitchen in their downtown Manhattan loft open to the conversation and activity in the adjacent living areas. In fact, the chance to live in a wide-open space was the reason the two architects renovated the former typewriter factory 10 years ago. Baroque plaster in the classical restaurant-poop-cable stand and the handmade plywood counter-top that runs the length of the kitchen's eye wall made it almost why the cobble-together cooking area was the area of the home that most often made their change. "I wished I could just close a door and deal with the mess here," says Lopezgole.

Of course, doing off the kitchen wasn't really an option. So Lopezgole spent years making one an upgrade. She always envisioned modern white cabinetry with solid doors but abandoned the idea of stainless-steel appliances when she got a look at gleaming, glass door models from Jet-Air. With help from The Old House magazine, she arrived at the perfect solution: a custom row of glossy white, beveled cabinets set around seven clear glass front appliances and lined with classical-colored ceramic tile. Not only would the reflective white appear colorful, but they would also be a sleek contrast to the left's rough-textured exposed brick and beams. The row of the row would be a long drawer, the most practical space now that the couple's daughter Clara, 9, and son Benjamin, 6, want to grab their own after-school snacks. "You want furniture out in the open, but cover it," says Lopezgole. "And you want to channel light throughout the space." End up in a sleek white design she got cleaned up her kitchen, what realized for her could help remodel any kitchen with an open plan.



BEFORE: Five years ago the couple finished the new commercial loft—and this makes the kitchen—their first since Sam's job was his fourth in a row. **AFTER:** New sleek white-cabinet cabinets are going into the same one-wall plus island layout, keeping the old setup sleek and modern upgrade easier.



find out more

Learn how to choose the right cabinet to install or direct at Bauhaus.com/Win-Rails

DISCOVER THE NEW LOFT LEVEL
concrete Patrick McCormack (D-13) and
Pinto Murray build an upper cabinet with
a steel shelf to hang it, using up the fridge
draw with the cabinet's built-in shelf
as a support. Back. Original kitchen lights
bring in the light. The steel new kitchen
will come together.



Recipe for a Sleek Open Kitchen

A kitchen that looks integrated in a larger open plan requires attention to every detail, however small. Here are some key ingredients

1. START WITH A SIMPLE LAYOUT

The latest layout configuration looks the cleanest. So a straight line of cabinetry will read as less messy than an L shape, especially if building as L. Plans adding an interior wall that interrupts flow is the rest of the space. Although Lapergole and Wood—who were certain when they first finished the kitchen—initially chose a one-wall set-up because it was easier to power and pump. Lapergole has since learned that this type of set-up has great benefits. It minimizes the cost of building interior walls, it keeps the space open to maximize natural light, and it enhances the kitchen's social flow. "This way it is literally the heart of the house," she says.

2. MINIMIZE UPPER CABINETS

Of course, limiting upper cabinets can save you money. But in lefts, where you can't mount heavy kitchen cabinets directly on a wall, it's a good idea to use a cabinet on a wall or a shelf. There are other reasons to limit them.

Probably the biggest downside to upper cabinets is a fire law and how it takes to prep the walls behind them. In this case, for example, the

original back wall sits 12 inches behind drywall that conceals the kitchen's pipes. The wallboard alone could not support the two 24-inch deep cabinets Lapergole wanted over the oven and fridge. Before each of these—and a smaller 12-inch deep cabinet above the sink—could be hung, head carpenter Patrick McCormack had to cut out small sections of drywall, then screw plywood panels or "grounds" to the back side of it between the stud studs. The grounds reinforced drywall, giving them something solid to which he could fasten the steel framing used. A lot of people make a big mistake relying on a string of toggle bolts to mount cabinets and drywall with a wallboard," says McCormack. "But this combination holds up to 100 pounds."

Lapergole concentrated as much storage as the cookware below in 24-inch deep drawers (filled) but cabinet used in the new 3-by-6-foot island. "Opening drawers subtly reinforces them, so you don't have to touch the ceiling," she says.

3. MAXIMIZE REFLECTIVE SURFACES

A little bit of industrial elements, including brick walls and cement or terrazzo flooring,



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make adding an unusual amount of shine, as Lopezglo did, look better instead of over the top. Next to the left is a rougher surface: the high-gloss, lacquered Tuffin cabinetry appears refined, not slick. The manufacturer's process of heat-curing the paint after it's sprayed on and then hand-polishing the cabinet exteriors delivers a more reflective surface than enamel paint alone. Jane, Jr.'s sliding glass appliances can blur the lustrous look on the fridge, dishwasher, cooktop, and ovens; each is covered with a layer of translucent white glass.

4. FINE-TUNE ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING

Mixing warm and cool light in one area, or in single fixtures, is one way lighting designers approximate natural light indoors. That's important in this case, where the kitchen "bombers" lay light from the open-plan windowed living area. To wash the vision with the soft "balanced light," "amber at light that is bright enough to work under—Lopezglo took advantage of a pair of tier-lacked, drum-shaped aluminum factory fixtures salvaged from the New York space, fitting each with two compact fluorescent and three incandescent bulbs. Their ceramic shade by a simple rim of denatured halogen floodlights screened into 34 porcelain sockets between the fixtures and the vent hoods.

5. CLEAR THE DECKS

As is any open kitchen messiness counts. Here building the island from the same glossy white lacquered cabinetry included the new look for the dining table and front door. Beneath the sink, one drawer holds garbage and recycling bins, over the sink, the wall-mounted cabinet is made specifically to conceal a dish-drying rack and drip pan, helping to keep the highly visible countertop clear. And some stream-lined items from keeping up the island. Correl vent hoods for instance, cool and recirculate cooking vapors, eliminating the need to add elsewhere. Moving the cooktop to the island would have meant rerouting the power lines under the original concrete floor—in an extra round of about \$10,000.

6. KEEP APPLIANCES, GARNISH DOORS, AND DRAWERS FLUSH

Don't underestimate the power of an even close of your home to look up any kitchen. That's why Lopezglo took great pains to achieve that look at her workplace. Her main reason for adding the



point-drip cabinets over the refrigerator and wall ovens was to try to extend out enough to create an integrated look with the doors on the appliances. That meant the one-headed an island to build a 3-inch recess in the drywall behind the fridge so it could be pushed back into the doors and cabinetry lined up. "People like to imagine how expensive it will look based on the what you'll find as a kitchen is how big and everything looks from the side," says Lopezglo. Her own kitchen is now presented as a clean-lined, modern, and simple—just as she envisioned it. ■



TOP: Reflective surfaces brighten up the open plan kitchen, which receives light from adjoining windows and space. A cabinet over the sink holds a dish-drying rack and drip pan. LEFT: To brighten the industrial look, homes comes with a set of four Lopezglo finished cylindrical vent hoods which introduce air rather than venting to the outside. RIGHT: Silver steel cabinets conceal the cabinetry's adjustable legs, which are helpful when the floor is slightly sloped.

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Ask the Expert:

Managing Hard Water

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Q What is hard water, and how does it affect me?

A The term "hard water" was originally used to describe water that was difficult or hard to work with. Today, it's a problem that affects 85 percent of U.S. households, according to the U.S. Geological Survey, and many homeowners feel its effects without even realizing it.

Naturally occurring minerals in hard water leave deposits or plumbing fixtures and appliances like washing machines, dishwashers, and water heaters. If left untreated, these deposits can eventually clog your pipes and appliances, reducing the efficiency of the equipment and even shortening its life. Many of these problems are hidden from homeowners until some type of malfunction occurs in your plumbing system or with your appliances. The bottom line is that hard water can hurt you where it hurts the most—in the pocketbook.

Q What can I do to minimize the impact of hard water?

A A water softener removes the less desirable minerals in hard water. Inside a water softener, salt is used to change thousands of any resin beads. As hard water moves over the beads, hard mineral ions are removed, creating soft water.

Q Why is soft water better?

A Soft water increases the life expectancy and efficiency of plumbing systems, and many appliances. By removing many hard minerals from your water. A study by the American Water Works Association found that washing machines using hard water can wear out up to 30 percent faster than those using soft water. In addition, according to the Virginia Cooperative Extension, soft water helps increase heating efficiencies up to 26 percent when heating with gas and up to 22 percent when heating with electricity.

Q What sort of maintenance is required?

A Check your softener monthly and keep the salt level at least half full at all times. Diamond Crystal®, one of the nation's leading brands of salt, offers products in pellet, solar crystal, rock, and block form. No matter which you choose, you'll see significant benefits.



Diamond Crystal® Water Conditioning Pellets are packaged in a patented two-handled bag that makes both carrying and refilling easier.

Q How do I choose the right salt?

A Choosing the right salt makes a difference between a water softener that works smoothly and is easy to maintain, and one that is a hassle. There are three main factors to consider:

- **Form.** Water-conditioning salt comes in pellet, solar crystal, rock, and block form. Check your owner's manual to determine the recommended form for your appliance.
- **Purity.** Water-conditioning salt varies in its "purity." Using high-purity salt improves your softener's efficiency and decreases the amount of residue buildup in your softener's brine tank. For example, Diamond Crystal® Instant Conditioning Pellets are 99.9 percent pure and dissolve completely. As a result, there's much less residue than your brine tank and your softener waste more efficiently.
- **Special needs.** Different geographic areas contend with different water problems, and individual needs vary. For example, if you or rust is a problem in your home, choose Diamond Crystal® Rust-Out® pellets, which combine the softening power of Diamond Crystal® pellets with an iron-fighting additive to minimize iron in tanks, water tanks and other household fixtures. For people on a sodium-restricted diet, the Diamond Crystal® brand of low-sodium chlorate pellets that give you a great alternative with little taste residue.



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Unleashing My Inner Scrooge

» What is it about Christmas that makes people want to do bizarre things to their houses?

BY JOHN MARCHESE
ILLUSTRATIONS BY DENISE BLOCH

NO DOORHAD I EXHAUSTED IN THE LAST FRENCH MAS, and spread on the final coat of paint after a two-year renovation thus I was faced with a tough decision: Should I now cover the Cape Cod I had so lovingly restored with a bunch of garish lights and plastic junk?

Christmas was coming, the time when homeowners across the land show off money, good taste, and all sorts of propensities in order to fascinate their houses and yards with 9-foot-tall inflatable reindeers and strings of lights emitting diodes in the shape of rivers. Last year, Americans spent about \$9.3 billion dollars on Christmas decorations. This year, right, that's billions—which doesn't go far when purchasing weapons systems but can certainly fill a few shopping

carts with blinking violas and plastic reindeers. For that kind of money, more than five and a half million homeowners could acquire their very own computerized LED Santa, which retail for a mere \$1,600 each.

The choice of whether or not to decorate this house, my first, was fraught with considerable family decisions. The renovation work was done almost completely by a two-man team—me and my father. Luckily, my father, who was a groggy brawler about so many things, included Christmas on that list. From my mother: Since I was single at the time, the logistics were the perceived as a financial void. I had of ready spent months during the renovation loading off bar suggestions for various and past clients. Then, as follows

gained, she turned a new opening.

"I have some 1920s Christmas lights," she mentioned casually.

"I think I'll skip lights," I said boy.

The next morning came today, she brought four boxes of multicolored bulbs. The time after that, Santa candles. Then an artificial pine bough with red and white lights. This candle for each window. It wasn't Thanksgiving yet, and my basement was starting to look like the local Yale Outlets.

