

This Old House

27
DIY
secrets
to cut
costs

tips & tricks to
save
space

smart built-ins
cozy attic suite
tidy kitchen redo

All
about...
wood
doors
page 92

Add rope
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\$120 Remodel
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idea file

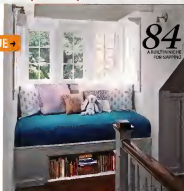
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All about: wood entry doors

Cover: Design: © 2009 The Whole House
Magazine Co. LLC



A wallpaper backsplash covered with tempered glass is a breeze to clean and pretty easy on your wallet.



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{ March.09 } checklist

EASY WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR HOME RIGHT NOW



❑ Put away storm windows

Nothing says spring cleaning like window washing. Wipe the grime off your storm windows, then slide them out of the way so that you can pull the screens down (if you've got triple track windows), or remove them and store till fall. Label them first so that you know which windows they belong to.



❑ Adjust track on outdoor lights

Daylight savings time starts on Sunday, March 8, in addition to changing your vehicle's clock batteries, set them on outdoor lights to take the longer days into account. No more taillights still blinking while the sun is still shining.



Now, seeds are up to 50% off!

☑ Plant your victory garden

Food prices got you down? If you didn't sprout seeds indoors, now's the time to buy seedlings for vegetables that are harvested in late summer and fall, like lettuce and peppers. To harden them, leave them outside a few hours a day for at least a week. After the last frost subsides, transfer plants to their permanent home, preferably one cool, cloudy day to help them retain moisture. Get tips on prepping a garden bed for veggies at thisoldhouse.com/seasons.

❑ Repair cracked shingles

Before these April showers start, check your roof for damage, and do a quick fix for shingles split by ice. Apply a bead of sealant to the torn areas, then weigh them down with bricks and let set overnight. If your roof needs a major mending, learn how to tackle it at thisoldhouse.com/seasons.



❑ Prep the play area

Get a jungle gym? Get it ready for when the little ones arrive! • Tighten loose screws and bolts, and replace missing protective caps. • Sand and repaint rusty or splintered spots that could cause little hands and knees. • Make sure underneath to loosen it, making sure there's at least 9 inches of padding in cushion falls. • While you're at it, why not build a tree house for your kid? Get instructions at thisoldhouse.com/seasons.

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“Chew your milk” and other advice

Growing up, I was lucky enough to know my great-grandfather.

And as a kid I was glibly enough to believe pretty much everything he said. You see, it's one thing if the patriarch of the family is a wise-speaking sage, but Poppy—though he may have been very wise indeed—didn't exactly speak so.

“You've got to chew your food 38 times,” he'd say, as he'd raise a glass of milk to his lips and set his jaw to work. I'm not sure which was odder: that he chewed his milk or that he had no teeth.

“Laughing is the key to health,” he'd say, as he'd pop frozen lime halves into his mouth the way other people popped popcorn. Frozen lime halves were his afternoon snack.

“There's a secret compartment in here full of gold coins,” he'd say of a big built-in secretary he had in his old house. Poppy may have been blind and his knees may have been backward, but that didn't mean I didn't pay attention—especially with treasure at stake.

Unfortunately, I never found the cabinet that held, but that doesn't mean I don't recognize the value a good built-in can provide. For example, I keep my ladder in the one in my dining room.

Anyway, I'm betting you find value in built-ins too. They store your stuff, make good use of dead space, and, when constructed properly, enhance my room. You'll see plenty of examples in our “Smart Storage Solutions” story on page 64. And while you won't find gold coins, I think there's something of a beauty in the ideas we offer for building your own.

Poppy never built one. But he filled a dilapidated garage (he didn't have a car, being blind and all) with every scrap of wood he'd ever touched, along with burned-out lightbulbs, each labeled with the date they burned out. Poppy was a curious man. Not every fall for from the family tree, I guess.

Scott Chamberlain
SCOTT CHAMBERLAIN
EDITOR



THREE THINGS I LEARNED FROM THIS ISSUE+

1. What carpets do for window screens (p. 38)
2. Why I should eat eggs and use the shells (p. 102)
3. How to choose the perfect system fan (p. 118)

P.S. There's still a lot to gain in building our Jane Reader-Created home. Submit your story ideas, tips, money-saving tricks, and photos of your own remodels at thisoldhouse.com/yourTOH. We're giving away a total of \$10,000 for the best of them. And while you're there, please drop us a e-mail. As always, I'm interested in how you think we can make a better This Old House.

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School for savings

A Detroit-based company is giving customers free DTE classes: tools, advice and parts for appliances. Why? "We want them to be able to afford their bills," says David Henderson of DTE Energy. As part of a pilot program the company offers workshops on home weatherization, energy savings, and budget matters. Also offered are home consultations to check that including programmable thermostats and rebates for Energy Star appliances.



NEWSFLASH ■ A study by the University of Macquarie says kale is a top-notch fertilizer—especially for yellow poppy flowers.

Happy birthday, old house

A 44-year-old single house owner 180 to 200 miles from Chicago is 1308 Hampshire Ave. Indianapolis entered its calendar year she marked the occasion with a party. Arrived late in period homes. Even invited 30 guests, including her plumber and electrician the house who sold her the place in 2003 and the banker who approved the loan. Guests were asked to make a donation to the New Albany Historic Preservation Commission which works to save endangered properties. "There's a great way for us to drive up interest for older homes in our downtown area" says Egan. "Hopefully it's going to be a trend."



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MONEY

How are Americans spending their home improvement budgets? Here's a quick breakdown on a per-dollar basis, of what we're shelling out each for these days.

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Basements are back

Whether they're getting ready for kids who are moving home after college (live on the cheap) or simply making space for in-laws, guest bedrooms or home offices, homeowners are rediscovering the benefits of finishing their basements. (One big plus: It's usually cheaper than building on addition.) The basement, remodeling market increased by an estimated 10 percent in 2006, with more growth expected in 08. For ideas on how to use your home's underused space, visit thinkdodge.com/ideas.

Cleaner cuts

There's one of a kind in every neighborhood, enough without having to risk it and give for example long information service for your equipment. Good news: Let's have a few more and standardize a way to buy reliable 100% quality propane or natural gas or electricity in the same way as you get it. Lower prices, better service, guaranteed quality. With a 100% cash back guarantee, the first time you call for 100% cash back, the first time you call for 100% cash back, the first time you call for 100% cash back. For more info, visit TheHorseWorld.com or info@TheHorseWorld.com.



Wrecking-ball respite

There's a glimmer of hope in the beleaguered housing market, especially for old-house lovers: Period homes are being spared from demolition. "Occasionally good for preservationists, since development of pressure isn't as aggressive," says National Trust for Historic Preservation's Executive Vice President, North Carolina, where many old houses were outbought in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Residents of the historic Colonial Park neighborhood (above) are scurrying to landmark it to avoid future change. If you're looking for old houses in your area, view a state's chances to protect them.

Trading spaces

With a lot of houses on the market, some builders are taking a cue from car dealers by allowing buyers to trade in their old homes for new ones. But before the final handshake, the Better Business Bureau encourages you to make sure you're getting a fair price by researching your local market and to hire a real-estate lawyer to review the contract thoroughly. For more details, visit bbba.org.



Reporting by Kristi Fordell
and Natalie Kuehnert

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Edited by Deborah Sweeney

make

10 USES

REWIRE A LIGHT

SECRETS OF A RENO PRO



4 SMARTIDEA

Wallpaper backsplash

Replacing an outdated tile or stone backsplash can set you back a pretty penny. For one that's easier on the wallet—and a cinch to remove and clean—opt for wallpaper covered with 1/4-inch tempered glass. Measure the backsplash area and cut out a cardboard template, marking the openings for electrical outlets. Bring the template to a glass fabricator so that they can cut a piece to size and polish the edges. After pasting the wall, attach the glass by screwing down the under-cover plates. Then run a bead of clear silicone caulk along the bottom and top edges and at the seams. Next time you update your kitchen, a new backsplash is just a quick smooch of wallpaper away.

A tempered glass tile works here because the glass is thick enough to be hung horizontally—no need to match seams. *Deborah Sella Designs: \$43 per sq. yard plus tax.*



FOR MORE INFORMATION: DIY.CREATION.COM

April 2011 THEOPOLISS.COM 17

Carpet scraps

Don't toss those pieces of old carpet. You'll reach for them again and again for projects at home.

1 Move heavy furniture.

Slide pieces of carpet pile side down under north the legs of a bureau, bed, or dresser, then push it across the floor—much easier than lugging.

2 Get your mower going.

Decoy your riding mower's engine in the spring. Use a doghouse with old carpet to make it cozy or make a scratching post for your cat by plugging scrap carpet to a felt post.

3 Cushion your knees when gardening.

Roll up a scrap of carpet and kneel on it when spreading seeds, planting flowers, or weeding.

4 Keep Fido or Fluffy happy.

Use a doghouse with old carpet to make it cozy or make a scratching post for your cat by plugging scrap carpet to a felt post.

5 Insulate your compost pile.

When it's cold outside, place a large scrap of



Roll up a scrap of carpet and kneel on it when spreading seeds, planting flowers, or weeding.

6 Protect your car doors from damage.

Attach strips of carpet to the wall of your garage so that you don't ding your door when you open it.



7 Scrub window screens.

Dip a clean scrap of carpet into warm, soapy water and rub the pile side into screen to get rid of gunk and dirt buildup.

8 Clean a scraper while you work.

Scrapers and putty knives quickly pile up with residue as you remove paint with a chemical stripper. Wipe yours in the carpet scrap from time to time to keep the working edge clean and sharp.

9 Muffle your washer and dryer.

Place scraps of carpet underneath the feet of laundry machines to dampen thumping noises.

10 Keep your sink scratch-free.

Place a piece of carpet pile-side up to the basin when working on the faucet to protect your tools from scratching the bowl.

11 What do you reuse?

Old carpet scraps can be used for many projects around the house. Find out how to reuse them in this guide.



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sofiy.

