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4 must-have features for the ultimate dream kitchen

Are you updating your kitchen? If so, here are four fabulous features you may want to consider installing.

1. POT FILLER

A pot filler is a swing-out faucet on a long, jointed arm that's generally mounted over the stove. Pot fillers are extremely convenient and prevent you from having to lug heavy, water-filled pots from sink to stove.

2. FARMHOUSE SINK

With their white, fireclay basins and tall, stainless-steel faucets, modern farmhouse sinks aren't only stylish; they're also wider and deeper than standard kitchen sinks. This helps make cooking and cleaning a breeze.

3. DOUBLE OVEN

Double ovens provide extra cooking space, so you have the flexibility to whip up multiple dishes simultaneously. They're especially convenient if you do a lot of entertaining.

4. BUILT-IN REFRIGERATOR

If you want your kitchen to have a streamlined and uniform profile, a built-in refrigerator is the way to go. Built-in refrigerators sit flush with the rest of the kitchen cabinetry in the space and offer an upmarket appearance.

If you're designing your dream kitchen, keep in mind, you don't have to do it alone. Consider reaching out to a home designer or general contractor in your area for help.



Kitchen lighting 101

In a kitchen, it's best to have different types of light fixtures throughout the space that serve various functions. Here's an overview.

AMBIENT LIGHTING

This type of lighting is powerful

enough to illuminate the entire room but tends to leave workspaces insufficiently lit. Recessed or can lights are a timeless choice for kitchens, as they have a low profile and work with any decor style. Alternatively, you can opt for a traditional ceiling fixture or track lights,

which have individual fixtures that can be easily repositioned to better illuminate the space.

TASK LIGHTING

This type of lighting is used to brighten up specific areas. Pendant lights are great to hang over a

kitchen island or sink, for example, and they can contribute to the decor. These lights are best paired with recessed lighting to avoid too much visual clutter. As for counter-top prep space, under-cabinet lighting is your best bet since it's easy to install, practically invisible and

won't create shadows.

To find the right light fixtures for your kitchen and elsewhere in your home, visit the hardware, home decor and specialty light stores in your area.

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5 bathroom storage solutions



Regardless of how large or small your bathroom is, organization is the key to creating a functional, clutter-free space. Here are a few storage ideas.

1. BASKETS

Place wire, wicker or canvas baskets beneath a floating vanity to maintain an airy feel while benefiting from additional storage. Baskets can also greatly reduce clutter on open shelves.

2. COUNTERTOP TRAY

Control the chaos on your countertop by arranging toiletries on a tray alongside a potted plant, scented candle or fake bouquet. Keep small items like cotton swabs and hair clips in glass jars.

3. BAR CART

This is a great alternative to adding shelves or

cabinets to a bathroom, especially for renters. Opt for a cart on wheels so it can easily be moved out of the way or closer to the shower as needed.

4. BUILT-INS

Use the empty space in your walls to add shelving that doesn't eat into the footprint of the room. You can also create small built-ins on the wall above the bathtub or next to the sink for toiletries.

5. LADDER TOWEL RACK

By leaning a wood or metal ladder against the wall, you'll create ample space to hang towels for the whole family rather than take up wall space with several individual towel racks.

To find these and other items for your bathroom, visit the shops in your area.