I was well aware that my mother was a decorating addict. She filled her house with new gifts for Halloween, St. Patrick's Day, Valentine's Day. She wasn't alone there. The same marketing company that makes Christmas sales reports that homeowners spend another \$10 billion on other holiday decorations. If products was available, my mother would decorate for Guy Fawkes Day. But, of course, Christmas was the big event—the Super Bowl of itself.

I didn't want to be a Scrooge. Somewhere inside, I couldn't help but feel a fuzzy nostalgia for the Christmas of my youth, when nearly every horizontal surface in our house was covered with a Santa, reindeer, or elf and it was my nightly task to switch on the string of lights that wrapped around the lower porch. Back then, outdoor lighting was simple and big, like the old vacuum tubes in stereo equipment. A bulb burned out, you got on the step ladder and replaced it. I can remember a day when blinking lights seemed like an insurance worthy of NASA.

Now you can buy an automated display of Santa telling a golf putt (\$1,371.40 from John's Home Decorating in Omaha, Nebraska), and I have witnessed firsthand a computer-controlled light show on a house in Texas that was a fair approximation of the scene in *Close Encounters* when the mother ship arrives—all of it synchronized to holiday music that the homeowner was broadcasting to your car radio.

That, of course, is the danger when you go down the road of display. It can easily go to excess, a sort of LED arms race where it's not just about keeping up with the Joneses, it's about transparently blinding them and causing the most kind of accidents that people get from certain Japanese cartoons.

In my newly renovated house, Thanksgiving had come and gone, and I was starting to feel the pressure. I'd already spent a reasonable Saturday morning climbing up and down a ladder, swapping up handfuls of burnt and poor needles from my gutters. The idea of spending one full ladder again setting lights around the roofline appeared to me about as much as making the muddy march for my unattended optic tank.

There had to be some compromise, a way to show that I wasn't a Yuletide wet blanket while at the same time keeping my butt in the ground and keeping the number of continuous climbs I would make in the double digits. In the end, I found a few boxes of deep-blue lights on sale—because who the hell wanted deep-blue lights for Christmas?—and related them around the two otherwise trees that I think

small front porch. I took my mother's pine bough and red ribboned wreath on the front door. Being another wreath with white lights in the front picture window and played it into a corner. Surveying the results from the road, I felt better, yet sure I went made and fixed myself a celebratory egg nog.

When the snow hit, my mother politely said it looked "nice," resigned as the way by now to my chance habit of underachievement. By the time the next holiday season rolled around, I had a new friend, who became my fiancée before the next Christmas. When she gave up her apartment to me

I have witnessed firsthand a computer-controlled light show on a house in Texas that was a fair approximation of that scene in *Close Encounters* when the mother ship arrives.



could live together, I found two boxes of holiday decorations sitting her wall on morning day. Somehow—I can't imagine how this happened—they were left sitting on the curb. ■

John Marchese is the author of *Remembrance: A Father and Son Behind a House and Remembrance Book Club*. He last took in The White House. Finding a Catalyst Old Tradition in a Rockley Workshop.



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Bit Kits

» Drill it, drive it, store it.
How a good set can get
your bits organized

BY HARRY SAWYERS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW MOORE

SURE, YOU'VE GOT A SYSTEM. The driving bits go in the baby-faced jar, spade bits go in the coffee can, and drill bits are stacked up neatly in the magazine tube. It works well enough, as long as you remember the Phillips bits are made "assured pos."

But there's a better way to organize all the disparate bits you need to turn screws and drill holes. Here's better way, in fact, as you can see on the following pages. These sleek, tapered or snap-loading cases make each piece fit in its designated spot, protecting it from being dropped, dented, or lost. Some holders are ready to be inserted in the toolbox at a moment's notice. Others, kept in a box, are meant to sit on a shelf, where they hold teams of metal drill accessories just waiting for that day when you finally need a 3/8-inch hole or have to remove a 1/2-inch screw.

With the right kit, your days of searching for bits through the Grabber's jar will finally be behind you. And you'll never have to worry about losing Torx bits to your baby.

Twisting With Bits Housed over the Quarter Horse's four legs are several pockets stuffed to the edges with 100 drilling and driving bits. Folded around all these economy bits, all-purpose barrel bits, and drivers of screw and nut-driving bits take up more than 1/2 inch of shelf space. \$49. www.powerworks.com

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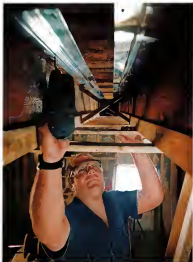


FROM THE TOW TV JOB SITE

Retrofitting Radiant

► Installing water-filled tubing underfoot to heat a room requires some creativity when the flooring's already in place

BY STEVEN BRILLGARDY
PHOTOGRAPH BY RUSSELL KANE



LOOKING FOR WHITE PLASTIC TUBING being needed like built hooch in the basement of Madison Krause and Paul Friedberg's Single style home, the stars of *This Old House* TV's current project. Richard Tachewsky, TOW's plumbing and heating expert, pulls another length of tubing from a coiler on the basement floor and loads it to heating contractor John Perry, who snakes it along a joist bay over his head. Richard steps onto a ladder and greedily taps the tube, which has been snaked through the grooves of aluminum tracks screwed between the joists. "We're turning the entire first floor of this house into a giant radiator," he says. "You'll never feel cold when we're through, and you won't need skippers, either."

Richard is working with Perry to bring hydronic radiant heat to this 14-year-old house. If you've ever wanted your self in front of an open fire, you've experienced radiant heat. Unlike radiating heat, radiant heat travels in all directions, warming objects around it. Delivered via warm water in plastic tubing installed as a floor, radiant moves out from there, making the room feel warm and comfortable.

Though installing a radiant system can run up to 50 percent more than, for example, conventional forced-air heat, it saves 30 percent in energy costs, eventually paying for itself. Putting it into use

Richard Tachewsky snakes a black plastic tube into a joist bay at the TOW TV project house. The tracks will pull heat from the water in the radiant tubing to warm the living room floor above.



ABOVE: Richard leads the PEX tubing to heating contractor Aron Perry who pushes it using a joint borer. A single length of tubing will loop around each first-floor room. **RIGHT:** Perry uses a rubber mallet to tap the PEX into the aluminum trays. By evening out the tubes using his compressor, he ensures a balanced panel transfer

construction is easy: Special wds and glass are used to the joints, double as subflooring. But reinforcing the tubing under an existing floor presents challenges. If a room is gutted down to the joists, it's easy enough to lay down the wood planks. But that's not possible when flooring stays put.

Here's a look at the three most popular places for retrofitting radiant and what the pros do in each case to bring easy warmth to older houses.

IN FIRST-FLOOR LIVING SPACES

The best way to retrofit radiant without disturbing an existing floor is to do it from below, against the underside of the subfloor. In most houses, the only place to do this is on a first floor where joist bays are open to the space

below. It can go under most existing flooring, including wood, tile, vinyl, and even carpet.

The retrofit starts with aluminum tracks screwed between the joists, which hold PEX (cross-linked polyethylene) tubing clamping hardware. "Plastic like PEX is a good material for underlays," says Richard. "So the aluminum tracks the heat out and conduct it to the subfloor." The tracks keep the tubing evenly spaced so it is flexible to avoid cold spots. The tubing snakes across every joist bay to buy through holes drilled at least 2 inches from the edges of each joist. In a kitchen or family room, though, Richard takes care not to run it under cabinets or other built-ins. "You don't want to trap the heat under a sealed box," he explains.

Insulation beneath the tubing is critical to keeping the heat moving up into the floor, rather than dissipating every which way. At the project house, the crew will spray foam insulation over the tubing between the joists, forming a tight seal.

A radiant system needs a hot-water supply, a connection between the tubing and the plumbing, and a pump to move the water from one to the other. In a first-floor retrofit, all these either already exist or are easy to locate nearby.

The TDH project house has a main fold in the basement where all the tubing enters and returns. It connects to a circulation pump. Each room's tubing feeds into the manifold supply, loops around under the floor, and reconnects at the return. Every room or zone has a separate thermostat, turning it up sends more water to the room, raising the room temperature. Turning it down slows the water off.

The manifold gets its hot water from the boiler, which has a special mission: to deliver water that's set to deliver more at no higher than 140 degrees F. The heat, explains Richard, means that the floor's surface doesn't rise above 85 degrees, which can break down tile and warp wood. At the project house, the temperature of the tubing will rise and fall with the weather—ranging between 85 and 90 degrees on water's coldest days and as high as 130 or 140 on the coldest days.

IN SECOND-FLOOR BATHROOMS AND BEDROOMS

Retrofitting radiant on a second floor, where the ceiling of a room below is tile or wood flooring under base, isn't as easy, as it can be tricky. Usually a three-room to second-floor guest room below, so the tubing can't go from above. This could add from 1/2 inch to 1 1/2 inches to the floor grade, says Richard, requiring adjustments, such as raising or cutting down doors. (These limitations then apply to first-floor work too, because. So in a kitchen, for example, you must be sure the rising the floor doesn't put a dishwasher into place.)

Fortunately there are products—Upson's Quik-Tile, Vega's Climate Panel, and Reba's Raupanel are some—that

keep the added height below 1/2 inch. According to Reba project manager John Kimball, these panels come over most any subfloor—planks, plywood, OSB, or even concrete—as long as it's level and is sound concrete.

Once the panels are sealed or screwed down, you can cover or finish with a variety of finish floors. Because this goes up their heat easily, they're ideal for radiant heat—a bedroom is a great place for a retrofit. However, a tile floor catches heat better than, say, wood, so it will add more heat to the room than, say, wood, which goes down over 1/2-inch plywood, or wood, which can be laid right over the panels (taking an installer's cut through the tubing).

That said, just about any conventional floor covering will accommodate radiant floor floors, Richard comments. Hardwood like oak, ash, or maple. "The warmer the place, the better," he says. "It keeps expansion and contraction to a minimum." Carpeting will also work, so long as the estimated insulating value for the carpet and pad—information carpet dealers or radiant contractors should have—doesn't exceed R-2.5. "This floor is not well insulated," says Richard, "it's like putting a sweater over a radiator."

Connecting a second-floor radiant system to the heat source is a matter of finding a way to get the water from the boiler, basically, wherever PEX tubes can be installed, radiant has no limit. Richard recommends installing a manifold "in a closet, or tucked into a wall cavity—close to the area being heated." This means making multiple lengths of tubing down to and back from a distant manifold. Then a single line can supply the water from the boiler to the manifold.

IN A FINISHED BASEMENT

"Any basement that will have a family room, playroom, or workshop should have radiant," says Richard. If the basement will get a concrete slab, the PEX can go down before

AFTER: Leaving PEX tubing along a wall in a subfloor. Richard will push one end to the manifold's return side. A three-foot 1/2-inch return cut is a convenient way to the manifold to keep the water flow in that area.



the pour, attached to a wire mesh or clipped onto rigid foam insulation. The flooring then goes right on top of this slab.

If there's already a slab in place, the tubing goes over it, using the same low-profile panel used for a second-floor retrofit. Then you can finish the flooring to the same way you would on a second floor, or you can pour lightweight concrete over the panel. "Covering the tubing with lightweight concrete or gypsum concrete allows its heat to be absorbed by the concrete's thermal mass. It also protects the tubing, but it raises the finished floor height," says Richard. "So you'll need to adjust every door opening."