Everything you need to rewire a light fixture

We've spotted lots of period and vintage pendant lights at secondhand stores lately, and we're digging them for a couple of reasons: (1) They're often inexpensive, and (2) they're a snap to fix. This one, from the early 1940s, would look perfect as a small-entry hall or over a modest-sized dining table. The glass shade is in good shape, so all it took to get it ready to hang (aside from standard electrical hookups) was a new socket assembly and some basic rewiring. Practically every piece of an old fixture can be rebuilt on the cheap, so if you stumble across one possible, grab it. Here's the gear you'll need to get it working again. —*AM. WEL/CA*

Tools



wire strippers

These cut a snap for wire size, making it easy to strip the insulation off your work. \$10; circulard.com



needle-nose pliers

For a variety of uses, including pulling wire. \$10; kirkco.com



screwdriver

Get one with a rubber-encased handle to protect against shock. \$10 for insulated 12 in.; bit.ly/bondhus.com

Materials



electrical tape

Wrap a layer around wires before connecting to the switch. \$10; bondhus.com

Replacement parts



now hang it up

Read a step-by-step tutorial for hanging a light fixture in this article: thisweekshomerepairs.com



18-gauge wire
Copper-core twist instead of PVC. This gives a fixture with exposed wiring a more finished look. From Super-Bonding.com



socket and base assembly

A new hammer for the bulb; the composite tube covers the switch. For a step-by-step tutorial, visit thisweekshomerepairs.com



wire nuts

One size fits all. (Note: Always use the correct size.) \$10 for 10; bit.ly/bondhus.com



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A reno pro's top secrets

It was the pleasure (and the pain) of revamping bar basins in North Carolina that led architect Sarah Samuels, author of the best-seller *The Not So Big House*, to pen her new title about remodeling. It's loaded with smart advice and tips. Here are three of our favorites. —www.remodeling.com



Not So Big Remodeling by Sarah Samuels, CMAA, www.sarahsamuels.com

> Let columns define space. "Homeowners are often concerned that columns will restrict view between activity places, but the alternative is awkward."

HOW TO PUT THIS TO WORK: About columns built into ceilings to enhance the space-defining quality. Here, a combination of columns and double-top support at a kitchen exit brings focus while keeping an open floor plan.



> Steal light for dark areas.

"A window-treated glass-paned door lets a little light into the master hall."

HOW TO PUT THIS TO WORK: To get the most light for dark areas, double-pane windows and reflect with clear glass (or none). Where privacy is a concern, frosted or stained glass is a better option.



> Nooks carry up a space. "A framed alcove creates a shelter for the bed."

HOW TO PUT THIS TO WORK: Add exterior sheen to sturdy bedposts, railing, arched or dented molding, make them decorative. The fun color of the arched molding is a defining effect and helps create a focal point in the room.

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A white range hood vents through the rafters of the eat-in kitchen.

The granite-topped island features a curved counter for quick access.

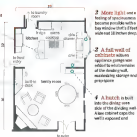
Cherry floors echo the island cabinets and stained ceiling beams.



The shined
new ringlet to
move the like the
shined wonder and
cousin's space

The previous crash-down is
faster of solid-state drive may
window edited is not more light

- I The islanders** breakfast: his eating design cabinets and a nightline from cooktop to finally reveal so that the deck and balcony of the island.
- J A built-in deck** with storage for files in the family room. The angled side—on the same side as the clipped end of the island rest based on the angle of the beach—allows for a coastline view.



There isn't as much on the sliding tray as tucked up in the top layer, either.

✦ **A cherry countertop** and arbutus leaves on leaf and low walls give the built-in hutch a distinctive, custom look. *Joshua Hottinger*



• **A painted marble shelf**
Says it with the offbeat kitchen cabinets and updates the family room's 1980s look. —*Sharon*



↑ The raised snack bar on the cherry island helps hide the hawking cooking. Golden duck-eggs traps its white surface. Along the snack wall what remained of the delectable wall that separated kitchen and dining room is filled with cobwebs. One built its burrows in the other side. The end of the wall is garnished with 10 pieces and finished with a few cherry topped shelves for artist storage. *Don't forget!*



★ **Open shelves** are angled toward the seating area by the hearth. The desk area's bottom cabinet is designed to hold a speaker for a plasma TV (sold). Gray conversion veneer painted wood/Galaxy Indoor Interiors, Inc. by Sherwin-Williams



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Victorian-style lav faucets

One easy way to warm up a bathroom: Swap in a vintage look faucet. Here, our favorites to fit sink decor with one, two, or three holes—or none at all. by ANDREW DOUGHERTY • Photography by DOUG BORN

Nothing adds character to a bathroom faster than a classic two-handle faucet with buttons masked over and coated in an elegant shepherd's-crook spout. While round is a late-Victorian style, today's cross-handle faucet was the dominant form for reproductions in shiny brass and nickel to dramatize manopercussions with updated water and porcelain finishes. There are also steel and configurations to fit every type of sink. *deck* Popular widespread models feature the wide variety of levers, while bridge styles maintain styling with more variety: single and double-hole versions work for compact spaces.

Each faucet shown here features all-brass construction and a durable ceramic disc valve, no matter the pricing. So whenever your budget, think of it this way: It's not when you can replace a faucet in the time it takes to switch out a spigot.



+COMPACT

budget pick

space-saver

DAVID WILSON

Designs that streamline with two handles just 4 inches apart, this chrome-plated cast-iron model with porcelain handles has perfect proportions for a powder room or rest room. \$65, magnolia.com



+BRIDGE

clear the deck

DAVID WILSON

Beginning from a tiny sink to a full-size one, this two-hole model has a wide variety of handles. \$100, magnolia.com

+WIDESPREAD

all in the details

DAVID WILSON

This faucet with a modern "pump" design is pulled into the room and into Victorian "brass" spouts. It also has a modern twist: a black line wrap of your machine's external coil. \$65, magnolia.com



"My husband is a toolaholic...help!"

Our married team of remodeling therapists offers tried-and-true advice for surviving the emotional and financial pitfalls of home improvement. BY STEVE LALLIERA & KIMBERLY ARNETTS • Photo illustration by JONATHAN CAGLEMAN

Q My guy says tools that he believes are necessary that do you really need 20 different hammers? Don't even get me started on the power tools! He improved the table saw with both our names, which was just a ploy to make me feel a part of his tool obsession. I'm not falling for that! Hope they can make him stop?

—GONNEE KOWAKS, REDDIE, OREGON

A Dear Cramped in Hammers: We're all got our obsessions. For me, it's a personal infatuation with decorative which I guess could do without. So we set some ground rules: limiting how much personal collections (this is a financial instrument) could sit on our checkbooks and closet space. Now have a budget to stick to, and if one year I don't use my Valentine's salt and pepper shakers, for example, I've got to give one up. So be your own dad with your husband. Encourage him to buy that new drill driver—hopefully an axe—as long as he agrees to put it in a similar tool cupboard. It's a good compromise. He can donate to Habitat for Humanity (probably not). He'll get a tax deduction and more important, help someone who really does need the tool.

Q "My wedding gift is overkill!" Dear my wife, Nicole, and I got married. I recently searched for a new house. My fiancée, the place across the street from where she grew up was for sale. It needed a little but I knew we would call it home. I had the deal done within a week. To my dismay, Nicole wasn't happy when she saw the buckled kitchen floor, nor when she discovered that the upstairs smelled of the previous owner's pets.

—CHRISTOPHER K. AUBURN, MA



A Dear Well-Intentioned:

You're lucky the distressed you suppose are flowers and candles—not houses! I learned to approach big decisions as a partnership the day I bought a house for my living room. They called it a house when I told her the color red. She did it on my own. Sure, I know well but also ride on a house when I told her I'd like a blue. She's a fair appraiser without your partner's blessing is even worse. It gets your fledgling marriage, spend lovely paper, frayed electrical, exploded pleaser. You both need to be ready for the remodeler's life—fraying flexible work hours, forest with contractors, and using your honeymoon to buy a remodeler's house instead of being a warm, sandy beach. Don't get

me wrong. Remodeling a house is very rewarding. Just remember that planning and dreaming together is half the fun.

Q "I left it to the expert, now my house is ugly!" I remodeled my Victorian, and took a house and let the architect choose the paint, thinking that color selection surely must have been part of his training. I was wrong. He assembled my place with clay shades of pink, turquoise, and yellow. Any suggestion on how to get an appropriate color scheme that'll actually like? —DEBORAH, MICHIGAN

A Dear Too Trusting: Hiring a new paint selection for your house is like letting your puppy

snore. Sure he's a pro, but you're going with his taste and yours. These colors probably remind you of school or the "Faded Lead" Victoria's Secret model. So, I don't always like the same color schemes, but we often find common ground after going over design books, websites, and magazines together. Then we pick our best bet and use it for the period. Appropriate color combinations: earthy tones such as red, brown, blue, and green. Colors tend to work well on your style. Once you find a few colors you like, look for the colors that look together in varying light. You don't have to buy big, can save money by buying paint companies now offer sample pots for \$5 or less.

Q "Thoughtfully I've had left the building!"

My brother and I bought a house in the end of interior updates. I'm a contractor, but he has little renovation experience. Our brother made the best friends, so he made making decisions about what changes will boost the value. He seeks his advice, and mine. What also tells me, is that in the first week of ownership, I was on the place 40 hours to his 3.

—JENNIFER HALLMAN, ALBERTA, CANADA

A Dear Bigger Building: Many a family and business is hurt, but it becomes a death sentence for your project—anyway, a relationship—if you don't develop a very honest plan for differences. Talk to your brother about who's contributing what. Factor in the value of each time and money. For

example, if you're doing most of the work, it seems that you get bigger share of the profits when the house sells. Then type in the outline the division of labor and money spent upon financial issues. Research together and sign it. That way there will be any future misunderstandings. Just be careful not to discredit your brother's contributions. While you may be the expert remodeler, he's not the financial decision-maker. What sells?



Q "My contractor was a nightmare, and now he won't be a reference."

Our remodel did it go smoothly. The contractor wrote instructions for his crew on the walls. In plain English, I understand a word, much less correct any errors. As the work went on, progress for months, he made mistakes because of a lack of supervision. One time they shut off the neighbors' gas during a dinner party. Another night I found them having a coffee party in our living room. In the end, their work was mediocre, and the price was right. I'm just not sure it was worth the trouble. Should I recommend the contractor only to my enemies?

—DAVID HALL, NEW YORK CITY



Steve Lallier and Kimberly Arnets are coauthors of *The Flippy Remodeler's*. Their 20-year experience will help keep you from losing your money, sanity, or marriage while making home improvements.

help us help you

Steve Lallier and Kimberly Arnets are coauthors of *The Flippy Remodeler's*. Their 20-year experience will help keep you from losing your money, sanity, or marriage while making home improvements.