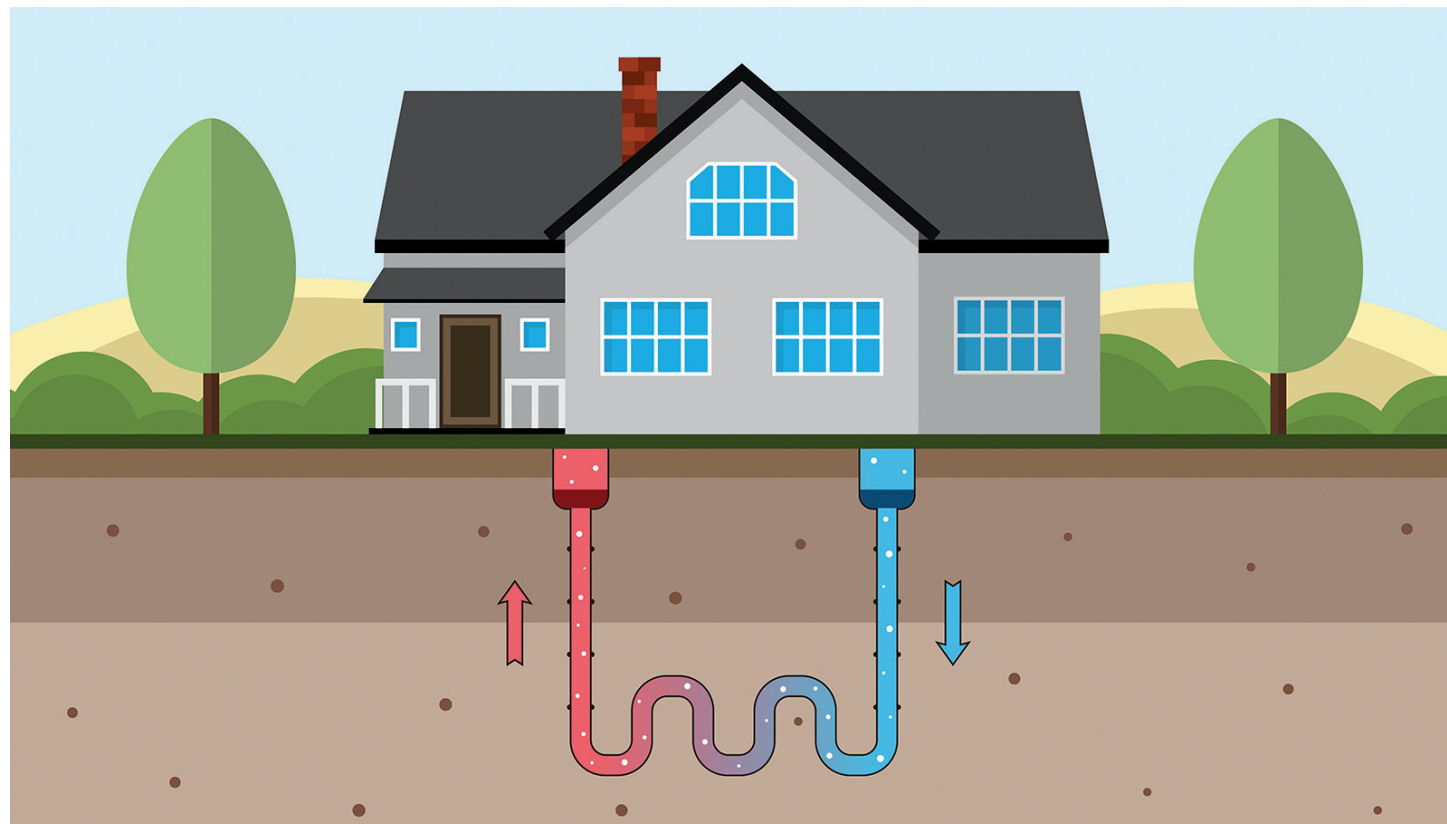
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Do you want to save money on your utility bills and minimize your carbon footprint? If so, you may want to upgrade to a geothermal unit for heating and cooling your home.

Geothermal systems use long loops of fluid buried below ground to exchange heat with the surrounding soil. Although installing a geothermal system requires a fair amount of work, it might be a smart investment if:

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- You plan to stay in your home for a long time
- You live on a large lot with plenty of space

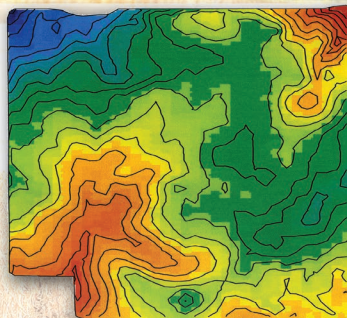
If you're interested in investing in a geothermal unit for your home, make sure you get quotes from multiple companies to ensure you get the best value for your money.



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SPRING CLEANING: get your backyard ready for summer

As the days get longer and warmer, you may find yourself anticipating how to make the most of your outdoor living space. Here's some advice to ensure your backyard is ready for summer.

THE PATIO AND FENCE

- Since the patio and fence are prominent features of your outdoor living area, their appearance will set the tone for the space. Sweep away any rocks, leaves and other debris before

cleaning the patio and fence with a pressure washer and specialized product. Make sure you choose the right setting so you don't damage the surface. Depending on the material, apply a coat of varnish or paint to freshen up and protect these backyard features.

THE FURNITURE

- As you take each piece of furniture out of storage, check to make sure it's in good condi-

tion. You may need to wash it to spot rust, stains or other signs of damage. In some cases, you might get another season out of your furniture by applying a new coat of paint. Additionally, worn cushions can be replaced or repaired by a professional. However, if your patio furniture has seen better days, consider starting off the season with a new setup.

