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Upcycling:

Helpful Products

Turn old or discarded furniture, cabinets and doors into fresh new creations through "upcycling" -- high-end "recycling" that reduces trash at landfills by refurbishing or repurposing existing pieces, often enhancing the value. Woodcraft offers the following ideas and products to get you started.

Upcycling Projects

Save chairs, tables, and other furniture passed down through the generations by doing repairs, if needed, and staining/painting to suit your current decor.

Other furniture or yard sale finds can be stabilized and given a new look through stain/paint or distressing, but some may also lend themselves to transformation for other uses, such as turning a chest of drawers into bookshelves, a chair into a swing, a dresser into a seat, and more.

Solid wood doors make great tops for tables and kitchen islands, old-fashioned screen doors hung from the ceiling can store pots and pans, and old windows make attractive wall hangings used "as is" or with additions, such as photos.

Change the look of your kitchen, bathroom or workshop with a new color for your cabinets and new handles and pulls.

"Woodcraft offers many products -- including professional advice -- that can make upcycling projects easy and successful," product manager Kent Harpool said. "A few products are listed here, but our retail store owners and salespeople, customer service staff and tech experts are available to help you select from Woodcraft's extensive line of tools and supplies, as well as understand how to use the products. We know wood and how to work with it, repair it and transform it. Visit a store near you, or give us a call -- let us help you."

Repair: Furniture that has been around awhile may need repair. For weak chair joints, drill a hole, inject Briwax ChairRx, and wait for it to swell the joints for a strong bond. For other repairs, Titebond I, II or III and other glues will work.

Transition: Changing the use and form of wood pieces will involve varied tasks. For projects that involve disassembly of furniture or doors, followed by reassembly of some pieces into a new creation, the Kreg Jig(R) K4 Master System offers quick joinery -- strong pocket-hole joints.

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Transforming the old into a better new



Use Restor-A-Finish® to “uncover” the original finish on an heirloom or other old piece of furniture. Available in six colors plus neutral, it revives the wood finish’s luster while blending out minor scratches and blemishes.

For a beautiful hand rubbed wood finish look, choose General Finishes Gel Stain and Topcoats. Available in 12 shades, including the popular Java, these

corner reinforcement on chairs, tables, chests, and more for quick, easy construction and repairs.

Once you have selected and/or repaired a piece of old furniture or created a new piece from an existing one, determine where your upcycled piece will “live,” which color or colors will look best there, and which type of paint or finish will achieve the desired effect.

urethane stains and topcoats are easy to use: simply wipe on with a rag and wipe off the excess. To protect the gel stain, especially for heavy-use surfaces such as tabletops, General Finishes offers three options: Gel Satin Top Coat, PolyAcrylic Top Coat or High Performance Top Coat.

General Finishes Water Based Milk Paints and Glaze Effects offer a wide range

of color possibilities. Use one of the 20 pre-mixed acrylic Milk Paint colors, such as Tuscan red, or combine two colors (using a topcoat between applications). To create eye-catching decorative finishes such as distressing, antiquing, marble effects, shabby chic, and more, choose one of the six translucent glaze effects to go with any water-based stain or paint.

Old-Fashioned Milk Paint is a powder made from earth pigments, which is mixed

with water to make 20 rich colors that authentically reflect colors found on existing antique furniture and buildings.

To uncover the original wood surface on furniture, SOY-Gel™ Professional Paint Stripper is easy to use, virtually odorless and has no known health hazards.

For more information about Woodcraft products, contact the store nearest you, visit www.woodcraft.com

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Home contractor advice

By TONI HOKANSON

Choosing a home improvement contractor can be a daunting task. After all, this is essentially inviting a stranger in to your home and trusting them with your most valuable investment.

The local Chamber of Commerce is a good source for local talent, however this is not a recommendation based on performance. The Better Business Bureau web site is another resource. High standards must be maintained, by the company, in the resolution of customer complaints in order to maintain a BBB A+ rating.

The most common referral source is friends, relatives and neighbors. Firsthand experience in a contractor's performance, work habits, timeliness, attention to details and meeting expectations promotes confidence in contractor selection. Having the right talent and skill to complete the project is an important, but not the only factor in hiring a contractor.

To best protect your investment take into consideration the following:

- **General Liability Insurance:** One million dollars is a typical amount to look for but could be more depending on the cost of the project and the value of your home. Ask for a certificate naming you additionally ensured prior to the start of work. This protects you against any damage that could occur to your home, including failure to complete the work.

- **Professional Liability Insurance:** Look for this if you are hiring a professional such as an engineer, architect or environmental consultant. This protects you against any penalties or liability for errors or omissions made by the professional.