Your Questions Answered 24/7

Q: I would like to prune my butterfly bush. When is the best time to do this? *deedee8*

A: The bush can be pruned anytime of the year, with early spring preferred. Try modest pruning in the most needed areas to see how it is tolerated. Carry on from there. *JacindaBlack, senior member*

Q: Sometimes our gas water heater doesn't have hot water. Does it need to be replaced? *RhettMR*

A: Often these thermostats develop a "flat spot." Turn it up or down 10 degrees for a couple weeks. Then turn it back to where you had it. Odds are it will now respond properly. *goldstar senior member*

Q: My dogs chewed one corner of our kitchen pine cabinets. Is there anything I can do to fix this? *-Spar*

A: Use a router and template to remove the damaged area. Find a piece of wood that matches the grain. Glue it in place and sand it smooth so you can stain and poly it to match. *ade845, member*

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advice.thisoldhouse.com

This Old House .com

Bronze ring door knockers

Both these models deliver a satisfying thunk and are handsome enough to do any house proud. Read on for the fine points that account for their difference in cost. BY STEVE TRANCOS • Photographs by GREGORY HADGAS

Descended from a traditional old style, a 1 1/2-inch ring knocker will focus the clunk of almost any house. From Calverton to contemporary—especially if you keep all the hardware in a similar flavor for a unified look. But not all rings are created equal. Each of these high-quality models has the weight of bronze and will make an echo, whether they offer a lesson in the nuances of look and feel.

Right-End
Recky Mountain Hardware
5-1/8"X1 1/2"X1 1/2" BRONZE RING DOOR KNOCKER

Weight: 24 ounces. *Wendy, Editor*

+\$267

IS IT WORTH IT?

If you have a place that you only use as a temporary home, this looks as if it's a little overkill. But it's a little overkill.

the metal
Solid with a bronze finish of copper, nickel, zinc, and manganese with a heavy-duty and copper base.

the process
Each knob is made of a solid piece of metal which is sand blasted and then polished with a fine sand. The knobs are then hand finished with a bronze finish.

the finish
The finish is a hand finished bronze. The finish is a hand finished bronze. The finish is a hand finished bronze.

Budget
Baldwin Hardware
5-1/8"X1 1/2"X1 1/2" BRONZE RING DOOR KNOCKER

Weight: 24 ounces. *Wendy, Editor*

\$95+

IS IT WORTH IT?

If you want a more traditional looking knocker—and don't mind it's not the only one like it in your neighborhood.

the metal
Solid with a bronze finish of copper, nickel, zinc, and manganese with a heavy-duty and copper base.

the process
The knob is made of a solid piece of metal which is sand blasted and then polished with a fine sand. The knobs are then hand finished with a bronze finish.

the finish
The finish is a hand finished bronze. The finish is a hand finished bronze. The finish is a hand finished bronze.

You will not be brought down by uncooperative citrus.



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How to zest a lemon



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Woodwork refresher course

Whether it's a quick cleaning or a complete strip-down, you can always remedy a tired, old wood finish

By KATHY HARTGOLDY • Photographs by WENDY LEE T. WEBER

Beautiful woodwork is timeless—and the shellacs and varnishes used to protect it tend to give start to crack, peel, and fade. Or some well-meaning homeowner does a lousy job with a heat gun and a putty knife. But if you have an old home blessed with actual multi-wood, you can always breathe new life into it with proper cleaning or refinishing methods.

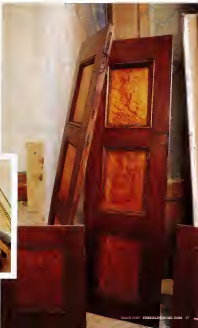
Wood finisher John Thomas is doing just that at the 1904 brownstone in Brooklyn, New York, owned by Karen Stern and Kevin Costello. The couple's home, the subject of *The Old House* TV project, has some gorgeous but long-neglected woodwork badly in need of his services.

Karen and Kevin's place is filled with fine woods—solid brook-elm moldings, quarter-sawn oak, and cherry—that today are considered quite valuable. But in the late Victorian era, when this house was built, says Thomas, "The middle class who bought these places wanted their rooms to look like they'd been plundered in a looting, a wood worker's the means of only



refinishing tools

It takes an arsenal of brushes, sandpaper, and abrasive pads to take old finish off the heaviest moldings and those rough shaves.



the very weather." As a result, most woodwork was given a dark finish that obscured its natural grain and color.

Thomas is quick to point out that sometimes these finishes also served a practical purpose by helping to hide lesser-quality or poorly matched woods. In each case, if the finish is intact, the best way to revive it is with a simple cleaning job. "Grime fighters," below, let at the house, in order restoring left the door panels blocked and covered, so Thomas's only recourse is to remove the existing coating and get back to the original material. Here's a look at how he strips, sands, colors, and varnishes to give storage woodwork a fresh face.

Grime fighters

Don't assume that tired woodwork has to be stripped and refinished. Sometimes a good cleaning is all it takes to bring it back to life, says wood finisher John Thomas. De-painted surfaces, by scrubbing with soap and warm water. Or clear finishes, re-up equal parts of paint thinner and a mild soap, such as Murphy Oil Soap, and apply with a sponge or paintbrush. Wipe the solution away with a rag to clear the dirt, you'll likely remove a thin layer of varnish as well, too, because the grease has melded with it. To clean deep into details, such as carvings or beadwork, use a toothbrush or fine steel wool.



HOW IT'S DONE

Six steps to a perfect finish

1. Testing the finish

Thomas restores the finish on an inconspicuous area, such as a door edge (below), by rubbing it with denatured alcohol. Shellac will come right off, but if the finish softens and doesn't come off, it's a water-based polyurethane. If nothing comes up, it's oil-based polyurethane or varnish.



1. **Scraping down to the wood** A dull scraper is the best tool for removing stripper-softened finish from flat panels (below). But when Thomas comes to the tiny carves and ensembles around the panels, he reaches for his pull scraper, dental tools, toothbrushes—anything that can get into the hard-to-reach places. He's careful not to apply too much pressure. "Remove the finish, not the wood," he says.

2. Stripping the old

Using a wide natural bristle brush, Thomas paints on a thick coat of commercial stripper then lets it sit for 10 to 15 minutes, waiting for the solvent to turn from glossy to dull. (Dull means the finish underneath has liquefied.) He keeps edges always open to allow any fumes to escape.



3. Sealing with shellac

Thomas rubs the stripped wood with fine steel wool and denatured alcohol to dissolve any shellac residue. Then, after a thorough vacuuming, he applies a coat of the second seal—sold in cans as Seal Coat—which is compatible with most finishes. He rapidly pads the finish using a wet of cotton rag wrapped in cheesecloth (below), replenishing the shellac from a dispenser as needed.



4. Adding color

To even out the maple's blotchy color, Thomas brushes on very thin coats of a water-based glaze that he mixed himself using dyes and glass beads (left). The wood gets darker with each coat he applies, in this case, it takes two glass coats for Thomas to approximate the original mahogany stain. But he can't just apply a glaze over a glaze, because the two would dissolve into each other and smear. So after the first coat of glaze, he wipes on a barrier of 1 part gloss spar varnish diluted with 2 parts thinner.

The invention of modern penetrating stains in the 1960s made it easy for homeowners to get even-stained color, but those stains work best if clear sealers of lacquer or shellac are applied to the wood first.

Finishing facts:

Maple, cherry, and pine don't absorb stains evenly, but you can give these woods a uniform color with aniline dyes.

5. Top-coating the color

Once the color is right, Thomas waxes the dry glaze with two more coats of the thinned glass varnish, which forms a tougher film than solvent-based sheens. (He skips polyurethanes, which get so hard that they can pull off the underlying shellac.) To soften the sheen, he brushes on a final coat of satin-spar varnish (left). A brushlets him apply this finish full strength so that it can form a deep film.

Finish lineup

Which clear finish is best for your interior woodwork?

Shellac

What it is: A natural, alcohol-soluble resin made from a bug secretion.

Best for: Sealing or finishing wood. Not as durable as varnish or polyurethane but easy to repair.



Spar varnish

What it is: An oil-based blend of natural oils and a synthetic resin.

Best for: Top-coating old varnishes and newly stripped surfaces. Thinner and more flexible than a polyurethane.



Polyurethane

What it is: Tough resin made from an oil-based or a water-based vehicle.

Best for: New wood surfaces subject to abuse. Floors, cabinets, tables, tops. Works over varnish but not shellac.



from the TOH TV pics

Learn how to properly stain woodwork at www.woodfinishing.com/learn



Refining a rustic cabin

One TOH reader's modest house in the woods gets a boost with an architect's proposal for a new porch and Adirondack-style details. by CHRISTIAN BROCKMAN • PHOTOGRAPHS BY HOWARD COOTNER



(before)



A balcony aligned with the front door is more welcoming than one turned to the side.

The rustic-looking metal roof is selected to match the house's trim.

Log columns and cross-braced balusters are hallmarks of Adirondack style.

"The front of my house is really here I know it needs curb appeal," says Christine Legault, whose log cabin home in rural Northwood, New Hampshire, faces a lake. "We asked architect Lynn Hopkins, of Lexington, Massachusetts, for a few ideas on how to spruce it up. 'It would be fun to rough the rustic nature of the house,' she said, noting that the wooden lot and lake now surrounded her of catty corners. Check among her suggestions: Convert the main deck to a covered porch that runs the width of the house, bringing order to the front, which looks haphazard because the windows are different sizes. A long shed dormer on the second story enhances this effect while capturing coveted lake views. 'It's hard to believe this is my house!' says Christine. 'I can't make all the changes, but it might fix the front porch—that alone would make a big difference.' ■

Finishing touches

Manual operation and earth-toned colors look at home in a wooded setting.



paint

Green and brown blend with the landscape.
Peacock House
Crest and trim and
Olive Green entry
door by Valspar
\$20 per gallon



deck seating

As Adirondacks, their rustic look is perfect for kicking back and enjoying the lake views.
LL Bean \$199



entry door

Divided light on this wood door is in keeping with the house's windows.
The Millie \$2,275



accent

A rustic-looking aluminum lantern adds the campfire after all these the log cabin.
The Cabin Shop \$199

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Exclusively on PBS Presented by

Country-style potting room

Simple lines, handwoven surfaces, and natural textures combine in a functional space with a warm, earthy style. Here's how you can approximate it at your house.

