

Spring & HOME & GARDEN

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AFTER A LONG WINTER

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EASTER CENTERPIECE IDEAS TO BEAUTIFY THE TABLE

Easter is a springtime holiday that marks a prime opportunity to cast off the remnants of winter weather and dress a home in bright, colorful hues.

Come Easter, tulips and daffodils may be sprouting, lilies are on display in churches and many other spring touches are incorporated into home decor. Celebrants who will be hosting their families or more intimate Easter gatherings can extend the eye-catching improvements to the dining table. Easter centerpieces are a prime way to add color and ambiance to interior designs. Here's a look at various ways to decorate the table for Easter celebrations.

- **Carrot-filled container:** Embrace an Easter bunny theme by hanging a bundle of carrots inside a glass vase or bowl and topping with orange, yellow and other spring-themed flowers and greenery.
- **Pussy willow basket:** Weave pussy willow stems into a basket shape or braid them together to make a ring. Then fill with colored Easter eggs or flower petals.
- **Nested flowers:** Purchase a wooden or wicker basket and weave or glue small twigs onto it. This will give it the look of a natural bird's nest, which is one of the markers of the spring season. The nest can cradle spring blooms, such as tulips, or hold Easter eggs.
- **Easter bunny garden:** Fill a shallow ceramic bowl with floral design moss or

another green filler. Place a gold-foil chocolate bunny or a ceramic rabbit in the center and put small tealight candles and a small glass canister of pastel-colored candy eggs to complete the picture.



- **Take a 'peep':** Marshmallow Peeps® are an Easter staple and they can have a place outside of Easter baskets. Line a small vase with Peeps. Place cut flowers inside for a festive centerpiece.
- **Rainy day decor:** April showers bring May flowers. Put that sentiment on display by purchasing an inexpensive pair of brightly colored rubber rain boots. Place cut fresh tulips into narrow glass vases and then slip the vases inside of the boots for a festive and funny table conversation piece.
- **Floating flowers:** Poke the stem of a flower into a square of bubble wrap. Place into a small fishbowl filled with water and watch the flowers float on top. Tint the water a pastel hue if desired.
- **Painted pinecone bouquet:** If you have pine cones left over from Christmas decorations or a pile that the kids may have collected from the yard, paint them in bright colors for an Easter makeover. Place in the container of your choice and add some faux or real greenery to complete the bouquet picture.

Dining tables can be incorporated into Easter decor. There are many different creative options for crafting centerpieces guests will adore.

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SAVE TIME & MONEY ON SPRING HOME & PERSONAL ESSENTIALS

(StatePoint) Keeping your household well-stocked of items you need to run things smoothly is essential, particularly during the spring cleaning season. But whether it's home improvement supplies or laundry necessities, selecting the best products may be a bit more challenging these days. Not only are new products introduced to store shelves all the time, if you're like many consumers, you're staying home more with fewer opportunities to compare products in-person.

While researching product reviews can help you discover what other consumers have already tried and loved, it can be a fairly time-consuming process. For quicker insights, consult crowd-sourcing resources like Product of the Year USA, the largest consumer-voted award for product innovation. With product winners determined by a national study conducted by Kantar, a global leader in consumer research, 40,000 consumers have voted on the best products for 2021.

"When shopping online or in-store, look for the Product of the Year red seal of approval to quickly spot the best new products," says Mike Nolan, Global CEO, Product of the Year. "Our process of polling 40,000 independent voters means you can genuinely trust the seal, saving you time and money while you shop."

As you stock up on spring household essentials and personal items, consider trying these 20 Product of the Year winners, which stood out in their respective categories:

- Car Care: Rain-X Glass Water-Repellent
- Cat Care: Pro Plan LiveClear
- CBD Pet: Paw CBD 300 mg Peanut-Butter Hard Chews
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- Natural Cleaning System: H2O e3 Cleaning System
- Oral Care: Crest Whitening Emulsions with Wand Applicator
- Oral Hygiene: Colgate Keep Replaceable Head Manual Toothbrush
- Outdoor Cleaning: Carbona Pro Care Oxy Powered Outdoor Cleaner
- Tableware: Hefty ECOSAVE

Navigating store aisles for the best and most effective products can be overwhelming, particularly when you're not physically in the store. To feel more sure of your choices, lean on the wisdom of thousands of other consumers.