- **Workers Compensation Insurance:** If your contractor has no employees this is not required. This insurance covers employee injury that could occur while working on your property.

- **Pollution Insurance:** This is needed when hiring an environmental contractor or anyone transporting potentially hazardous material from your property. Look for this when hiring a contractor to remove your old oil tank. This protects you should the sludge from the

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• **Contract:** A written quote, proposal or contract clearly describing the work to be done, the cost and how, payments, changes and potential variables will be handled. It should also include when work will begin and expected to finish and be signed by you and the contractor. Be wary of anyone who will not put the scope of work and charges in writing. Did you know that you have the right to cancel a contract without penalty? In NYS, you must cancel in writing by midnight of the third day after signing a contract.

• **Permits:** An experienced contractor will be knowledgeable about any permits that may be required by the local building department. It should be clear who will be applying for the permit

and the contractor must provide insurance certificates and any required work details.

Home improvements can add value to your home as well as providing beauty and comfort. It is worth the time to choose an experienced reliable contractor and ensure that the safety nets of insurance and a contract are in place to protect your investment.

Toni Hokanson is Director of Marketing and Training for C2G Environmental Consultants, LLC a full service environmental company which provides oil tank removal and replacement, water and soil testing, spill cleanup and more. C2G carries \$5 Million in General Liability, Professional Liability and Pollution insurance. For more information see WWW.C2G.US

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Six steps to a beautiful landscape next season

By MELINDA MYERS

Don't let a busy schedule stop you from creating a beautiful landscape. Incorporate a few of these changes in your fall landscape care. You'll create beautiful results with a limited investment of time and effort.

- Cut the grass, recycle fall leaves, and improve the soil with a pass of the lawn mower. Shred leaves and leave them on the lawn as you mow this fall. As long as you can see the grass through the leaf pieces, the lawn will be fine. As the leaves break down they add organic matter to the soil, improving drainage in clay soil and water holding ability in sandy soils.

- Or, as an alternative, use excess leaves as a soil mulch. Shred the leaves with your mower and spread a layer over the soil to conserve moisture and insulate the roots of perennials. Fall mulching gives you a jump on next spring's landscape chores.

- Improve your lawn's health by fertilizing this fall with a low nitrogen slow release fertilizer, like Milorganite (www.milorganite.com). You'll reduce the risk of disease problems and with slower weed growth in fall, your lawn, not the weeds,

will benefit from the nutrients. Fall fertilization also helps lawns recover from the stresses of summer by encouraging deep roots and denser growth that can better compete with weeds and tolerate disease and insects.

Northern gardeners can follow the holiday schedule and fertilize Labor Day and Halloween. Southern gardeners should make their last fall fertilization at least 30 days before the lawn goes dormant or the average first killing frost to avoid winter kill.

- Do a bit of planting. Cool season annuals brighten up the fall garden and, for those in warmer regions, the winter garden. Consider adding cold hardy pansies. They provide color in the fall garden, survive most winters, and are back blooming in the spring just as the snow melts.

- Fall is also a good time to plant perennials, trees and shrubs. The soil is warm and the air cooler, so the plants are less stressed and establish more quickly. Select plants suited to the growing conditions and be sure to give them plenty of room to reach their mature size.

- Plant daffodils, tulips, hyacinths and other bulbs in fall for extra color next

spring. Set the bulbs at a depth of two to three times their height deep. Then cover them with soil and sprinkle on a low nitrogen slow release fertilizer. This type of fertilizer promotes rooting without stimulating fall growth subject to winter kill.

Base your bulb planting time on the weather not the calendar. Start planting after the night-time temperatures hover between 40 and 50 degrees. Be patient, waiting until the soil cools reduces the risk of early sprouting that often occurs during a warm fall.

Those gardening in the far south and along the gulf coast can purchase pre-cooled bulbs to compensate for the warm winters. Or the chilling can be done at home by storing the bulbs in a 35 to 45 degree location for at least 14 weeks before planting.

- Leave healthy perennials stand for winter. This increases hardiness and adds beauty to the winter landscape with their seed heads, dried foliage and the birds they attract. Plus, it will delay cleanup until spring when gardeners are anxious to get outdoors and start gardening.

However, be sure to remove any diseased or insect-infested plants to reduce

the source of pest problems in next year's garden.

