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INSIDE

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THEir ADVENTURE



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LIGHTING



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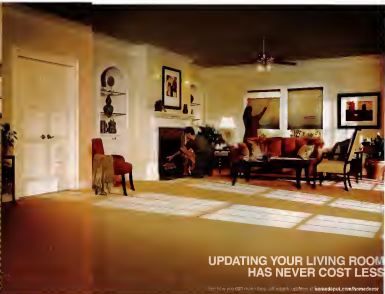
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checklist {December.09}

EASY WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR HOME RIGHT NOW

Stock up on deicer

A delivery slip can quickly turn a holiday bink, so make sure you have a few pounds of deicer salt on hand for when snow piles up. Refreshing your reserves? Opt for calcium chloride. It's easier on concrete and lasts three regular rock salt, and you'll use two-thirds less for the same job (canceling out its higher price). For more expert setbacks on snow-melting retreats, check out [thisoldhouse.com/beatles](#)



Get tax back

It's the season for giving, after all, and so is old or extra tools to a charity, such as Redding. Together, both organizations help people who can't afford to buy new clothes, but those members pump when closed windows and heat help them bind. So give left window dressings—a prime note holiday—a good cleaning. Use your window cleaner's brush attachment to suck up the slings. And remember to use a fabric-friendly new setting.



It's better, not to cut the tree, but to cut it in a way that's not so big. It's a better idea to cut it in a way that's not so big.

Get your tree home

No matter who chops down your conifer, hauling it is all on you. So come prepared: Bring an old blanket or sheet to wrap the tree in, which will keep it from sliding around your car's roof and the wind from stripping moisture out of its needles. Secure the tree to the roof, trunk pointing forward, with ropes or burl bungee cords to prevent those 65 mph gusts from breaking branches.

Dispell holiday cooking odors

When that last meal is ready and—well, for areas not fit for the long haul. Keep the air fresh by cooking your next meal's meat frites over all-purpose deodorant, such as Gossard Lighting (1936, levin.com). When most of the grease is gone, wash away the solution—and any remaining grease—with soap and water.



Freshen window treatments

As it is, the average home usually have over 300,000 dust miles crawling around, but those members pump when closed windows and heat help them bind. So give left window dressings—a prime note holiday—a good cleaning. Use your window cleaner's brush attachment to suck up the slings. And remember to use a fabric-friendly new setting.



What's on your checklist?

The week after Thanksgiving, my sister in law and I will set up a holiday to bring Christmas lights on trees in the yard. Our fingers probably just set a few tasks in.

—Reader Ellen Gager, Norwalk, Conn.
E-mail us your date at [checklist@thisoldhouse.com](#)

letter {from This Old House}

Holiday at home

"You know," I said to my brother, "I'm impressed that neither one of us was electrocuted today."

It was a Saturday night, and we were sitting—me, him, our wives—at the dinner table. He had come over to help with a bunch of pre-holiday home-improvement projects, including wiring a two-way light switch. "But still," I said, "it just amazes me how we never seem to get enough done."

He shook that so mean I was angry. My wife looked at me and, trying to be helpful (or trying to tease me)—I'm never really sure, asked, "Well, why do you go back to the hardware store three times in one day?"

My brother, not looking up from his laptop, had definitely spoken to me, answered her: "Stupidity."

"You're stupid," I said.

"No, you are," he answered.

"Think, but you're never stupid."

"Aye!" my wife said, raising her voice. "Do not make me call your mother!"

"Look," I said, setting down, "you go to the supply house that many times a day—they just have a helper. That's what I need: a better helper."

"Not as much as I need a better brother," mine said.

My wife glared at me and then at the telephone before turning to my brother. "I know you need a better brother, but what are the chances of that happening?" He shook his head. "But," she went on, changing the subject, "it is that time of year—what else do you guys want?"

Now, I know it's better to give than to receive. And in the past I have given—in cash or by check or with credit card—to the plumber and the electrician, the painter and the painter. I have opened my ear to the HVAC man, the cabinet maker, no fewer than eight different home centers, and I don't know how many other retail and supply outlets. So the idea of a little receiving seems nice those days. Not that I want much. Really, I'd be happy with:

A CFL that lasts for more than 100 of our 10,000 hours.

A contractor who shows up when he says he will and finishes the job, if not when promised, or at least in the same calendar year.

A professional model—meat, wait—finishing rule. What about you, the *This Old House* reader? What do you want? Drop one in here at [thisoldhouse.com](#) or let me know. I'd like to include some of your wish-list items in my upcoming issue.

Meanwhile, here's our most thing I want for you and yours to have a safe, happy holiday and home.

Scott Chantrel

SCOTT CHANTREL
EDITOR



THREE THINGS I LEARNED FROM THIS ISSUE

1. **How used Christmas tree branches** can make fish feel right at home. (p. 16)
2. **How a checkbook** can replace your wallet. (p. 22)
3. **How a pendant light** can help you pay my bills. (p. 24)

Here at *This Old House* we smile a lot when we read your letters. You just have a unique way of putting our tips and tricks to work that makes us proud. This month, your efforts to preserve your abodes—and make 'em warmer—start tuned in, and keep bats bdy. Yes, bats.

I wish my October TOH and/or dog had arrived on time! My dog dropped off his bagged glass and ceramic coffee shavings before the music came on. The trip on eating a glass bowl was [John's] Trick of the Trade! We've saved me money. I also liked the idea of taking cuttings from my culture to use for garden color and yearning! "Sing Now for the [John's] Trick of the Trade" and was ready to praise the traffic stopping one in my front yard. Ah, I have no small feeling wonderful! Can I tell you these things?

The editors reply: A west-facing window will work, too, but augmenting with other lights will ensure success.

In "All Lovers Are Bad and Other Good Myths" (October), you offer some great advice: try to be everywhere you're wanted, but unplugging your cable box could be more trouble than it's worth. A few days after unplugging our first boxes, some stopped working. After hating them to the cable company, we were told that unplugging our boxes made them unavailable for system updates, which the company does late at night. Ironically, our system marks the boxes as unavailable, and the only way to fix them was to replace them. The necessary box must be true black for reprogramming.

—STEPHAN LEE AND TONY GUSTAFSON

—STEPHAN LEE, *WOLFGANG PETER*
BARTLETT TOWN

I enjoy the countless ideas that I get from TQM and the rules of learning from trial and error. I recently became single and am learning how to do household tasks that I once depended on my boyfriend to complete. TQM magazine and website are my primary resource for tips, advice, and motivation. They make repeat work easier and less tedious. Thank you!

- JOURNAL OF CLIMATE 15

In "Jail Makeover" (October) you show the side of a home work but leaves me with a question: second floor windows in encourage the inappropriate casual crowd around. Beware: Non-angels hate poop a lot! Homeowners won't want it all over their cute cedar deck. I don't even like it on the ground. My solution: I put a poop catcher below their area and add it to my comment.

—CHARGE TRANSFER MECHANISM IN C.

The editors, The Outhouse magazine, 101 West 11th Street, New York, NY 10020
Or e-mail TO: outhouse@earthlink.net
- include your full name, address, and phone number. Published letters are edited for clarity and length.

how to
results
1998



**Added security =
added savings**

Along with cheer and good will, the holidays also inspire a spike in home burglaries. The good news is that many major insurance companies offer discounts to policy holders who upgrade their security systems. The size of those discounts vary, but you can generally expect about 10 percent off for installing dead-bolt locks on all exterior doors and up to 12 percent off for a system that notifies authorities when there's a break in. With many areas seeing burglary statistics grow in 2008, now might be a perfect time to think about new ways to protect your home.

Reporting by Keith Pridemore
and Nicholas Radevsky



Back to the bungalow

With its top-notch craftsmanship, great looks, and manageable size, the burglar is a popular choice: "It's a come-back in real estate market-wise," says the reason, according to the National Association of Realtors, is that most bungalows were built in first-tier suburbs, which were both walkable and just a quick, hot (and/or) cold drive from downtown. Their single-floor layouts are also great for anyone looking to stay for the long haul, since there are no stairs to negotiate.

NEWS FLASH The sign came from The Scarlet Letter neighbourhood. R.I. police officers are boarding the homes of college students' party houses with neon orange codices which are stuck to front doors and read: remain here like you're in school now. [Business](#)

Unleaded legislation

The beer-illing inside most faucets contains quite a bit of lead—and that lead percolates into your water. Delaware physician Catherine and Kenneth that go into effect on January 1 buy the sale of faucets containing more than 0.25 percent lead (the current max is 0.1 percent). Since copper doesn't kill the idea of manufacturing specialized faucets just for these two states, the law is rather innovative as it is one of few lead-tolerant consumer products.

Multi-tasking shovel

The ergonomic 3-in-1 SnowShovel can be used to shovel snow, push it off a paved walkway without hurting your back. It can also serve as a "snow blight" to dig the white stuff to its intended sharpening point. \$139, www.3in1.com



Need help with your to-do list?



Just Ask...

Tune in this month to Ask This Old House and learn how to tackle these projects and many more. To ask your question, visit thisoldhouse.com/askquestion



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home solutions

Edited by Deborah Swerman

inside

HOLIDAY HELP

10 USES

FIRE LOG PICKS

SAFETY TIPS

MORE



4 SHORT IDEAS

Fun, festive entry lights

If the thought of icicle lights dripping from your roofline feels more like how than *ho ho ho*, try a fresh approach to decorating for the season. Wrap a strand of retro-style colored bulbs around your entry gate, mailbox, or porch post like a bird would in a nest, attached way. Use outdoor-rated LED bulbs for a brighter, longer-lasting (up to 100,000 hours) glow. They'll also save your electricity bill, since they burn 90 percent less energy than incandescents.



Plug them into an outdoor receptacle or fit an outdoor light fixture (that's not low-voltage) with a socket-to-socket adapter. Complete the scene with holly and greenery for a light-hearted twist on the traditional holiday welcome.

Get glimmer: A 25-foot strand of outdoor-rated LED lights by GFI Northlake. \$40. GFIonline.com

PHOTO: JENNIFER L. HARRIS/SHUTTERSTOCK/JOHN/STOCKPHOTO



Christmas tree

When the holidays are over, take down the tree, but don't bag the tree. Its needles, boughs, and trunk can do more than hold ornaments.



1 Mulch with needles. Pine needles dry quickly and decompose slowly, making them an excellent mulch for ground-covering crops, such as strawberries, to retain

2 Create a bird sanctuary. Place your tree in stand outdoors. If it has feeders and hang them from the boughs, or drap the tree with a swag of pinecones coated with peanut butter.



3 Insulate perennials. Cut off boughs and lay them over perennials. Better to protect them from snow and ice than frost heaving.

4 Edge your borders. Cut the trunk into 2-foot discs and set them into the soil to edge flower beds or walkways.

5 Shelter fish. If you have a koi lake or have a pond, and your tree is chemical-free, toss branches into the water to provide sheltering habitat for overwintering fish. (Or 1 per million from town of fish if needed.)

6 Set a stage for containers. Saw the trunk into different lengths and use the pieces as flowerpot



7 Make coasters and trivets. Cut thin slices off the trunk, sand them smooth, and apply a thin coat of polyurethane to keep the sap off tables and glassware.

8 Stake your plants. Strip small branches and use the remaining twigs to support indoor potted plants or other floppy seedlings.

9 Feed a fire pit. If you're in a hurry, use a few of the quick to split branches to start an outdoor fire pit—but never use an indoor fire place where one could build up as a hazard.

▶ **more 10 uses**
Use leftover twigs to make birdhouses. houzz.com/ideas/10-uses-for-christmas-tree-branches/

EASY CLEANUP

4 UPKEEP

Get wax off any surface

The glow of the candles always makes for a festive atmosphere during the holidays, but the drops and pools of wax they can leave behind are an obstacle for others. So here's how to banish the stubborn stuff for good, without compromising your furniture or staining your walls in the process. (You can find additional wax-busting tips and techniques at diy.com/bonus/10-uses.)

Material	Removal Method
Wood	Melt the wax with an iron cable, then carefully scrape it off with an applied-to-wall scraper. Wipe the residue with a damp cloth. Rub away remaining residue with more furniture wax.
Glass	Scrape any residue, then apply heat with a blow-dryer set to warm, wiping off wax with a rag as it softens. Wash the wax with hot, soapy water to remove residue.
Painted wall	Apply medium heat with a blow-dryer and scrape away wax as it softens. Remove residue with a solvent or paint scraper for 24 to 48 hours.
Carpet	Scrape off excess. Lay a damp cloth over white spots over the wax and apply medium heat with an iron, the wax will bubble to the cloth.
Hard flooring	Soak the spot with hot water outside of wax with a dry cloth. Repeat until wax is removed. Then apply floor polish or a nonwax floor oil (if recommended, forget oil of residue).



GET YOUR TO-DO LIST BACK

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+ TOP IDEA

Hang tubs for wintry gear

If there's no place to park shoes, scarves, gloves, and hats can become a tangled heap in your entryway, complicating entry for anyone on their way out the door. To save space, attach tubs that can slip off conventional shelves, mount them on a wall and hang gear on the wall above a row of coat hooks. To hang them: Locate and mark the wall studs, then drill at least two holes for each tub, making sure one goes into a stud and using a toggle bolt anchor in the other hole. Drill corresponding holes on the bottom of each tub, and use deck screws to fasten them to the wall. Check for level and adjust the tubs as needed. They'll add a touch of rustic charm to an entryway—and keep the party going alive for weeks to come. —CHRISTOPHER

Sevens of hangings job
credit: Tutorials 200
personalized.com



+ PRACTICAL PRESENT

A gift that gets the job done

Can't make that holiday visit to loved ones who value your DIY prowess more than anything? Book a powered job through a service you can rely on to help with the hanging of new flat-screen TVs or fixing a leaky faucet. Simply get in a request, choose and schedule a contractor, and pay through the site. The money gets released once the job is completed. Or buy a gift certificate issued and let the recipient take care of the details. —J.C.