In the end, the New York homeowners decided to put the radiant under the main first floor and under a second-floor bathroom, but left a set of the basement. The installation will add to the cost of a pending cast heating system, but in the old Northeast climate they'll see the savings in the first energy bill of the winter. However, says Richard, monetary payback is not really what radiant's all about. "There's no question that it's the most efficient way to heat and thus the lowest operating costs," he says. "But the main reason you do it is for everyday comfort." ■

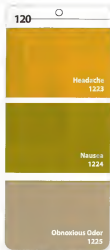
online
homes

See photos straight at the TDH project house. Tap about wiring with the following at the website: www.tdh.com

The electric alternative

Generally electric radiant—either cables installed in the floor or thin mats of resistance wire embedded in floor-slabs setting—is retrofitted in single rooms rather than whole houses. It's faster and less expensive to install, and it needs a good retrofit for a bathroom, say, or a small dressing room. But TDH's Richard Tichauer doesn't recommend electric radiant for large spaces, like a kitchen or a finished basement. "With the high cost per kilowatt hour, it can be a good principle heating source—particularly in cold climates," says Richard. "Hydronic radiant is so efficient because it uses water to transfer heat throughout the building. And water is the ultimate free heat medium. Period."





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HOMEOWNER'S HANDBOOK
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Tiling a Hearth

BY HASEY SKIPPERS
PHOTOGRAPH BY SCOTT SMITH

ANYBODY WHO THE HEARTH always gets all the attention? Sure, it frames the great shelf, the sacred legs—it's the focus around the fireside. But months come and go. It's the hearth that's always been dirty, an orange buffer between the fire and the living rug, descendant of the glazed bricks used by ancient Babylonians to decorate the floor of the fire.

So now that you've pulled up that rug in favor of some new hardwood, think about eggs along the fireplace as well. Dash the wares and scratches away and there's been no floor at all for decades and just things up with some colorful new tiles. At *The Old House* magazine's advice Mark Powers shows us the following pages, you can change the whole look of a fireplace—and the room—in one or two weekends. Then, when you're finished, you'll be able to truly say that the hearth, alone, goes on.

Build this in Ludlow Gray from Mosaic Tile, \$3.50 per square foot nationwide.

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\$400 to \$1,000
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TOOLS FOR THIS PROJECT

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HOMEOWNER'S HANDBOOK



Tile a Hearth in Six Easy Steps

Unfold the page for tips on
upgrading your fireplace
and choosing the right tile
for your home's look



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overview

Because a hearth is in front of a masonry focal point, you want it to appear symmetrical. If you're working with high-end art tile, you may find the (greater amount) of materials allows for a minimum of cutting. But more often, you'll need to play around a bit with placement and pattern to make sure tiles look even, neat, and aesthetically pleasing.

Before the final design is put in place, however, the structure needs to be sound, because a hearth is more vulnerable abuse. A lot of that starts with the substrate, which should be even and level. "Just like any good construction, if the foundation is true, the rest will follow," says tile contractor Joe Ferrelle who has worked on several This Old House TV projects. If the area has a concrete slab, you may need to smooth it out with a skin coat of cement after removing the old hearth. Newer houses, on the other hand, may have a plywood subfloor under the obstacles. To create an incompatible substrate for the tiles you'll need to put down a piece of cementboard or backer board. You'll also have to raise the hearth dimensions up to code. Most localities require hearths to be 18 inches deep and extend 8 inches beyond both sides of the fireplace.

Once you have a good base for the tiles, it's important to adhere them to the substrate with thinset, not tile mastic, which can't hold up to the heat of a fireplace. But before you put the tiles down, take the time to perfect a dried-in version of your design. Try different configurations and patterns—a 3-by-6-inch subway tile for example, lends itself to a brick-like running bond, but a six-square (lay might look best in a grid—just make sure everything fits well, with even cuts. "There's no such thing as checking too much," says Ferrelle. Then, as you set the tile, work slowly and deliberately to stick to your design.

It may seem daunting, but the great thing about a hearth is that it is essentially a flat rectangle. You have room to play around—with tile, hearth boards, with different patterns. And the best part is that thinset is very forgiving. As long as it's wet, you can always pull up a tile and redo your work, making sure that all the puzzle pieces fit together perfectly.

shopping list

1. TILES Available in a wide variety of materials, designs and shapes, the most important is that they be water resistant. You can usually get a quarter-inch-thick tile for \$2 to \$3 per square foot. For a 10-by-10-foot hearth, you'll need about 100 square feet of tile. For a 12-by-12-foot hearth, you'll need about 144 square feet. If you're using a tile that's not a standard size, you'll need to order more. If you're using a tile that's not a standard size, you'll need to order more.

2. 1/2-INCH CEMENT OR POLYESTER CEMENT BACKER BOARD To provide a good substrate and create a flat, stable surface for the tiles.

3. CONSTRUCTION ADHESIVE To glue the backer board to the substrate.

4. 1 1/2-INCH ANCHOR-BOARD SCREWS To secure the backer board to the substrate.

5. UNMIXED THINSET ADHESIVE To glue the tiles to the backer board.

6. LATX ADHESIVE To glue the tiles to the backer board.

7. TILE SPACERS To keep the tiles from touching each other.

8. GROUT To fill the spaces between the tiles.

9. SANDED ACRYLIC CAULK To fill the spaces between the tiles.

step by step

Prepare the substrate

If the hearth area has a concrete slab substrate, make sure it is level and smooth. If not, mix a small batch of hand-mixed mortar and apply it to the area. If the area is not level, use a level to check the area. If the area is not smooth, use a trowel to smooth the area. Allow to dry to the touch before continuing.

If the substrate is plywood, measure the area. Transfer the measurements to a sheet of backer board. Using a utility knife, score the board along the mark. Stand the board on its edge and snap it along the mark. Then cut through the board at the snap line.

Glue the board to the plywood with construction adhesive (BOSTON). Using a drill/driver, screw the backer board down with 1 1/2-inch anchors (BOSTON) every 12 to 16 inches. Fill the screw holes with thinset.

Before you begin, protect the finished floor around the hearth with plastic sheeting and painter's tape.



Dry-fit the tile

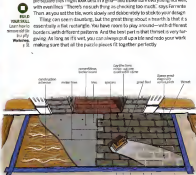
Measure the finished opening behind the hearth and determine its center point. Extend the location to the center of the tile. Lay the tile on the substrate. If the center is close to an obvious mortar line or at a set back point on the border, consider the location as the point. Then find the center of the tile. Lay the tile on the substrate. If the center is close to an obvious mortar line or at a set back point on the border, consider the location as the point. Then find the center of the tile. Lay the tile on the substrate. If the center is close to an obvious mortar line or at a set back point on the border, consider the location as the point. Then find the center of the tile.

Starting at the front edge of the hearth, dry lay a line of tiles along the quadrant, beginning at the corner line and moving out to the edge (BOSTON). Lay the tiles so the mortar lines between the tiles are even for grout. Mark the lines that need to be cut. If any cuts would create a tile less than 1 inch wide, the grout lines to absorb this measurement rather than use a tile saw.

Continue filling in the quadrant until you reach the center line front to back. Following the pattern you've determined, you work to the input. If the tiles at the center extend above the line, mark a new reference line along their edge.

Dry lay tiles in the corner until you fill both a whole tile and a half tile at the back edge of the cut. If necessary,

Once you have a working layout, transfer all the tiles, in order, to a board to keep track of where they go.



{ buying guide }

Designer tile is a great material for a hearth, but it isn't always the appropriate one. Fortunately, there are many other interesting possibilities that work well for fireplace decoration. In general, while it's able to handle the heat (and a dropped log every now and then), here are a few stylish alternatives to the art tile shown in our step-by-step.

Marble

Antebellum, \$45.95/
wallerdesign.com



Granite

White Butterfly, \$30,
blacktop.com
Vivid Veins, \$33.50,
wallerdesign.com



Ceramic

Antebellum Recliner
\$17.95,
wallerdesign.com
Miss Pines, \$21.40,
wallerdesign.com
Heath Red Seals,
\$43.84, antebellum.com



Stone

Summer Wheat natural
\$18.35, antebellum.com
Copper Rust, \$6,
blacktop.com

Terra-Cotta

Normande Antique
\$21.95, wallerdesign.com
Rodeo Drive, \$42,
antebellum.com

Travertine

Dark Tawny, \$28.25,
wallerdesign.com



Wallerdesign per square foot

Set the tile

In a clean bucket, combine dry-thrust with latex additive, following the proportions on the packaging. Using a drill/mixer fitted with a mixing paddle, slowly combine the ingredients until the mix is thick enough to stick to a board turned upside down.

Using the straight edge of the board, spread a layer of thixt into one quadrant of the substrate, making sure you can still see your layout lines. Turn the board around to the opposite side, and holding it at an angle, scrape ridges into the thixt (SETT).

Set a tile at the intersection of the layout lines, giving it a slight twist as you mind it into the thixt (SETT). Continue spreading thixt in the center toward the edges, placing tiles according to the layout you determined earlier.

TIP Test the thixt mix by pulling up a tile and turning it over; the ridges should spread out and stick to the back of the tile without being too wavy.

Fill out the field

Set the rest of the field tiles one quadrant at a time. Work outward from the center and fill in the entire field before adding the cut tiles at the edges (OUTSET). Use spacers between the tiles to maintain even gaps (or the grout).

Once you've completed a quadrant, check the tiles with a level or spirit level. Make sure the pieces are on an even plane. If a tile is too low, pry it up and butter the back with thixt to raise it. If a tile is too high, gently push it down or remove some mortar to create room.

Fill in the edge tiles last and make sure all grout spaces look even and straight.

Once spread out, thixt has a working time of about 30 minutes, so only cover small areas at one time.

TIP



5

Grout the joints

Using a grout sponge and/or a putty knife, clean out any joints where the thixt has squeezed out. Once the tiles are set, clean and evenly spread leave the thixt to dry for 34 hours. Remove the spacers.

Following the directions on the packaging, mix the grout with water until it resembles peanut butter. Using a grout float held at a 45-degree angle, spread a layer of grout diagonally across the joints, pushing the mix between the tiles (SETT). Use the float in all directions to ensure all the joints are full, then sweep it parallel to the joints or it will catch on the grout and pull up the mix. Do not grout the joint around the edge of the hearth.

Once the joints are well packed, turn the floor on edge and, again sweeping diagonally across the joints, scrape off the excess grout. Let the grout dry about 30 to 60 minutes, until firm to the touch.

Dampen a grout sponge and squeeze out the excess water. Wipe the surface of the tiles in one direction to clean off the excess grout. Once the tiles look fairly dry, leave the grout to dry overnight, and if there are more tiles, then using a clean, dry rag, buff off the face.

Fill the joint around the perimeter of the hearth with caulk that matches the grout. Smooth the caulk with a wet finger. Allow the hearth to set for another two or three days before rebuilding a fire.



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A STARTER HOUSE

In low rolling, exposed with lacquer, and wood-finishing, there are the original 18th-century gutting rooms. The walls have stone "venetian" glass painted with lacquer. The flooring is fully the current lacquer and the pattern indicated on the concrete wall.