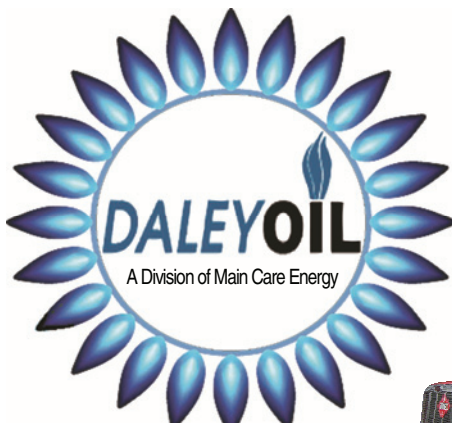
- Start composting or add shredded leaves and other plant debris to an existing compost pile. Combine fall leaves with other plant waste, a bit of soil or compost, and sprinkle with fertilizer to create compost. Recycling yard waste saves time bagging, hauling and disposing of green debris. You also reduce or eliminate the need to buy soil amendments to improve your existing garden soil.

Incorporate one or all six of these practices to increase the health and beauty of your landscape now and for years to come.

Gardening expert, TV/radio host, author & columnist Melinda Myers has more than 30 years of horticulture experience and has written over 20 gardening books, including Can't Miss Small Space Gardening. She hosts the nationally syndicated Melinda's Garden Moment segments and is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine. Myers' web site, www.melindamyers.com, offers gardening videos and tips.

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Raking leaves efficiently

Cool autumn weather and less sunlight are signals to certain trees that it is time to shed their leaves. A leafless tree is more capable of conserving energy and riding out the winter successfully. Trees also shed their leaves during periods of drought or if they have produced too many leaves in the summer and need to conserve water.

For homeowners, fallen leaves can be an unsightly nuisance that can stain concrete and smother lawns, especially when fallen leaves are not promptly removed. Raking is a timely task many homeowners dread. But it is possible to cut down on the time it takes to clear a yard of all those unsightly leaves.

Wait for the majority of leaves to drop before beginning your work. If you start too early in the season, you may end up raking multiple times and that is not time-efficient.

Use the technology at your disposal. If the grass is still growing, you can use a mulching mower to take care of some of the leaves. The mower will shred the leaves and create nutrients for the soil and the lawn. However, once the lawn stops growing you do not want to cut it too short. This is when it is time to take out the rake.

A composting vacuum and leaf blower

are other ways to make quick work of cleaning up leaves. Although these devices may not be as eco-friendly as a rake, they can significantly reduce the time it takes to clear a yard of fallen leaves.

Remember to rake downwind. It is a good idea to save raking for a day when it is not too breezy; otherwise, you may end up raking the same spots over and over. Handle small spots at one time and rake the leaves into small piles. Then you can easily transfer the leaves to a tarp or bag and set aside for disposal or deposit them into your compost heap.

Invest in a lightweight leaf rake and a good pair of gloves. Being comfortable while doing the work will make it go more smoothly and quickly, and a lightweight rake won't be too taxing, while gloves will prevent the formation of blisters. In addition, take breaks to rest and recharge.

Move your feet as you rake so your arms and back are not doing all of the work. Think of it as dragging the leaves more so than just shuffling them around. The more leaves you can gather in one pass of the rake, the more quickly the job will go.

Spread the work around. Sharing the task with others certainly cuts down on



the time it takes to clear the yard. Have a leaf-raking party in which members of the household each pitch in before everyone enjoys a well-deserved backyard barbecue.

Although raking leaves may not be the average homeowner's favorite activity, it is

a healthy one. Various muscles are worked when raking, which also is a good form of cardiovascular exercise. In fact, a person who weighs 180 pounds can expect to burn more than 350 calories raking leaves for an hour.



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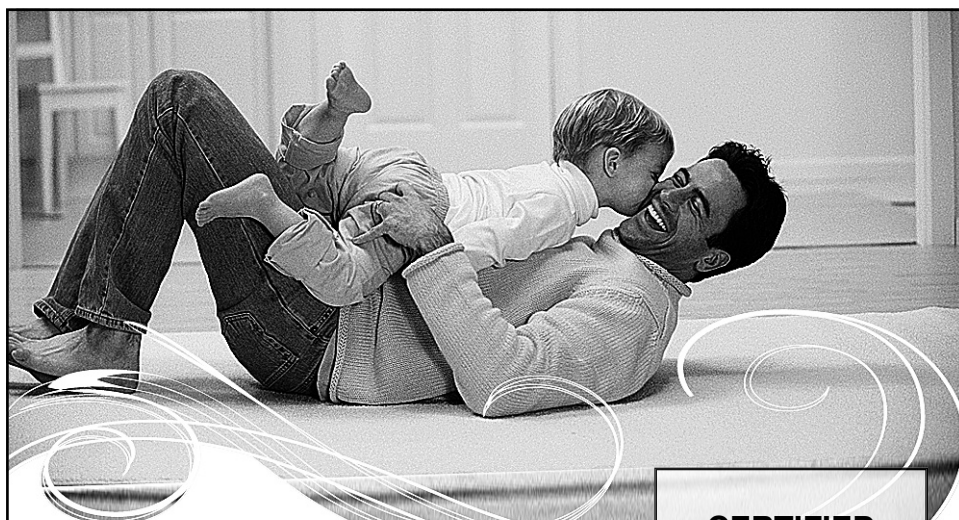
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Important prep work

Painting a home's interior can give it a completely new look and feel. A fresh coat of paint can make a room feel more vibrant and up-to-date, creating a whole new attitude within the room without breaking the bank.