THE BARBECUE

- To make sure you're ready for summer cookouts, clean all the stainless-steel surfaces of your barbecue. Be sure to check the condition of the grates and any other components that come in contact with food. Finally, inspect the propane tank and test each burner.

By following these tips, you'll soon be ready to enjoy lazy afternoons and warm evenings outside.

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A weekend guide to welcoming spring into your home

Are you ready to shake off the bleakness of winter and embrace the season of new beginnings? Here's a guide to help you welcome spring into your home in just two days.

SATURDAY

In the morning, focus on cleaning your home from top to bottom. Dust and vacuum each room, and put away thick blankets and other winter decor. Now's

also a good opportunity to declutter your home, setting aside items to throw out, recycle or donate.

In the afternoon, get all of your shopping done. Head to a farmers market or garden shop to pick up an assortment of plants and flowers. Additionally, stop by a home decor store to find spring accessories that'll help brighten up your living space.

SUNDAY

In the morning, transplant your new flowers and greenery into pots you picked out the day before. Take the time to create a variety of arrangements. While you're at it, trim yellow leaves and dead stems from the plants already in your home.

In the afternoon, set about finding spots for your new decorative items. Play

around with tones, textures and shapes to best showcase each piece. Consider rearranging some of your furniture or installing lighter curtains to make the space feel airier.

After the weekend's over, you can sit back and enjoy the beauty of spring in your own home.

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What you should know about paint and wallpaper

Painting and wallpapering are two effective ways to transform the look of a room. Here's some information to help you decide which products to use in your home.



PAINT

The finish of your paint is just as important as its colour. A matte finish is ideal for living rooms, bedrooms and ceilings. However, satin and gloss finishes are stain resistant and easy to clean, making them ideal for kitchens and bathrooms.

It's a good idea to take home several paint samples to see how each colour looks in the room.

WALLPAPER

Choose a wallpaper that's suitable for your space. For example, if you're remodelling your kitchen, choose a wallpaper that's durable and easy to clean. Moreover, make certain the pattern complements the space and will line up well when installed. Additionally, ensure each roll of wallpaper has the same batch number.

PAINT AND WALLPAPER

If you want to combine paint and wallpaper, stick to a maximum of three colours; select a dominant, secondary and accent colour. Additionally, you should choose paint and wallpaper that share a common hue. Make sure you base your colour scheme on a shade in the background or foreground of the wallpaper.

For inspiration and personalized advice, visit your local shops.



Bring your office to the backyard

Do you work from home? Whether you want to escape distractions or enjoy some fresh air, moving your office outside could boost creativity and productivity.

Depending on your needs and the available space, you can create an open office by installing an overhang on your deck to protect you from the weather and the sun's powerful rays. This option is ideal for summer. However, it may not work when making calls in the middle of a rainstorm. Therefore, you may want to build a complete room, similar to a converted shed, which can be used year-round.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Above all, your workspace must be functional to ensure you're as productive as



you usually are in a traditional office setting. You must also have access to electricity and a stable internet connection. You may also need to consider investing in an air conditioning, ventilation or heating unit.

If a backyard office appeals to you, work with local businesses and contractors to make it happen.

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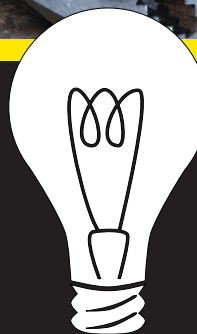
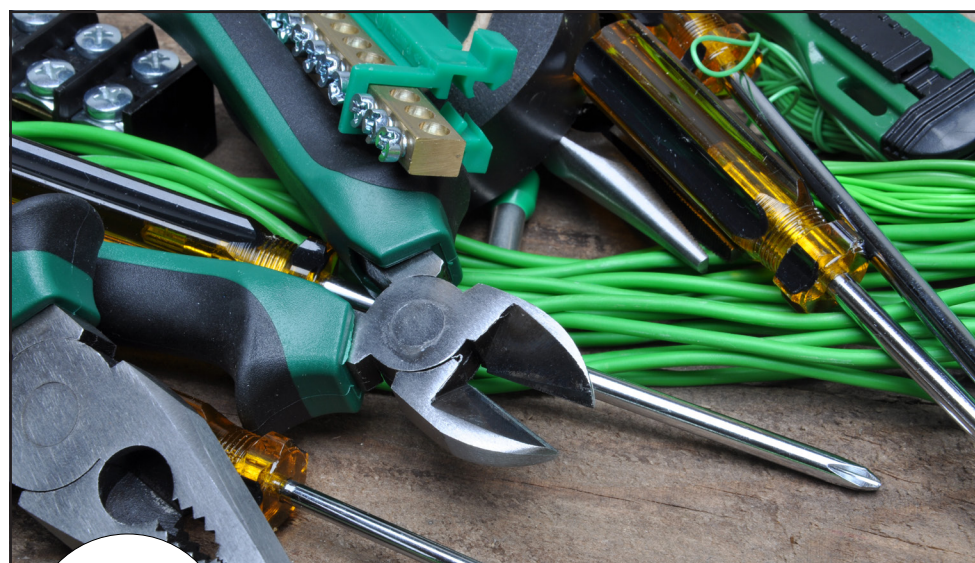