+ SAFETY

Kidproof your holiday decor

Little ones love the simple charm of bubbles and balloons, but if they get their mittens on the wrong ones, you could have a problem on your hands. Child safety pro Debra Smiley Hoffman, author of the newly updated Safe Kid told us how to deck the halls so no one gets hurt. —JENNIFER



Greenery: Keep clear of those that are sharp, brittle or have small removable parts. And don't use any decorations made to look like food, especially candy.



Light: Use lights and extension cords that are UL-rated or otherwise certified by an independent testing group. Check extension cords carefully and replace those that are frayed or damaged. Don't use bulbs that can be easily shattered.



The tree: Put it in a sturdy stand that soaked for the tree's size, and place it where foot traffic won't knock it over. Some artificial trees may contain lead, contact the manufacturer of yours for more details or replace it.



Mistletoe and holly: They're festive, yes, but these holiday greens (as well as others, such as ivy) can be sharp or poisonous. Do your best to keep them safely out of reach or avoid using them altogether.

REFINISHING TECHNIQUE

+ INSTANT WITNESS

Warming up oak

"Light-colored oak can look clinical," says Atlanta-based contractor Kim O'Brien, co-owner of Lustrating But Renovations. So O'Brien likes to add warm, honeyed tones to highlight the wood's grain and give it a warmer patina. Here, her simple two-step job is sure to warm any existing finish. (1) Pour dark-colored glaze or gel stain onto a cloth loader. Then use a nap to apply over a small area of the piece you're refinishing, wiping in the direction of the grain. (2) Let the stain stand for a minute, then use a clean, dry cloth to take off any excess, again wiping with the grain. The stain will have been absorbed where the wood is most porous. (3) Continue staining one small area at a time until you've covered the entire piece. Let dry. (4) Repeat the whole process using a warm, honey-colored stain. (5) Apply a clear, protective finish like Waterlox for extra shine and defense against wear and tear. —CHRISTOPHER



Paint store products for this three-step process: (1) Dark Walnut Gel Stain, \$10 per quart; (2) Waterlox, \$10 per quart; (3) Waterlox, \$10 per quart. —CHRISTOPHER



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before + after:
kitchen

Practical design, period appeal

A 1930 Spanish Revival house finally gets the stylish, high-performance kitchen it deserves
by JILL DORRANCE • Photographs by JACOB ELLER



↑ The white enamel sink leading to the dining room offers an exciting view in the house.

Decorative paint accents mirror original designs found elsewhere in the home.

It's tried-and-true advice: Live in a space for a while before you remodel it. For Alicia and Craig Collins, waiting a long while (31 years!) seems to have paid off big-time. The couple put up with the shabby galley kitchen at their 1930 Spanish Revival-style house for over a decade. Bad enough were the worn cabinets and awkward layout, but the room also lacked the kind of desire-based design that these homeowners, which has arched doorways, wrought-iron work, and an eclectic fireplace surround. Alicia, an avid cook, craved a top-notch range, and with the family having grown to include three children, they needed more food storage. Kitchen designer Dawn Jones's solution delivered both without adding on. By incorporating a butcher's pantry—just one cabinet and a swinging door between the kitchen and the dining room—she gave the room an extra 50 square feet, allowing for more counter space, a cook's peninsula, ovenside, an alcove for the pro-style range, and a double refrigerator-freezer. But as much as they like their new surroundings, the Collinses also love the new kitchen's old-style architectural details: ornate-curved archways that connect to original stonework in the entry hall, six appropriate triple-arched casement windows, and painted scrollwork. Says Craig, "We finally have a kitchen that measures up to the other parts of the house."



Before: The old home house was cluttered by a cluttered pantry and a small island that hid the beauty of the floor (below). Adding the pantry allowed for a larger countertop with five sinks and a breakfast bar, and a 40-inch refrigerator. Photo: Kenyon Photo Studio

before+after kitchen

◀ **The move above,** set off with a soaring arch and hand-painted tile mural, highlights the deep-set range.

▶ **A snack bar** doubles as a breakfast nook for 30 and houseplants and built-in pendant lighting.



the key details

▶ **New architectural details,** such as the curved brackets beneath the upper cabinets and the pull-apart rearward windows, recall the Spanish Revival style of the 1930s house.



▶ **Wine storage** built in under the counter keeps bottles at the ready (and perfect) for when the couple entertains.

▶ **Built-in a bar** with a serving counter along the entry to the breakfast room.

▶ **A built-in hatch** is the way to the breakfast room. Features a plate rack, built-in seat panel, matching serving counter, and cascading arch detailing. Upper shelves keep dishes covered within easy reach. *Contractors: Great Woodworks*

▶ **Grooves in the soapstone** create an integrated sink. They're grooves that are designed to be cut into the stone.



homeowner tip CRAIG COLLIER, SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

"Stay flexible. We originally planned a tiled floor but decided to keep the original tile when it was uncovered under layers of linoleum. The tile 'rug' we designed became our stove-backsplash."

before

The freestanding stove and refrigerator had no adjacent counter space, so there's plenty of room for a new island.



lots more ideas

See how the homeowners used their ideas to design a modern kitchen with a new island.

after

The kitchen now opens up the dining room in a wide arch, it has a longer counter and a built-in bar. The range sits below the arch for a clean look.

1. **Appened the butler's pantry** was led to the dining room, extending and adding a wide archway to the other. This made space for an extended counter and breakfast bar on one side and 60-inch high on the other.

2. **Replaced the windows** with identical sets of single-arched casement windows that also arches to the right of the house.



3. **Added three arches** to the doorway to the adjacent hall put a single kitchen corner, the house for the range got a cascading arch.

4. **Built-in a bar** with a serving counter along the entry to the breakfast room.

Classic redo, 1920s-style

Freshly tiled walls and old-fashioned fixtures help to remake a vintage bath

By DANIELLE HURDLE • Photograph by DAN SOLAR

Old doesn't always mean quaint. That was the lesson Filip and Rosemarie Balasore learned after moving into their 1920s on-up apartment in Queens, New York. Previous tenants hadn't been kind to the master bath: Chipped subway tiles lined the walls, rust spots marred the cast-iron sink, and concrete poked out beneath the broken ceramic floor squares.

Renovation wasn't an option, and the 5-by-11-foot space didn't allow for changing the fixture placement. So the couple enlisted contractor Patrick McCormick to update every element—but with a vintage look. A new claw-foot tub, real pedestal sink and a black-and-white tile scheme added plenty of period charm.

Today the cast-iron soaker's definitely the star of the remodel, having turned the master bath into a favorite relaxation zone for son Sebastian, 13, and daughter Cassie, 2. Says Filip, "For us, it's a 10-minute shower, but the kids spend hours in there!"

Before Chipped tile and worn fixtures made this original bath feel dilapidated. **AFTER** A new iron-bath soaker, tiled pedestal sink, white subway tiles and a black-and-white tile floor recaptured early 20th-century touches.



Light-reflecting brushed subway tile has a period look and helps a small room feel bigger

• **Settin'-mickel finishes**
Warm up the clean lines of the medicine cabinet, light fixture, and cast-iron tub faucet. Match the brushed nickel. *David Frazier Photography*

• **A wall-mount tub filler**
With its own hand shower (shown), this wall-mount tub filler (shown) has a built-in hand shower. *McMaster-Carr*



• **A head-to-toe hook**
Built into the wall-hung soap dish, this hook holds towels and bath linens. *McMaster-Carr*



homeowner tip
FILIP BALASORE QUOTES: "My life is blessed by plumbing showrooms for inspiration, but buying from a supplier, local dealer got us a 20 percent discount on our marble floor tile."



• **Tile hardware**
When reinforced by learning, bathroom tile and grout trapping them with tiles for a custom look of mixed materials. *Tile-A-Job USA*



• **See tutorial**
Learn how to tile a bathroom. *Tile-A-Job USA*

before + after

The layout of the bath with the fixtures, including a deep well, remained the same. The hooks made it more functional.

2. A new pedestal sink with elegant curves was mounted in the hallway's light quarters.



3. A towel bar mounted behind the toilet and the tub keeps bath items at the ready.

1. The soaking tub gives the space a vintage feel. It's also a claw foot, it helps the room feel like a built-in model. Mounting the tub filler on the wall saved floor space.

PHOTOGRAPH BY DANIEL HURDLE; PHOTOGRAPH BY DAN SOLAR

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Happy DIY holidays

'Tis the year for thrifty gifting. So this season we've got do-it-yourself gifts for the house, garden, and workshop—come to make yourself, come to inspire hands-on friends and family. by MICHELLE LOCKWOOD and AL VACCIA • Photographs by TIGER BRAND



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stool. like the one
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TOOL, IN YOUR HANDS

Chrome towel bars

Are they the same—or not? After doing a double take, we cast a keen eye on these not-quite-identical twins and why they cost what they cost. BY SARAH KRAUSS • Photographs by MARK WEISS

There's even a bath towel on the scale, and you'll find a dozen towel bars, many similar in style but widely different in price. Even if you throw out the top-of-the-line models—and the way both makers present them isn't all that convincing why one is superior to the other \$33 and another \$331. Then, a look at the double-handled models proves that while both can give a bath the pop of polished chrome (or a look alike), many give you more than just good looks.

High-End

Symmons

24-INCH CARBIDE TOWEL BAR

Weight: 1.2 pounds Depth: 1 1/2" Max. Weight: 100 lbs.

+\$65

\$31+

Budget

Moen

24-INCH MODERN TOWEL BAR

Weight: 1.2 pounds Depth: 2 1/2" Max. Weight: 100 lbs.

IS IT FOR YOU?

If you appreciate fine detailing and a sleek appearance.

IS IT FOR YOU?

If you're looking for a towel bar that will hold a lot of towels and is easy to install.

design

The post inserts in its base. It also has a hole for the towel bar and not during installation. It also has a hole for the towel bar and not during installation.

materials

Aluminum bar between stainless steel posts.

finish

Plates are made with copper, then nickel and chrome plating.

feel

The post has a hole for the towel bar and not during installation.

design

The one-piece design is simple and easy to install. It also has a hole for the towel bar and not during installation.

materials

Aluminum bar between steel posts.

finish

The post has a hole for the towel bar and not during installation.

feel

The post has a hole for the towel bar and not during installation.

in profile

With a hole in the post, it's easy to install. The high-end bar is made of stainless steel and has a hole in the post. The budget bar is made of aluminum and has a hole in the post.

"I got hosed by my plumber...help!"

Our husband-and-wife team of remodeling therapists offers tried-and-true advice for surviving the pitfalls of home improvement

by NATALIE LALAN & LYNNE K. ARNOLD • Illustration by JAMES SCHNEIDER

Q I hired a plumber to replace pipes in a house I wanted to rent out. He did the work, I paid, he left. A few weeks later my tenants moved in. They called me no water. The plumber never turned it back on. When he opened the valves, there was water everywhere. I had to call a realtor (and high-priced) contractor to undo the damage. I paid for the same job twice, and when I finally contacted the first plumber his number had been disconnected. Do I have any recourse? —PAT ANDERSON, DETROIT

A Dear David, It's infuriating to be caught underestimating, but it's also good to see everyone "turn out the faucet" before you get your plumber (and before you get your next tenant). You can do much more to protect yourself. Next time, check the Better Business Bureau (bbb.org). Unfortunately, there are a handful of scammers out there giving honest contractors a bad name. To avoid such traps again, always check the status of a contractor's license and insurance. Many states provide this information free, either online through their department of consumer affairs. And remember to check references and find out how long a contractor has been working in the area. You're less likely to be bamboozled by someone with a proven track record in your community.

Q "Did I skip on contractors?" I'm rehobbing my 1950s home. My contractor, who has been working with us since the hills is gone. What kind of Christmas bonus should I give him or his right-hand assistant? —SARA HIL, GAITHERSBURG, MD



A Dear David, It's refreshing to hear that you're having a happy experience. And we think it's important to recognize good work. In this economy, contractors and their workers may be having a difficult time so a cash bonus would be very kind—there's nothing that's not said about something between \$50 and \$100 is appropriate. Feeling a little dropped yourself? Put together a gift basket with home-related items or groceries for them to share with their families. Also be sure to tell them regularly that

you appreciate their work. Giving people the gift of praise is priceless.

Q "The missing out of doors." The electrician I hired didn't make my house correctly for selling. Now only one of the seven outlets in my bedrooms works. I've scared my house is going to burn down. I can't afford to have the wiring redone, and the original electrician keeps giving me the run-around about fixing it. What can I do? —TERESA DANKS, FORT WORTH, TEX

—TERESA DANKS, FORT WORTH, TEX

help us help you
visit www.bbb.org
for more information
on how to
avoid these
scams and
find the right
contractor for
your home.