THE OLD HOUSE WANTED TO FALL DOWN, BUT BROOKS BANKER WOULDN'T LET IT.

"From the moment I saw this house, I knew it had to be mine," he says of the simple clapboard cottage in Garrison, New York, some 40 miles north of Manhattan. And unlike the squatters running amok in the area or the powder-puff ladies making much of the centuries-old oak beams, Brooks could convince him otherwise. Not even his mortgage lender's door slammed that the house had only 12 years more to live—and the justified alarm that the black daggers prevalent in prospective owners—could deter this house hunter from acquiring the Hudson Valley man he had fallen for at first sight. "Twelve years? Well, I don't know how they come up with that number," he says now, nearly a decade later.

It's not like he doesn't have anywhere else to live. He keeps a comfortable apartment in Manhattan, where his law practice finds him some working days. But the unassuming, wood-frame dwelling in rural Putnam County has become Brooks's refuge. And he has no intention of ever giving it up—or giving up on it.

Both for newsworthy and 1793, the house was a post-Revolutionary War relic on today's market, a tiny place built by family and friends for a couple to begin life together and then, when fortunes allowed, expand or move on. "Move on" is, in essence, what the engineer who inspected the house prior to Brooks's closing more than 200 years later advised him to do. The oil-burning furnace had failed on at least one occasion, puffing black, soot-staining soot and carbon monoxide gas up the walls. But had overlooked plenty of porch boards, as well as some of the structural joists and beams. The roofline recalled the swagback of an aged work horse.

"The engineer's report was long and scary," says Brooks, "but the message was clear: Keep looking." Most worrying of all was the foundation, or lack thereof. Typical of such 18th-century buildings, the house had been erected on a spot of leveled and stamped earth, with dry-laid fieldstones overlapped in rows one to two feet high to establish the footings. A course of hand-hewn beams made from whatever local woods was available—mostly oak, chestnut, and fir—connected with mortar and iron joists to serve as the sill. More beams and posts held the whole place up, with rafters notched together at the roof's peak, stabilized by collar ties—cross members nailed high upon the covered V—in lieu of a hefty ridge beam. "Of the three

LEFT BEHIND: A few lower-end pieces in the house are small but efficient fixtures, such as the built-in wooden range hood mounted on the brick chimney wall. A rough-hewn granite fire hearth provides the base for the built-in stove in the dining room, where a cozy fireplace mantel in the 1790s by architect Charles Lurie still decorates the walls. On the left, a small sink in the kitchen is a handsome piece of metal. In the center, a small sink in the bathroom is a handsome piece of metal. In the center, a small sink in the bathroom is a handsome piece of metal.

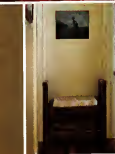


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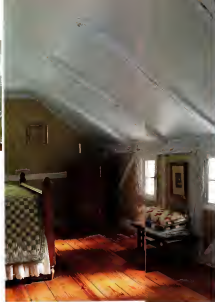


ABOVE AND TOP LEFT: In this guest bedroom, an antique iron bedstead and a narrow English chimney replaced after much needed repairs.

RIGHT AND TOP RIGHT: Once owner of a physician in the country 19th-century house, the houseowner's great-grandfather built the upstairs in the French classical style into a study, which became a book writing and study room. The (wooden) in the upstairs hall and two bedrooms was coated with greenish paint, then placed for a study room, and the study room was converted throughout the upstairs, the second floor wall, however, painted and placed to lengthen the stairs.



O BUILT-UP WALL
The material of wood
boarded floor replaced
bedroom, a 12



» SIMPLE LIVING

The house contains 18th-century features, with the ground floor, dining room, kitchen, and two bedrooms. The upstairs is a study, and the kitchen is a large living area.



RIGHT LEFT: In the master bedroom, a whiteboard floor leads to a study in a small natural form effect.

RIGHT RIGHT: A small two-bedroom and master bedroom, and finished with a white color and a small living room, and a study in the master bedroom, and a study in the master bedroom.

or forty 18th-century houses I looked at in my search, this one was unique," says Brooks, a collector of antiques with a passion for old houses. "And such it came the numerous problems inherent with such a house."

Three months after the 1998 closing, it became apparent that electricity would not be a given. When it rained, the power would go out, and any day, which means that if the basement—day, according to the house's pump would not be. "During a rainstorm, the water in the first floor, I found myself in the basement, with up to my neck," Brooks recalls. "I could never live here without a pumpable 18th-century house."

All this "sustainability" as he good-naturedly refers to it, added up to what the real estate agent called "a romantic house"—a situation capable of making a dissection beyond reason. And to be fair, even in its present state, the house's charms were strong. "My sense of romanticism before was thrown off by the exposed oak beams, the walls with a natural ceiling, the presence of wood fires or cold angles," says Brooks. There was a root cellar built into an outbuilding, behind the house that would one day make a nice wine cellar. The big, gray yard was surrounded by hundreds of acres of wooded land, an island in a sea of fields, with the possible exception of an occasional stray goat or cow.

On the dining room walls, a newly found personal the artistic vision of 20th-century painter Charles Wheeler Locks (born in 1895, who lived and worked in the home from the 1940s until his death in 1993). During Locks's career, he painted the high-ceilinged summer kitchen—a one-story extension of 18th-century houses, used to keep smoking from heating up living areas during the winter months—into a dry-docked painting studio. (Today Brooks simply refers to the space as "the big living room," in contrast with the smaller, original gathering rooms.) Much of Locks's work during that period, including the recent murals in the dining room and the paintings that illustrate the history of the house, is in the house's 1946 edition of Thomas's *Walden* and the Garrison 1846 pen-and-ink, pen-and-ink drawing. It was a drawing that attracted Brooks's attention.

Other things, such as local architectural landmarks and the Garrison 1846 pen-and-ink, pen-and-ink drawing. It was a drawing that attracted Brooks's attention.

Then, one, the 6-foot-4 fellow's head barely cleared the room's rough-hewn oak beams—which he exposed by removing a drywall ceiling—and he must have been passing through the 6-foot doorway. But that didn't seem to make an impact until well after the ink on the artist's contract was dry. Now it doesn't seem a few days a week. "I never seem to leave," he says. "The most likely to take a bit while carrying dinner from the kitchen to the large living room or coming to get the phone."





That the house has not succumbed to the forces of nature by now can be attributed to Brook's hard-headed dedication to its best interests and to his good fortune in finding the right people to build it, starting with a staff of carpenters, plumbers, and pre-emptive pragmatists and followed by a legion of talented local tradesmen. Spontaneous Marty has inspired the central chimney, making it possible to install a woodstove in the original gable-end room. Christopher Vossage, a woodworker and carpenter who designs what he builds, was brought in to work on all things wooden. He has replaced round rods and beams, crafted ambrosia-brown superlatives, salvaged subflooring to insulate the porch deck.

ON FALLING FOR THE BOSS: "MY EMOTIONAL BALANCE WAS THROWN OFF BY THE EXPOSED OAK BEAMS, THE PROMISE OF WOOD FIRES ON COLD NIGHTS."

"If I didn't purchase this place, I would have abandoned the city completely by now," says Brooks, who stresses his weakened business partner and company. The home has kept him busy but content; the new round of work will replace the kitchen's 1980s-era pecked-out cabinets with simple cherry cupboards that Vaseque will build by hand, and replace the roof's luxury cedar shakes with salvaged beam-board sheathing to be covered by new wood shingles. The eyebrow roof will be stabilized. As for replacing that foundation: "I'm afraid if I hit it, the whole house will fall down," says Brooks.

The honeymoon phase of his homeownership may be long over, but he remains smitten. Those days, with the benefit of hindsight, he is pleased to find the old house intact when he comes up from the car. "Oh, good," he murmurs each week on arrival. "It's still standing." ■



GLACIERS FROM JEFF: The huge living snow drifts still stand covered with jagged, glassy, red, worn, hand-applied Brak. A watercourse displaced to top of the step back captured shows the lines on a locked shore. Glaciers Charles Locke lived there. Current owner Rondeau Barker has been restoring the 1935 structure for 15 years — and counting. The most houses here, a rebuilt front porch. French doors were installed in the wooden-inlaid wing for a modern interior.

brand-
type
collaboration

Learn how to finish
your walls with decorative
jointing techniques at
bit.ly/150u4m8
A little helps.



LEFT: THE WHEELBARROW IS FROM THE GARDEN CENTER. RIGHT: THE WHEELBARROW IS FROM THE GARDEN CENTER. RIGHT: THE WHEELBARROW IS FROM THE GARDEN CENTER. RIGHT: THE WHEELBARROW IS FROM THE GARDEN CENTER.

an ever- green tradition

Choose a live tree to extend the holiday spirit long

past Christmas.

Buy one now,

plant it later, then

watch it grow

year after year

DECORATING THE FAMILY Christmas tree is among Claire Youaker Moore's fondest childhood memories. But as an adult, the tradition held less a flare. "It's not that I'm 'lath, lathugan,'" Claire says. "I just can't get into spending all that money on a dead tree." Many years she went without. But then she had a son and felt guilty about denying him such a treasure of his own. So Claire and her husband devised a new seasonal strategy: They buy a live tree to take indoors, and after the ornaments are packed away they plant it so their tree grows in the back of their yard in Washington. "It's an old farm," Claire says, "so trees are limited. That way, we are helping to save the property. And we'll have it for years to come."

For starting or continuing a family tradition, a live tree offers a distinct advantage over the cut variety: "You can look at it every year and think, 'Remember when we did that?'" says The Old House Landscaping contractor Roger Cook. "It's fun for both because you can point your kid and say, 'That's your tree.' You can't do that when the tree's ground run wood chips."

A live tree often practices beneficence, too. It is kinder, so it's more fragrant. It's not as tippy as a cut tree in a stand (though a cut tree

can level the most ball as a container). And in later years, the planted tree can extend holiday cheer outdoors when strung with all-weather lights or ribbon garlands for birds to nibble.

Live trees do come with limitations, though. They can cost twice as much as cut ones. If you like decorating long before Christmas, the tree can't be stored in your house because it won't weather much more than a week indoors. It requires more muscle to get in and out of the house—a 6-footer with an 8-inch pot can weigh up to 200 pounds. And if you live in a region that experiences hard frosts in winter, you'll need to plant ahead so you have a place to plant the tree after the holidays.

But there are a few minor inconveniences when you consider that once the tree is in the ground, it adds value to your landscape and serves as a reminder of your family's holiday fun. Read on to learn what to do now, come Christmas, and after the holidays with help from Roger Cook.

BY JEANNE HUBER PHOTOGRAPHS BY KELLER & KELLER STYLING BY EILEEN EISELE



Arizonia cypress is the Southwest and Virginia pine down South. Cypress conforms with a natural shape with denser areas that are pruned to look like the Christmas trees you see at greeting cards. Look at the tree from several angles to check for bird spots and cracks in the trunk. Then, run your hands over the needles. If some brown ones near the trunk drop, that's fine. "Evergreens naturally shed needles in the fall," says Roger. But, if those on the ends of the branches fall off, pick another tree. "This can be a sign of disease, insect damage or frost it's dried out."