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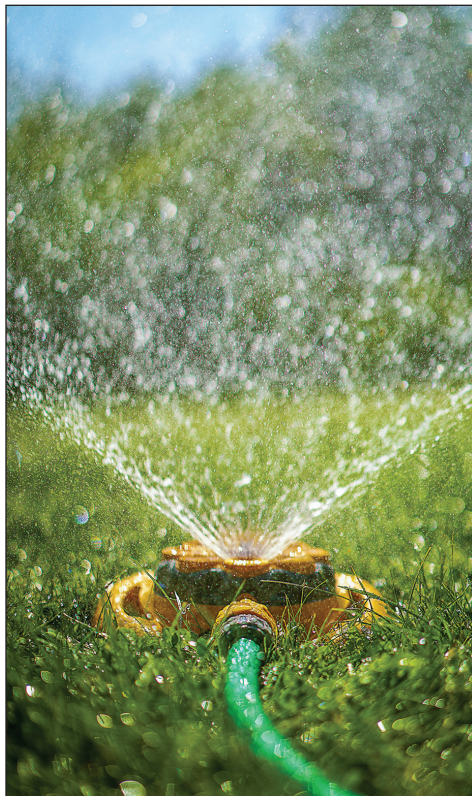
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LAWN WATERING AND FERTILIZING TECHNIQUES



A lush, green lawn is a sight to behold. Many variables are involved in growing and maintaining grass, and water and fertilizer are among the most important components.

Knowing how much water and fertilizer to apply and when to apply it can make a big difference in the appearance and health of a lawn. That's because a well-fed and watered lawn will develop a better root system, which makes the lawn less vulnerable to stressors like drought, mowing, foot traffic, and heat, according to the Scotts® company.

Fertilize

There is no magic formula governing when to fertilize a lawn. The type of grass and how well-established a lawn is must be considered. Experts suggest having the soil tested to determine its pH levels and if any nutrients are lacking. A fertilizing schedule can then be developed after testing.

Keep in mind that overfeeding a lawn will not make it grow any better and actually can damage the turf. Several small applications of fertilizer during the lawn's most active growing period may be helpful, advises the home improvement resource Tools Around the House. An annual application (late spring for warm-season grass or fall for cool-season grass) may be all that's needed.

Certain fertilizers need to be applied and watered in. Others

may be combined with weed-control products and must be set on top of damp grass. Read packaging to determine the right application.

Water

The right watering schedule and techniques can help a lawn thrive. Scotts® says adjusting for climate and nature can help grass to grow strongly. A lawn that has a grayish cast or appears dull green is telling an owner that it needs water. Another test is to step on the lawn. If footprints disappear quickly, the grass blades have enough moisture to spring back.

Water the lawn in the morning before 10 a.m. when it's cooler and the winds tend to be calm so that the water can soak in. For those who must water at night, do so in early evening so that the water can dry before nightfall and will not contribute to disease.

Scotts® says to water an established lawn until the top six to eight inches of soil is wet. Most lawns need one to 1.5 inches of water per week from rain or a hose to soak the soil that deeply.

Newly established lawns may require more water to keep the soil moist but not soggy.

Visit a lawn care center for more information on watering the type of lawn for your area or visit www.scotts.com for additional tips.

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AMP UP YOUR SPRING CLEANING ROUTINE WITH THESE HACKS



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(StatePoint) Spring is a great time to refresh your home. Whether you're planning a major clean sweep or just giving problem areas a little extra TLC, experts say that a few simple strategies will make the job easier and the fruits of your labor last longer.

"When tackling your spring cleaning, checklists are key. The best thing you can do is to plan ahead and make sure you have everything you need to get the job done, which will save loads of time. Second, work room by room until each area is clean. Jumping place to place makes accomplishments take longer and it's harder to see big results," says Erin Chase, founder of 5DollarDinners.com, mom of four and "Cleanfluencer" for AlEn USA.

To make larger spring cleaning tasks easier and keep your house smelling fresh every day, Chase is sharing her top hacks to get the best results from those larger cleaning tasks:

1. Create cleaning caddies for every bathroom, the kitchen and garage. Having all of your supplies ready for quick touchups and cleaning saves tons of time.

"For super fast touchups, I keep a canister of cleaning wipes handy. I prefer naturally-derived Art of Green wipes because they seriously cut through scum, and the scents are amazing. Best of all, they're safe for use around kids and pets and protect sensitive skin," says Chase.

2. "Clean" your cleaning supplies. Deodorize your mop by adding 3/4 cups Pinalen Original to a gallon of water, soak your mop for an hour, scrub and rinse.