A Dear Burned-In David: You may regret not getting paid what you were worth before the house burned, but you certainly need to have it checked for safety and without delay. Consider the worst-case scenario: losing everything in a house fire. Now, most major electrical overhauls require a permit and an inspection from your local building department. Before you call, the inspector must sign off on the work. We guess that didn't happen. But it's not too late. Some departments do free inspections of certain buildings where work was done improperly or without a permit. Sometimes there are no permit possibilities to schedule a visit. The permit would have to be worth it.

Q "My kitchen designer had a mind of her own." My husband and I built our house with a dream kitchen designer. We asked her to make a new kitchen, and she gave us a huge deposit. We also gave her photos of kitchens we liked and she did things we wanted, but she just wasn't satisfied. She had already decided how she wanted our kitchen to look and what appliances we'd have. A few weeks we had four sets of drawings, none of which had what we asked for. She wanted to know how we would split the deposit and paying ways. What did we do wrong? —DEBBIE ANN FOTALLA, JAZON, CAN

A Dear Diane David: Honestly your biggest problem was to forget that you were the customer. You should have run at this right after she wasn't interested in your ideas. It's your kitchen, and you should pay only for things that include your wishes. It helps to find someone whose design

philosophy is similar to your own—something to bring your vision and looking at the plan. Good designers always take their clients' needs and wants into account. Likewise, good clients are open to suggestions from the experts. But before making any payments you need a contract that spells out what is to be done and at what costs. That should include the cost for preliminary drawings and the amount of a reasonable—not a huge—deposit.

Q "It doesn't feel like home." In 2007, my wife and I moved into the city. Our old suburban place was spacious and well constructed, but I thought living in the city would be even better. Unfortunately, our new home is small, confusing, and needs lots of upgrades. I regret the decision every day. While moving again would be too expensive, I'm willing to spend some money to make our current house a real home. I just don't know where to start. Can you help? —CHRISTALYN, TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA

A Dear Christalyn: Before anything, take a moment to remember all you gained by moving to the city: such as a shorter commute, less upkeep with a smaller home, and being closer to friends, restaurants, and other fun spots. It's better to have a mind (see how) go through your new house and look for the possibilities of what could be. Reflect on what you liked about the features and design of your prior home. Was it the open layout or the size of the rooms? What about natural light? Decide on a handful of adjustments you'd like to make, and get going. For example, you can always improve your

kitchen's efficiency by adding a new island or fitting existing cabinets with storage racks—no gutting needed.

Q "My yard looks as expensive." I had a good painting studio in my backyard. Instead of spending it behind some of the many trees, the contractor put it right behind the house in full view of all visitors. Can I cover it up or move it? —ANNE KODOLICE, TUCUMAN, ARG

A Dear Anne-Kodolice: In your yard, the closer they are to the water source. Their location, however, can be flexible, and the should have asked you where you wanted the projects go before starting the work. Moving them will probably be much more expensive than hiring a contractor to dig up the old painting studio. You could also move the painting studio to a new location, but that would be a huge expense. You could also move the painting studio to a new location, but that would be a huge expense. You could also move the painting studio to a new location, but that would be a huge expense.



Natalie Lalan and Lynne K. Arnold are coauthors of *The Happy Remodelers*. Their 20 years of renovation experience will help keep you from losing your money, sanity, or marriage when tackling home improvements.

Thirty lessons learned in 30 years of TOH TV

Most folks may tackle two or three houses in a lifetime. This *Old House* TV's crew has taken on 59—and counting. What they've discovered in the last three decades is sure to help any home improver. *BY MICHAEL S. GREEN*

Thirty years is a long time. More than a generation in human terms and several eons when it comes to television. Since *The Old House*'s 1979 renovation of a worn Victorian-era house established home-improvement TV as a genre, we've traveled a long way, by car, by truck and by plane. We've roamed to far-flung locales that include Haven, London, and Bermuda, and we've investigated and used a variety of new technologies, materials, and construction techniques. We've participated in a traditional barn raising and put together a 16-story-bell modeler house. We've emphasized the importance of good design and good labor as conserving natural resources. And while we always honor the past, we've never been slaves to it—the show guys have even been known to say, upon peeling apart an old wall, “They don’t build ‘em like they used to. Thank goodness!” As tastes have changed, we hope we’ve helped you change along with them. So here’s 30 years’ worth of good ideas, all TOH tested. Cheers!

1 Restoring an old house is a good investment

When TOH premiered, rating entire Mason Kersley way for new construction was common practice. Our first project, in Boston’s Dorchester neighborhood (top left), demonstrated that an older house can be reworked into a livable, unique space that wants to take over time—unlike the sterile and soulless of history-buffs might find.

Former executive producer Bruce Beving worked on *The Old House* TV for 17 years. He is now a home-remodeling consultant based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF: 1. BRUCE BEVING; 2. JEFFREY HARRIS; 3. JEFFREY HARRIS; 4. JEFFREY HARRIS; 5. JEFFREY HARRIS; 6. JEFFREY HARRIS



2 Color is a low-cost way to add pizzazz

When money is tight, as it was in the 2006 remodel of a 1979 brick row house in Washington, D.C. (opposite, top right)—or even when it isn’t—the right color choices can bring timeless style to any room at almost no additional cost. Here, the combination of bold walls and crisp white trim gives a slightly faded porch a striking look.

3 Creating outdoor rooms expands your living area

At the 1992 Arlington Heights (above left), the crew built an outdoor kitchen for what had been the back porch. When they’re not cooking, Dan and his wife use the space as a lounge. In our 2002 New Orleans project, a Rochester resident wanted to use his back porch as a lounge. The crew built a large outdoor kitchen and a lounge area.

4 An outbuilding can be a bonus living space

Finding a new way to use an existing structure—like the 2003 conversion of a backyard garden shed into a charming in-law cottage in Concord (above right)—can be as effective way around modern zoning prohibitions. By creating an outbuilding, the owners were able to acquire an important functional space out of an underused structure.

5 Save and celebrate at least one old thing

Most renovations call for removing parts of a house’s history, say a crumbling porch or a cluttered layout. But virtually every home benefits from being left, at least one important feature from its past. In our 2008 New Orleans project, a Rochester resident wanted to use his back porch as a lounge. The crew built a large outdoor kitchen and a lounge area.

“We’ve used cement siding on several jobs—it looks good, holds paint well, and is cheaper than wood. My house will be next.”

—JOHN S. LA
TOH SENIOR
CONTRACTOR

double-sided fireplace, hardwood floors and beamed ceiling (opposite, bottom left), all of which hold memories of the house’s rich history.

6 Stick around when you call in a pro

Part of being a good DIYer is knowing your limits. When you’re shopping to hire, use a handy list for a handy problem: hiring a pro with years of experience will almost certainly save you time and money in the long run. Watch a pro’s skills in the trouble spot, and you’ll learn a thing or two. As do the homeowners who involve a professional like Ash (this *Old House* team). During the difficult season in 2002, the Ash crew (opposite, bottom right) helped homeowners with a variety of tasks that included fixing window screens, shoring up a sagging floor and replacing a leaky shower tub faucet.



1998
WATSON/TOWN



1993
BILMONT

7 Be prepared for your project to evolve

Often the best solutions to today's renovation challenges don't present themselves until work is underway. One of the most important and beautiful changes made during our 1988 Waterbury project (above left) was demolishing the home's three staircases and rebuilding just one in the center of the house, vastly improving the floor plan of the 1886 Queen Anne. The modification was made possible by good communication, careful planning, and close collaboration among our pros and the architect and craftsmen involved.

8 Never start a major redo without an energy audit

Since 1982, TCM has called for these audits to find out where a home's energy is being wasted. Today, techniques like blower door testing are combined with infrared camera readings to help homeowners pinpoint where to plug money-wasting holes and take on other ways to cut down on energy consumption.

9 Restore original materials when it makes sense

The "before" photo of the Waterbury home taken before its renovation in 1988 (our feature, below left) is being covered shed on of this handsome "after" shot of the Shingle style beauty (above right). The original wood siding was mostly intact when it was uncovered during the renovation, so it was worth the investment to bring it back to life. For extra credit, the homeowners decided to put real cedar shakes back onto their "rusty" 1900 roof, though only on the steepest side where the look mattered most.

10 Prefab foundations are a great base to build on

The shell had used a factory-made pre-formed concrete foundation system in 1994 when adding onto a 1760 Colonial in fact. Tom Silvestri noted the unusual advantages of having this ideal exterior composite built off site. "We had no mess, no water trucks. Send your plans out to the manufacturer and the factory

"We've seen paint come a long way over the years. Today's low-VOC versions can cover in one coat—even dark colors."

—NORMA GRAM SCHWABER, GARDNER

prepays all the pieces, ships them to the jobsite, and brings them to place. In one day you're ready to start building an addition or whole new house."

11 Curb-appeal changes can pack a big impact

By updating a key feature on your house's front facade, you're doing your neighbors a favor and increasing curb appeal—and home value. Such a move can be simple, such as repainting your entry door, or complex, like restoring a lost architectural feature, as Norm Abram and Tom Silva did in 1990 when they rebuilt a missing front porch on the Wyland house, which dates back to 1825 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

12 Radiant heat rocks

Richard Trethewey is especially proud that TCM was the first home improvement show to demonstrate the right uses and materials for this heating method, which typically relies on hot-water pipes or electric cables under



2004
GARDNER

floor to heat up chilly rooms. "When done correctly, radiant heating is a lot more efficient and effective than heating up air and blowing it through air ducts, which can destroy HVAC systems as it leaks made-in-at-people's-most-comfort-able-in-cold-climate homes," he says.

13 Choose synthetics for their staying power

Throughout TCM projects, look for natural materials like wood and plaster, building with them today can always be the best option for your home. On the exterior, synthetics such as cement siding, polyurethane architectural moldings, and brackets, fiberglass columns, and PVC trim boards hold paint well and don't rot, extending their life and cooling you into the month. Inside, polyurethane crown moldings and cellulose-fiberglass urethane actually outlast natural materials for their wood

and plaster counterparts—and they're lighter and cost less.

14 Expose the structure where you can

One of the great signature spaces in TCM's history, the 2004 Carle house is two-story "living hall" (above left) was once a barn on the grounds at the main home, an 1880 Queen Anne. Thankfully, its hefty timber frame means good enough shape to preserve as the barn was converted. When an architecturally appropriate, showcasing a room's bones makes for a great conversation piece.

15 Insulate right to boost comfort

Now, during proper indoor temperatures means trapping the heat in the winter and keeping it out in the summer. Depending on the specifics of each house, we've



"We pick the right plant for the right spot and do the proper soil prep—it pays off in the long run. For advice, talk to a pro at your local garden center."

—ROGER COOK, TCM LANDSCAPE DESIGNER

outlined, TCM has used fiberglass batts between ceiling, mineral wool rigid foam, shoulder blue jeans, and even antiseptic oil spray foam insulation save homeowners cash and make their houses more enjoyable year-round.

16 Time-saving methods and materials save you money, too

In the huge, complex undertaking that was the 2003 Manchester renovation (above right), every minute counted to finish the project on time and within budget. The crew worked hard to track down products that shaved days, shaved off the schedule, a radiator drive, beyond two systems, plastic PEX tubing, factory-stained cedar shingles, sheets of MDF made to look like hand-hewn weathering, and a prefabricated engineered wood floor.



"This Old House" Chapel House, Newton, MA

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TODAY



17 Good design pros are worth every penny

An architect or designer has been involved in every TOM project. And over the years we've brought in landscape architects, kitchen designers, fabric consultants, interior designers, and even paint-color experts in the situations required. Why? Because these people bring special talent and knowledge to the task. You'll get your money's worth in a remodel that looks great, performs well, and lasts a long time. Seasoned design pros will help you get there.

18 Commercial products can add flair to your home

In 1998, our San Francisco remodelers opted to use corporate-sinking (and networking) products typically found only in commercial spaces in their home: a 1905 church they were converting. Their unexpected



"We've showcased a lot of energy-saving technologies over the years, and we'll keep on doing so, because we need them more than ever."

—SCOTT THOMAS, TOM PROJECT MANAGING EDITOR

choices included both non-leads operated by local people, hefty marble worktop salvaged from a bank, industrial light fixtures, and in the kitchen (above), an industrial-grade chalkboard for jotting down notes, grocery lists, and recipes. The kitchen's design was even modeled on one of the couple's favorite restaurants.

19 Take advantage of the sun, but guard against it, too

Bring an addition for more square footage into being in a nearly cost-free way to warm it up. And when the summer's days are rolling around, don't underestimate the cooling effect of overhanging awnings and well-placed trees. As we've demonstrated early there at project houses, when you're installing new windows, opt for high-efficiency models that let in plenty of light without allowing heat to build up inside.

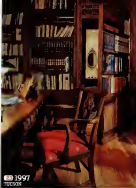
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when you move **into the same castle?**

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20 Buy the right insurance

The owner of the 1939 Billie's house, Dick Siler (Tom's father), had suffered a disaster when his house burned down. But thanks to advice he'd received from a good agent, he was covered by a "full replacement value" policy on the house and its contents—as opposed to "cash value," which is calculated based on the depreciated value of items lost. A replacement policy provides adequate funds for a proper rebuild, and it's only a bit more expensive to carry.

21 Some old structures just can't be saved

In 1969, the owners of an 1835 barn in Concord hoped to dismantle it and rebuild it on their farm. But upon further inspection, they realized the structure was too damaged to be worth the effort. The frame and materials just wouldn't hold up. So the old barn became the inspiration for an entirely new barn: a frame house that was finished with factory-built parts like structural insulated panels (its exterior is sheetrock made at a custom shop in Wisconsin) and we had an old-

timbered barn rising to put up the frame by hand (above left).