BY KELLY HANSEN • Photos by ANDREW BARNES

Whether you're a gardener who loves to get your hands dirty or you just crave a dedicated space for tending houseplants and cut flowers, an efficient—and attractive—workroom is a pleasure to have. This one, located just off the kitchen in a 1929 brick house, was designed around a 6-foot-long vintage metal sink and inspired by the kind of potting shed found in the French countryside, crisscrossed from lecherous houses and fields and filled with weathered, iron-cored pots. How to strike a balance between practicality and style when you bring such a space indoors? “Keep all the finishes natural and stick to conventional garden tool materials: wood, metal, and terracotta,” says interior designer Wayne Markus, who created the Brooklyn, New York, potting room shown on these pages. Here are some pointers you can use to bring a similar space to life in your home.



potting table

The long-top table kept wood contained (just for the table) with sawdust before you get to work. The lower shelf is handy for storing extra supplies. **Cost:** \$170 parade.com



aged terracotta pots

A weathered patina gives these unglazed square-shaped containers vintage style. \$13-\$36 each. etsy.com



utility sink

A vintage metal sink is a rare find. But this 6-foot-long version does hardware delivery every sensitive tomorrow—its sink, counter-top, and backsplash, all in one. Random the legs to suit it into a bit of old-world charm. \$1,495. vintage.com



outdoor light indoors

This reproduction pendant lamp, inspired by farm lighting, incorporates dry-bush-honey-toned wire. \$290 with free hand-painted copper finish. burnlightelectric.com



pro advice

WAYNE MARKUS, INTERIOR DESIGNER, NEW YORK CITY
“To encourage mossy growth on new pots, apply a mix of yogurt and crumpled moss, and leave the pots in a warm, moist, shady spot. The results are worth the mess!”

period-style faucet

A few pantry faucet handles as a 20th-century design can be a way to bring fresh from the garden inside. \$240. tomes.com



brick floor

Early potting sheds were built mostly from stone, including clinker bricks, which have a rough, weathered look. These antique bricks can be used for a traditional surface. \$20-\$24 per square foot. perthbricks.com



watering can

This classic English-style is also useful for watering house plants. It's by Hens which has made them since 1885. \$145. bellflower.com

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Marc B., Coventry, RI



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ALABAMA	ALASKA	ARIZONA	ARKANSAS	CALIFORNIA	COLORADO	CONNECTICUT	DELAWARE	FLORIDA	GEORGIA	HAWAII	ILLINOIS	INDIANA	IOWA	KANSAS	KENTUCKY	LOUISIANA	MAINE	MARYLAND	MASSACHUSETTS	MICHIGAN	MINNESOTA	MISSISSIPPI	MISSOURI	MONTANA	NEBRASKA	NEVADA	NEW HAMPSHIRE	NEW JERSEY	NEW MEXICO	NEW YORK	NORTH CAROLINA	NORTH DAKOTA	OHIO	OKLAHOMA	OREGON	PENNSYLVANIA	RHODE ISLAND	SOUTH CAROLINA	SOUTH DAKOTA	TENNESSEE	TEXAS	UTAH	VIRGINIA	WASHINGTON	WEST VIRGINIA	WISCONSIN	WYOMING

Shapely staircase spindles

Put reclaimed wood balusters back to work in your home as table legs—or even as elegant candlesticks. By AMY B. DUCKLES—Photographs by ROSELYN LARSEN



The heavy newel post at the end of the stairs always gets the attention, but it's the spindles—those leggy balusters cradling the handrail—that do the heavy lifting.

Be for the Industrial Revolution brought mechanical lathes to mass wood quickly and cheaply, these spindles were typically mass-produced, save for those in the grand stair halls of the super wealthy.

But by Victorian times, the plain little pickets that the less-moneyed masses could afford had been transformed with decorative banding, intricately carved floral patterns, and classical fluting details. Mid-work carvings from the late 1800s showed dozens of designs, as well as various wood species, to choose from. Builders often picked inexpensive pine for spindles, though, preferring to splurge on straight-grained walnut or mahogany for the newel and rail. They'd then paint the balusters to match the stair treads or other trim in the room.

Long ago stripped from the staircases they once adorned, most of the spindles found in salvage yards today are covered in their once-old paint. On warm spots, you



shop smart Turned to fasteners like these at Greenleaf Depot in New York City cost about \$15 each. Though dealers will often cut you a deal if you buy in bulk.

contrast the different colors for end-to-end or side-by-side layer applied over the year.

The handsome games of a metal green paint as a pair of spindles is what create my eye on a room shaping trip. To preserve the spindles finish and to contain any lead paint chips, I simply coated the surface with clear acrylic enamel.

Once sealed and protected from future wear, each spindle have myriad uses around the house. You can bore a hole through the center of one and use it for a table lamp, or use a spindle to create a nook in your top to make a spindle holder. For both, screw a vintage wooden corner block or router on the spindle bottom for a sturdy base.

Another great project is to secure a pair of spindles under a mechanical stair tread to serve as the front legs of a full console table. It's a simple and sturdy solution for a space-conscious home. And it's so simple to build that even at seven months' pregnant, I managed it with ease. Based on to learn how you can make one too. ■

fix wood finishes

Learn more about how to fix and finish wood in our new e-book at thehouse.com/bonus.

STEP-BY-STEP

Build a table from stair parts

My friend David Mendez came to me with a problem: How to create a central repository for keys, dog leashes, and mail in his tiny front entry without gobbling up precious square footage? Easy. Build a two-legged console that saves space by anchoring directly to the wall. To match the level in look of his farmhouse, we built one ourselves using inexpensive salvaged stair parts. For the front legs, we chose a pair of green-painted spindles for \$50. The top is an 18½-inch-deep by 36-inch-long heart-pine tread that we got for just \$15. To replicate the look of a riser (salvage yards usually don't stock them) for the apron, we cut a \$5 rough-sawn pine board to a standard 7½-inch height. ▶

Cost: \$102 for the spindle tread and apron board. Time: 3 hours. Difficulty: Single. But parts give the table a rustic look reminiscent of porphy.

➔ **Exclusive offer for TGH readers** Get 25 percent off a salvaged stair part kit to make this table at thehouse.com/bonus.



1 Dry old fasteners (nails or carpet staples) from the stair tread with a nail puller, and use a scraper to remove any glue or paint residue.



5 Clamp the apron end blocking in place and mark where the fasteners will go. You'll use 2½-inch deck screws to secure the blocking vertically to the tread, and 1½-inch ones to attach it horizontally to the apron.



2 If your tread has returns (small projections that would have given the tread a beveled look when its ends were mowed), remove them. Start by making a straight line along both ends.



6 Fit your drill/driver with a countersink combination bit and pre-drill screw holes in the blocking. Be careful not to drill deep enough so that the screws will anchor in the tread and apron but not pull the way through. Screw the blocking to the apron and tread.



3 Cut along the line using a saw. To steady the tool, clamp a wood scrap to the tread as a guide.



7 Attach the spindle legs to the apron's front end using 1½-inch screws. Pre-drill holes first to prevent the wood from splitting.



8 Arrange the apron boards on the underside of the tread, leaving a ¼-inch reveal for the tread to overhang. Next, mark where you'll attach 2x4 interior blocking into which you'll screw the apron.



8 To secure your new table to the wall, cut a wood strip that fits between its interior blocking. Measure the strip level on the wall at the height of the table's underside. Rest the table on the strip, and press the bar with finishing nails tapped through the table top.



Install easy crown molding

With the coping saw, and don't worry about perfect numbers when you put up this featherlight, modern-day plaster detail. BY JOANNE SCOTT-MORRIS • Photographs: HOLLI SMITH

Cost: about \$2,000 for a 20 by 10-foot ramp
Time: 2 hours per day
Difficulty: Easy The materials, weight, and the installation method are forgiving.

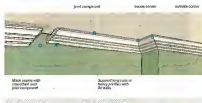


Day-to-day timeline

POST KEY Measure the money. Then order the melting of metal fasteners individually.

SETUP Cut all the pieces, install the roofing, clean up joints and gaps with joint compound.

SUNDAY David, prince, and asked the mother



Stress levels will
improve over
time, however.

Showering with a baby is often with the baby.

tools were used

interior and exterior
6 inch x 24 inch polyethylene
siding block
former
orange
applied with paintbrush

manuscripts no. 100

plaster, sealed form molding
Gel 2: Spread more than you think
you'll need to accommodate shrink
(dormant) cast
joint compound, lightweight
easy-sanding premixed compound
alcid, 1/2 gallon of latex will
cover about 10 feet of molding
Add finishing with a support
bars if large mold profiles as
the compound dries
150 gill sandpaper
painter's tape
power sander



1. Lay out and cut the molding

If you're working with walls that sit out of level and plumb, allow your eye—rather than a level—to guide the position of the molding. For best results, focus on getting the crownline look parallel with any neighboring trim. Install it starting at an inside corner and work toward any outside corners.

4. Hold a strip of molding in place above a piece of window casing. Adjust the molding until it looks even with the casing. (Or, a helper to steady the molding and look for you.) Draw a pencil line to mark the position so that you can install the crown at this alignment.

B To cut the molding at an angle for an inside or outside corner, place it in a miter box upside-down, unclamped and pivot the bottom end and side of the box, so it is evenly angled against a coping and wall. Using a shadowbox cut the molding at a 45 degree angle. On an inside corner, the top part of the miter will be shorter; on an outside corner, the bottom part will be shorter.

d Using a coarse garden fork, show the birds of the aviaries a bouquet from the flower garden in some leafy field of the forest.

2. Install the molding

The crown adheres to the wall without a compound joint using two-inch-wide foam to slide down the wall. As the compound joints support long runs of molding with 3/4 nails.

A Using a 3/4-inch putty knife, spread 1/2-inch-thick joint compound the length of the molding along the top and bottom edges spread maximally toward end.

B Push the two-sided ends together to create the inside corners. Making sure their faces align at the corner. Match up the detail of the profile first, then use a mallet to fit any small gaps between the molding and the ceiling on all four sides.

C On inside/corner joints, push the mitered ends together until mud squashes out of the joint. Backfill gaps using your finger or a putty knife.

D Along straight runs, push the straight cut ends to create a butt joint. On long runs, place an 8d nail under the molding every four feet and at joints to hold it in place. Angle the nails up slightly to hold the holes, and seal them enough to keep them in place.



2

D

3. Smooth the joints

Cleanup will be easier if you clean every surface just compound while it's still wet.

A Use your finger to smooth out the seams where the molding meets the wall and the ceiling. Use a wet sponge to help wipe away the compound and cover up the face of the molding. Can remove too much compound—if you do, the seams will “holow” as it dries.

B Using a small putty knife, push more compound into and over butt joints. Push the ends over each detail of the profile, leaving the compound a little proud of the joint. Once dry, the excess can be sanded smooth.



3

B

4. Prep and paint

Joint compound is easy to sand, and once you go over the seams where molding meets molding, the joints will almost disappear.

A After the joint compound dries completely, sand down the entire using 100-grit sandpaper.

B Seal the walls using the edges of the molding with painter's tape. Use a scrubbed washbrush, primer, and paint the molding to match the door and window casings in the room.



see how
it's done

Watch on YouTube
or visit www.houzz.com
for more



4

A

B

Shopping guide

Buy stock molding

Crownmold.com uses two dozens of Trimac profiles in stock (crownmold.com). Here are three elegant classics.



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Replicate an existing profile

If you have original plaster crown in your home, Crownmold will custom copy your profile for \$2 to \$10 per linear foot. But making an accurate drawing of your existing profile requires a little ingenuity. Here's how to do it.