"I switched to Pinalen Original because it is made with real pine oil, which makes it a powerful multipurpose cleaner. Plus, I love the scent," adds Chase.

3. To really disinfect and deep clean non-porous floors, add 1/3 cup of CLORALEN Disinfectant Bleach to 1.5 gallons of water and mop or scrub and let dry. You'll be surprised what comes off and how much they'll sparkle.

4. To sanitize countertops, kitchen sinks and the outside of appliances, mix 1 tablespoon of bleach with 1 gallon of water and apply. Let stand for at least two minutes and dry.

5. To clean baseboards without bending and crawling, rubber band a microfiber cloth over the bristles of a broom. Spray the cloth with your favorite cleaner and scrub. No aching back!

6. To make an easy shower door scum remover: mix four parts water to one part fabric softener like Ensueño Max, spray onto scum, wipe off with a sponge and rinse with warm water.

With a plan of attack and the right tools and strategies, your spring clean can be fast, efficient and painless.



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HOW TO PREPARE A GARDEN FOR SPRING PLANTING

The final weeks of winter, and even the first few weeks of spring, are still chilly in many parts of the world. Despite those last vestiges of winter chills, late winter is a great time to begin preparing gardens for the coming planting season.

Gardens may have to withstand months of harsh weather each winter, and such conditions can take a toll. Gardeners can consider the following tips as they try to restore their gardens and get them ready for spring planting.

- Disinfect your tools. It's common to clean tools in late fall or whenever they're typically placed in storage for the winter. But cleaning and disinfecting are not necessarily the same thing. If tools were not disinfected at the end of the previous gardening season, disinfect them before doing any work on the garden. Doing so can ensure any lingering bacteria or fungi on tool surfaces are killed prior to the beginning of gardening season. According to the University of Minnesota Extension, plant pathogens, including bacteria and viruses, can be transferred to and infect plants through bits of soil and plant debris left on shovels and pruner blades. Thoroughly disinfecting such tools prior to using them in the spring is a great way to reduce the risk of disease in your garden.

- Clear debris from garden beds. Leaves, twigs, sticks, and other debris may have gathered in the garden over the winter. Such debris can inhibit the growth of plants and vegetables, so make sure all of it is removed prior to planting. Weeds might even begin to sprout up in late winter and early spring, so remove them before they go to seed.

- Test the soil. Testing the soil prior to planting can help gardeners determine what their gardens will need to thrive in the coming months. Garden centers and home

improvement stores sell home testing kits that are effective and easy to use. Once the results are in, speak with a professional at your local garden center about the best time to amend the soil.

- Loosen compacted soil. Soil can become compacted over winter. If compacted soil is not loosened prior to planting, plants will have a hard time getting the water and nutrients they need to thrive. Loosening the soil also provides another opportunity to inspect the garden for any underlying issues, such as fungi or weed growth, that you may have missed when clearing debris or testing the soil.

Late winter is a good time to assess a garden and address any issues that developed over the winter so plants and vegetables can thrive come the spring planting season.



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DID YOU KNOW?

Disinfecting garden tools can help ensure the long-term health of plants and vegetables. According to the University of Minnesota Extension, plant pathogens, including bacteria, fungi and viruses, cause diseases that can damage and even kill plants. These pathogens can be transferred to plants and infect them through bits of soil and plant debris that get stuck on common gardening tools, including shovels and pruners. Pathogens are microscopic and invisible to the naked eye, which is why even tools that appear clean may still contain harmful substances on their surfaces that can prove life-threatening to plants. Disinfecting tools at the appropriate time, such as when the tools are being stored in fall or before using them in spring or after using them to remove infected plants, can prevent the damage caused

by invisible pathogens. Avoid using strictly bleach to disinfect garden tools, as the UME notes that bleach corrodes metal and can therefore render tools that require sharp edges ineffective. A homemade solution that's nine parts water and one part bleach can be used to effectively clean shovels, spades and rakes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that isopropyl alcohol (rubbing alcohol) in concentrations of 70 percent or more can effectively disinfect surfaces for bacteria, fungi and viruses. Such a solution can be used to disinfect hand pruners and other small hand tools. Store-bought cleaners with an active ingredient that is .1 percent alkyl dimethyl benzyl ammonium saccharinate also can be effective when disinfecting small hand tools as well as small pots and saucers.