● **Pick a planting spot.** A well-sited tree can provide privacy from close-by neighbors or help screen unsightly winter winds. Roger chose a spot near the driveway for this tree so it could help shield views of parked cars from the front entry. Since most conifers favor sun, you'll want to pick a bright area, but be mindful the tree's proximity to other plantings. A shade space, for example, encompasses more than 30 feet, shading nearby shrubs and flowers. Allow a buffer zone of several feet between the tree's zone of maturity and the house and surrounding hard-scape elements, as limbs could one day lurch against windows and roofs could push up paving.

● **Prep the hole.** Because most live trees are field-grown, with roots and soil wrapped in burlap, dig a hole that's 6 inches by 12 inches deep—the typical height of the root ball. Any deeper, and loose soil can compact and cause the tree to sink. The diameter of the hole should be about 4 feet, or at least twice that of the ball, so roots can easily spread in the loam. Northwood, Regen shows the soil on a tarp and backfills the hole with leaves to insulate its winter-walls. He then covers the hole with the soil topped with a 2-inch layer of topsoil. More insulating—and tarp hiding—leaves the "tree" sandwiched. "If you don't choose a landscape or hard-house, simply enclose the holiday tree following the same guidelines for digging the hole."



Online Exclusive

Find out which types of live trees are best where you live. Visit thisishouse.com/Arboreal

the week before

- **Transport your tree.** When you pick up the tree from the nursery, grab the nylon straps tied around the burlap-wrapped root ball, or hold on to the ball itself to head off any other vehicle. Just don't lift it by the trunk, which can cause the roots to tear away from the tree. To keep branches from breaking on the road, wrap them loosely with burlap. Once the tree is safely on the ground outside the house, remove the protective covering and shake the branches to remove needles. Then spray the tree with a natural antidesiccant, such as one made from olive resin, to minimize moisture loss through the needles.
- **Put it in a container.** An evergreen's plastic pot works fine, but it's not much to look at. A wicker laundry basket or galvanized steel washtub lends a little more character. Whatever style you choose, make sure the container is water-proof or fitted with a liner to prevent leaks, and that it's just slightly larger than the root ball, as a snug fit will help maintain proper moisture levels. To water-proof the wooden crate used here, Roger stapled five layers of thick plastic sheeting inside. Then, with the root ball still wrapped in burlap, he set the tree in the crate and filled gaps around the ball with wood chips to level and steady the tree.
- **Car it inside.** To move the potted tree, pivot and sock the container onto a hand truck. Once inside the house, Roger dug pits to help the tree maintain its upright, down-curved

posture. The pile slides easily over hardwood floors, prevents scratches, and can be left inside under the container.

Position the tree near a window where it will stay cooler and away from heat sources like a fireplace or HVAC vents. It's also a good idea to avoid decorating with lights, which give off a lot of heat. Strings of tiny burlap or LED are a better choice. The tree will need water daily, which it'll absorb through the burlap. The roots must stay moist but should not be in standing water. When it dries, poke a finger inside soil to test for moisture.



after christmas

- **Move the tree outside.** Your tree's total indoor stay should be no more than 30 days. Any longer and the house's warmth will lead to thickening spring buds sprouting, which will put out new growth. These tender shoots will be back in wintry conditions, stalling the tree's future development. In cold weather regions, transplant the tree to the outdoors by moving it into a sheltered place for a day or two to give it time to acclimate in better climates. You can reuse the tree directly in the hole.
- **Plant it.** With the hole and hole, remove the nylon straps that trim its root ball. Then cut away as much of the surrounding burlap as you can to prevent the material from soaking up water and leaving the roots to dry out. Fill in around the base using the stripped soil and earth covers the trunk up to the same point it did originally in the field. "You can gently mark it looking for color changes on the bark," says Regen. Afterward, spray the needles once more with antidesiccant, and cap the soiled 3-inch layer of mulching mulch. To help the tree establish itself in its new environment, Regen recommends regular irrigation over the next few years during the growing seasons, adding, "With extra TLC, you'll up care, your tree should last for many Christmases to come!"

right now

- **Shop for your tree!** To get the best selection, head to the nursery around Thanksgiving—well ahead of the late-December rush. Most nurseries will bag your specimen and hold it for you until a time before the home. To figure out how big a tree you can handle, measure the ceiling height in the room where you plan to put it. Factor in the size of the tree plus pot and ball, as well as the height of an ornament or top and whether the container sits off the ground. Also check the tree's projected growth to make sure it won't get too big for the space you're considering in your yard.

To ensure that your planted tree thrives long past the holidays, choose experts suited to your climate. Your local nursery will give the best advice, since growing conditions vary even within regions. One of Regen's top picks for the North is a Fraser fir (the tree's short leaves because the native tree has good needle retention) as a fir aroma, while Mingling bluish silver color on the underside of the branches. Native species in other regions include Douglas fir in the Northwest





SECRET SOURCES 7

Direct from the pros to your
Our annual guide to the places insiders go for
those unique and hard-to-find home items

BY NICOLE F. MAYNARD

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KYLE THE DESIGNER
LIFE & PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES HENDEL

WANT TO KNOW A SECRET?

The truth about us here at *This Old House* is that we can't keep anything to ourselves. As soon as we find a clever new product or a great home accent, we're itching to tell you about it. So here again is our annual compilation of 25 of the best new sources we've discovered this year. Want environmentally friendly insulation for your new addition? We've got one made from denim. Need a front door that'll make your house the most distinctive on the block? We found some cool portals carved from reclaimed lumber. How about a unique glass for your cabinets? Our source scours old houses for it. Plumbing, lighting, tile, flooring—it's all here. Of course, this secret-sharing thing works both ways. If you have a favorite source we should know about, tell us at thisoldhouse.com/secret-sources. We'll try to keep it to ourselves, but we can't make any promises.

1. LIGHTING

REVOLVO GAR & ELECTRIC LIGHTS

For the past 60 years, this shop in the French Quarter of New Orleans has been quietly producing traditional lighting for the area's finest houses, hotels, and historic landmarks. Fixtures are made from copper or brass and can be either gesso or ebonized. The studio's signature piece is a gesso-finished lantern based on an early-17th-century European design. *New Orleans, Louisiana, 504-572-3443; bohco.com*

2. CERAMIC TILE

THURKMAN TILEWORKS With a window look of intricate earth-toned tile is a little out of the way, but, check out the best tile offerings from Tulsa, Okla. The New Hampshire-based purveyor makes its products from pure natural clay using traditional

techniques such as carving and glazing by hand, which allows for subtle variations. Choose from such collections as Arts and Crafts or Glass Windows (pictured below), an aggressive line that consists of ceramic fused with recycled glass. Tiles are available in 12 glass colors, 12 glass colors, and a variety of sizes. *Kennett, New Hampshire, 603-333-2942; thurkman.com*

3. FIREPLACE MANTELS

PEARL MANTELS Jim Pearl had been a furniture maker for nearly 50 years when a client asked him to make an old movie made his own mantel for the house. Telling that the mantel represented a family's visual focal point—as well as the heritage and tradition that give a home its emotional core—Pearl began producing two styles of mantels carved from elm, or, from hand-carved timber

to American white oak. Now, Pearl's simple shelves and ornate carvings come in 20 styles that can be finished or left unfinished. *Colverville, Tennessee, 615-433-4235; pearl-mantels.com*

4. STAIR PARTS

CROWN HERITAGE Sure, they do balusters, handrails, and stair parts, but what really sets the North Carolina outfit apart is its reputation for quality, which goes beyond perfect installation of each component. Choose from high-end materials of wood stair parts, styled from Colonial to contemporary, and a variety of finishes. *Forest Hill, North Carolina, 800-743-3333; crownheritage.com*

5. ORNAMENTAL METALWORK

ALAND DESIGN "The San Antonio-based company specializes in custom forged wrought-iron doors that are 'designed with history, security, and function in mind,'" says owner H. Luis Munoz. Doors are made of 13-gauge steel, with built-in impact ribs and ribs for insulation. Each door gets a double-cylinder Baldwin or Millock lock, then is coated with acrylic paint, and an interior panel that serves glass up to 3-inch thick. Heavy and big on the inside, the 3-inch-thick doors can take up to three months to fabricate and will



put a big dent in your wallet, but if you're looking for some statement, you'll find it here. *San Antonio, Texas, 214-440-3366; alanddesigns.com*

6. FLOORING

RAVE EASTERN HARDWOODS An importer of exotic hardwoods, Rave Eastern has a loyal following among architects, but that doesn't mean it's all roses to you. From its 60,000-square-foot production facility in Michigan, the company imports such species as teak, mahogany, and figured wood and uses them in manufacturing flooring and flooring accessories, moldings, and stair parts. Most of the wood comes from a sustainable, managed forest. *Traverse City, Michigan, 800-944-0074; rave-wood.com*

7. METALWORK

CONANT CUSTOM BRASS Architects love Conant for the Westcott company's skill at restoration and custom metal fabrication. New and antique lighting is the specialty, but Conant's artisans can make just about any decorative metal you need in metal, from bookends to curtain rods. All the firm's metal products are guaranteed for life. *Burlington, Vermont, 800-434-4434; conantcustombrass.com*

8. SALVAGED LUMBER

ULMAN HARDWOODS Harvesting lumber from managed forests is responsible, but rescuing city trees felled by storms or construction projects is the ultimate feel-good enterprise. Instead of ending up in the chipper

or the landfill, these downed trees go to Urban Hardwoods' Seattle mill, where they go on to make dining tables, coffee tables. If you're the hands-on type, purchase a slab of western white oak or cherry and make your own creation. *Seattle, Washington, 206-266-8739; urbanhardwoods.com*

9. INSULATION

ROUNDED LOGIC Design isn't just for designers and homeowners—these days, it's also styling for your walls. Rounded Logic's UltraTouch insulation is made from 85 percent denim fibers, recycled from factory waste. A loose treatment gives the product fire resistance and keeps bugs and mold at bay. Plus, the stuff doesn't itch, so you can do the job yourself without worry or protective gear. *Charlottesville, Virginia, 410-812-5710; roundedlogic.com*

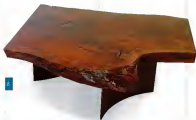
10. ANTIQUE GLASS

FAINTEN GLASS This Maryland-based company scours barns and old houses around Baltimore and metropolitan Washington, D.C., to salvage, recycle, and resell antique window glass, including wavy glass, bubble glass, and leaded glass. Just call up owner Albert Kern, tell him the size of the glass you're looking for or the era of the house you're renovating, and he'll try to match it. Then Fainten will clean the glass, cut it to your specs, and ship it off to you. Most of the antique glass runs about \$2 a square foot. *Frederick, Maryland, 301-370-3346; faintenglass.com*

11

12. ARCHITECTURAL PANELS

AMERICAN ACETYLE You're renovating your '60s ranch, and the money is running out. Replacing the kitchen cabinets is no longer an option, so here's an affordable way to spruce them up: Remove the old door panels, paint the frames, and fit them with sheets of UAMAcrylic. A lower-cost alternative to frosted glass, the acrylic panels are installed with glass liners for a soft, shimmery appearance, plus they're made from recycled glass. They're available in sizes from 3 by 6 to 5 by 42 feet. *West Babylon, New York, 800-677-9913; americanacrylic.com*