22 Tap undersused square footage

More than once, the TOM crew has run into "dead" space in attics, basements, and garages in comfortable living areas. You need to plan carefully and you may have to obtain approvals from the local building department to turn farm spaces like these. But when done right, such innovations compare you the cost and hassle of a full-blown addition or a move to bigger house.

23 Bring your personal stamps to a project

The owners of the Tucson home—one of three a designer brought many of the ideas to the table during the 1997 remodel of their 1930s Pacific Revival home. They worked closely with the architect on some unique and not-so-typical details: black-painted concrete kitchen counter tops (the first time someone's ever done it), kitchen cabinets to match from distinctive, locally sourced

mesquite wood, and in the library (above right), a powder room door cleverly disguised in a wall of bookshelves.

24 Water heaters are a good place to look for energy savings

TOM projects have incorporated tankless (or instantaneous), indirect, and solar hot water systems—all proven technologies that can save money over their lifetime when installed in a house. Tankless water heaters are sold today in much more efficient than older ones. Homeowners with one that's more than 12 years old should consider replacing it; a new one could even pay back with a rebate from the power company or the government.

25 Salvage old wood when possible

We've constantly seen in TOM projects that old growth woods perform better than new. Their growth rings are much tighter than today's plantations and species, making them more stable, rot-resistant, and hard-wearing. That's why

we always try to coordinate original wood windows, bay windows, original wood floors, and other details. The beauty of old wood beams, however, we encourage them.

26 Sourcing local products can help you go green

Our 2007 Austin project proved that as long as we buy materials and materials, we can go green. We used local materials for a remodel. In the kitchen (above left), oak cabinets without added formaldehyde were made in a shop just a few miles from the house. Bathroom custom light fixtures were fabricated at local studio and the art installation was made in a nearby town.

27 It's easier than ever to build a long-wearing deck

Rain, wind, and sun can turn a hand-crafted deck into a splintered, rotted, and dangerous zone. But improved materials

have showcased at many TOM houses including long-lasting synthetic boards, composite decking, treated lumber, and engineered stainless steel brackets have made it possible to build decks that hold up with the ravages of time.

28 Save up and go for quality over quantity

In the 2004 Dade County project, the home owners had a 1930s Dutch Colonial (above middle) for nearly five years before looking for a renovation—long enough to know what it (and they) really needed. They set built up a small, well-chosen and minding an just enough space. 300 square feet together, they were able to build a great room without going into any debt to do it.

29 It's worth extra effort to protect your trees

The 2004 Carlsbad project involved lots of construction (above right), so the crew

"We use self-adhering roof membrane on every project to guard against leaks in the building envelope. It's cheap insurance against a house's worst nightmare."

—KATHY CONNOR, TOM HOST

worked diligently to safeguard mature oaks and trees. A decision rarely known for its staking flowers, during the building process. Professionals like proper testing and watering, protecting the trunk and marking a red zone area for heavy construction equipment make all the difference for preserving a tree, which often doesn't show signs of damage until after the job is done.

30 Good landscaping makes your home look complete

If it isn't for TV's "after" shot that TOM projects always include an adequate budget for landscaping. Proper planting is crucial to making a house look like it and only improves with time. While a master plan provides a great roadmap for your home as money becomes available to tackle new outdoor enhancements. And eye-catching landscaping adds to a house's value too. ■

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Install a stone-veneer fireplace surround

Lightweight cast stones are easy to install – and add rustic charm to any hearth
by JENNIFER STEINBERG • Photographs by WENDY T. WINTER

Cost: About \$60 per square foot
Time: 5 hours a day for three days
Difficulty: Moderate. Choosing and cutting the stone takes attention to detail.

There's something so cozy about a stone fireplace, bringing so much easy magic spent with loved ones in front of a blazing hearth. For those who think that using real stone is the only way to get this look, think again. To day's one-stop source looks a lot like the real thing, with styles ranging from stacked stone to river rock. And if an exact price tag makes it an option, that's hard to pass up. The DIY-friendly panel stones we'll use, the design source retailer's Black Powers shows us, it takes just a few days to build a hearth log the stones and mortar them to your fireplace for a rustic look that will warm up your holiday gifts wrap for years.

Buildings stone to Jendine
@BlackPowers.com



For complete instructions, turn the page.

weekend
remodel

Project timeline

FRIDAY Apply the builder's felt, metal lath, and scratch coat, which will dry overnight.
SATURDAY Install the stones and secure all the joints between them.
SUNDAY Grout the joints.

tools you need

stud finder Before you begin working, use it to find the wall studs, mark their locations with an X on the wall so that they are not cut up.
shaping gun to remove
building twine
filling trowel with 1/4-in. notch

primer (like *It* with a blue metal)
masonry plaster
brick trowel
brick trowel
spray bottle of water
grout bag
striking tool
brick trowel

materials to buy

stone veneer Get about 20 percent more than you need to cover your fireplace to account for fit and loss.
builder's felt It's a heavy moisture barrier that prevents water from getting into the wall.
metal lath To install over the felt, it keeps the mortar in place.
scratch coat A 1/2-in. thick layer of mortar.
1/4-in. mesh galvanized roofing nails
veneer mortar A cement-based additive to create a strong bond between the stone veneer and the surface to which it's attached.
plastic sheetrock Type 1 to your wall, floor, and ceiling to protect them from the work.
primer & tape
old drop cloth (optional)

builder's felt

metal lath

1/4-in. mesh galvanized roofing nails

scratch coat

veneer mortar

plastic sheetrock

primer & tape

old drop cloth

stone veneer

builder's felt

metal lath

1/4-in. mesh galvanized roofing nails

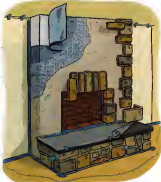
scratch coat

veneer mortar

plastic sheetrock

primer & tape

old drop cloth



1



1. Add the base layers

A. Install builder's felt

Working from the bottom up, install horizontal lengths of builder's felt to the front and sides of the fireplace where the stones will go, overlapping the lengths by 2 inches or more. Each length of felt should be a continuous single piece so that water in the mortar can flow behind the felt and cause damage.

B. Secure metal lath over the felt

One side of metal lath has cuplike protrusions that keep mortar in place. When installed, this side should face inward with the "open" facing up. It will be rough to the touch after you run your hand over the wall but smooth on the opposite side from the horizontal length of felt. Pressing into the wall is fine; the lath will be replaced. Overlapping each piece 2 inches or more in all directions will ensure a secure fit. Then level the felt around the sides with a trowel, using a long piece of wood to help. Avoid the trowel hitting the front and side walls to keep it in place and prevent the mortar from cracking.

PHOTO A: JEFFREY M. HARRIS/GETTY IMAGES

2. Apply the scratch coat

A. Cover the lath with mortar

Use a trowel to apply the scratch coat of mortar over the lath. With a trowel, spread it over the lath, first using a downward motion to "fill" the space, then building the surface for thickness of 3/8 inch by using a side-to-side or forward motion to spread mortar over the first layer.

B. Smooth the scratch coat

While the mortar is still pliable (about 20 minutes after application), smooth it horizontally using the notched trowel held at a slight angle to the surface. Then, if necessary, create a textured surface for the mortar stones to grip on. Allow the scratch coat to cure overnight (or longer).



3

3. Prepare the field of stones

A. Create a dry run of your design

Selecting and laying out the stones on a template helps you visualize how they'll look installed. Tape plastic sheetrock or old drop cloth to a flat surface, and use painter's tape to define the shape of your fireplace on it. Secure by placing the corner pieces that will define the opening and sides of the fireplace. Then lay in the field of the field, leaving space about 1/4 in. wide as a finger between each stone and staggering stones at different levels, shapes, and colors to achieve the look you want. The corner pieces for the header at the top of the fireplace opening will be installed last, so install them last.

B. Score the corner pieces

Thus is the first of two steps for cutting the stones to size. Measure the depth of the fireplace opening on the top and sides, making sure to leave enough clearance all around to remove the doors or screen if necessary once the stones are in place. Mark the measurements on the corresponding corner pieces, starting at the inner corner of each stone's back side. Using a pencil, score the back sides to a depth of about 1/4 in. from the thickness. Then measure the depth of the fireplace's width and mark the pieces for the remaining corner pieces in the same manner.

C. Remove excess material from the corner pieces

Hold a stone so that the waste side hangs over the edge of your work surface. Strike the waste side with a brick trowel to create a smooth, flat edge. Repeat for all corner pieces.



Tip When scoring corner pieces, use a brick trowel. Use it to score the lines in the corner of your work surface, and hold it firmly against the surface to prevent the entire stone from breaking.

4. Install the corner pieces

A. Wet the stone and wall

You'll install the header first, so start wetting the left side corner piece for this area. Using a spray bottle or damp sponge, dampen the back of the stone and the area on the wall where the stone will be placed. The moisture will help the mortar cure more slowly for a stronger bond.

B. Grout the first corner piece for the header. Mix mortar to the consistency of pudding. Using a brick trowel, apply a 1/4-inch thick layer to the back side of the first corner piece, using spreading motions to work it into both surfaces until they're completely coated. Then, with the trowel tip, use a pulling motion to make a furrow in the center of the mortar spread surface. Don't let wet mortar drop into the face of the stone because it will erode stones.

C. Install the header stones.

Press the stone firmly into place on the top left part of the header. Wiggle it back and forth slightly, and tap pressing when you can feel the stone touch the top of the corner piece. Mortar should ooze from all sides of the stone as you do this. Repeat with the remaining header stones.

D. Install the rest of the corner pieces.

Each header and install the rest of the corner pieces following the opening and tuck of the fireplace using the process described above. Leave a finger's width gap between each stone.



Tip: Don't try to wipe wet mortar off the face of any stone—you'll end up pushing it deep into the stone's surface joints, where it will cure and rise to the surface and then be impossible to remove. Instead, let the mortar dry and then scrub it off with a stiff brush.



5. Fill in the field

A. Coat the top-left fieldstone.

Starting at the top-left portion of the field, back-butter the stone using the process described in Step 4B. Again, don't let wet mortar drip onto the face of the stone.

B. Install the first course.

Push the stone firmly into place at the top of the field, almost touching the ceiling. Wiggle it into place until it's against the rebar wall. Mortar should ooze from all sides of the stone. Repeat for the remaining stones in the first course, leaving a finger's width joint between each stone.

C. Finish the field.

Continue adding stones to the top course, which will keep mortar from filling into the base of the stones below as you work. Again, leave a joint as wide as your finger between each stone. Dress the ends of any cut stones by applying extreme force to them. To save your finish for the day, remove a excess mortar between the stones with a stinking tool and whisk broom so that there's enough room to push the grout later on. Let the mortar cure overnight (or longer).



5

Tip: Pay attention to the size, color and shape of the stones as you install them. Don't be afraid to change your original layout or cut the stones to size for better results.

6. Grout the stones

A. Fill the joints with grout.

Cut the tip off the end of a grout bag, string your end to the joint width of the bag halfway with fresh grout mixture to the consistency of pudding. Tuck the side end of the bag shut, and squeeze grout toward the joint until all the air bubbles are gone and the grout reaches the opening. Starting with vertical "head" joints and moving to horizontal "bed" joints, fill the joints with grout always using an upward-pulling motion as you work. For the head joints, when it's too difficult to maneuver to reach the highest stones, fill the joints until the grout is flush with the previous stones.

B. Strike the grout.

Let the grout cure and pressing it with a finger lowers it and without breaking through the surface (about 60 minutes). Using the stinking tool, curve the grout to the desired stone's depth. (You can use a wire brush to knock out a chip of grout at the end of a bed joint a beer rounded with sandpaper, spreading on the side at the joints.) Achieve a concave look by curving a grout profile that sits below the face of the stones (for a radio effect). Like the one we used, shape the grout to flush with the stones (on a new set of grout technique), then groove the grout lines with a whiplash broom to create a natural-looking finish. Let the grout cure for at least 48 hours before using the fireplace.

A Home for the Holidays

...and every season in between. Here's how a top-to-bottom redo turned a 1912 summer cottage into a year-round gathering spot for the whole family



By Deborah Goldstein
Photographs by Susan Gilmore
Produced by Colette Scanlon
Styling by Christine Clark



DIAGNOSIS: COTTAGE

The catch here was a barren late-1900s cottage with sagging floor slats. A gradual redo in the single-story-guest-architect's interest to spare.

a Inspired by New England's historic cottages in the 1910s style, the warm-up floor slats were replaced with arched woodwork, a 1910s-style vintage bar, and a new chimney, and "southern" cedar shingles.

b The living room was finished in a shiplap style, built in for a more intimate look.

c Raising the roof for a proper second-story support. The rafters were left in place, and the new roof was added.

d The new roofline allowed for a second-story porch, and the new roofline allowed for a second-story porch, and the new roofline allowed for a second-story porch.

SOMETIMES TO SAVE AN OLD HOUSE you have to take a apart and put it back together in a brand-new way. After three years of wandering how to update their 1932 bungalow cottage in Mound, Minnesota, Michael and Andrea Krasnow decided to begin tinkering around the edges of their old whole-house redo. The result, says the new gambel roof and a new front porch to the main level in the center hall, personally looks older than the house they started out with.