1 Fold down the corner of a piece of paper so that the points of the facet meet the top and bottom of the molding and the adjacent sides are square to the molding's end.

2 Cut off the corner at a square piece of cardboard to match the mitered corner.

3 Hold the cut cardboard against the profile face. Using a compass or scribe, transfer the contours of the profile onto the cardboard.

4 Cut out the profile drawing. Transfer its shape onto graph paper, keeping it at the same angle as on the cardboard.

5 Send the drawing to the manufacturer, and they'll return a computerized draft for your approval.

Original



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Homestead Lane

2 Bedroom, 1.5 Bath
Total Living Area: 1,542 Square Feet



For families just starting out, empty nesters or those looking to build a weekend retreat, this 2-bedroom 1.5 bath classic Cape packs a lot of living space into a small package. Full function, the home has virtually no wasted volume. Living spaces are convenient, yet screened from daily view. Best of all, the home lives large, with its open floor plan and a dining area that leads to a generous deck. With its small footprint, Homestead Lane fits its style into a narrow building lot. And for those on a budget, the home is extremely cost effective to build and cost. If you're looking to maximize your living experience while minimizing your footprint, Homestead Lane is the perfect choice for you.



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Woodland Avenue

3 Bedroom, 2.5 Bath
Total Living Area: 2,114 Square Feet



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Sunset Drive

3 Bedroom, 2.5 Bath
Total Living Area: 1,958 Square Feet



This heavily 2,000 square-foot broad-based cape is designed for a wide range of needs. Whether you're a growing family or looking to downsize from a larger house in retirement, this 3-bedroom, 2.5-bath home with master suite on the first floor has ample room with areas for whole-family gatherings, as well as more private retreats. The open first floor plan features a central eat-in kitchen that looks out to a living area and separate dining room flanked by a porch that spans the full length of the home upstairs, there's a cozy study, plus two bedrooms that share a bath with a Jack and Jill option. Sunset Drive has everything you need—all wrapped in this modern version of a classic design.



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Prospect Hill

4 Bedroom, 3.5 Bath
Total Living Area: 2,292 Square Feet

Prospect Hill, our most spacious offering, is designed for larger or growing families. The 4-bedroom, 3½-bath, farm-house-inspired home, with over 2,300 square feet of living space, boasts a vaulted great room, a scorable first-floor private master suite, and a bonus room over the garage for future expansion. The dramatic, split-level main space, or to both the living area and private dining room and provides access to the deck for warm-weather entertaining. Upstairs, three additional bedrooms share 100 baths, with space left over for a sitting area and conveniently located laundry room. With plenty of natural light throughout, this elegant home offers space and comfort without sacrificing energy efficiency.



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W

ALL TEAM UP FOR THE EXPRESSION "The second one's the charm." And that's just how Anne and Andy Lyons have come to feel about renovating their 1938 Boston, Texas, cottage since their decision, making not only space but also character with their latest find: they were their last—only.

Determined to stay in a house and a neighborhood they loved, the golf-course country estate and family room the first time around. Got to 2008 and daughter Molly's quest for every tenth-down a private bath. So the Lyons decided to finish an attic space above the living room to create a room as charming, Anne says with a laugh, as would be a "please come home often" entrance where no legs walked round.

But as with any old-house renovations, this one posed several challenges. For one, the Lyons wanted to raise the roof's peak to add bedrooms and fit in a dormer so gracefully that you would hardly guess it was new. Before they could add to the top, they would have to strengthen down below, since the cottage is set on piers and has only a crawl space under the ground floor. Plus, they would need to add an stair up to the new bedroom and bath, as well as wiring, plumbing, and ductwork.

All three Lyons soon realized they were contemplating more than a simple attic conversion. Walls would have to be opened up, and to pour new concrete footings without disturbing the home's lovely oak floors, workers would have to get into the crawl space to dig. In short order, Molly's quest for private space turned into a fine-tuning of much of the below, culminating in a new front door and 13 new energy-efficient windows.

Through all this, though, the Lyons measured to the same local design-build firm, CCGS, that had done their earlier addition. "Our challenge was to add new space and change old space but keep to the period, creating graceful transitions from room to room," says architect Stewart Davis, who quickly began craning about for a place to put those stairs.

As Davis drew up plans and project manager Tracy Scott started to start to bring the house apart, the family discouraged to the earlier addition. "Molly slept in a tiny closet below the back stairs the entire time," says Anne, not that the now-16-year-old realized the renovations would stretch to nine months.

(Continued on page 75)



The architectural and computer programs to create a complex pattern of blue lines to enhance the white shower walls.



LIGHT AND BRIGHT

ABOVE: A skylight brings the backyard breeze through the new pattern between skylight. Below: Kitchen has a new tile floor. Opposite: The new front door is a decorative archway. Right: The new entrance and white walls are inspired by a traditional white as framed here by the white door's archway.



Floor plans

Two-story house (at a new front) stands on 10,000 square feet. The architect took space from the attic. Clients were confident to design the kitchen, dining room and dormer to be built. At the front of the house, a 100 square foot lot is a 150 square foot lot.



Thanks to the new front door, the living room is now a bright space without the need of adding windows.

BETTER FLOW AND FUNCTION LEFT: To open up the small rooms on the first floor and provide better flow, the new entrance and staircase were moved. ABOVE: Light-filled buffet shows the kitchen's new look. The new entrance and staircase were moved to the new entrance room. For a full view of the house, see page 76.

win up to \$5,000 in cash or a gift certificate to a local business. For a full view of the house, see page 76.

finishing an attic

Figure you'll need to beef up the floor, insulate—and more. Here's a look at some building-code basics when it comes to turning attic space into living space.



ROOM AT THE TOP Attics are built in with a truss or top provides display space and points the way up the new full-height level stairs.

Access and egress

Code generally requires a full-size staircase with a minimum 6-foot 8-inch clearance above it. For fire safety, there must be two ways out—a second staircase, for example, or a window.

Ceiling height

Any living space requires at least 7 feet of headroom over a floor area of at least 30 square feet, measuring at least 7 feet in each direction. At the Lyons' house, this meant that only a portion of the attic was usable, though some of the low-clearance area was trapped for storage.

Floor support

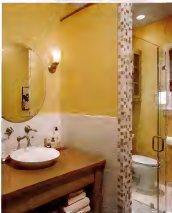
Attic floors generally need to be reinforced with additional joists and a subfloor. The Lyons used a mix of 16-inch deep engineered trusses to accommodate wiring, plumbing, and ductwork, then topped the plywood subfloor with oak or pine. (Kane limited that deep trusses will not hold beams.) "Heavy built-in floors, DBO, and some built-in may also need foundation work," says architect Stewart Davis, especially if the project involves ridding the roof, as the Lyons did.

Ventilation and insulation

Heat and moisture rise. That often means heating to add air conditioning, ceiling or window fans, and/or windows. The Lyons installed windows at each end of the roof to promote cross-ventilation. A layer of spray foam insulation under the roof and in the walls will help cut their heating and cooling costs.

SMART

KITCHEN SAVER The owners kept the existing sink without a hood to light to help maintain light and really up all the existing low 8-shape walls throughout help update kitchen. (Ruth Allen, Hallowell)



CHEERFUL BATH UPDATE By keeping a shower in the guest bath, the Lyons gave the room a separate shower area and improved safety with a walk-in shower. During the renovation, the Lyons used a mix of 16-inch deep engineered trusses to accommodate wiring, plumbing, and ductwork, then topped the plywood subfloor with oak or pine. (Kane limited that deep trusses will not hold beams.) "Heavy built-in floors, DBO, and some built-in may also need foundation work," says architect Stewart Davis, especially if the project involves ridding the roof, as the Lyons did.



See above and the sink was replaced by a new sink, which was allowed to be removed.

(Continued on page 14)

The toughest challenge was adding headroom and natural light to the attic without altering the roof's pitch. Scott's crew raised the ridge beams up and back to extend the eaves along in front, which allowed for ceilings 10 feet at their peak inside. While rebuilding the roof in back, they added a skylight over the bath. But the eaves of the new roof in the eaves of the dormer that Scott and his crew built off was, rather by night, they trussed over to the house and wedged into place. Just getting the unusual dormer to line up correctly, then shaping a smooth exterior inside with Masonite and drywall, took the men an entire week.

Less visible was the sawing going on under the house. To pour footings for additional piers without disturbing the oak floors, the crew dug under the crawl space by hand "with little berry shovels and tiny picks," says Scott. But one problem was avoided as was expected:

dividend: The floor in the downstairs bath was so water damaged they had to tip it out, which exposed the crawl space for at least some of the piers.

Two exterior walls and four inside had to be stripped to the framing and reinforced. But Scott was able to build the floor for Melly's suite without disturbing the ceiling downstairs, using 16-inch-deep engineered trusses to fit in ducts, plumbing, and wiring for much of the house.

The dormer's curve would soon be echoed by two more arches as a porch added downstairs. "The architect with the period, add charm, and open up the house," says Davis.

With a little jiggling, the team was able to add the staircase and give the downstairs bath and kitchen a little more room. "Keeping the scale small, retaining the character of the cottage, having living space that makes you feel good—that was where the Lyons wanted," says Davis. "And it's what they now have, with a little more breathing room." ■

A DORMER

PREP AREA Above, architect Lyons used a mix of the new island, which has a sink, to hold elements and then for cooking. The 10-by-5-foot rubber floor top with a mix of a pair of stairs for bare feet. Colors: Distinctive Wood Craft Counter and backspace pink. Nylon Zinger. Floor tile: American Ocean.



Homeowner Thyra White uses brush to build a trellis for peas that apple trees begin pruned off in early spring.

Branching Out

Traditional trellises made from twigs look at home in any backyard. Here's how one gardener makes her own—and how you can too

Gardeners need all the support they can get. There never seems to be enough time, after all, between growing's best green shoots and autumn's backyard-changing rains to straddle the weight of heavy-bested peaches, ripe tomatoes, and plump pea pods. As any green thumb knows, many tall annuals and mid-blooming cabbages need something to lean on to keep them upright so that they're not rotting in transit.

Ever since colonial-era homesteaders wove rustic garden structures from unbranched shoots of willow or hazel

and set their peas to clamber over rows of top-bagged herb beds, even less genteel men have used sticks to prop up their plants. Today, landscape pros who merge beauty and utility can do the same. "We take a lot of interest in how plants may be practical," says Connecticut gardener Thyra White, owner, "but aesthetics are important, even in the vegetable garden." So she reaches for branches pruned in early spring—close at hand easy to fashion to the right size, biodegradable, and free to hang on to her beds. It's hard to learn how she does it,



Once the peas are climbing, the trellis is biodegradable enough to stand until next year and sturdy enough to last through 10 seasons.