Whether creating an accent wall or painting each wall within a room, painting is a relatively easy and inexpensive home improvement project. But that doesn't mean painting does not require a little prep work before the project can begin.

- Address any holes or bumps on the wall. Holes or cracks in the wall will need to be patched with spackle, which then must dry before the wall can be given a new coat of paint. In addition, sand down any bumps until the walls are smooth and free of any unsightly abnormalities.

- Wash the walls. Walls can get dirty, and that dirt may or may not be masked by paint. Before adding a new coat of paint, wash the walls and inspect them for dust. Dust can collect on molding, especially in rooms that get little natural air. When dust has collected on the molding and around doorways and trim, use a damp cloth to wipe it away before adding any new paint.

- Apply primer. Primer can serve many functions, not the least of which is its role

as a bonding agent between the wall and the top coat of paint. Primer can also help conceal dark colors, prevent stains and increase the life expectancy of the paint job you are about to undertake.

- Prepare your paint. Preparing the paint is a simple task, but one novice painters may not be aware of. When opening a new can of paint, stir the paint before using it. In addition, even if you don't plan to use a roller when painting, do not paint straight from the can, which can be heavier to hold than a small bowl, and a light bowl is less likely to be spilled than a potentially heavy can of paint. In addition, once paint has been removed from the can, replace the lid so dust and other impurities do not settle in the can.

- Purchase painter's tape. Painter's tape can be especially valuable to novice painters. Painter's tape makes it easier to paint smooth and clean paint lines, giving a room a more professional looking coat of paint without the cost of hiring a professional painter.

Painting can be an inexpensive and fun way to upgrade a home's interior. But even though painting does not require the technical know-how of more large-scale home improvement projects, it still requires some prep work and attention to detail to ensure the job is done right.



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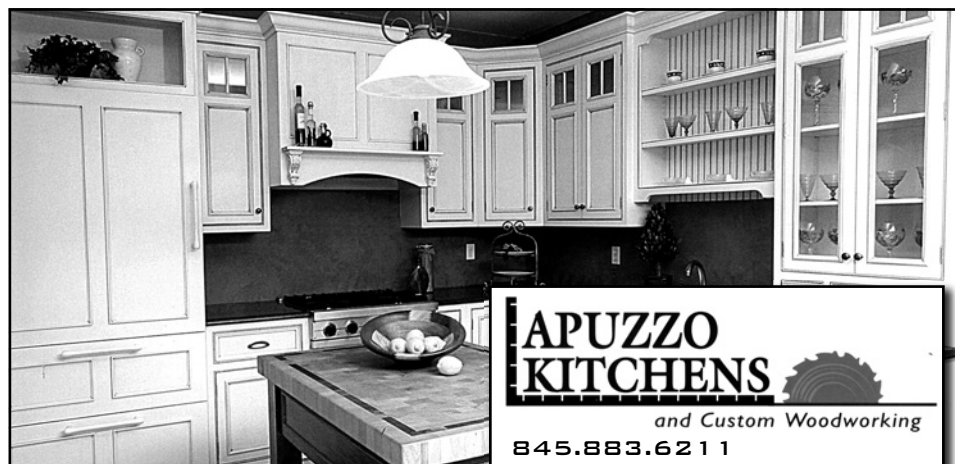
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Home improvement

Home improvement projects can add value to a home and do-it-yourselfers know the sweat-equity that goes into such projects can give homeowners a greater sense of pride in their homes. But no two home improvement projects are the same, and homeowners should know that certain projects are best tackled during certain times of the year.

Fall is a great season to work on your house, as the weather is often at its most agreeable once the summer heat has gone and before winter weather arrives. The following are a handful of fall-friendly home improvement projects for homeowners looking to improve their homes.

Roof repair

Whether you're repairing or replacing the roof, fall is a great time of year to dust off the ladder and get some work done on your roof for a variety of reasons. First and foremost, fall is ideal for roof work because you won't have to be up on the roof with the summer heat bearing down on you. This can make the project move along more quickly, which is especially beneficial if you are paying laborers to work on the roof. The fewer hours workers

are fixing your roof, the less you will be paying in labor costs.