The couple—currently living in a place that Michael had acquired a few years earlier—appreciated the cottage's compact footprint and had no desire to replace it with one of the mid-back McMansions that had sprouted in the area, a former summer colony outside Minneapolis. Still, the kitchen dated to the early 1960s, and the upstairs was half attic, with no real back space for Michael's three young grandchildren. The house lacked modern amenities, its boiler was wheezing, and accidentally it was neither here nor there. “We didn’t want to tear it down, we wanted to gently nudge it,” says Andrea, an interior designer with a passion for weathered gray shingles, lacy floor patches, and painting preservation.

As the couple dipped into her idea file, crisscrossed with magazine clips and photographs that she took whenever they spotted a house they liked, one picture kept drawing them back. It showed a Shingle-style dwelling in Newport, Rhode Island, with a casual air and wide gambrel roofline. “It was a very clean aesthetic but without feeling cold,” Andrea says.

That aesthetic took shape in her new home, along with a decor that would convey the couple’s grown-up tastes and casually-casual lifestyle. The new approach: “That typical old-front house that had had a series of updates over the years, with shed dormers front and back, a 1930s picture window with simple but whimsical casework in one room and double bays in another,” says Andrea. “It had an continuity—sort of a code issue.”

But how to add a little design logic while preserving the home’s traditional wattle of first-floor rooms? No. In “We took the plunge and tore off the roof,” says Andrea, allowing the house to gain a new facade—and master suite—without expanding out. And No. 2, “instead of completely demolishing exterior walls, we decided to weave the passageways between rooms,” she says.

Armed with a detailed plan, the couple went to a local design-build firm, Lobe

FLOOR PLANS

To preserve the traditional layout of the first floor while bringing in light and air, the homeowners cut under passageways between rooms and opened them to new outdoor spaces. They also opted to build up instead of out, topping off the attic and adding 500 square feet on the second floor. The upstairs expansion made room for a new guest bedroom with its own closet, and a master suite with a bay balcony accessible through French doors.



READY FOR COMPANY

Before their gambel exterior walls and roof, the feel of the original house, the owners selected passageways for more light and better flow.

The opening between the kitchen and dining room was 18 inches to 24 inches.

To preserve the existing oak oak floor and create a seamless transition from the kitchen, old and new plants were introduced and blended with a natural style.

Old panel wallpaper adds a traditional touch to a new, with contemporary furniture and a new shopping cart.



"Period details should be warm and layered, as if the room evolved over the years."



STEPSHAPE
The pretty yellow
painted floor style
with perfect details.

j
Pendant light
cabinets have
deep brass cup
pulls with a warm
metal finish.

k
Try to clean
glazed white
cabinets like white
enamel style.

l
A dark white
darker floor
cabinets counter
reflect light from
the room. A few bits
of white.

m
Vintage plates
including a couple
of family and some
personal
the space.

n
A window seat
cabinet and
cabinet seating in
the dining room. A
special night on
many other
dining party there
class of hand.

Country Builders, which helped coordinate it into drawings and work schedules. The goal was to bring light and openness and keep going down into the formerly dark house, making it as comfortable and warm as an old New England inn.

Another goal was to recycle and reuse as much as possible. After the couple visited the house just down to get an idea under the work crew's feet, Auden made a wishlist of the hardware, a mix of brass hinges, glass knobs, and painted metal. "I had it all replaced—even the screws—with an oil-rubbed bronze finish and assembled it to tie together the old and new rooms again."

Most of the old redwood still worked, even if the 50-year-old boiler didn't, and sturdy red-oak flooring was hidden under a primitive layer of carpet, awaiting a second life. "When floor doctor Roy Andrews salvaged boards from a bedroom to patch holes downstairs and alternated old and new boards in staggered lengths elsewhere. His surgery, along with a solvent stain topped by semi-polyurethane, means "the table top will never see the change," he says.

To get the new rooms they wanted upstairs, where two and a half makeshift bedrooms and a bath sat alongside the attic, the couple had to underwrite major structural work below. Foundations were repaired, and walls opened up to add studs. Chances for new wiring, ductwork, and plumbing had to be found, too. Lead car painter Peter Mann says a dump-pile board as long as the house made a column, one of a pair designed to set off the opening between the dining and living areas.

The crew added two steel beams over the living room, leaving them out and

SCUFFE MEETIN

Dark wood tones and crisp blues and whites make the master bedroom and bath.

Architects suggest the Federalist window associated with the Shingle style.

A black-painted iron post bed grounds the room's historic and midcentury.

Exhausting, grubby mortar and stone brighten the dark wood paneling.

A paneled door with frosted glass below the PG.

Shingle- mania?

Frederick
Hagopian is
another
handyman
service out of
the Blue Hills
area.



"We wanted a comfortable, classic aesthetic but without feeling cold—just cozy."



adding a grid of false beams to create a coffered ceiling. They also dispensed an existing fireplace faced in crumbling peck-and-brick. "The hearth didn't meet code, it was just sitting on the floor, so eventually it would have crumbled," Mass says. They pulled down the brick, dug a beam underneath a new firebox, and rebuilt the hearth with a surround designed to reinforce Andre's deep blue, crisp-white, and stained-wood theme.

Despite the heavy lifting, the layout alterations stayed virtually as it was. To reinforce the gallery teacher's vintage grooves, Andre took out the long wall paper, blood cabinets, and 18th-century cupboards and added pale marble work surfaces, painted mosaic-panel cabinets, bar pulls, and subway tile.

Building a house from scratch might have been easier. "Walls were totally out of plumb," says Mass, referring to the challenge of raising out floors, tramping rafters, and replacing windows and doors when cobbling wants to air right. "We did a lot of refinishing and reupholstering," he says simply—and ordered cabinets with extra-wide sides to fill any visible gaps.

Seven months later, the Kyrnses had their new old house, with cedar shingles replacing the painted ones and a front-facing gambrel roof over a shingle-filled window box. With an extra space, the house now easily handles Andre's home office and visit by an extended family that includes four grandchildren and three grandkids under the age of 5. "Over the holidays, it's chaos," Andre says happily.

One pure early-20th-century summer cottage, one post-19th-century remote New England, and one post-contemporary flow and function, the house is warm, comfortably furnished, and packed inside a brand-new shell, augmented by front and side porches and a deck to back to extensive outdoor living. "It's, it does look like it's always been here," says Andre, who is smug with having the vision to see the project through, right down to the custom etch on the faux-weathered shingles. "Friends walk in and think, 'I did this house!'"

behind the design

The biggest inspiration for the redo was time spent in New England, where Michael and Andre's interior designs were often showcased on the water with barn-style roofs, deep front porches, and shingles peeking by the eaves. Here are some of the ideas Andre put together for the interior fix.

exterior style

Photographs of spacious yet cozy New England houses in the Shingle style inspired the front-facing gambrel roof, arched windows, curved window box, and wide white-painted front porch.

color palette

A favorite book, *Blue and White Living* by Sherrie Higgins, inspired Andre's mid-century modern look for guestroom's blue-and-white plates with patterned center to create the found-on-a-pair-of-chairs look to these colors and warm beige used for the palette.

fixed finishes

Samples of subway tile and pale marble fed the original three-lap shingle gambrel roof and fireplace. Building the house in was interrupted glass and subway-tile finish, and used to provide a little bit of the house's past.



Sitting Pretty

Window seats provide a place to perch or relax (even snooze) and add style to any room in the house, often with the bonus of built-in storage. Here, 11 inspiring designs

By Natalie Rodriguez Produced by Colette Scanlon



Bay-Window Daybed

The new-look natural light and steady inside view that a bay window brings with it practically begs for the addition of a window seat. Here, a long, deep bench lined with soft, over-size cushions creates a perfect lounge area. Decorative brackets help support the seat, a new throw, and provide large-scale visual interest in a lightened-up look, as does the all-white color scheme. Tall glass molding ties it all together in the room.

TIP: Add adjustable window coverings, such as the interior curtains shown here, to control the amount of light when windows are large—and to shut out sunbath in bedroom sitting.



Two-Tier Built-In

A hybrid seat can make awkwardly placed windows look intentional, even the home office. The peaked roof back displays keepbooks and reading material under the high window; the cushioned base backs under the sill at below-eye level. The built-former desk doubles duty with vertical slots for front drawers that hold legal-size file folders.

TIP: Make your seat feel more elevated by lowering the reading area into a built-in shelf that slopes toward the window.



3

Sofa Bed

An extra-deep window seat can serve as a comfy enough for snuggling couch—and double as a crash pad for overnight guests. If you have the space, build the frame to the specs of an off-the-shelf twin- or full-size mattress—about 30 by 70 inches or 54 by 73 inches, respectively—and you've got a ready-made cushion just waiting to be covered, a jersey or flannel Matt's sheet in a dark color or pattern can even do daytime duty. Then pile on the back pillows. Built-in drawers offer a convenient place to store extra linens and bed linen.

TIP: Install a pair of windows directly above and style window seat where you want it—5 feet from the floor is a good head-clearing height—so that you can keep up with that page turner even after the sun sets.

PHOTO: JENNIFER HALL; COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK TIMES; PHOTO: JENNIFER HALL; COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK TIMES; PHOTO: JENNIFER HALL; COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK TIMES



4

Pair of Perches

Small benches on either side of a family room entertainment center create a handsome wall of built-ins that don't impinge on big views and allow for two separate nooks kids can retreat to. The padded seat fronts make the media cabinet doors, joggling them farther into the room adds both comfort and visual interest. These corner units, which take advantage of wrap-around views, even have tops that lift up to reveal built-in pull-out beds for sleepovers.

TIP: A window seat meant for an entire window should be 22 inches deep, but if space allows, 30 to 36 inches turns a corner table with at least 36 inches side to side.



5

Amidst pillows
offer a sweet but busy look
from a cushion
while still providing
ample support when
guests want back.



6

Storage Center

A windowed wall of cabinetry built up to ceiling storage is a small but mighty addition to a room for storing everything from books to toys. Though more expensive than a simple flange compartment, drawers installed at the space below avoid the inconvenience of having to remove a cushion to reach belongings stashed inside. Drawers can also be a handy closet for storing kids' sports gear or a madhouse or place settings in a breakfast room.

TIP: To make a comfortable cushion, get a medium-density or low-loft foam for the core and wrap it with soft bedding for flexibility. Cover it with upholstery-grade laminated fabric or apply a stain-resistant bonded-together weight material.

Bathroom Organizer

Filling a wall with cabinetry might seem like an impractical use of precious floor space in a small bath, but it can both maximize storage and create a place to park your towels (or yourself) in the tub fills. Here, a deep shelf that recessed from the side offers a spot for showing bought-in bath-paper products. Over the lip top on the bench find space for extra towels and grooming supplies.

TIP: When adding shelf space that will be specifically kids, consider installing safety lingers to prevent it from slamming down on small hands.

Design doors as a built-in storage space to open over the seat, rather than enter the room where space is tight.



Build your own

Learn how to use ideas brought out into the world to make your own. We show you how to build your own.



Ingenook Style

Take advantage of a corner configuration and combine charming, occasional seating with handsome open storage. This L-shaped bench—its mirror image flanks the other side of the hearth—offers a convenient spot for books, glasses, and a few toys, and makes a great place to gather around the fireplace. Allow half wall at the end of the seat makes a perfect nook and provides a handy place to set down a drink.

TIP: Don't let existing heat register or baseboard and seal your window and plan. Extending the built-in bench to include the register or wrapping in a bench heater is a simple job for any handy homeowner.

Bookshelf Bench

Scorebooks, safari hats, and other items are crated where walls jump in or out. Here, open shelves serve as the base to a bedroom window seat, keeping books close by. Towels, if you're in a window where space allows, extend the seat at least 6 to 12 inches on either side. Long enough to sit about 5 feet will make people to stretch out.

TIP: For window seats that see lots of direct sun, use UV resistant outdoor fabrics for cushions and covers so that colors will better likely to fade.



Build dividers into open bookshelves to support your seat and act as bookends. Add bench space to provide your own view of the floor.

Vintage-Style Seat

Period kitchens featured furniture pieces for storage, food prep, and eating. Making this window seat a step out of stained oak that matches the counter on the flanking china cabinets ties them all together, but its more elaborate millwork and high glass block pane make it feel like a separate place. Pull up a small table and a couple as a banquet table.

TIP: In kitchen, moisture, accidents, when seats and spills might have problems, call for patterned and removable washable covers for window seat cushions.



Stairway Getaway

As under the stairs, the kind of odd space windows are good for them, a little window seat nestled by a built-in shelf might have been dead space into a secret hideaway any kid would love. For a similar effect, we plot under the stairs space in a niche for a built-in bench and a small table for a window seat or a small table for a window seat or a small table for a window seat.

TIP: Get space under window seat the front entry? Build a step-up bench and you've got a place to sit and read, and you've got a place to sit and read, and you've got a place to sit and read.