TEXT + PHOTOGRAPHS BY KAREN GUSSELL



Build a diamond-patterned twig trellis for climbers

Collect fresh, straight hardwood cuttings about 1/2 inch in diameter. Flexible apple shoots are easiest to work with, but shrub willow or dogwood, maple, or aspen also sapling twigs can be used, or improvise with bamboo stakes from the garden center. For the 3-foot-high, 10-foot-long trellis, Thyra used 50 sticks, 3 to 4 feet long, plus three thicker ones, 1 to 2 feet long (center or guide stakes) or one for each of the ends.

1. LAYOUT THE FRAMEWORK. Sort sticks by length, use the longest ones first. Cut lightweight two-sided objects (3- to 6-inch lengths) and nail ends. Push support sticks straight into the ground. 4 inches apart at each end of the trellis under the middle. Then drive the supports at slant and feet above the ground, as a guide for forming a straight line. Then cut remaining sticks and 5 inches for spacing, use 3 feet as a height check.



3. WEARIN' MORE TOUGH THERAPY. After the big sides and using the 3-inch spacer and three more diagonally going in the 3 to 4 direction. Then drive in the other direction. Drive them in and out of each other at every other intersection. The crossing sticks together at the bottom middle and top of the trellis. Keep working from the outside in, adding weaving and tying sticks. Flexibly tying crossing sticks at both ends to the structure.



2. GETTING IT BEGONIA. Center the 5-inch spacing guide on the middle support stick with two 40-inch end of the guide. Insert a stick diagonally into the ground at about a 40-degree angle going about 2 inches deep. Keep the diagonals parallel to each other. Then, at the base of the first stick, insert diagonals in the opposite direction, always pressing to level at the support stick.



homeowner tip

For quantities of sticks, offer to pick up prunings from a local landscaper or arborist in early spring. Their disposal problem could become your treasure trove.



4. TIGHTENING. Brunch and take a good look at the trellis. Then adjust sticks and tie them as needed. For a neat finish, tie the twigs along the top of the trellis using the 3-inch sticks as a height guide. Then tie up sticks at both ends for a neat line.



5. PLANT THEM AND ENJOY THEM. Thyra plants shelling peas (shown here) some peas, and a sugar snap along the length of the trellis. As the peas come up, she adds a support twigs along the length. They get optimum air circulation and support. Best of all, they're ready to pick.

Beefing up twig supports

Rather than buy clunky peony hoops or flimsy trellises, Thyra W. enhances root-zone bar twigs garden structures with galvanized metal garden stakes, spray-painted lacquer (brushed red can also be used), for plants that need heavy lifting.

To keep the nodding heads of her 30- to 40-inch tall 'Festiva Maxima' peonies upright (last, below), Thyra surrounds their bed with 3-foot metal stakes, driving them into the ground about 20 in. apart when the plants are 1-foot tall. Then she uses the stakes to secure twigs that run in a grid through the bed, just below the flower heads, knotting in the foliage, she adds another grid when the plants are 2 feet tall. "Take into account the height of your peonies so that the stakes don't stick up above their heads like they're a noose!" she says. Apple-orange had to be at the ends of the stakes put a pretty face on the grid.

To give her late-blooming stately framework, Thyra builds the trellis a four-legged tower (bottom). Plant, she drives 5-foot metal stakes into the ground in a 2 1/2-foot-sided square. Then she ties straight apple cuttings in big X's to the outside of the stakes and ties the tower with crossed arches made of bent twigs tied to the opposing stakes. Tomatoes ripen within easy reach.



SMART STORAGE SOLUTIONS

Even the most cramped house has space with untapped potential. Behind the walls, between them, or under the stairs, there's often room to build in cubbies, cupboards, and shelves where freestanding furniture just won't fit. So follow along on a room-by-room tour that's full of expert tips, shortcuts, and simple DIY projects to help you carve out clever places to stow everything.

Build in a Corner Hutch for Dishes

Sitting in a room where people rarely tread, a plain front corner cupboard is a classic dining room space saver. And since you're already working with a tight angle, you don't even need to have fine custom made. You can pick up a prebuilt corner unit from an unfashioned furniture store or a vintage one from a salvage yard for \$500 to \$1,000, and trim it out to match the moldings in your room. Here, the molding overlaps the sides of the hutch, where vertically ribbed boards form the gables, giving the piece even more permanence in the room, says Monroe. Considered-out carpenter Tim Pringle. To add symmetry, the crown is built up so that the cupboard matches the height of nearby door.

By Josh Garskof

Illustrations by Joe McKindley. Produced by Collette Scanlon

Build Wall-to-Wall on a Stair Landing 4

Most middle landings serve no other purpose than to provide a place to pivot 180 degrees before climbing the rest of the way up. But you can install a seat along its back wall and let it become a two-in-one (to serve the morning paper). For larger landings like this one, trade the seat cushion for a twin mattress (which measures 39 by 75 inches) and the built-in can double as a comfy spot for a nap. A cubby in the bottom of the bench made by Montauk, New York, contractor Robert Brando, provides ample storage for books and other reading material in smaller landings or niches elsewhere in the house, such as an alcove created by a doorway. **plus** for a seat that's long enough and deep enough for an adult to rest comfortably against a side wall with legs outstretched.

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HOW TO RE-CREATE THIS WINDOW SEAT

Building a wall-to-wall seat with the back and sides concealed means only the front needs a finished face. Start by securing 2x6 hanging strips horizontally to the studs along the three walls. For the center support, fasten a 2x6 post to the ends of the boards secured to the side walls. For the seat's front frame, install a 2x6 across the wall just off 2x6s, leaving a notch in the center for the book cavity. Top the platform with 1/2-inch plywood, securing its front edge with molding strips. Build the book cavity out of 1x6-inch plywood, and mount a 2x6 knee wall. Finish off the seat's front with beadboard cladding and baseboard molding along its bottom edge.



Build Perpendicular for an Entry Partition 4

Built-in can designate activity zones within a multipurpose room and create a feeling of intimacy all while maintaining the spaciousness of an open-floor plan. Here, the job is done with a column not even in appearance: That suggested divider ends between the living room and entry hall. In the early 20th century, such partitions usually came in pairs and were placed on either side of a passageway. These colonnades were so common that they were sold through builder's catalogs as "mail order kits." Today, you can find anecdoted out at your local salvage yard or built as true scratch. To make a square column—such as the one Portland, Oregon, designer Melinda Kern finished here to pick up the detailing of the nearby home post—install a hollow box by securing four poplar planks together with finishing nails. No hidden nails! Kern just makes one pair 3/4 inches narrower than the other to accommodate the oval top. For round columns, order neoclassical paint, grade pillars and decorative capitals for the top from an online supplier such as www.classicalcolumns.com. **Recreate the paneled look of the bookcase below: Buy plywood sheets (www.homedepot.com is one source) to the smooth back and end of a ready-made unit. For a seamless transition when the built-in meets the unit, use it on planks, and cover the open section with the same baseboard molding used elsewhere in the room.**

TIP: Consider hiding structural supports for a leaning wall with hollow columns, boost up your floor plan. As long as the design fits in with the decorative divider, the columns will serve to continue down through the bookshelves and thereby eliminate some interior design space.





Build One on Top of the Other in a Kids' Room ↑

For slumber spots for two kids in the space of one, we built in bunk beds. Here, Anissa of *How to Be a Mom* in Denver, CO, designed a room to work with the foot of the beds as a place of extended ladder designed a staircase with drawers out into the beds to give it a feel to climb for climbing. The angled stair wall serves as a handrail. To eliminate the need for a freestanding dresser, clothes drawers are hidden in the risers. A built-in book cubby provides more storage space in the corner beneath the stairs. And, just in case a little one wiggles out from behind the top safety rail, Anissa created a crash pad by taking advantage of the 20 inches between the built-in window and window to use a full-size mattress for the bottom bunk—which also makes a nice comfy spot for parent-child story time.

TIP: To take full advantage of the space under freestanding beds, we built modular storage of open top boxes in the corner. Because the unit is 18 to 22 inches high, the boxes for cabinet drawers, and glides leaves little room for all your gear. Build the box yourself, or simply purchase ready-made boxes (like the ones in the photo) that are 21 inches high by 21 inches wide for \$10 each.

Build Beneath → Living Room Stairs

In many homes, the area under the stairs is just board or has a long closet with such a deeply arched ceiling that it's useless. We built a bookshelf. A better solution is to fill the wedge-shaped void with storage units that are open to the rest of the room. You could have a pro to create a custom assembly or simply make your own built-in with a combination of stock kitchen cabinets from the home center. Start with a full plywood unit, then angle down the face with a combination of smaller rectangular wall cabinets and base cabinet units. It's even easier and less expensive to build cubbies like the painted plywood ones shown here. The series of rectangular boxes are placed one on top of the other in descending order and then screwed together through their legs, bottoms, and sides.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN MODULAR CUBBIES

Building beneath the stairs is a DIY-friendly project. You can make modular boxes from one board and sand them to fit the book wall without any plywood or construction. Each cubby consists of two sides, a top, a bottom, and one end or shelf. It's applied to a 1/2-inch plywood. The visible edges are finished with one or edge molding, sold by the roll at home centers. For larger cubbies, such as the two shown on right holding speakers, leave out the bottom shelf. To build the boxes, screw the parts together with three screws per edge of the top and bottom. First, position the cubbies row by row, screwing them together as you go. To make the assembly look as if it were built in place, use it on a light form (see "How to Create a Bookcase Above" p. 90 for instructions).



PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS; STYLING: JEFFREY M. HARRIS; PHOTOGRAPHY: JEFFREY M. HARRIS



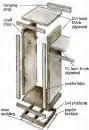
How long can
your shelves go?
Find out with
the Segalizer
kit, later at
theaerobics.com/learn!

← Build Out for a Home Office Niche

Adults don't require a fog-free vision or drywall-busting construction. Even an expense of wallpapering is an opportunity for adding storage. Here, Inglewood, California contractor Tim Pelerman wrapped deep bookshelves around an antique desk to create a niche, rather than to fill one. The desk would have looked lost on an empty wall. So he turned a decorating challenge into a functional focal point with carving out a wall niche. After getting the idea for the bookshelves, Pelerman installed adjustable shelves for storing books of various lengths. To make every inch of depth, the bookcases' back panels are left off. By securing the units to hanging strips just below their tops, they sit flush with the wall.

