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the heart is*

THE LAS CRUCES
Bulletin 2020
HOME
IMPROVEMENT
FRIDAY, AUGUST 21, 2020

A little or a lot? What's the best home renovation for you?

By **RICHARD COLTHARP**
Las Cruces Bulletin

Years ago, when I lived in Alamogordo, I lived in an adobe home built in 1958.

There were lots of things to regularly update and modify, and I enjoyed working on them.

When it came to remodeling the kitchen, though, it was more than I could take on myself.

I was able to do a few things, then turned it over to the pros.

After it was complete, some people came over, marveled at the re-done kitchen and said, "Wow, it's almost like you got a whole new house!"

"Yeah," I said. "Only



RICHARD COLTHARP
From the Publisher

more expensive."

We had a laugh and, of course, it was way less than a whole new house, but home repairs and renovations can definitely get costly if you're not careful and, often, even if you are.

The nice thing about home improvements, though, is they can be as big or as small as you want, and many are very affordable.

In many cases, a new coat of paint can completely

transform a room. And painting is often a fun family project almost anyone can do.

In other cases, a new dining room table, bedroom suite or entertainment center are just what you need to bring your décor into the 21st Century. Furniture costs more than paint, brushes and dropcloths, but the right piece of furniture can serve you for years.

A CLOSER LOOK

With the Bulletin's Home Improvement section, our writers look at ways you can improve your quality of life and increase the value of your home.

Jess Williams and Elva Osterreich write about solar panels. Williams and I talk with some local framers

about the value of art in the home and the ways to improve its presentation.

Mike Cook interviews three local flooring companies about the options for your floor, and the growing preference for hard surfaces over carpeting. Osterreich has an article about kitchens and cabinetry, and then takes a look at the outside of the home, how you can transform your yard with both plants and birds.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The possibilities for improving your home are literally endless, and often that's the problem. You may not know where to start.

Involve your family and think both short-term and long-term. Determine

together your priorities, and make a list of the projects. Create a budget, and then get price estimates.

Visit in person different vendors. Read reviews and visit with friends who've had similar work done. Sometimes, other home professionals will share with you their experiences with other experts.

Maybe you don't know a tile company, but perhaps your electrician does.

GET 'ER DONE

Price is usually the biggest sticking point when it comes to home improvement projects. And there's a real temptation to just do it yourself and save some money. If you're good at that sort of thing, and you have

some experience, go for it!

But if you're unsure, it's usually best to spend the extra dollars and get it done right. Many of us have had the experience of being surrounded by a half-completed room, at 2 in the morning, frustrated and wondering what to do next, regretting not calling the experts who have the right tools and the right know-how.

You may be a great accountant, hair stylist, teacher, salesperson or doctor. That doesn't necessarily mean you're great at laying tile or building a deck. Bite the bullet and call the pros.

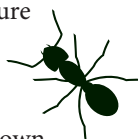
It's your house, and there are a thousand ways to make it more your home. Find the way that's right for you.

Pest-control services can deal with insects, rodents and more

By **MIKE COOK**
Las Cruces Bulletin

Got ants in your pantry? Pigeons on your roof? Is something biting you in your house, but you are not sure what it is?

It might be time to call the Bug Guy, also known as Jeff Murray, who started the pest-control business in 2006 and can deal with



not only ants (the insect his customers have the most problems with) and pigeons, but also termites – which he said are often discovered during home remodeling – mice and rats, cockroaches, flies, scorpions, spiders, bed bugs, centipedes, bees, wasps and more.

And, if you're not sure exactly what pest you're dealing with, Murray and his staff can help you figure that out as well.

Murray and his staff work throughout Las Cruces and Doña Ana County, and provide pest-control service both inside and outside the home.

The basic Bug Guy service call is \$88, which "covers any treatment necessary in most situations," Murray said. Controlling rodents and pigeons can be more expensive, he said, because that service could involve setting and checking traps

and/or patching holes in a home's exterior that allow mice and rats to get inside.

The Bug Guy is located at 1309 E. Lohman Ave.

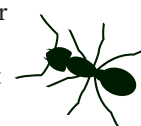
For an appointment and more information, call 575-635-7237. Visit www.bugguynm.com.

You could also call Doña Ana Pest Control, which Luis "Looper" Fresquez started in 1968. The family-run business "can help you with whatever bugs you,"

according to their website.

Doña Ana Pest Control provides pest control and exterminator services throughout Doña Ana County and in surrounding communities, including Silver City, Lordsburg, Deming and Truth or Consequences.

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pest control, no job is too small or too large," and that includes insects in shrubs, trees and lawn, says Doña Ana Pest Control's website.

Doña Ana Pest Control is located at 261 N. Fairacres Road.

For more information, call 575-523-4295. Visit www.facebook.com/DoñaAnaPestControlinc and <https://meetlascruces.com/DoñaAnaPestControlin-Las-Cruces.html>.