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EXPLORING DIFFERENT BACKYARD STRUCTURES

Designing an ideal backyard space requires forethought and an eye for style. Knowing which features to include in a yard often boils down to what homeowners want to achieve in the space. Will it be a relaxing oasis or a central entertaining focal point? People often look to various structures to add height and visual interest to outdoor spaces. Homeowners will likely come across structures like arbors, gazebos, pergolas, and even trellises as they wade through the variety of features they can incorporate into backyard plans. Each of these structures can add appeal, but they also can offer shelter from the sun and privacy when enjoying the yard. There are significant differences between each structure, so here's an in-depth look at what sets them apart.

- **Arbor:** An arbor is one of the more simple garden structures. It is usually a frame that is arched or square-cornered. Most homeowners use it as an entryway to a garden or even the front of the home. Those with green thumbs may cover the arbor with climbing and trailing plants. The Spruce says arbors date back to early Egyptian and Roman gardens and were used throughout Europe by the late 16th century.
- **Pergola:** The words arbor and pergola are often used interchangeably, but to suggest the two structures are the same would not be accurate. Pergola comes from the Italian word "pergola," which means "projection." Pergolas were once projected from exterior walls and supported on one side by pillars or columns. Today, arbors are usually freestanding units with two or four posts. Pergolas may be connected on one side to a home or another structure. Some are freestanding units supported by four posts. Pergolas tend to be larger and offer more privacy and shade than arbors.
- **Gazebo:** Gazebos are more defined garden buildings, states the contractor referral site Network. Gazebos are freestanding units that can be built in various shapes. Some are octagonal, others are square. Like a pergola, a gazebo is supported by columns and

may have low railings or built-in benches. Gazebos also may have a more solid roof than arbors or pergolas, providing sun and other weather protection. The roof may have added architectural appeal, like a cupola.

- **Trellis:** A trellis is a simple, geometrically-shaped structure that provides a surface for climbing plants. A trellis also may support fruit-bearing trees. Trellis work may be used in conjunction with an arbor or pergola, or be installed on fencing. Incorporating structures into backyard designs can provide functionality and appeal.



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LEARN THE RIGHT WAYS TO CLEAN LAWN AND PATIO FURNITURE

Once the days begin to grow a little bit longer and the numbers on the thermometer creep a tad higher, outdoor entertaining season is right around the corner. Homeowners may be anxious to once again return to the comforts of their backyards. However, their patio furniture may not be ready for lounging just yet.

Some simple cleaning strategies make it easy to brighten outdoor furniture made of metal, glass, wood, and plastic. Before homeowners know it, their backyards will be ready for outdoor entertaining season.

Proper storage

Storing outdoor furniture during the colder months of the year is a great way to protect items from the elements. This may involve careful shrink-wrapping and keeping items outdoors, or by moving furniture indoors to a shed or garage. Cleaning the furniture one last time before storing it also can be handy.

Remove stuck-on debris

Inspect furniture and be prepared to remove any stuck-on debris, such as bird droppings, sticky food residue or even cobwebs and insect nests. Be sure to use a cleaning tool that is safe for the material you are cleaning. Test an inconspicuous area of the furniture first to ensure your tools don't damage the furniture. For example, many scrub brushes can scratch glass or aluminum.

Make a thorough cleanser

Clean stains off of furniture with a versatile cleanser. A mild cleaner can be made by mixing 1/2 cup baking soda with 1 gallon of warm water, according to the experts at Better Homes & Gardens. Regular dishwashing detergent also can be mixed with water, as it has a mild bleaching agent. This cleanser can be used on plastic resin furniture or metal furniture, which are popular patio furniture materials.

Patio fabrics

Check the cleaning instructions of outdoor fabrics, as there might be specific instructions on the tags. In some cases, fabric may be removed and washed in a washing machine on a gentle setting. A solution of dish soap and warm water also is a gentle way to clean outdoor fabrics. Once items are clean, HGTV advises applying a water-repellent fabric protector to minimize staining and maintenance.

Strip or sand

Wood furniture may need specialized care. If stains cannot be removed with a mild cleanser, then hard woods like teak can be surface-sanded to restore items' original look.

Pressure washers can often do more harm than good to patio furniture, so it's best to look for an alternative way to clean them. Usually a bit of elbow grease and a cleanser is all that's needed. Give the cleaning product time to work. Wipe down and dry the furniture thoroughly to prevent the growth of mildew.

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SAFETY FIRST WHEN POWER WASHING YOUR HOME THIS SPRING

Spring cleaning is a great way for homeowners to clear their homes of clutter. As people spend extra time indoors in winter, items can quickly pile up around the house. Spring is a great time to clean up such clutter, but interior spaces are not the only areas of a home that can benefit from some extra attention once the weather warms up.