In addition, fixing up the roof in the fall ensures those winter storms, be it rain or snow, won't find their way into your home via leaks. A leaky roof in winter is hard to fix, as the roof surface could be treacherous in the winter and winter winds can make it dangerous to be up on the roof at all. Addressing leaks in the fall can prevent damage to your home's interior, which can mount up if a leaky roof is not addressed until the following spring.

Window work

When the weather outside gets frightful, poorly insulated windows can allow cold air into the home. That often has a trickle-down effect on finances, forcing you to turn up the thermostat in an attempt to offset the cold air pouring into the home. Whether you need your windows replaced or simply need to patch up any leaks, a proactive approach to leaky or older windows in the fall can save you from unnecessarily high heating bills come the winter. Addressing leaky windows also makes a home more comfortable

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projects perfect for fall

for its inhabitants.

Fall is the ideal time to address a home's windows because the temperature outside tends to be pleasant. This means you likely won't have to make much of an effort to offset the elements, and open windows in the fall won't make your home's interior very hot or cold like they might if you were to tackle the project during the summer or winter.

Fixing the floors

Wood flooring is a hot commodity for many homeowners. But not all flooring can be added to a home at any time of year. That's because certain types of flooring employ adhesives that need temperatures inside the home to be within a certain range, and that range is often within 70 to 80o F, which makes fall a great time to install such floors. Colder temperatures can make it difficult for the flooring to dry and bond, which will prove problematic down the road. What's more, many people entertain friends and family come late fall and into the holiday season, and it can be difficult to do so if you are busy installing new flooring.

Painting projects

Painting is another home improvement project that seems tailor-made for fall. A fresh coat of paint or a new color scheme around the house can give a home an entirely new look and feel. But paint can be pungent and the aromas may last if it's applied at a time of year when it can't dry while the windows are wide open. Paint fumes inside a home can make the home uninhabitable, but painting at a time of year like the fall, when you can keep the windows open during and after the project, can help air the home out.

But interior painting isn't the only painting project homeowners can tackle in the fall. Many exterior paints are temperature-sensitive and need the temperature outside to be above 40o F. Paint that freezes won't dry properly, and homeowners might be left with a costly and unsightly mistake on their hands. Fall temperatures tend to be amenable to both interior and exterior painting projects, just be sure to check the weather forecast before making your first brush stroke.

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Invite the natural light inside

A dark home can drain your energy levels quickly. As well, increasing natural sunlight in a home lessens reliance on interior lighting, reducing energy bills and lowering the carbon footprint.

According to the National Institutes of Health, some people experience serious mood changes during the winter months. Dubbed seasonal affective disorder, or SAD, this condition may be effectively treated with light therapy. Exposure to more light can alleviate fatigue, loss of interest and sad or anxious feelings. Homeowners looking to increase the natural light in their homes, can do so in a variety of ways.

- Opening blinds and curtains as far as they will go allows as much light to shine in without having to do major home renovations or spend any money at all. Homeowners concerned about privacy can install a window film that allows viewing from the inside only.

- Dirty windows obstruct sunlight from entering the home. They also can make a home appear unkempt.

- Seamless sliding doors enable a large amount of light to enter the home. The more windows and doors a home has, the brighter it will be.

- A room may be dark because it simply does not have a layout conducive to brightness. Is a wall blocking light from reaching

a portion of the room? The addition of a small window on a south- or west-facing wall can greatly improve natural light. Using mirrors can also reflect light where it is needed.

- Both skylights or solar tubes enable light to enter a home from above. Skylights are larger and require considerably more work to install, while solar tubes are low-profile and can be put into rooms that do not abut the roofline, such as those obstructed by attic space. The tubular cylinders are installed between the roof and the ceiling and carry light through a reflective tube to the room below. Diffusers on tubular daylighting devices scatter the rays so the light doesn't cast harsh shadows, and UV filters can help protect furniture.

- If trees and bushes are blocking light from entering your home, trim them to enable dappled light to come through. Deciduous trees that will naturally lose their leaves come autumn can be planted on sunny areas of the property. This way in the summer months they will shade the house and keep it cooler, while in winter more sun will stream in when the leaves are shed.

- Make a spot in the home where sun will be at a premium. A solarium or greenhouse attached to the home can be a warm and sunny spot.

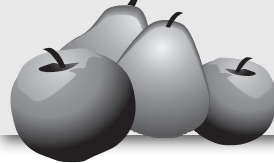
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