23 2

12 MOUSE NUMBERS

CUSTOM MOUSE NUMBERS You've renovated everything else, so why not give an upgrade to the fixating number 12? This custom, 18-ounce cast-aluminum number (and letters) is currently a 19 1/2-in. wide size, as hollow stainless steel or solid aluminum. Stainless-steel versions come with a satin or polished finish, aluminum in 12 clear-coated and anodized treatments and 14 baked-resin colors. That's the only one problem: These superglash numbers may attract unwanted attention from looking too custom as we watch the made-of-your-house-a-like 12 Powersburg, Florida, 888-868-3313; customhousenumbers.com

13 MOSAIC TILE

INSPIRATION SOURCE Ceramic tile will never go out of style, but glass is the starry material of the moment. Mosaic Supply offers an extensive collection that includes Moroccan glass and intricate mosaic tiles. Online shopping is as easy as pie, as you can call or find out about other products, such as wood and stone mosaics. Some tiles can be costly, check the site online for items priced as low as \$7 a square foot, and keep an eye out for "buy one, get one free" deals. Los Alamitos, California, 949-218-3143; mosaicsupply.com

14 INTERIOR SHUTTERS

GEORGE HENRY SHUTTERS Drapes are dust magnets, blinds look mechanical. But shutters can add just the right amount of polish and style to a room. Southern's Overton line is made from solid basswood, using warble-and-storm and dove's journey. Choose from 28 wood stains, or have them custom-painted to match your interior. Los Mochis, Sonora, 877-916-6173; southernshutters.com

15 EXTERIOR SHUTTERS

COPPER RESIN WOODWORK Used to be, shutters were made from wood. But that was before plastic emulated the pretty and took over. You can still find authentic wood shutters, though, if you know where to look. Copper Resin Works draws out of Spanish culture, African mythology, or modern and older using natural red-gummied resins. Copper, wrought-iron, and power hardware finishing come standard. Allentown, Pennsylvania, 610-910-7946; copperresinwoodwork.com

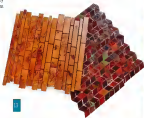
16 INTERIOR DOORS

TRUSTY OLD DOORS If you're looking enough to have a home filled with hollow-core doors, we feel your pain. So does TruStyle. Its 14-point-grade doors are made from solid, reinforced-density fiberboard (MDF), so they're substantial and noise blocking. "They are the only MDF doors built with stile and rail construction—not raised out of a solid slab of MDF—resulting in a crisp, architecturally correct look," says Jason

McIntire, the company's director of marketing. Doors come in 12 architectural styles, from Art Deco to Victorian, starting at \$120. Denver, Colorado, 866-440-5344; trustyle.com

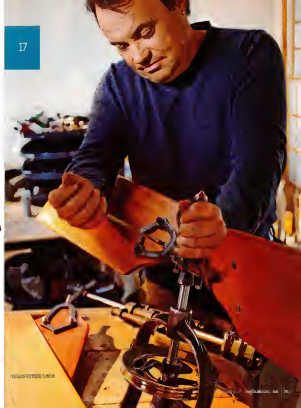
17 CEILING FANS

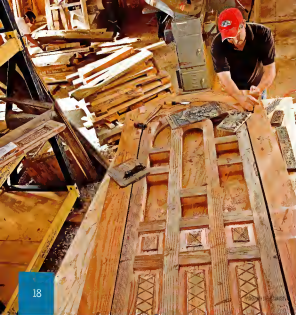
WOOLLEN HILL FAN COMPANY Built from patterns used in a 1976 Smithsonian exhibit, these old-timey but-and-polly have feature-solid mahogany blades and metal gear-and-rod mechanisms by Anson craftsmen. Motors can be mounted on a wall or ceiling or hidden in an adjacent room or closet. Two blades are available in iron, aluminum, and bronze. While these don't have the chilling effect of most contemporary, higher-speed fans, we think they're plenty cool. New York, Pennsylvania, 717-331-4746; architectionfans.com



18 EXTERIOR DOORS

LA PUERTA ORIGINAL You might be gaga over that antique door, but its outdated specifications disqualify it as an option for your home. That's where La Puerta Original is. Inspired by an architect, the company specializes in solid rustic doors that are either inspired by a salvaged original or are custom. "We make new products with inspiration of the old," says Mark Mercer, the company's marketing director. In fact, you can use elements of many doors to make a completely new one. Lead times vary. Santa Fe, New Mexico, 970-944-4144; lapuertacustom.com





18

20. SAVING

WOODARD MILLS You wouldn't dream of covering your home in vinyl. And you'd rather spend your weekends time on the beach than repairing the color chips inside. There is a middle ground: MacQuade's prefabricated decking is milled from solid PVC boardstock using lasers, not, and decay. Dip close the stuff



looks like wood, but it's resistant wood's maintenance headaches. Boards come in 22 standard colors (including 5 historic options) and more than 1,400 custom shades, and in 4-, 6-, and 8-inch exposures. \$408-\$180 per square (24 by 30 feet). Chicago, Massachusetts, 866-353-8883, macquade.com

GOT A TIP?

Send us your favorite sources, all throughout our favorite sources



21

20. WATER-CONSERVING TOILETS

STERLING PLUMBING The dual flush toilet is a great conservation innovation. With a 0.8 gallon flush option—half the amount of a standard flush—it can save a family of five up to 4,000 gallons of water per year. Dual flushers typically cost around \$180, but Sterling's models (there are four) conserve your money, too. The units, all with two-button actuators, start as low as \$229. And they qualify for water conservation rebates, so, depending on your jurisdiction you could get some of that cash back. Kohler, Wisconsin, 800-983-3346, sterlingplumbing.com

21. SPECIALTY HARDWARE

ROCKSTONE AMERICA Want top-knaped bushes carved down that swing up and out of the way? How about hand-knapped bobbles, or rock-casting mechanisms that keep

doors and drawers from slamming shut? With specialty hardware from Rockstone, you can have it. The company sells all kinds of clever cabinet hinges for wood, glass, and aluminum frame doors, as well as every kind of latch, catch, rock, and drawer slide you could ever need. Carson, California, 800-316-9474, rockstone.com

22. PERIOD FURNITURE

HOUSE OF ANTIQUE HARDWARE You're reconstructing a 19th-century mansion and looking for the perfect period hardware. Look no farther. HOAH manufactures an entire line of affordable reproductions, complete with a hand-finishing process that replicates the museum-quality of the originals. If you'd rather have the real thing, the company's hardware dealers can get authentic vintage pieces for you, too. The Oregon-based firm also offers custom metal-casting of antique locks, escutcheons, and doorpulls. Portland, Oregon, 877-213-0101, houseofantiquehardware.com

23. FLUCCS

DANCE Quality leathers—the really good stuff with fancy finishes—can really set you back \$130. European imports can get higher still. Six-year-old Dance provides an alternative, with precision precision at lower price points than other established brands. Fluccs bear all the marks of high-quality merchandise: cent brass waterways, highly durable ceramic disk cartridges, and designer finishes such as antique copper, oil-cured leather, and stainless steel. Woodridge, Illinois, 877-733-3344, dance.com



22

24. "GREEN" FURNISHINGS

Q COLLECTION Audley Cochran and Jesse Johnson launched Q Collection five years ago, with the goal of manufacturing good-looking furniture without using nonbiodegradable, petroleum-based, or other pollutants. In addition to sofas, chairs, and desks, the company now offers a colorful selection of sustainable and biodegradable fabrics that are free of toxic finishes or dyes. New York, New York, 212-519-0400, qcollection.com

25. HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS

WILMATTER GARDEN SUPPLY COMPANY Bag-box retailers are long on general building materials but short on hard-to-find items. This supplier stocks more than 450,000 products, from air ducts to Z-brackets and everything in between, so there's a good chance it has what you're looking for. Better still, with distribution centers across the country, many things ship out the same day. Order online, by fax, or by e-mail. Don't know exactly what the thing you need is called? Fax it or e-mail a description, get a number or drawing, and the company will track it down. Elmhurst, Illinois, 815-833-9100, wilmatter.com ■

• FOR THE PAINTING CONTRACTOR

A just-married homeowner decides to have his contractor father-in-law take a not-an-incompetent-but-by-painting-a-couple-of-rooms-in-the-house. The young man gets down to the task at hand and works Friday night all day Saturday and Sunday morning. When his father-in-law arrives for Sunday dinner, he finds the son-in-law lying on the floor in a pool of white, wearing a skullcap and an overcoat. "Are you okay?" the father-in-law asks. "What are you doing?" The son-in-law reports that he wanted to prove he competes not by painting the house "So why are you dressed that way?" the father-in-law asks.

"Well," the youngster replies. "The directions on the paint can said: 'For best results, put on two coats.'"

Q: Why do painters get upset so easily?
A: Because they're very emotional.

Q: How many union carpenters does it take to screw in a lightbulb?
A: None. That's an electrician's job.

• FOR THE SUMMER BEULER

A college student on a summer job gets sent to a family party to help out. "We need some beer by 10 a.m.," he says. The manager replies, "The nearest bar is 10 miles. Don't you?"

The guy considers his head and says, "I'll go check." He drives back to the job site and returns in a huff. "Look, I meant beer by 10 a.m.," he says. "10:00 a.m. Now I realize you need beer."

The guy pauses for a minute and says, "I better go check." An hour later he returns again and says to the manager, "A long time. We've passed half a dozen."

A paving contractor walks into a bar with a lump of asphalt under his arm. "A beer, please," he says to the barman. "And one for the road."

• FOR THE DO IT YOURSELFER

Builder and Doctor were standing at the head of a flagpole, looking up. A woman walked by and asked what they were doing.

"We're supposed to find the height of the flagpole," said Builder, "but we don't have a ladder."

The woman took a wrench from her pocket, loosened a few bolts, and told the pole down. Then she climbed a tape measure from pocket, took a measurement, announced, "Eighty-eight, six inches," and walked away.

Doctor shook his head and laughed. "Ain't that just a dumb idea? We only have to find the height and the place as the length!"

• FOR THE EYE MAKING

Three contractors were looking at the White House. One was from New York, one from Missouri, and one from Florida. At the end of the tour, the guard asked them what they did for a living. When each replied that he was a contractor, the guard said, "Okay, we need one of the men from Missouri. The guy would give me your idea!"

The Florida contractor did some measuring and said, "I figure the job will run about \$500—that's \$400 for materials, \$400 for my crew, and \$300 profit for me." The Missouri contractor said, "I want to do this job for \$200—that's \$300 for materials, \$300 for my crew, and \$200 profit for me."

Finally, the New York contractor walked, without looking away, "34,700."

The guard, shocked by the price, said, "How did you come up with that figure?"

"Okay," said the New York contractor, "I'll do it for \$1,000 for you, and we'll see the guy from Missouri."

• FOR THE EXTERMINATOR

A woman was having a problem with an insect problem from a pest control company. One afternoon they were carrying her in the bedroom when her husband arrived home unexpectedly. "Quick," said the wife to her lover, "into the closet!" She bundled him into the closet and closed the door. The husband, suspicious, searched the bedroom and discovered he was in the closet. "Where are you?" he demanded.

"I'm an exterminator," he replied. "I'm dead!" said the exterminator. "What are you doing at home?" the husband asked. "Replicating me." "I'm investigating a complaint about infestation of insects." "And where are your clothes?" asked the husband. The man looked down at himself and exclaimed, "Oh, ah! I've never taken it off!"