24

products and professionals
to help make your house
a standout on your street

It's that time of year again. No, we don't mean the holidays, though much of what's here and on the following pages certainly tops our wish lists. It's when we at *The Old Farmer's Almanac* up our notebooks to spill secret sources we've discovered in the past 12 months. Looking for something the Joneses won't have? We've found handsome one-of-a-kind items, such as handmade farmhouse tables and recycled glass backsplash tiles, to personalize your space. For those of you with expensive tastes but tight budgets, we've uncovered online outlets for insider deals—no master your Zip code—on pricey lighting, floor coverings, and power tools. And if you're looking to replicate or match some thing you have on hand, we divulge our favorite places to go for custom-made hardware, millwork, and wall coverings. This year, readers also get in on the action, sharing bushy-bush finds of their own. Because even the most in-the-know home-improvement enthusiasts can use a hand in digging the latest and greatest of what's out there.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WENDELL T. WEBER

5 ways to get a custom look

#1

REPRODUCTION WOODWORK HEARTWOOD CRYING

If the years haven't been kind to your old home's trim, this company in Eugene, Oregon, can replicate damaged details using special 3D imaging software and computerized mills. Just send a sample photo of your mangled spindles (or, for instance, send in a couple of weeks you'll have new ones that are virtually indistinguishable from the originals). Prices (excluding any design fees) start at \$12 for a simple router bit to finish off the corner of a door casing and go up to \$25 or more for ornate pieces, such as this copy of a 3½-inch corbel with a curling acanthus leaf heartwoodcrying.com



#2

REPURPOSED METALS

KRAMER DESIGN STUDIO Send your rusty salvaged yard accoutrements to Chicago furniture designer and "upcycler" Randall Kramer, who can transform just about anything cast or wrought into a stylish, one-of-a-kind home accent. A Victorian-era cast-iron fence section, for example, gets a new life as the base of a bench and an Art Deco window guard becomes a fireplace screen. This elegant headboard was once a balcony railing. The design and fabrication fee: \$495 (excluding price of the rail); kramerdesignstudio.com



#3

PERSONALIZED PRINTS ALLUMENARE

This design-it-yourself online shop lets you create your own wallpaper and get coordinating throw pillows, upholstery fabric, and even lamp shades. With more than 50 patterns and colors to mix and match, you can customize pieces to suit your individual taste and home decor. Shown below: Navy wallpaper in white, ochre, sand dollar, and charcoal gray. \$8 per square foot, and matching 14-inch-square throw pillow. \$100; allumenaire.com

#4

FETCHING FIREPLACE TOOLS CUSTOM DESIGN METALARTS

Brush up your hearth with hand-forged wrought-iron fireplace tools made expressly for you by ornamental metalsmith Ed Roberts of Ocala, Florida. Recent commissions include a shovel, poker, and broom set topped with intertwining vines and ones with handsome horse heads. Tools are treated with a traditional blacksmith finish containing linseed oil, tung oil, and beeswax. This wall-mount set with a bold motif: \$100; customdesignmetals.com



#5



reader find: Kraft Hardware

ALLEN RAUPHUS, NEW ORLEANS

Why I love it: Kraft built its business making decorative hardware and specialty plumbing products for pro designers like me, but anyone can use its custom services. On-site fabrication means prototypes are made on the spot and tweaked according to your feedback before an order is sent.

What I scored: Drawer pulls for a client who fell in love with the shape of a 6-inch pull but wanted something twice the size. **Word to the wise:** When shopping for hardware, whether at Kraft or a flea market, look for good design and shape first. You can always reinterpret an item to fit your needs. (The Persian doorknob above, a vintage find, inspired this replica knob and rosette in polished brass, \$50, and these cabinet pulls in brass, \$34, and satin nickel, \$19; kraft-hardware.com.)

6 ways to score a deal

#6

CHEAP CHIC HARDWARE

URBAN OUTLET STORES Find wall hooks, shelf brackets and door knockers that look much more luxe than they cost on the website for Urban Outfitters, a hipper-than-thou design store and purveyor of dorm-room essentials for teens and twenty-somethings. This special green apr-friendly spot for homeowners and renters alike is called the Apartment. Several styles of shelf brackets, including the ornate cast-iron Rockback and Scroll models shown above, \$12 and more than adze-n-hooks, starting at \$6. urbanoutfitters.com



#7

HIGH STYLE, LOW-COST CARPET

PLUM OUTLET You've heard of sample sales for designer clothes, but how about ones for expensive floor coverings? Plum, the maker of DIY-friendly slide-together carpet tiles, sells one-off designs and best colors for up to half the cost of its regular stock through this special online outlet. Quantities are limited, so for large area rugs pick a few different colors and arrange them in a custom pattern, such as the checkerboard shown at left. We've seen some fun and artsy displays in kids' rooms, where having the ability to swap out a stained square is particularly useful. 20-inch square tiles, starting at \$5 for corn/coulet.



#8

BUDGET-FRIENDLY ECO PAINT

VISIONS PAINT RECYCLING Go easy on the environment and your wallet with low-VOC latex made by blending and reformulating excess stock from major paint manufacturers and leftovers from homeowner projects. Visions, at McMillan, California, offers 20 neutral shades in flat, eggshell, and semigloss for half the cost of comparable Green Seal-certified emulsions. If you want something brighter, send a swatch and Visions will mix a custom batch at no extra charge. \$23-\$25 per gallon, depending on sheen, visionsrecycling.com

#9

#10

TOOLS FOR LESS

CPO OUTLET Find hundreds of like-new tools from two brands including Bosch, Makita, and DeWalt, for up to 65 percent off through this online retailer's "Recon Central" portal. Every router, grinder, sander, and drill/driver is factory certified and comes with a 30-day money-back guarantee. So go ahead and plunge on that lithium-ion hammer drill you've been hankering for. We found the Bosch 18V Sauter Tough, which retails for \$560, for \$310. cpoutlets.com



staff find: Lumens Annex

AMYR HUGHES, FEATURES EDITOR

Why I love it: The virtual bargain basement for Lumens Light + Living, a Sacramento, California, seller of high-end lighting, fans, and accessories, such as woven Pampi floor mats and stylish house numbers, includes a display model and returns for up to 70 percent off. **What I scored:** This dramatic Candelaria Chandelier with an antiqued-bronze finish and exposed Edison-style incandescents to go above my dining table. It was \$395 (not including the bulbs), almost half off its retail price of \$748.

Word to the wise: The Annex typically has about 75 lucky finds up for grabs at lumenstannex.wordpress.com. If you see something you like, best buy it fast—there's usually only one available.



#11

STONE STEALS

OPUSTONE'S VALUE ANGEL Want granite countertops on a leaner budget? Visit the online home of Opustone's clearance showroom in Miami and browse through a rotating stock of discounted stone slabs and remnants in varied colors and finishes. With up to 50 percent off and special shipping rates with freight carriers for national delivery, you'll be hard-pressed to find a better deal. Just keep in mind that Opustone sells materials only, so you'll have to work with a local fabricator for any custom cuts, edge profiles and installation. An 88-by-92-inch slab of beige travertine was recently listed for \$4 per square foot, down from \$7. opustone.com

got a secret to spill?

Send your little-known bargain find this address as a bonus.

7 ways to solve a problem



#10

QUILT-PIECE EXOTIC FLOORING

GOOD WOOD If you love the wandering golden espresso streaks in marblewood from Brazil or the ripples in nambian from Indonesia but worry about logging practices in such far-flung locales, let this purveyor of responsibly harvested exotic-look wood convince you. Owner Thom Scott of Good Wood in Westport, Massachusetts imports the boards from ethically and environmentally sound sources, then kilns-dries and mills them here in the U.S. to his customers' specs. Shown above (from top to bottom): pin-square foot base prices: nambian, \$30; marblewood, \$8; Brazilian ebony, \$10; black poisonwood, \$8; and macaruba, \$7. thegoodwoodinfo.com



#11

HARD-TO-FIND HINGES

HARDWARE SOURCE Searching for satin nickel cleopatra wrought-iron pinpoints got a whole lot easier with this one-stop online shop for all things huge. It's got the gamut, from solid-brass bellows to stainless-steel strips along with hundreds of specialty products, including refrigerator hinges patterned after ones used on zinc-lined wood for boats from the early 1900s. We really dig the look of these replicas on tall kitchen cabinet doors. Shown above: Die Cast Refrigerator \$129 per pair. Final Tapped \$18 each. Art Deco \$12 each and Ornamental \$5 per pair. hardwaresource.com



EASY COLOR NOSH

SAFE PAINT Finish your walls with Colonial-style milk paint in just one step with a new self-priming formula from The Old-Fashioned Milk Paint Co., of Groton, Massachusetts. Designed for use on nonporous surfaces, it's unlike some other manufacturers' formulas, which require you to mix in a special bonding agent for use on anything other than wood or masonry. Safe Paint goes right over previously painted walls and bare Sheetrock. Just add water. And like all milk paint, it's zero VOC. Available in 20 shades. Shown above: Pumpkin. \$46 per gallon. milkpaint.com



#12

EXACT MATCHBULBS

THE LIGHTBULB STORE If you can't find the bulb you need among the 75,000 at this store in South Hackensack, New Jersey, owner Larry Benbaum will make it for you. A third-generation lampologist whose granddaddy worked with Thomas Edison, Benbaum has been in the bulb business for 60 years. He's the go-to guy for everything from high-tech LEDs to carbon filament repros. Shown below: 1930 Squircleage (front) and 1930 Doubleloop (rear) FerroWatt bulbs. 99 each. 800-392-3742



#13

GOOD-LOOKING WATER SAVING

KENTUCKY BARRELS If you're looking for a rain-catchment system that's as much conversation piece as pragmatic approach to water saving, these recycled whiskey barrels from the Bluegrass State are for you. The solid white oak barrels, once brimming with bourbon, come with a brass faucet, steel overflow pipe, and downspout adapter. For \$275, we think they've got a lot more charm than those plastic models with the faux wood grain for the same price. kentuckybarrels.com



#14

HANDSOME FINGER

DESIGNBYTHOMASANDRUS.COM Replace that ugly plastic oblong in your foyer with a period-appropriate wood one from craftsman Mitchell Andrus's online shop. Simply remove your old finger and connect the new one to your existing wires. Select from 12 designs, including the Art Nouveau-style Mason with an inlaid floral motif, and a variety of woods and finishes. Or have Andrus build a bell that's unique to your house. Shown above: the stained oak Arts and Crafts-style Summer. \$295. masonfurniture.com



#18



staff find: Baird Brothers Fine Hardwoods

SILVANIA EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Why I love it: The Baird Brothers mill in Oneida, Ohio, stocks 17 species of wood in 100-plus profiles. Everything's available at their online store, so you don't have to traipse around lumberyards and big-box stores looking for what you need. **What I loved:** 48-in.-tall TVs in cherry baseboard (shown above, left), for \$4.97 per linear foot, that would have been a special order—and a long wait—at any of my local dealers. **Wood to the wise:** If you see something really special in the pages of *TDH*, send Baird a photo. They'll custom-match anything from a five-panel interior door or Federal-style mantel to an elaborately built-up window casing. And in about two weeks UPS will be at your door with your woodwork in hand. bairdbrothers.com

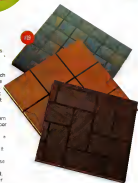


6 ways to make your neighbor jealous

HARDWOOD TILES TRISCHORN MOSAIC FLOORING

End-grain wood mosaic tiles crafted from sustainably harvested exotic species, offer a stylish alternative to traditional strip flooring. Each custom-assembled floor tile is formed with tiny squares, rectangles, or hexagons set within a grid of flexible grout that moves with the wood's natural expansion and contraction. An optional foam underlayment makes the floor as cushiony underfoot as carpet. The tiles can be refinished, but their maker says they shouldn't require it if treated annually with a water-based cleaner. Choose from 24 patterns, including herringbone (shown at right, bottom). Starting at \$39 per square foot installed, trischormosaicflooring.com.

#19



#20

TIME-WORN TABLES PRIMITIVEPOPLES

Set your country kitchen apart with a handcrafted table that costs about the same as mass-produced ones from high-end furniture stores. Georgia woodworker Danette Sperry makes each table to your exact specifications, using a custom white pine floorboard salvaged from deconstructed 18th- and 19th-century buildings for the tops. Benches are fixed either with new hand-turned or tapered legs that Sperry distichs to match the tops. A natural oiled finish highlights the tables' warm honey hue and aged patina. Shown above: A 3-by-7-foot table with tapered legs that will set you back \$2,195. primitivefols.com

#21

TROMPE L'OEIL GLASS TILE DEVENNE ELEMENTS

Dress up your kitchen backsplash or shower enclosure with glass tiles that have the handsome texture of wood but hold up better in wet areas. Hand-cast from recycled glass at De Venne's shop in Biglerville, Pennsylvania, each one of a kind tile is also eco-friendly. Shown at left: 3-by-12-inch "oak" tiles. \$40 per square foot. devenneelements.com



#22

HAND-PAINTED FABRIC HOME SWEET

Using a traditional block printing process, Delaware artist Jerry Nelson makes colorful Arts and Crafts-inspired fabrics for upholstery, drapes, and throw pillows. Water-based inks get the hemp and organic cotton-based fabric a soft, weathered look, while over a dozen color combinations and new original floral and geometric designs allow your own taste to dictate the final product. Shown above: Leaf Weave in green. Mary Margaret in plume and chocolate, and Trumpet Flower in adobe and grass, starting at \$60 per yard. homewestbyhand.com



#23



#24

SALVAGED GARDEN ORNAMENTS RHODES ARCHITECTURAL STONE

This Seattle show-and-sell the globe for vintage pieces that lend the modern well to repurposing as unique garden ornaments. Its specialty is large, 500-year-old granite and sandstone mill wheels imported from China's southern provinces. We've seen them used as tabletops and as fountains with water gurgling out of their center holes. Wheels start at \$4,000. If that's not in your budget, Rhodes also sells reclaimed terra-cotta herbicides. Use them lining an outdoor barbecue pit. \$5 each. rhodes.org



reader find: Vintage Lighting and Fan Shoppe

GRYNN IDIN HARD NEW WESTMINSTER
BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

Why I love it: I stumbled across the place while looking for antique lighting for my 1910 house. They restore and sell original hand-painted Art Deco and Art Nouveau fixtures for roughly the same cost as reproductions.