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How to design a bedroom your child can grow into

It can be expensive and time-consuming to frequently update your child's bedroom as they get older and their interests change. If you want to create a space they'll feel at home in for years to come, here's some advice to follow.

- **Buy a "big kid" bed.** A wrought iron or upholstered headboard and matching bed frame will look just as appropriate in a teen's bedroom as it will in a child's. If you have the space, skip

straight to a double bed.

- **Invest in timeless furniture.** Opt for wood or white bookcases rather than colourful storage bins so you don't wind up with pieces that feel too juvenile in a few years. You should also avoid child-size furniture they'll soon outgrow.

- **Pick a neutral paint colour.** White, greige or cream walls will provide a

neutral backdrop for colourful art and accessories, which can be easily updated as your child's tastes evolve.

- **Keep staple items classic.** Favour an area rug with a geometric or floral pattern rather than a space- or princess-themed one. Similarly, invest in window coverings that will stand the test of time.

- **Personalize the space with accesso-**

ries. Use fun blankets, throw pillows and wall hangings to make the space more child friendly. You can even encourage your kids to paint their own frames and choose what photos to display.

Remember to keep your child involved in the process. While you should avoid giving them free rein on the design, don't hesitate to let them select certain items or choose between several options.



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4 annuals that will add height to your flowerbeds

Annuals often feature abundant blooms that are positively eye-catching. While it's relatively easy to find low, medium-sized flowers, it can be difficult to get your hands on large, majestic ones. Here are four annuals that stand tall and proud.

1. Dahlia. Some varieties of this beautiful flower can grow up to two metres in height. However, it's best to stick to a single colour and find a type that doesn't grow taller than one-and-a-half metres.

2. Cosmos. This thin and delicate flower is available in beautiful pastels like white and pink. It'll wow your neighbours and attract butterflies and birds to your yard.

3. Cleome. This beautiful ball-shaped flower is often overlooked at greenhouses and nurseries because it rarely blooms at the start of spring. Give it a chance — you won't regret it.

4. Canna. This bulbous plant tends to bloom late in the season. Therefore, it's best to plant it indoors four to six weeks before the last frost. Better yet, you can buy dwarf varieties that fill out quickly.

Horticulturists and landscapers generally recommend limiting yourself to two or three colours and three or four species to maximize their visual impact.



4 ideas for a statement ceiling

When renovating, many people forget to incorporate their ceiling into the overall design. However, this surface shouldn't be ignored. Here are four ceiling updates you may want to consider.

1. EXPOSED BEAMS

A ceiling with exposed beams can add visual intrigue to a modern or traditional home. You can opt for thick, rustic wood beams or thin, low-profile faux beams. To create contrast and draw the eye upward, paint your beams a darker colour than your walls and ceiling.

2. PAINT

To add style to a room, consider pairing a dark ceiling with light-coloured walls. In a large room, this can create definition and make other features, such as artwork and light fixtures, stand out. In a small space, a dark ceiling will lend a cosy, intimate feel.

3. MOULDINGS

There are a variety of decorative features you can install on your ceiling to add character to your space. Emphasize the transition between your walls and ceiling with classic crown mouldings, or add grandeur to any room in your home with egg-and-dart mouldings.

4. WALLPAPER

Applying wallpaper to a ceiling is an easy way to inject personality into a room. If you want to make a statement, opt for wallpaper that has a bold geometric, striped or floral print. If you prefer a look that's a bit more understated, look for a simple design in a neutral or light colour.

To get help making your statement ceiling come to life, reach out to an interior designer, architect or general contractor in your area.





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