Harsh winters can take a toll on home exteriors. Dirt and grime can build up on exterior home surfaces over the course of the winter, affecting the appearance of the siding of a home as well as outdoor entertaining areas.

Power washing is a great way to give a home a fresh, clean look in spring. But there's more to power than simply renting the right equipment and getting to work. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that there are many risks associated with using power washers. For instance, the CDC says strong spray from power washers can cause serious wounds that initially seem minor. However, such wounds can lead to infection or disability if left untreated. In addition, if manufacturer safety instructions are not followed, electric shock can occur due to improper use.

Homeowners who are intending to power wash their own homes this spring should first determine if they're physically capable of doing so. Power washers can be difficult for some people to control, so it's imperative that homeowners honestly assess their physical abilities before renting a unit. The CDC urges homeowners who determine they can safely handle power washers to take these additional safety steps to make sure the process of cleaning their home exteriors goes smoothly.

- Never point a pressure washer at yourself or others.
- Do not attempt to push or move objects with spray from the washer. If anything is in your way, turn the power washer off and then move the obstruction.
- Never use a gasoline powered washer in an enclosed space, which can increase the

risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

- Always test the ground fault circuit interrupter (circuit breaker or outlet) before using a pressure washer.
- Always plug a properly grounded pressure washer into a properly grounded receptacle.
- If an extension cord must be used, keep the pressure washer's power cord connection out of and away from any standing water, and use a heavy duty extension cord with components rated for use in wet locations. Keep both the power cord and extension cord connections as far away as possible from the item being washed and away from any water runoff. While power washing, periodically take note of the location of the extension cord connections to ensure they are not in a puddle.
- Wear rubber-soled shoes that provide some insulation when using the pressure washer.
- Never cut or splice the pressure washer's power cord or extension cords.
- Never remove the grounding prong from the pressure washer's power cord plug or the extension cord.
- Pause the project if a circuit breaker is tripped. Always have a qualified electrician check the pressure washer for electrical problems after it has tripped a circuit breaker.
- Never allow children to operate a pressure washer. Keep children at a safe distance when an adult is using a pressure washer.

Power washing can give a home a whole new look after a winter's worth of dirt and grime builds up on the home's exterior. Safety must remain the utmost priority when operating a power washer on your own.



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TECHNIQUES TO REVITALIZE A LAWN AFTER A LONG WINTER

Pristine, snow-covered landscapes can be wonders to behold. While that blanket of white is idyllic, a lawn's delicate blades may be paying a hefty price beneath the cold, heavy piles of snow.

Snow plows push salt and sand up on the grass while subterranean animals like mice and moles dig burrows beneath piles of snow as they try to find food and stay warm. Such conditions are not favorable for thriving landscapes. When the spring thaw arrives, lawns may be in dire need of some TLC. The following techniques can mitigate winter-related lawn damage.

- Clear out debris. Remove any scattered leaves, branches and other debris that has been strewn across the property due to storms or snow-laden trees. This will give you a clean canvas to work on.
- Dry out snow mold. The Family Handyman says snow mold is a cold-season fungus that causes gray-colored circles or patches on the lawn where there has been snow. To alleviate snow mold, rake the lawn to loosen matted grass and facilitate the drying-out process.
- De-thatch the lawn. Heavy snow can compress the grass and cause some of it to die off. De-thatching helps to remove dead grass blades and separate any matting. This enables water, nutrients and air to reach the lawn's roots more effectively. Thinning out old organic matter also helps encourage new growth.
- Aerate the soil. Coupled with dethatching, aeration involves loosening the soil or poking holes to allow nutrients to move freely to the roots.
- Kill weeds before they spread. Weeds may be the first to start growing when the weather begins to warm. Address them promptly by manually pulling them or

applying an herbicide.

- Overseed the lawn. Chances are there are some bare spots that have formed over the winter. Overseeding can help to fill in the lawn. Make sure that frosts are largely a thing of the past and soil temperature is around 50 F to 60 F before seeding. Water daily until grass fills in.
- Apply nutrients. Fertilizer and compost can restore nutrients to the lawn that may have been used up over winter. A soil test at a nearby horticultural center can tell you which nutrients are needed, according to the Chemistry Cachet, a guide to using chemistry secrets for healthy living, beauty, cleaning, and gardening.

Lawns can be restored to their pre-winter glory after some sweat equity and about five to six weeks of consistent sunshine and warm weather.



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