What I scored: Nine fixtures (including a five-bulb ceiling-mounted one that was about \$400). [A similar model is shown here, along with three- and two-bulb models for \$275 and \$285, respectively. vintage-lighting-and-fan-shoppe.com.]

Word to the wise: Ask the Impossible Owners Testa and Craig Elderton are always acquiring new pieces and are happy to keep an eye out for white-wire you need. They actually found an exact mate for one of my orphan wall sconces.



Greetings from our old red house!

For this single mom, holiday cards delivered annual updates on her four loves: her three sons and the rehab of her 1899 four-square that's been years in the making

By Barry Hahn, homeswimer
Photographs by Jason Dervey
Styling by Sunday Hendrickson

It was January 2005 and obviously too late to call the update a Christmas letter, but fast as the computer says we'll figure up family and friends in Texas would understand—I was, after all, living in the middle of a construction run.

At least I was no longer sleeping on a bed in the back porch, with no door for privacy and bones piled high around me, like I had been for over a year. Just before that Christmas, I had finally moved into the new bedroom and bath I added on to the first floor. The laundry, though, was not yet finished, so the weather and dryer were still in the s/he afflicted basement. The 1899 four-square still had been straggled of its old tin vinyl siding and aluminum trim to reveal cedar's egg-like clapboards, now dented with blower-in insulation every point and about 30 test patches of red paint—as it had been for months. I'm sure our neighbors were holding their breath over who house we would finally choose. The winter, by the way, ended up being my own special concoction: "Barney Bird Mix No. 34"—yes, it took that money to find the right one.

There was so much still to be done. But I took the time to get out my card boxes, finally, the ones I left in my new home, the ones I wanted to bring about in January's first Christmas card showing the place in 2004. I had bought the house a few months earlier, newly divorced and rushing to settle my three sons in before the school year started. I moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado, for the military medical facilities and other on-base conveniences the area offers several small offices like myself, and for its historic character. After decades of watching *The Old House* on television and subscribing to the magazine, I wanted to tackle an old house and put two projects at that I'd learned. When the Realtor showed me the place, I wasn't

LEFT: FROM TOP: Holiday cards show the house over the years, with the exterior (as vinyl siding, then with the blue-painted clapboards that lay underneath, and the blue-tinted glass and halogen outside it has today. RIGHT: Homeswimer Barry Hahn with his sons: Barry, Tyler, Travis, and Michael. Hahn bought in 2003, right? Last year's money holiday season



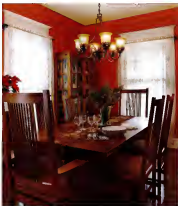
Homeswimer Barry Hahn and son Tyler stand on the porch of their renovated 1899 four-square with updated siding and blue-white paint and the blue-tinted glass door. The photo is a holiday card from the same Barry Hahn, who is the first owner of the house.





Tips for cutting trim
Watch EDC's pro installation team show the techniques and techniques you need to know.

By the next Christmas, things were coming together—designs were available



By 2003, we were able to have a real Thanksgiving dinner in the dining room for the first time, and I put a true "adult" photo of the house on my Christmas card. Over the years the projects had become smaller: I've added a few past top-to-the-headers ideas to create a spare room, and I reread an apocryphal Of course, the to-do list always seems never-ending—I'm thinking about making a walk-in closet and removing a dropped ceiling upstairs—but what was a cold, ugly house is finally a lovely and comfortable place to live. ■



trans entry



ALL ABOUT

Pendant lights

These hanging fixtures add brightness and style to any room in the house. The experts at TOH show you how to find and install one that puts light where you want it, beautifully. *By Sal Voelker*

Suspended from ceilings by rods or chains, pendants bring light down to the places we need it, and they do so with stunning good-looking grace we can't help admire, even after the electricity is turned off.

Simpler than a chandelier with its multiple ornate shades, a pendant is little more than a bulb hidden under a shade hanging on the end of a cord. Yet there's a wide variety of shapes, sizes, and styles, ranging from 4-inch-diameter mini cylinders to massive 36-inch domes. Some wash light over a big area, giving your foyer or entry landing a welcoming glow. Others focus bright beams onto one strategic spot: a sink or cutting board in a kitchen island, a family photo on the living-room endwall.

A pendant's purpose is also defined by what it's made of. Glass ones, whether colorful exactly like Murano flasks or industrial-style ribbed globes, as well as most fabric-covered ones throw off softest light. Shades fashioned from etched or hand-blacked metal, for instance, confine light to a downward path.

On the following pages, learn what to look for when shopping for pendants and where and how to hang them. Armed with this knowledge, you don't have to be an Edison—or, rather, an Edison—to execute your lighting designs.

Pendant Anatomy



VITALS

What do they cost?

A 6-inch colored glass "mini" pendant from the Home Center starts at \$25; larger hand-crafted metal fixtures endow with blown-glass shades range for \$500 and much much more.



Where can you see them?

You'll find a wide variety, such as aluminum pendant lamps, at a local home office. They can also sell online, giving you a direct view of a room or a room's view.

Open or closed shade?

Closed shades, such as schoolhouse-style copper globes, scatter light and hide the bulb. Shades that are open on the bottom create bright spots beneath them, such as drum shades, which create light off the ceiling.

Install it yourself or hire a pro?

Swapping out an old fixture is easy if you know how to wire. But if your wiring wires are old or you need to run wires to a new spot, call an electrician.

The light-colored wire, shown on the right of this pendant, is used to ground the fixture.

How much to spend

A close inspection of two nickel-plated pendants with metal dome-style shades reveals the factors that influence their price. Decorative detail is just the beginning.

budget



MURRAY FEISS
Soho Loft Pendant
Price: \$99
Diameter: 10 in.
Weight: 12 lbs.
Warranty: None

Canopy: Clamped white metal with a weight along that is easy to slide.

Post: Finishes have problems when they come together. Ringed top looks like it's glued together.

Shade: Made of thin pressed metal. It's held up by a single threaded rod in the center.

Light: Milky translucent diffuses light, but is not very bright.

Bottom: The pendant is light weight, making it easy to install—and easy to lose.

high-end



CIRCA LIGHTING
Edwards Single Pendant
Price: \$304
Diameter: 10 in.
Weight: 12 lbs.
Warranty: 2 yrs.

Canopy: Half-inch steel. Coating allows for intricate designs.

Post: Decorative cast-iron brackets cover the bolts where the thick brass tubes screw together.

Shade: Nickel-plated steel. Hand-finished and ringed for smaller finish.

Light: Made of cast brass. It's held in place with external turnbuckles.

Bottom: Heavy brass castings give the fixture an authentic vintage look.

Where and how to hang them

Follow these room- and task-specific guidelines when putting up pendants.

1. Bathroom vanity: An alternative to conventional sconces, three pendants with recessable shades project a flattering light.

How-to: Two inches below the vanity, eyes and cheeks, repeat the pendants near eye level, about 30 inches from the center of the sink.

2. Kitchen island: Durable cast-copper pendants illuminate key work areas and add kitchen style. The prep sink and butcher block.

How-to: For small islands, center just one pendant 30 to 36 inches above the counter. For larger islands, evenly space multiple lights, leaving about 30 inches from the ends so that you won't bump your head.

3. Dining table: A punched-metal hanging lantern throws off a diffused, mood-setting light in a dining area.

How-to: For visual interest, let lantern shade be the length—typically 33 to 35 inches above the table. Hang it on the high end of the range for a large table, the low end for a small one.

4. Bedside: Pendants on either side of the bed save space, eliminating the need for nightstands and table lamps.

How-to: To stand in for reading lamps, mount pendants 50 inches above the floor.

5. Entryway: Suspended from a long chain, this modern light makes a lofty two-story foyer feel cozy and welcoming.

How-to: If the ceiling is higher than 10 feet, the pendant is better should hang at the midpoint between floor and ceiling.

For 6-foot-high ceilings: The shade should be no closer than 6 inches from the ceiling and a minimum of 7 feet above the floor. Always center the fixture with the front door.

6. Kitchen office: A pendant at the end of a bank of upper cabinets defines a swath of countertop below as a dedicated spot for paying bills and reading recipes.

How-to: For a clean kitchen look, leave about 30 inches between the bottom of the shade and the counter. Leave 30 inches for hand-ups below.



pro advice BRIAN R. BOUDREAU, MASTER ELECTRICIAN, NORTH HAVEN, CONNECTICUT
"An outlet supported only by drywall can hold a 35-pound light. For a heavier pendant—up to 200 pounds—install a fan brace to span the distance between the nearest joists."

Design help

Three questions to answer before shopping for your pendant

How many? Avoid a number of fixtures—one, three or five—generally looks better than an even number. Over a kitchen island, space the fixtures evenly, typically 24 to 30 inches between the centers of the shades.

How big? Scale the shade to the size of the room or its most prominent piece of furniture. Over a rectangular dining table, for instance, the shade diameter should equal the table width minus 1 foot on either side, to create a visual buffer around it.

How bright? For ambient lighting with incandescent bulbs, aim for 2 watts per square foot—that's 200 watts for a 30-by-10-foot room. Up the output by as much as 50 percent in repainted or stained rooms or that have dark stained trim. For task lighting, say over the desk in your child's room, the rule of thumb is 15 watts per square foot. Don't be afraid of too much light; you can always install a dimmer.



pro tip **STYVEN ALLEN, LIGHTING DESIGNER, MURRAY**
"When hanging two or more pendants over a counter or table, space them so that each one's pool of light overlaps with its neighbor to prevent any dim spots."



Which wire goes where?

Pictures with color-coded wires make installations a snap. Just cut the power, and connect the white to the neutral, white wire to the white wire coming out of the outlet box, for instance. But if the positive's wire is the same color, you'll have to roll each one between your fingers to feel the difference. The neutral wire is ribbed and the hot one is smooth. And the black is left for a safe-wiring how-to.



HOW TO HANDLE...

PENDANT WIGGLE: Twist off the power, and drop the canopy by loosening the fitting that holds it against the ceiling. Tighten the nipple against the mounting strap, then tighten the fastener holding the strap to the outlet box. Refit the canopy.

FAST BURNOUT: If a bulb's wattage exceeds the fixture's maximum (see the label on the socket), heat buildup in the shade can shorten the bulb's life. This is a particular problem in pendants with enclosed shades.

FLICKERING: A canopy may be the culprit. Drawn to light and heat, bugs can get wedged between the bulb's base and socket, interfering with electricity flow. Shut off the power, unscrew the bulb, and blow out the socket with a can of compressed air.

Problem-solvers

These clever variations help save energy, simplify installation, and amp up the illumination from a single outlet

on-light conversion

4 Turns a no-hum remote-control light into a pendant using a corded adapter that fits into the existing socket.

A decorative canopy hides the adapter and the new switch. Product: Light Adapter with corded remote canopy and fabric-shade-style shade. \$89.95. bellanddesign.com



pendants on track

4 Hang up to six wire-pendant tracks from this 4-foot track for easy to adjust track lighting. Each 4-in. track diameter glass shade holds a 50-watt halogen bulb. Track and transformer: \$420 each. pendant: \$28. prague-lighting.com



adjustable height

4 Pull down on this pulley-style pendant's handle always need more light to say, cheer up? Just give it a gentle pull to move it back up. A counterweight keeps the fixture at its original 5'6-in. Count yours down. prague-lighting.com



many lights, one canopy

4 This five-bulb Corded Remote-style fixture, with its array of fully shadable pendants, adds light to any room, including dining room. Each socket accommodates up to a 100-watt bulb for the look of original wire-bulb pendant. Delivery: \$1,449. reformation.com



energy-saver

4 Inside this pendant's coated sockets is a CFL, smaller than the type CFLs. These bulbs are 70 percent more efficient than incandescent bulbs with the same light output. Because this fixture can't accept old school screw-in bulbs, it meets California's strict energy code. Whitehouse's pendant: \$125. whitehouse-electric.com



PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS; PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS; PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS; PHOTO: JEFFREY M. HARRIS



30
Special Anniversary Issues

This Old House
THE NEW TV CENTER PROJECT



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PHOTOGRAPH BY
VICTOR SCHRAGER

askthisoldhouse

inside

SHORTEN A RADIATOR

FIX A DOORBELL

VENT A CRAWL SPACE

MORE



41

tips, tricks, and
answers to
your home-
improvement
questions

Q Does anyone
use plumb bobs
anymore?

—BRANDY LEE, OMAHA, NEB.

A I do, all the time. They come in handy when I'm installing doors or need to transfer a point from ceiling to floor, or vice versa. These are simple tools, just a weight on a string. But there's a knack for using them, and patience is a helpful trait, too. You have to wait for the bob to come to a rest—wait the right to touch it while it's moving—then always let it hang free. Once it touches the ground, plumb is set.