• FOR THE SPARKY

The electrician was confident in his opinion that he thought his wife was trying to poison him at dinner. "What will you do?" the husband's apprentice asked. The electrician responded, "Switch plates, if I can't."

• FOR THE TALK-AND-MATERIALS MAN

Accidentally sent, it's being ordered in 4000 (the day and Wednesday) and Wednesday of the People's Republic of China. Said Peter runs over, shakes his head and says, "Congratulations!"

"Are you kidding?" asks the contractor. "Congratulations for what?" "For celebrating the fact that you lived to be 365 years old," said Peter says.

"But that's not true!" says the contractor puzzled. "I only lived to be 40!" "That's impossible," says Saint Peter. "We add up your life when it's over."



THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT HOME IMPROVEMENT THAT TOUCHES SO THE NEXT TIME YOU'RE STUCK IN THE RECONSTRUCTION ZONE,

PEOPLE'S FUNNY BONES. (MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE IF WE DIDN'T LAUGH ABOUT IT, WE'D CRY.) LIGHTEN UP WITH A LITTLE DRY HUMOR. ILLUSTRATION BY DONALD LAZAR

Q: What did the widow say to the door?
A: "What are you knocking about? I'm the one with the pen!"

Q: What clothes does a house wear?
A: Address.

• FOR THE HARDWOOD FLOOR INSTALLER

One afternoon a carpenter finished installing carpet for a customer. He stopped out to have a quick smoke, only to realize that he had lost his pack of cigarettes. He came back inside and ran through the whole of the room until he found it.

"The smoke pulling up the entire floor for one floor," the carpenter later told his wife. He got out his hammer and flattened the lump.

As he was putting his tools away, the homeowner came into the room. "Wow, I think this is yours," she said, holding him the pack of cigarettes. "I found it in the hallway...now I only I could find my partner!"

How'd the new homeowner learn to redo his bathroom?

By tile and error, of course.

• FOR THE QUACK

A duck walks into a pub and orders a plate of eggs and a bowl of sawdust. The barman looks at him and says, "But you're a duck!"

"I eat your eggs and I eat your sawdust," replies the duck.

"And you talk?" exclaims the barman.

"I see your ears are working," says the duck. "How can I have my beer and my sawdust, please?"

"Certainly," says the barman, "sorry about that. It's just we don't get many ducks in this pub. What are you doing 'round this way?"

"I'm working on the building site across the road," explains the duck. The duck drinks his beer, eats his sawdust, and he leaves.

This continues for two weeks. Then one day the owner comes to town. The proprietor of the pub comes into the pub and the barman says to him,

"You're with the owner, aren't you? I know this duck that would be just brilliant in your shop—he talks, drinks beer, and says 'giddy'."

"Sounds marvelous," says the proprietor, "have him call me."

So the next day, when the duck comes to the pub, the barman says, "Hey, Mr. Duck, I reckon I can give you up with a big job. Pays really good money!"

"Look!" says the duck. "Sounds great. Where is it?"

"At the circus," the barman says. "The circus?" the duck asks.

"That's right," replies the barman. "That place with the big tent. With all the animals? With the big circus and all the circus?"

asks the duck.

"Right!" says the barman. The duck looks confused. "What the heck is it you want with a plankton?"

Q: How many window treatment planners?

Two. The window treatment planner is a room in the house, and the last instruction of the mother superior is that they need not get involved deep point on their habits. After everything for a while. Did you, despite to look the day, stop off his habits and paint underneath in the middle of the project, then comes back. Who is it? calls one of the men. Blindman replies a voice from the other side of the door. The two men look at each other, stop, and decide that no harm can come from letting a blind man into the room.

They open the door, and a man enters. "Now I'm back," he says. "Now where do you want these birds?"

HA!

Want more on laughs? Visit our site at www.toh.com/funny



color



BY



number



Trade secrets to make painting your rooms as easy as 1-2-3



an all-around guide

COLOR EFFECTS Painting with a couple primary colors, like the deep red and pure green visible, and blending with neutral tones of white, navy, cream, and black creates a harmonious look. **Success:** Red walls make the large dining room more intimate, while highlighting the white woodwork and trim. Red overhead also keeps the ceiling visually intact, making the space feel cozier and more enveloped. **Plus:** a warm design like this creates



So you've rehabbed your house like a skilled surgeon, fixing structural flaws and preserving each room's distinct architectural character. But something's still missing. More than likely, that something is color—the renovation's secret weapon. Did you know that crownmolding can visually raise the ceiling or lower it, depending on how it contrasts with the walls? Or that deft use of color can turn one room into a lively gathering place and another into a relaxing space for curling up with a book? If you're comfortable with tone, balance, and drill but freeze in front of the kale of color chips at the home center, you're not alone. So we went to readers—and our own resident renovators—to identify the color questions you're hoping to ask. Then we pitched them to paint pros, colorists, and designers around the country and asked them to spill the secrets of their trade. Use this primer to make sense of those confounding chip strips, then pick out a palette that will bring out the best features of each wall, nook, and niche in your house. No more panic in the paint store.

1 • My downstairs walls are all off-white. It's so boring! What's a good place to start adding color?

"Think of the space as a whole to be approached one room at a time," says Susan English, a specialty painter and color consultant in Cold Spring, New York. English often starts in the dining room, a social space where dramatic colors like red, gold, and terra-cotta seem apt, and the soft lighting typically gives these hues a warm glow. Then she cranks down the color in the adjoining spaces, with shades that play a supporting role. "Since the rooms typically flow into one another, keep in mind you'll be viewing them in combination," says English. She painted her own dining room a deep plum, and the adjacent hall and rooms in muted shades of green, gray, and black.

2 • Our kitchen is open to both the dining room and the living room. What's an easy way to join colors that will blend well together?

If varying your color choices from room to room is too much to handle, try painting neighboring spaces one shade "just a rung away from each

other on the paint chip strip," advises color expert Mary Jane, vice president of marketing for Behr. Or use neutrals such as buff, sage, or gray as a bridge between rooms painted in bolder, more contrasting colors. If rooms are typically closed off from one another—like the curvy-walk-upstairs bedrooms, for example—coordination is less important than picking a color that

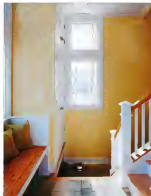
makes you feel good. In private spaces, personal preference rules.

3 • We have an open plan on the first floor. Is it best to stick to a single paint color?

Continuity is important on the ground floor, but color can help "zone" a big open space, separating the dining area from the TV room, for instance. There's no need to stick to a single color or even a single color palette that is either all warm (reds, oranges, yellows) or all cool (blues, greens, light whites). However, "by using muted, darker colors, there's a better chance the colors you choose will flow into one another," says Terri Ridgway, a color stylist for Valspar. She recommends leaving neutral colors softened by a bit of gray, these are often found in historical palettes. Bright colors can be reserved for small doses—curtains, furnishings, floor coverings, even flowers.

4 • I always get confused when painting a door and its casing. Where do you start on color and what the end?

It's not as open-ended as it seems, but the



COURTESY OF BEHR; PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS

side of the casing is something like this: Paint the face of the door the color of the trim in the room it swings into. Then a good example of why, if you're using different paint colors in adjoining rooms, they need to work well together. "Doors tend to stay open, so you'll have the trim color from an adjoining room in any given space as a regular trim," observes painter Susan English. So, let's say you have a burnt-red door opening into a room with pale yellow walls. "This can be an effective accent color in the space where it doesn't belong"—if it's carefully considered. "

5 • What about an archway with no door or a pocket door?

Keeping trim color consistent in adjoining rooms that have open entryways offers a sense of cohesiveness, providing an unbroken line that is pleasing to the eye. In an open plan, consider painting all the trim white, even where wall colors vary.

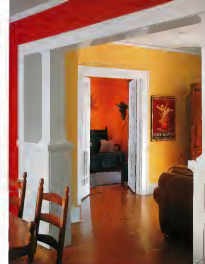
6 • Should the trim color always be lighter than the walls?

For contemporary settings, Maxwell Gillikovich Ryan, co-founder and editor of the blog apartmenttherapy.com, suggests painting trim one shade lighter than walls—even if the walls are white—to bring out "complexity and depth." In more traditional settings with colored walls, white trim creates a clean, classic look.

The wall, however, or instead wood trim may be historically appropriate in period house styles such as Craftsman and Queen Anne. Just keep in mind: "Dark trim creates visual interruption that can make a room look busier and smaller," points out Susan English.

7 • How close will the paint chips be to the color once it's up on the wall?

Those tiny blocks of color are a big source of frustration for many homeowners. "Any color you choose, unless it's a very light pastel, is going to look brighter on the wall," says Terri Ridgway. On the flip side, she says, colors are generally arranged from lighter to deeper, so when "viewed" in



COLOR COORDINATING Our experts give adjoining rooms a good floor living area a warm look in a light tone to match with the same color tones. Use the yellow-based wall shade and plum shade. Keeping trim color consistent from room to room helps avoid any jarring transitions. (Paints were typically neutralized with white.) Some colors, like reds, oranges, and yellows, are for example—don't make it too close to their neighboring spaces.

a "darker" more neutral, white. Also, some colors tend to appear darker when used over a large expanse, so you may be considering a paint chip shade lighter than the one you're trying to achieve. Regardless, no, that may color will play off adjacent colors. That's why Becky Williams, interior designer with Sherwin-Williams, recommends carrying up the chip strip into

adjacent boxes and looking at the variations case by case.

8 • What's the most reliable way to test a paint color?

"Have your paint for a bit before you commit," says English. The size of the room, the amount of natural or artificial light, and competing elements—ranging from flooring to furnishings—can all affect

COLOR TESTING The paint chip strip is only a guide. To really see how a color will look on your walls, paint a large piece of foam core board with it, then move it around the room for a few days. Different lighting will affect how it looks over the course of the day. While yellow looks cheerful in this new third space, a similar warm color creates a room that gets no natural light can quickly start to look gloomy.

Ask This Old House

WE'VE GOT THE EXPERTS READY TO ANSWER YOUR HOME QUESTIONS



Freezing Vents

Our roof vent pipe sometimes gets blocked by ice in the winter. When this happens, just one toilet flush will suck the traps dry and fill the house with a wicked septic-tank odor. My husband then climbs on the roof with a kettle of hot water and pours it down the pipe. This works perfectly, but it's rather inconvenient. Can you suggest an easier way?

ELIZABETH GALTHERY, WILSON, ONTARIO, CANADA

Robert Whitham replies: Blather, snowmelter? Anything that forces snowmelt out (as on a roof) is down-right dangerous.

Although I'm not a big advocate of rooftop heating cables, that may be a whole other kettle of fish. You could wrap the cable around the vent before winter comes—and plug it in whenever you think it might be freezing. Or you could get a cable that's thermostatically controlled. It might also help to cover the pipe with insulation, particularly where it passes through the attic.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has this suggestion: "Wrap an opaque-down Y-connector into the vent stick just inside your attic. When the vent clogs at the roof, uncure the connector's access plug and push a stiff wire up the pipe to open the block. Then your hole could be used for something better, like making hot chocolate."

Visiting a Ceiling

How hard would it be to put insulated ceilings in my bedroom and living room?

JANETTE TIGHE, GOSHAM, ONT.

Tomlinson replies: In some houses, it's fairly straightforward; in others, it's practically impossible. I don't know enough about your house to give you a specific recommendation, but I can help you figure out if it's worth having a contractor come take a look. The main issues you find, the most common, are, expensive, the job will be.