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COURTESY PHOTOS

Landscaping is for the birds

Coordinating design for plants, wildlife

By **ELVA K. ÖSTERREICH**
Las Cruces Bulletin

The first thing to do when considering landscaping for your home, whether beginning or recreating a yardscape, is to clarify your environment, according to Caiti Leduc of Desert Siren Landscape Design.

"We are in an extreme temperature and extreme dryness area," she said. "Zones here are generally between seven and 10. It's a struggle (to find the right plants) because we go from

very hot to very cold."

She said being xeric is not the same as zero-scaping. When designing a yard, "you would typically start closer to the house but don't push right up to house, that doesn't do much aesthetically. You always want to start with the hardscape, gravel, trees, then look to the smaller plants, mulch and things of that nature.

"Being xeric is working with the climate you are in," Leduc said. "There are some plants that work well here along with the natives like

ocotillo, including oleanders and palo verde. And some that do well but are site specific – you have to know which side of the house they will be located on."

Desert Siren offers everything from consultation services to full design and installation for those who would like to speak with them. Often the work is dependent on the time of year and what kind of plants are available.

"We are based on what local availability is in order to keep feasible to clients,"

she said.

To draw birds, and other pollinators, into the garden, you need four things, said Kristi Lane with Wild Birds Unlimited.

"They need food, water, cover and places to raise their young," she said. "By food you can put out feeders and plant native plants. Any native to our area will produce nectar, berries, seeds and draw insects."

She said sages produce nectar, cotoneaster bushes and chocolate flowers are a few of the excellent choices for

encouraging the insects, and thus the birds, to your yard.

"Birds only get about 20 percent from your feeders which might contain suet, seeds and, for hummingbirds, nectar," Lane said. "All things need water for drinking and bathing. It should be less than three inches deep so the birds can stand. Moving water is a magnet for birds, you can have a bird bath with wigglers and drippers, even just a pan of water on the ground would be ok if nothing else."

To provide cover, you can use brush piles and bushes where birds can get in and shelter from predators or weather, she said. Some native plants have thorns and that helps with shelter too. The area is home to numerous kinds of birds that can be encouraged to live in Las Cruces yards.

"We have pyrrhuloxia or desert cardinals, goldfinches, hummingbirds, orioles, house finches, sparrows and woodpeckers," Lane said. "Most of them not a problem at all, they are showing up."

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Nicely framed art can jazz up any home space

By JESS WILLIAMS
Las Cruces Bulletin

Dorm rooms routinely get decorated with stacks of beer cans and tattered movie posters, but having made an investment in a home, most homeowners want to class it up a little.

The Bulletin reached out to Frame and Art Center co-owner Brenda Nevue for some tips on making the most of a home's art-friendly spaces.

Bulletin: How does quality framing enhance home décor, and what should

someone expect to pay for small, medium and large size custom framing jobs?

Nevue: Quality framing is an asset to home décor, because just like any other piece of furniture, you want it to last. When you use real

wood built by an experienced woodworker, you have a product that is going

to last. Quality framing has a large range of prices. During our sale, you can

expect to pay around \$40 for something small, \$70 for medium and \$90 for large. Outside of sale prices your imagination is the limit.

Bulletin:

How important is matting to make art pop?

Nevue: Matting can completely change the feel of your art. It gives you a transition from the frame to the artwork, while enhancing the colors in the art. If you're having trouble picking a frame, consider looking at matting, because that may be exactly what is missing. However, the need for a mat really depends on the art, and I do sometimes recommend no mat, as there are instances where a mat would make the art bigger, but not necessarily better.

Bulletin: What are some things people don't understand about basic home décor and home improvement that you can help them understand based on your experience, both personal and professional?

Nevue: When it comes to home décor, it's important to remember that everyone has their own style. When I work out a design with a customer, I always try to get a feel for their style preferences. If you know your style, I find it best to stick to that base when making choices on what to add to

"it's important to remember that everyone has their own style."

- Brenda Nevue



COURTESY PHOTO

Ean and Brenda Nevue of Frame and Art Center

the room. Picking an inspiration to work from when designing a room's décor can help you make sure everything fits together. However, when it comes to framing, you want to make sure the design goes with the art, rather than trying to frame it for the room's décor. Therefore, it is a good idea to keep that in mind when choosing art for a room.

Bulletin: If you had to give three tips to someone wanting to devote a wall to art, what would they be?

Nevue: Do it! Do it in another room! If you run out of room, build another

wall! Just kidding. If you want to devote a wall to art, the first thing to take into consideration is how your style will work with it. Are you someone who prefers to have things matching? If so, you will want to pick a neutral frame that can work with any art you choose to add to the wall. Are you more eclectic with your style? If so, your choices for framing can be subject specifically to what best enhances the artwork.

Bulletin: What am I not asking that's important for our readers (and your customers) to know?

Nevue: The best advice I

can give our customers is to know your framer. Be sure that you trust that they are taking care of your art as if it were just as precious to them as it is to you. We use all acid-free mats and are diligent in making sure that anything that touches the art is acid free. If you have a piece of art that was framed 10 or more years ago, it is a good idea to take it in "for a checkup." We can open it up and replace any elements that need to be updated to acid-free. We can discuss glazing options as well, like glass that is UV protectant and can add to the life of your artwork.