—TIM ALLEN
FOH SENIOR CONTRACTOR

PHOTOGRAPH BY
VICTOR SCHRAGER

PHOTOGRAPH BY VICTOR SCHRAGER

+ Our cast of veteran experts

TOM SHAW
General ContractorNORM ABRAM
Master CarpenterRICHARD TRETHEWEY
Plumbing and Heating ExpertROBERT WONG
Lumber ContractorSTEVE'S CORNER
Inc.

I'd like to remove one section of a cast-iron radiator to make it shorter. How would I go about it?

—JAMES CORNER, COAL TOWNSHIP, PA

Richard Trethewey replies: If you shorten the radiator, it won't give off as much heat. And even if you can't read the loss at first, you might find water to leave in the way of a pleasant disassembling one is either a big job or nearly impossible, depending on the type of radiator you have.

The first step—disconnecting the radiator from its stems—is the easy part. Hot-water radiators always have steam radiators usually have one hot sometimes have two. If you have hot-water radiators, you'll have to close the system first. Disconnect the radiator from its valve using two plumber's wrenches, one to turn the nut, the other to apply pressure to the opposite direction to avoid cracking the valve. Now comes the difficult part.

In radiators built before 1930 or so, the sections were connected top and bottom with nipples, 1½-inch-diameter pipes threaded at both ends. You'll be able to use the taps inside the nipple if you pierce the metal of a radiator with a flashlight. Over the years, short threads can cause, making the nipples almost impossible to remove. A good trick is to use a Liquid Wrench and some brass nuts with a radiator spanner wrench—a steel bar with flares to engage the lips—might crack them loose, if you're lucky, but I'd leave this type of radiator alone if I were you.

Newer radiators were assembled

with push nipples, short lengths of smooth pipe that fit in a tight seal when the radiator sections are pulled together. Cut the connecting rods that run the length of the radiator and pry the sections apart by tapping a splitting wedge between them. Work slowly; you could crack a section if you're not careful. Once you've taken off the sections you want to remove, clamp a Wre-Grip on the exposed nipples and pound them out. Get new push nipples from a boiler specialist like Omaha County Boilerworks (boilerworks.com). Joel March of Radical Radiators (radialradiators.com) offers them with a note: "I wish they're not here. After loosely reassembling the pieces, he pounds the sections back together with a sledgehammer, making the flares with a block of lead.

Finally, you'll have to reposition or extend the pipes to connect for the radiator's new length. All in all, it's probably easier to buy a new cast-iron radiator of the size you want.

TRICATING PRESSURE-TREATED LUMBER

When I cut through treated lumber, should I be putting something on the freshly exposed wood?

—STAN SCOTT, VERNAL, CO.

Tom Shaw replies: Field treating, as it's called, is a good idea because the treatment doesn't always penetrate completely. Some manufacturers even require field treating to maintain the product warranty, so check with your lumberyard when you buy it.

Coatings for field treating, available at home centers, should contain about 1 percent copper naphthenate, although some manufacturers specify a 2 percent treatment for their lumber. Brands of dip-solvent edges, as well as any holes larger than about ½ inch in diameter. This can help you go a long way to protecting your project from decay.

WHAT IS IT?



A-1 Pallet-clip
holder

B-1 Lumber-
thickness caliper

C-1 Ladder-
clip

D-1 Drill-
bit

E-1 Drill-
bit

F-1 Drill-
bit



A house fire forced this owner to consider this. A vermiculite contractor removed the floor from the living room, then used patterns of sheetrock to encapsulate the empty cavity.

HIDING THE SMELL OF FIRE

After a fire in our 2002 home, the insurance company told us to get the house. I'd like to keep the original framing. Is there a way to seal the wood so that there won't be any lingering odor?

—AMY'S KUTTINGTON, MONROEVILLE, MD

Kevin O'Connor replies: About 10 years ago, *VOY* magazine ran a story about fire-damaged old houses. In that case, developer Chubb White and Michael O'Brien gave the burned wood a clean-snap-up treatment. "We removed as much of the char as we could with wire brushes and scrapers," says White.

Then they lightly sandblasted the charred areas. All structural compromised lumber was replaced, but they sprayed the lac on any charred wood to encapsulate the sooty odor. "When lived in the house for eight years after the rehabilitation and says he never smelled smoke during that time. That's a pretty good recommendation for the method he used.

STORM-WINDOW DAMAGE

Our brick home hasn't had storm windows, so we made our own each out of pine. We saved a lot of money, but on the bottom inch of each frame the paint is constantly peeling, despite frequent maintenance. How can we prevent this?

—TOMASZ KAMLA, DARTON, SALT LAKE CITY

Norm Abram replies: All wooden frames require regular maintenance, just as wood windows do. Perhaps you're having cavity problems because the wood is absorbing moisture from moisture in the air. Paint alone is not enough of a barrier to keep the water out.

At this point, you'll have to remove all the paint in the worsted area and finish on a paintable, water-repellent preservative like Wolman's Woodlife Classic. After you've treated the area, attach a strip of self-adhesive waterproof membrane to the bottom

Richard Trethewey cautions: A radiator's flares, which feed steam or hot water into the radiator sections, are shrouded in solder, making them difficult to remove. A good trick is to use a Liquid Wrench and some brass nuts with a radiator spanner wrench—a steel bar with flares to engage the lips—might crack them loose, if you're lucky, but I'd leave this type of radiator alone if I were you.

edge of the storm to create an additional barrier against moisture.

Another part of the problem could be that winter vapor trapped between the storm window and the window itself is condensing and rotting away the wood. A couple of small wedge bolts cut in the bottom edge of the sash will give the winter a way out. Aluminum storm windows have weep holes for that same reason. Make the holes about 1/8 inch deep and 1/4 inch wide, and place them a few inches from each end. Just be sure that the weep-proofing membrane doesn't block them.

Q CRAWL-SPACE VENTS: OPEN OR CLOSED?

Some people tell me to block our crawl-space vents all the time to stop termites in the summer and heat loss in the winter. Other people say that I should be opening and closing the vents with the seasons. Which approach is right?

—MICK TOLLEY, WILLIAMSBURG, VA

Tom Silva replies: I think working vents in crawl spaces are a good idea, and so do the building codes, which generally require them. These vents allow outside air to circulate under the floor in summer to prevent the moisture buildup that encourages rot and mold. In winter, when the air is drier, the vents are closed to reduce the chance that the pipes in the crawl space might freeze.

The simplest way to close foundation vents for the winter is to plug them from the outside with foam blocks made specifically for this purpose. Just remember to remove the plugs when the weather turns cold in the spring. As you do that check, check to make sure that the vent screens are intact so that insects and other critters don't make a home under your house. Automatic vents are fine, too. An Air Vents box can close open at about 70 degrees F, close about 40, and don't require any electricity.

You do not say whether your crawl-space floor is made of dirt or concrete, but if it is dirt, spread 6 mil-thick plastic sheeting over it to help block that source of moisture.



Q The doorbell in my 1929 home has died. What's the easiest and safest way to install a new one?

—SCOTT THOMPSON, BED STARK, NJ

Matt Toews, master electrician, Toews Electrical Contractors, replies: Ninety percent of the time, when a doorbell doesn't work it's the fault of the battery on the outside because weather and contact are worn it out. But it's also possible the chime or transformer, the other parts of a traditional wired doorbell, have stopped working.

To pinpoint the problem, simply test each component with a multimeter, sold at home centers for under \$10. There's no need to shut off the power as you troubleshoot because the transformer steps down regular 120-volt household voltage to a safe 16 volts or so.

Doorbell wiring is seldom the cause of this problem, but when it is, I recommend going with a wireless system and skipping the hassle of rewiring. That simplifies the installation process in old houses like yours. You'll just have to occasionally replace the batteries.

Cost: New battery, \$1; chime, \$15–\$50; transformer, \$42

Time: About an hour

Difficulty: Easy if battery or chime needs replacing. Harder if you need a new transformer

STEP-BY-STEP Read doorbell

1. Check button

Remove the screen hiding the button to the door panel. Cleanse the wires from the button and cross them. If the chime rings, then you've found the problem. Go to Step 3 and replace the button. If the chime doesn't ring, go to Step 4.



4. Test transformer

Now I find most doorbell transformers are not the main electrical panel. Set the multimeter to voltage setting, and place its probes on the wires where the small ground/bell wires are attached. If the multimeter reads 16 volts or so, the transformer is fine. Go to Step 5. If it's producing less than 16 volts, call an electrician to replace the transformer. This involves working with 120-volt wires and following the electrical code.

5. Test chime

Turn on the chime's power. Leave the multimeter on the voltage setting and touch the probes to the wires. Have it beep to push the button. If the multimeter shows that can't safely be done but the chime doesn't ring, replace the chime. But if there's no sound, the wiring is faulty. If you can't find the break, make a splice with 15-gauge wire. If you can't, either pull through new wire or install a battery-powered wireless unit.

6. Replace chime, if needed

Before disconnecting the old wires, label them with strips of tape. "Front" for front bell. "Back" if there's a back bell. And "T" for transformer. Mount the new chime on the wall, and attach each wire to its corresponding terminal in the chime. If the old wires aren't long enough, splice with a length of 15-gauge wire only as long as 15-gauge wire is only as long as 15-gauge wire. Push the bottom to make sure the chime is working, then turn on its power.

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY, TOM SILVA

SINKING BRICK PATIO

Years ago, I laid a brick on sand patio. At the time, the brick was flush with the top of a 6-inch-diameter cast-iron pipe cleanout. Now the pipe sticks up about 2 inches above the brick. How can I fix this problem?

—CJ BOSCH WOODCLIFF LAKE, N.J.

Roger Cook replies: Two inches is a lot for a brick patio to sink, but if that's what's going on, the dip will be obvious when you lay a 4-foot level or metal stringline across the area. Lay out the wooden boards with a flat pry bar, add enough sand to bring them back to level, then tap them back into place with a rubber mallet.

Of course, it's possible that the bricks are fine and the pipe has lifted. Sometimes a length of pipe is slipped over a nut or a pipe cap to provide extra stiffness, and the freeze-thaw cycle can push up

the outer sleeve over time. To fix, remove the bricks around the pipe, dig a few inches, then have a plumber verify the situation. If he confirms that the pipe is elevated, tap it down using a spray of 2x4 and a 3-pound hammer. If you try to drive the pipe deeper and it's not a sleeve, you'll have an expensive repair project on your hands. When the pipe is back down where you want it, put back the sand and bricks.

send your questions to ask the old house

go to thisoldhouse.com/asktheoldhouse or write to: Ask The Old House, This Old House Magazine, 135 West 50th Street, New York, NY 10020

Include complete address and daytime phone number. Plumber questions will be asked by phone. We cannot guarantee publication. Please do not include photos or drawings. Please do not include any items for sale or purchase.

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Norm's tricks of the trade



A piece of laminate has broken off the edge of my countertop. Is this something I can repair?

—JANE RESELA MEADSBURG, OREGON

A You can mend the piece if you still have it. Use sandpaper or a paint scraper to remove as much of the laminate as possible from the piece and the edge of the countertop. Then glue a light coat of wood glue around the edges. Let the cement dry overnight. Then sand the edges. Carefully press the chip in place—you'll have only one chance because you can't reposition it.



Then the next morning sand the surface and push it firmly against the countertop edge. Then glue the rest with a 2-color hard-surface fast-drying epoxy. The pressure needed for proper bonding without tearing up the laminate.



My wife has a left some ugly dents in the carpet. Can I cut them out and patch in new material?

—DINA CAULFIELD, NEW YORK CITY

A Before you do anything, try a steam iron. If water is caught under the same way it takes dents out of wood. I used this trick myself to make some deep dents in my floor. I just placed the iron a foot or so from the spot, taking care not to let the soleplate touch the carpeting, and applied steam for three or four minutes. The dents disappeared immediately. If you don't, try giving them a few more tries.



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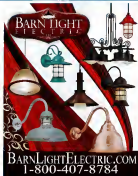
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The history: Lamberd and owner William H. Barkins were so smitten with this superbly pitched roof and perfect symmetry of the 2600 Queen Anne in Adel, Georgia, that he built one exactly like it—right outside—in 1907. In 1953, he sold this 2,000-square-foot "toddler" to E.M. Rogers, who presented it as a wedding gift to his bride, Melie. Members of the Rogers family resided in the house until a few years ago, when they donated it to the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation.

Why we like it With its simple windows and 34-foot ceilings, this house is as sunny and inviting as they come. And all the details that made it great last in the day are still there, including a need to replace windows, last year. Floors and a columned-in square and porch. The half acre of land has plenty of gardens to tend to and three outbuildings that could provide office space or storage space. The house is just down the street from historic downtown Adel, which is about two hours north of the Florida border.

What's needed: The electrical plumbing and HVAC systems need serious updating, but the rest of the works is mostly cosmetic. Don't worry about the standing seawater metal roof: a new, The place is being sold by the George Trust for Historic Preservation which requires the new owner to sign a preservation agreement, ensuring this great old house will continue to inspire others, just as the one next door once inspired Washington in 1793.

—RESEARCHER/STUDENT



3. The dramatic multi-gable design is emblematic of the true Queen Anne. 4. One side of the original wrap-around porch was enclosed when the house was built.

2. A front porch (one of two) with original or over four windows and a double height mantel. 4. The other front porch with a similar fireplace mantel and its original tile surround and cast iron summer bust.

Got a home? If you know of an old house that should be saved and is for sale, write to The Old House, 120 West 50th Street, New York, NY 10019 or weirdhouse@aol.com



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