HOW TO CRAFT A BOOKCASE ALCOVE

For this built-out alcove, we've doubled up plywood rather than using boards for cost, weight and preventing shelves from bowing. The bookcases, tabs are equal to 2x4-wide thick planks, make them by gluing and nailing together two 1/2-inch plywood sheets. The shelves are 1/2-inch thick, made from 1/2-inch and 1/4-inch plywood. Adjustable stems are then clipped with poplar strips. To begin, square up the desk and depth of the bookcases cut these lengths and drill for adjustable shelf clips, wrapping all the holes with hardware store tape. Cut shelves to the same length and depth, but make the ones between the two bookcases longer for a spacious alcove. Finish by nailing both bookcases to a lat platform wrapped with a lock and shoe molding.



Build Into a Bathroom Wall →

The stud bays that lie empty behind drywall can yield ample stowaway space in even the tiniest rooms in your house. By opening up the wall in this diminutive bath, Meritauk, New York architect Bruce Rabinow converted a floor. In ceiling built-in with a combination of open and concealed storage—shelves for easy access to everyday items like lotions and a cabinet below for unsightly stuff such as toilet paper—in a narrow crease between the bathtub and the towel rack. If you plan to build one of your own, note that the standard width between studs is 16 1/2 inches and the depth is 4 inches. Walls that contain plumbing are often framed with 2x4s, rather than standard 2x6s, which permit an extra 2 inches of shelf space. For anything deeper, you'll have to steal space from whatever is on the other side of the wall—at this case, the chase around the HVAC duct. "Just don't make the shelves more than 28 inches deep; these are about 12 inches," says Rabinow. "Otherwise, the recesses will become cluttered with stuff you don't even know is back there."

TIP If you're winning space from an adjoining room for a built-in, don't finish the back of the bump-out with plywood. Adhesive-mount shelving is a functional upgrade for the new construction. ■

Is a wood door right for you?

Consult this handy checklist to see if a wood door makes sense for your house.



Is it protected from rain? A wood door needs upkeep and requires lots of maintenance to be covered entryway. To be effective, that coat should be reapplied at least half the height of the door including its sill and any pinched windows, such as the transom shown on the right. If the roof is 10 feet above the door's landing, for example, it should project 9 feet. Also, the roof's width should be at least 2 1/2 times the door's.



Is it exposed to the sun? Doors that take in the sun for more than 4 hours a day will quickly lose their luster without routine care. Clear-coated doors must be resealed every one to two years, and painted ones require a fresh coat every five to six years.



Is the sill high enough? It should clear a porch landing by 4 to 6 inches to prevent built-up snow or pooled rainwater from causing rot.



Is fire a concern? Check your local building codes, particularly if you live in a place prone to wildfires. A fire door is required to withstand 90 minute fire tests.



How cold does it get? Standard 1 1/2-inch thick wood doors have an R value of about 2.5, close to that of a double-pane window. That's a lot better than bare-filled fiberglass or steel doors, but with tight weatherstripping you can boost its ability to stop air infiltration.



Sheltering a wood door from the weather helps preserve its looks and increases its life span.

...the alternatives

Both steel and fiberglass doors need less maintenance and get higher fire ratings than wood doors. And because they leave less room for error, they make about twice as much sense. MDF (medium-density fiberboard) doors, made of glued wood fibers, are relatively resistant to water damage. None of these alternatives have as many design options for you to choose from as wood does.

•STEEL

Magnetic weatherstripping makes these entries a tight fit in refrigerators, but they're susceptible to dents, dings, and rust. The chromium-plated doors never need repainting. Steel is the least expensive wood alternative.

•FIBERGLASS

Better than steel at imitating wood, resisting water, and standing up to blows, but susceptible to fading. Keep it clean by wiping it down with soapy water. The cost is comparable to a high-end oak wood door.

•MDF

It looks like painted grade-wood but typically costs less and carries a fire rating of up to 70 minutes. These doors need the best paint job and will show no exterior oil-based paint to maintain their fire-free warranty.

Get the right door for your house

A door is one of the telltale details that distinguishes the style of a house. So if your entry is due for an upgrade, let the look of your place help you pick the best match.



QUEEN ANNE

The Victorian era door has either a single pane or beveled glass in the top, and elaborate carvings and moldings below. This natural panel featuring red oak veneer with a single window. Stained by old-glass. \$4,950. housewood.com/queenanne.com



RANCH

Contemporary doors match the exterior material by clear horizontal lines. This clear beveled glass and knotty-oak wood slab door. \$1,000. doorbydoor.com



CAPE COD

Harking back to 18th-century New England, Cape Cod doors are a nod to the past. This four-pane glass door with two lights. \$2,000. joh-son.com



CRAFTSMAN

Clearly doors celebrate the open, airy feel of the Craftsman style. Windows may have elaborate leaded glass lights. This white oak slab door with fresh Lloyd Wright-style windows and dovetail molding. \$4,000. craftsmendecor.com



TUDOR REVIVAL

Locally selected from the English Renaissance, Tudors have leaded and bottom doors often with arched or pointed tops and a single small light. This 2 1/2-inch thick slab style houses an arched glass door. \$1,800. craftsmendecor.com



COLONIAL REVIVAL

Painted panel doors have a symmetrical formality and are often accented with a fluted and flanking side lights. This prehung five-pane Spanish cedar door surrounded by five divided lights. \$2,500. marvix.com

With 200+ Best of Home Awards, Real Simple, HGTV, and more, it's no wonder that this door is a real standout. marvix.com



1 in 150 chance of a child being diagnosed with autism by age 3

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No babbling by 12 months

No words by 18 months

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LEVEL A FLOOR

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MORE



13

answers to
your most
common home
improvement
questions

Can I grow the seeds I saved from last year's Halloween pumpkin?

—JAYSLAGUNA, AUTUMBERVA

A As long as you've kept them in a cool, dry, dark place, pumpkin seeds can be planted when the heavy spring rains are over and temperatures rise to 60°F or higher. The day before planting, discard any shriveled or discolored seeds and soak the rest in water to speed sprouting. Plant them 2 inches deep in rich, well-worked soil where they'll get at least six hours of sun a day. You'll be rewarded with pumpkins in about four months. —TAYLOR COPE



OTHER SEEDS TO SOUP

- 1- Garden beans
- 2- Pumpkins
- 3- Cucumber
- 4- Eggplant
- 5- Radish
- 6- Pea
- 7- Watermelon
- 8- Cucumber
- 9- Pumpkin
- 10- Cucumber
- 11- Pumpkin
- 12- Pumpkin
- 13- Pumpkin

PHOTOGRAPH BY
LEVI KROHN

Our Cast of Veterans Experts

TOM SILVA
General ContractorNORM ABRAM
Master CarpenterRICHARD TRETHEWEY
Plumbing and Heating ExpertROGER COOK
Landscape ContractorKEVIN O'CONNOR
HVAC

I have an evergreen shrub that's gotten a little too chubby. Normally I trim it with an electric clipper, but now I'd like to prune the lower branches to make it look more like a tree. Would that be okay?

JOSEPHINE CHILL, WIS.



A bypass hand pruner is Roger Cook's favorite tool for shaping evergreen shrubs.

Roger Cook replies: Don't do it. Your shrub will end up looking more like a mushroom than a tree.

The problem here is that the shrub is so thick on the inside that nothing can grow on the inside, and without inside growth you can't change its size or shape. But if you're persistent, there are a couple of ways to regain fullness so that you can prune it the way you like.

Start by choosing a couple of your electric shears. Then, using a bypass hand pruner and bypass loppers, prune about one-third of the major branches to create some open space in the center of the plant. This will allow sunlight to reach the interior, where it will stimulate lateral growth buds to sprout. Cut off each stem at a point just above the buds, and lightly prune the outside of the shrub to make it look neat.

Next year cut out another third of the older branches, and then another third the year after that. By the fourth summer, you should have plenty of interior growth to let you prune the shrub back to a manageable size. From now on, keep it in check by hand pruning.

Q BLOCKED AIR RETURN

The main return air vent for our forced-air heating system is in a closet above, which means we have to keep the closet door open all winter so that enough air can reach the vent. This is very inconvenient. Short of taking the door off entirely, what would you suggest we do?

JOHN SATHI, DARTMOUTH, CONN.

Richard Trethewey replies: You could create a new air vent by cutting through an adjacent wall and installing an exterior return duct. Ask your heating contractor whether that might work. But the easier solution would be to replace your solid door with a louvered one, sometimes called a screen door.

Be sure that both door panels have real louvered to allow maximum air flow (some doors have false louvers on the bottom panels). Also, you may have to trim the door's bottom edge so that there's about 1 inch of clearance between the floor or the carpeting and the bottom of the door. When you can keep the door closed all the time.

Q LEVELING A FLOOR

I'd like to install flooring over the uneven, out-of-level concrete slab under my basement. Is there a way to level the slab without reducing the already limited headroom?

WILLIAM AND WILSON, NEWARK, N.J.

Tom Silva replies: The easiest way to level a floor is to use a self-leveling compound, also called liquid floor underlayment or floor reinforcement. You mix it with water and pour it out on a flat, the material flows on like thick syrup, then hardens into a smooth, perfectly level surface, sometimes in less than an hour. The only place you'll lose any appreciable headroom will be in the slab's low spots.

In a basement, you should use a compound that contains Portland cement rather than gypsum because it won't be affected by moisture. If it's not your goal, just decreasing the overhead clearance with a dispenser to remove any concerns about the angle of the floor with getting a good bond. And before you lay your flooring, check the manufacturer's instructions to be sure the compound is dry enough.

Q OLD-FASHIONED PATHWAYS

I'd like to create walkways and a driveway for my 18th-century house

WHAT IS IT?



A-I Pest manager?

B-I Shed detector?

C-I Food signs? D-I...?

D-I...?

D-I...?



using something called soil cement, a mixture believed to originate with Colonial Williamsburg. Can you tell me more about it?

DONALD ROBERT FOSTER, R.I.

Kevin O'Connor replies: Soil cement, these days, are highly compacted, water-permeable, and very durable mixes of soil and aggregate with a small amount of Portland cement—just 4 to 6 percent—by weight. It's relatively inexpensive because the soil can be pretty much whatever is available at the site, except for clay or highly organic material. This kind of material would probably work well on your driveway, according to the Portland Cement Association.

Colonial Williamsburg doesn't use Portland cement on its pathways, the material wasn't available and the last 19th-century Mark Winger, director of facilities, says that some public pathways are just compacted gravel mixed with sand and soil, spread in a 3-inch-thick layer, then compacted with a roller. They're so solid that they need touching up only once a year.

A few paths are covered with crushed oyster shells, which closely resemble mud, a mixture of clay and shells the colonists mined from local strabedon and spread over their pathways. Winger's crew dresses the oyster-shell paths annually with a 1-inch layer of fresh shells. No landscaping is needed, they quickly enclose them in a solid, quick-drying surface.