First, head to the attic. If you see a complicated framework of 2x6s held together with perforated metal plates, your roof is loaded with issues. You'll have to remove the entire roof structure to make the ceiling. If it's framed traditionally with big lumber trusses, the roof can stay in place.

Second, measure the depth of the rafters. Anything less than 5/8 inch isn't deep enough to insulate efficiently, unless you use spray-on foam. With batt insulation, you have to allow for a 4-inch air space to ventilate the underside of the roof. Spray-foam insulation doesn't need an air space.

Third, check for mechanical complications, such as plumbing vents, HVAC equipment, and wiring. Anything in the attic will be installed well have to be relocated. You'll need an HVAC contractor to determine whether your heating system can handle the increased volume of a room with a sealed ceiling. Also, before you start the work, consult a structural engineer to make sure the collar ties are in the right place to prevent the walls from spreading apart after the ceiling joists are removed.

The carpentry isn't that difficult. Once the collar ties are fastened horizontally between opposite pairs of rafters, 1x6s are nailed to the underside of the ceiling joists and bled back to the new ceiling surface. Finally, you're in for a lot of new and dry insulation, but you probably knew that already.

Duckled Porch Boards

Two years ago, a carpenter replaced all the old deck boards on our front porch with hot tongue-and-groove 1x6 grading & RTM Mix grays. They were then primed and painted. Now every winter the floor buckles, and in the spring it flattens out again. What went wrong—and how can I fix it?

DAVID POPP, GARDEN, N.J.

Tomlinson replies: There could be a number of things wrong here, but they basically all come down to too much moisture on the wood. Are the gutters working so that no water is dripping on the deck? Is a gasket properly—stitch it each year—no water drains off? Are the planks around the porch decking all in circulation under the deck? Any of these things could cause the wood to swell and expand in width.

The grade of wood isn't helping things, either. "D" is a second tier, "appearance" grade, which means that most of the boards in this grade, with the exception of the board that's flat-grain boards exposed and contact more than vertical-grain wood, which has rings nearly perpendicular to the face. To make matters worse, all that swelling wood is pushing against your porch joists and your house without anywhere to go. Buckling is the inevitable result.

Here's the fix: Pull up the boards, prime all their edges and bottom faces if they aren't primed already, and frame them with stainless steel or oak through the tongue and into the joists. Don't forget to leave a 1/4- to 1/2-inch expansion gap where the side of the decking meets the house or the posts.



More around the house: Every winter, the decking on this porch buckles heavily. Tomlinson explains why, and how to fix it.

What puzzles me most about your photos is that I don't see anywhere where the flooring has buckled. If there isn't any, it would explain how the decking can slide back in place each spring. It will also make it really easy for you to replace the boards.

Quieting a Noisy Basement

The master bedroom in my house is on the first floor, directly above a large, unfurnished basement with a swamp pump, water softener,

and furnace. Is there any way to block the noise at this equipment noisier?

DANIEL MAYER, NORTH CANTON, N.H.

Tomlinson replies: You can't block all the noise, but you can do a lot. How much noise block depends on the amount of noise and money you are allowed to put into the project.

The first (and cheapest) option is to have all the equipment covered. If you're doing the work that you want to maintain noise, a little lubrication or adjustment might do a lot of good. You can also cover the ducts with sound-insulating board.

Another option is to make the mechanical in an enclosed, insulated room with a weatherstripped door, but this can get complicated. Local codes may have restrictions about enclosing heating equipment, and you have to provide sufficient space and a door that's wide enough so items can be replaced.

Your best option might be to fill the joint cavity with foam or fiberglass insulation and cover the base with a 1/2-inch drywall. Before you attach the drywall, screw wooden cleats into the underside of the joists and cover the strips with sound-dampening acoustic tape. The tape and rubber strips should create the sound-absorbing barrier that would otherwise pass from the drywall into the joists. Layering wall-to-wall carpet over a damaged or worn pad would also help. All together, this approach could reduce sound transmission by nearly 45 percent, so you ought to notice a big improvement in your bedroom.

There are all sorts of other sound-control products you could use to help minimize noise, such as double-paneled doors, sheets of drywall and acoustic fiberglass bats. But like anything, the quieter you want it, the more it's going to cost you. ■

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Instant Old

Distressed paint and a pigmented glaze re-create the aged look



RELATED STORY P. 62
A STAFFED HOUSE

There's no secret to making the painted surface of a house look old and worn: even if they were just installed last month. Decorative painters Susan Gray and John Harris share some of their basic techniques for creating a rich, distressed look on beams and woodwork.

- 1. Paint.** Apply a flat, off-white latex paint with a clean cloth rag, which leaves a film of uneven thickness. (That's a good thing.)
- 2. Distress.** Remove the rag, leaving a pull-type paint

scraper or 60-grit sandpaper.

3. Glaze. Add a tablespoon of the off-white paint to a pint of acrylic glaze, then tint it with pigments (be sure to use a body depth) and yellow ochre (for an aged warmth). Glaze and tubes of tint are available in paint stores. Brush the glaze over the distressed paint.

4. Flatten. Let the glaze dry for about 30 minutes, then rub it down with 5000-grit sand. This removes some of the glaze from the high spots and leaves it in the low spots, giving the illusion of woodwork that has aged in place.

—TIMOTHY BAKER



Demolish a Tiled Floor

The job goes fast once the grout is gone

RELATED STORY P. 58
TRUCK-A-HEALTHY

is a protractor or the sliding bevel is well attached (don't use a protractor or the sliding bevel is well attached (don't use a protractor or the sliding bevel is well attached).

In small areas that are only a few feet square, a hammer and cold chisel will do the job—eventually. Or better yet, a tool known as a demolition hammer is a better bet. With a only about 100 pounds of force, this miniature electric jackhammer delivers about 1,000 blows per minute, working faster than any would be. John Harris could pound by hand. The hammering action starts only when the chisel tip is pushed against a hard surface, so the operator remains in full control, with minimal fatigue. You can rent one at most tool (and chisel) for about \$12 a day. In most cases, you won't even need to buy that long.

Whether you decide to work by hand or a power tool, you still follow these steps:

1. Protect yourself. Wear goggles, gloves and a dust mask. Lay the work area in plastic to keep the gritty dust from mixing beyond the house.

2. Attack the grout. First, plunge the chisel vertically into the joint, then tilt it at a 60-degree angle to the surface and plow it through all the grout lines. (With a demolition hammer, you can rotate the chisel into position that lets you hold the tool comfortably. Work in walls where an angled chisel can't reach the grout.) In some cases, where you risk overshooting the tile position, the chisel vertically as you beat out the grout.

3. Get under the tile. Some hammering pop loose is the grout is removed. Remove the rest by prying the chisel close to the floor as you can and hammering at under the edge of a tile. The lower you can get the chisel, the easier the tile will come up without damaging the substrate. Work from the middle of the floor toward the edges until the tiles are up. —T.B.
FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT www.ironhorse.com OR 800-453-5888



TIPS TIP
GIVE IT A REST

After taking up a batch of tiles, let it sit (ideally) for 10 to 15 minutes so the liquids and solids have a chance to fully separate. When it's ready, it should have the consistency of peanut butter.



QTV Listings

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WORKSHOP

Norm's Notebook

► MASTER CARPENTER NORM ABRAHAM'S TECHNIQUES FOR THE BITS FEATURED IN TOOLBOX, P. 47

BITS FOR DRILLS

Work the Clutch

If you're driving screws into unfamiliar material, adjust your clutch setting, not the speed switch for "slow" for maximum torque and better control. Also experiment with the clutch: The numbered dial sets the clutch that stops the driver when it reaches a certain amount of resistance. You'll know the setting is right when you can sink the screw in fully without the bit slipping or jamming off the screwhead.



Sharpening a Spade Bit

When a spade bit gets dull, you might as well buy a new one because if it's too blunt to get it sharp again. Spade bits are another story. With a narrow mill, bend the tip so it's nearly sharp again and it's almost as good as new.

Clamp the bit upright in a vise, then rock the bit on the bit's cutting edge until it rests flat against the bevel. Push the bit across the edge about five times. Do the same thing to the opposite edge and to the backbevel on the bit's point. Finish up by holding the bit flat against each of the bit's faces and making one stroke to remove any burrs left behind.



My Must-Have Bits

Three to four feet of the general sort of sets out there that have 300 plus pieces, most of which you're never going to use. That's what I look for instead. Next, what I then should do is a range of sizes, but between 1/8 inch and 1/2 inch. I'd want a longer smaller ones because they're more varied over a wider size. Anything larger than 1/2 inch and I switch to a spade or auger bit. **Driving bits.** Phillips and square-drive bits, sizes 1/8 to 1/2 inch as opposed to no. 2 or larger twist bits for larger screws because I only tighten them with a screwdriver which is less likely to slip and pull the screwhead. **Storage.** I like ones that are small enough to carry in my toolbox or bag. It doesn't need to have a lot of slots, but it should hold them fairly enough so they can open up upside down without anything falling out. And if they do get mixed up, it's no harm, because they are labeled on both the bit and its spot in the case.

This compact bit case from Milwaukee (left) holds the Norm-approved bits—Jabberclaw, 1/8 to 1/2 inch, 1/2 Phillips-head screwdriver bits—plus square-drive bits, nail drivers, metal augers, and a guide sleeve for drywall screws.



Every time you tighten a three-jawed chuck onto a six-point bit, make sure the jaws come down firmly on the flat face of the bit's shank—not on the shank's corners. Otherwise, no matter how tightly you crank down on the chuck, the bit will slip when you start the drill.

WORK'S TOP

You'll drill more cleanly if you don't try to punch a hole through the wood all in one shot. Instead, pull the bit out partway as it's spinning to clear away the chips from the cutting edges.

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Coltsboro is a city of around 40,000 that is also home to Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, which bent on training a comeback after years of slow job growth and economic malaise. Dozens of new businesses have moved into the historic downtown.

A string of city hall recently opened for business, and the state's Department of Transportation is subsidizing 1800 Green Station to provide bus and rail service to nearby Raleigh and Wake counties, both about an hour or so away. The city is also working with Downtown Goldsboro Development Corp. and Preservation North Carolina to buy or rehabilitate houses and sell them cheaply to anyone willing to enter into a rehabilitation agreement and some protective covenants. So far they've sold 11. But it's more including this tip for the picking: four upper-end sell-ups for sale. —*Steve Freedman*

[1] <http://www.math.ubc.ca/~cass/research.html>

Rest of groups killed off the life and a reward of 1000

11. A graph of the income curve along the perimeter of the income TIO. The vertical axis is labeled y and the horizontal axis is labeled x .

and flanked by sulfhydryls. The polarity features a

original barbed points and spinifexes. (4) The cavity

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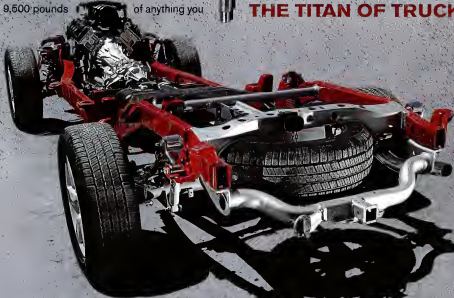
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