In areas with lots of wheelchair and stroller traffic, Winger goes high-tech and covers paths with a two-inch layer of pea gravel held together with polyurethane resin. He says the resin darkens the color of the aggregate somewhat, but the overall look is in keeping with the 18th-century surroundings. According to Jill Phillips, vice president of Kingstons Park, the company that makes the resin, this aggregate is tough enough for a driveway as well.

Q SHELF REPAIR

I recently installed a shelf on drywall using those bullet-shaped plastic drywall anchors. But they

pulled out when I put some weight on the shelf. Can I reinforce the shelf in the same location?

BLADY/OLYMPIA RESPONSE

Norm Abram replies: Yes, you can. First, fill the holes with joint compound or spackling. Then, if you can't find a stud to fasten the shelf to, use metal toggle anchors, which can hold up to 85 pounds apiece. Each one has a built-in toggle that passes and pulls right against the back of the drywall. Just make sure each anchor is placed at least 2 inches from the filled holes.

FLAMMABLE PUZZ

After our dryer stopped heating, we discovered that its vent pipe was clogged with lint and that it needed its own cold space instead of venting outside. We'll install a proper vent, but is there anything else we should be on the lookout for?

MOORE PERINCE/CENTRAL POINT DRIES

Kevin O'Connor replies: Yes. You need to get rid of any lint inside the dryer or its duct—at the very least. According to Linda Espinoza, who works in the service department of REO Appliances in Norwalk, Connecticut, "A plugged vent, or even a clogged flue, often forces lint into the dryer cabinet." To gain access to the cabinet's interior, check the owner's manual for instructions on how to remove the front access panel, but a service call may be required for a complete cleaning.

To avoid a service call, Espinoza suggests that you be scrupulous about keeping the dryer area clean. Vacuum frequently beneath and behind the dryer, regularly clean the vent door, and check or clean out outside your house to make sure it hasn't become clogged with lint.

Dryer manufacturers even remind that you clean the lint screen after every load, but Espinoza says

Cost: \$25 for enough lint-removal compound for 75 square feet.
Time: 2 days.

Difficulty: Easy if the old mortar is white-based; difficult if the old mortar is cement-based.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

asked this month:
Darryl Finkbeiner
writes, "I'm looking for
the Old House
TVN 2000 on YouTube."
Washington, D.C.

I have a brick wall where the mortar is crumbling all over the place. What should I do? —BACKEHOUSE ONE MAIL

Danny Palenik replies: Even the most beautiful brickwork is just as much subtle without a bed of mortar to seal and hold it together. So when mortar starts cracking, crumbling, and falling out of the joints, it's time to chisel out the old stuff and trowel in the new, a process called repointing. This is a simple job, but it can be done

with care, using the right tools and the right materials to avoid damaging the brick and permanently compromising the integrity and appearance of the wall. For me, that means using hand tools and lime mortar similar to the ones masons employed 100 years ago. It takes a little more time to do it this way, but at least 15 more dry weeks will last another 30 years or so, if not 100. Those hard, cement-based mortars many masons use today will actually destroy old brick, slowly but surely. And they turn repointing into a difficult, dusty job

STEP-BY-STEP Brick repointing

1. Rake out the bed joints.

Scrape out the horizontal joints to a depth of at least 1½ inch. (Points wider than 1½ inch have the danger: 2½ times the joint's width.) A coarse, tapered dust saw (below) works well on these 1½-inch-wide "bed" joints. (Do wider joints use a cold chisel and an mason's hammer.) Avoid electric angle grinders. Otherwise, it's trouble to use them. They're almost guaranteed to cut into and damage the brick.



4. Mix the mortar.

Mix the brick-lime mortar into the dry mix until it reaches the consistency of peanut butter and clings to an upside-down trowel. What will a film of water form on the mix: about 30% water. 2 for the water content. The mortar is now ready to use and remains workable for 3 hours. It's quite too dry until then, you can "retemp" it occasionally by adding water.

2. Clean out the head joints.

After removing three or four courses of bed-joint mortar, dig out the vertical joints. Be careful not to let the edges of the bricks show or better. Here, the old mortar is being chiseled out by tapping a 5- to 6-pound ball with a hammer.



5. Fill the joints.

Scrape a dollop of mortar onto a brick trowel or hawk, hold it up with a bed joint, and push the mortar against the back of the joint with the tuck-pointing trowel. Alternate with a finishing piece of the trowel to edge the mortar into the joint. The joint is filled. Dig your finished three or four courses of bed joints to back and fill the head joints. Finally, smooth and compact all the mortar with the trowel's flat face and scrape the excess mortar off the brick.

3. Wash down the wall, again.

Wash all the country debris with a light-bristled brush, then check that the blade of your tuck-pointing trowel will fit into the joint. If the blade is too wide, grind it down with an angle grinder. Also, the wall with water until the brick is thoroughly damp and starts to dry. This is a critical step because dry materials will suck the moisture out of the new mortar and prevent it from curing properly. Wait until the next day before filling the joints.



6. Brush the wall.

When the mortar is to the touch, brush lightly across it to remove any dry mortar crumbs. (On a long wall, use the postcard to pull out the dust.) Then carefully sponge mortar residue off the brick faces. For the next three days, use a tarp to protect the wall from rain. Use a wind or wind silk and give the wall a dry misting to keep the brick and mortar moist.

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D-1 LED FLASHLIGHT
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Photo: (top) David H. Heston; (bottom) David H. Heston

QUEST EXPERT John Dee



I'm painting the interior of my double-hung windows, and I can't seem to get a clean, even edge along the glass. How do professional painters go about it? Do they mask off the glass before they paint? —BETH DOOLE, Southaven, Miss.

John Dee replies: Masking off a window takes as much time as painting it. The only windows you need to tape are ones with high-tech coated glass, which can be damaged by metal scraper blades. Otherwise, follow the steps below.

- 1) Paint methodically.** This sets up anything that helps you put a consistent amount of paint on each surface. I always work from the top of the sash down, and I paint in thin, first narrow side of the window and profiled sashgrooves, then the other.
- 2) Brush away from corners.** This prevents paint from packing and dripping into window panes.
- 3) Seal the edges.** As you brush around each pane, tap a 100% paint onto the glass to prevent the wood from condensation.
- 4) Scrape.** Once the paint is dry, hold a 6-inch wide putty knife blade against the glass with its flat side against the wood. Scrape up to the blade with a scraper (not a putty knife), which will leave a thin, even strip of paint on the glass, and prevent you from prying the edge of the shutter.

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READER
TOOL
TEST

Cordless jigsaws

Over the years, these handy curve-cutting saws have acquired a number of cool advances: keyless blade-changing, trigger-finger speed controls, and orbital sawing action for faster cuts through wood. Now they're starting to lose the cords and rely on battery power. This Old House readers tried out four of the latest 18-volt lithium-ion versions. Here's what they found.

DEWALT DC330K

Price: \$279
Highlight: Comes with a side blower that cuts flush with the front of the shoe



Tester: Robert Clark
Concordia, Mo.
Skill level: Professional ("I've remodelled houses for the past 10 years.")

Used tool for: Plunging cuts into 2x4s using the dual-blade saw.
Verdict: The motor did not slow down much, even when paired head-and-toed. Flipping the orbital switch really increased the cutting efficiency.

Tool stats: 7.5 pounds; variable speed to 2,200 strokes per minute; 1-inch stroke length; four position orbital setting; keyless blade change and shoe adjustment.

"Power is clean to extend tool's"



HITACHI C3JBDL

Price: \$239
Highlight: Quits on LED illuminate saw ahead of blade



Tester: Robert Clark
Annapolis, Va.
Skill level: Professional ("I'm a licensed contractor.")

Used tool for: Cutting decorative scrollwork out of plywood and pine boards.

Verdict: "I was surprised at how strong the battery performed, even after hours of constant work."

Tool stats: 6 pounds; variable speed to 2,400 strokes per minute; 1-inch stroke length; four position orbital setting; keyless blade change; shoe adjusts with Allen key.



RIDGID R883

Price: \$169 for jigsaw, \$259 for battery and charger
Highlight: Works with both 36- and 24-volt M40 or M45 series batteries



Tester: Tim Lambert
Northampton, Maine
Skill level: Remodeling ("I've done a lot of interior and exterior work.")

Used tool for: Cutting hole for a new cockpit in aluminum counter.

Verdict: "This tool has plenty of power; it didn't bog down at all."



RYOBI P52L

Price: \$79 for jigsaw, \$129 for battery and charger
Highlight: Rely laser projects a cutting line ahead of the blade



Tester: Steven Dierker
Portland, Me.
Skill level: Remodeling ("I've remodelled my entire kitchen, tap in bottom.")

Used tool for: Cutting receptacle boxes in plaster wall.

Verdict: "I liked the orbital action, but I'd trade its long battery life for more power."

Tool stats: 5.5 pounds; variable speed to 2,100 strokes per minute; 1-inch stroke length; four position orbital setting; keyless blade change; shoe adjusts with Allen key.



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The history: Built in 1903 when E.J. Pierce built this comfortable Queen Anne in Union Springs, Alabama. He loved this building as a cotton hub. The local railroad depot, where Pierce worked as a station agent, saw a lot of cotton reports going out of town and a variety of factory-made moldings, mantels and cabinetmaking as Pierce used these architectural imports to dramatic effect in his new 2,300-square-foot home, where he lived for 37 years. In 1964, the house was sold to Keith and Ruth Slater, who stayed on for 50 years and raised six children.

Why save it? The house is doing so well, clearly—including the intricate woodwork and oak mantels—are mostly intact. The most eye-catching features are the 10-foot-tall Corinthian columns that divide the center hall from the front porch and the matching column columns that line the front porch. Union Springs is a wonderfully preserved, historic community. "People just keep moving here to work on our old houses," says local realtor Joyce Penno. "They love to see their own back to the old and the town truly appreciates them."

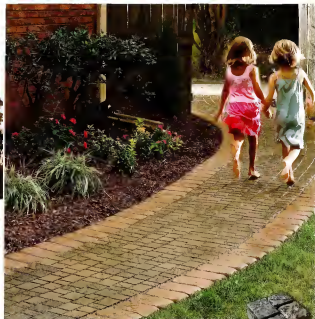
What's needed: The place has been sitting empty for seven years. Along with some cosmetic work, it needs new heating and plumbing systems, as well as central air conditioning to ward off those sultry Alabama summers—85°F in August.



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2. The 1903 Queen Anne was built by E.J. Pierce, who the Union Springs Historic Society calls "a favorite local entrepreneur and civic leader." The front of the main floor where Pierce often entertained features dark woodwork and a mirrored overmantel. 3. Corinthian columns support the wrap-around porch. 4. The front porch features 10-foot-tall Corinthian columns and matching porch doors. 5. The house is a center hallway (30 feet wide).



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