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Bringing the background to the forefront

By **RICHARD COLTHARP**
Las Cruces Bulletin

The Coronavirus pandemic brought some unexpected new customers to Picture Frame Factory Outlet in Las Cruces.

"You know what's bringing people in?" asked Greg Groves of the shop at 382 S. Walnut Street. "Zoom meetings. Everyone's on these Zoom meetings and some of them are self-conscious about what's on their backgrounds."

Certainly, some nice art can dress up any background, as well as say something about who you are as a person and where you are in your life.

"Some of these people in their late 20s and early 30s are looking around and saying,



PHOTOS BY RICHARD COLTHARP

"Maybe it's time to take the concert posters off the wall," Groves said.

Not that a concert poster is a bad thing and, in some cases, dressed up with the right frame or presentation, they can actually be quite beautiful.

Many other art subjects can also be decorative, personal, and representative of who you are and where we live.

Favorite family portraits

and vacation photos don't have to live forever on your phone or in a 3x5 glossy print. Sometimes blowing them up can have a dramatic effect and, framed properly, can change the whole aura of a room. Even a child's drawing, with the right color and framing, can graduate from the refrigerator door to a lovely wall-mounted memento.

It's easy enough to find nice wall art at department

stores, but living in the Land of Enchantment, almost all of us personally know a good artist or photographer. Why not purchase something from your friend or family member, something that has more meaning? Again, that art, framed well and hung in the right area, will transform an area and bring a more personal smile each time you see it.

Local art is also available in the Picture Frame Factory Outlet studio, including the dramatic photos of Groves' father, Mike Groves.

Mike Groves has been capturing the power of the Organ Mountains and the other iconic landscapes of southern New Mexico for years. Adding one of these images to your wall will certainly signify a sense of place.



Framers can create many ways to display your art. Here are two methods Picture Frame Factory Outlet uses to display work. At left is a photo by Mike Groves. Above, a piece by Collette Marie.



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Converting to solar is green and saves green, too

By JESS WILLIAMS
Las Cruces Bulletin

Southern New Mexico is a sunny place to live, and the sun produces more than light and warmth. It's also a powerhouse.

Locally owned Organ Mountain Solar and Electric (OMSE) is among the leaders in solar installations in southern New Mexico, so The Bulletin reached out to co-owner Corey Asbill and Technical Sales Advisor Troy Guglielmina for their takes on some of the most commonly asked questions within the solar industry.

Bulletin: Why should people think about converting to solar?

OMSE: Aside from en-

vironmental benefits, most important to most consumers is cost. Solar electricity costs less than power from the grid, and the cost is predictable and consistent as opposed to ever-increasing utility rates.

Bulletin: What should people know about investing in battery packs to enhance a solar system?

OMSE: Batteries add significant additional cost and complexity to any grid-tied solar installation. With current rate structures and net-metering policies of all utilities in southern New Mexico, there is no real economic benefit to installing a battery. The only benefit is the security of knowing that you will have power during a grid outage.

Bulletin: What's the general life span of a modern solar system, and at what point in that lifespan is return on investment (ROI) realized?

OMSE: The lifespan ranges from 30 to 40 years, and there's an 8- to 12-year payback. ROI is better than any other secure, safe investment. The return is between 10 and 15 percent a year for a low-risk investment.

Bulletin: From the time of the initial consultation to going live, what is the timeline for a solar system sale, design, installation and activation? What are those steps like, and why are they each important?

OMSE: Every solar installation is unique, so



PHOTO BY JESS WILLIAMS

A typical flat-roof solar installation in Las Cruces

it depends. The timelines have been stretched out by the pandemic, because each installation is dependent on a series of inspections. Disreputable companies will have delays that are their own fault and then blame the government or blame the utility for their mistakes.

Bulletin: Ideally, solar panels should face south, but what options are available if that's not feasible?

OMSE: Panels that point north are certainly not ideal but west and east facing panels do very well. Other factors such as roof type roof pitch shading from trees or HVAC equipment or vents on a roof all factor in.

Bulletin: What are the principal differences between pitched-roof and flat-roof installations and systems?

OMSE: Very little. Any qualified installer should be

able to mount to virtually any roof surface, with a few exceptions. A more important factor is how old is your roof and what shape it is in. Do not install solar on a roof that will require replacement soon. Any reputable company will advise you if they see concerns.

Bulletin: What are some misconceptions people have about solar?

OMSE: A lot of people think solar is expensive, but it's not if you look at the long-term ROI vs ever-increasing electric bills. Some people are wary about property values, but solar, installed and financed properly, adds significant Resale value to a home. Then there are those who call solar a scam. It's not, but some companies and some salespeople are scamming. If you take your time and do your research and get everything in writing, you be fine.

Bulletin: How can a

person interested in solar be sure they're dealing with a reputable outfit?

OMSE: Online reviews or are a great place to start. Go deep into the reviews from multiple sources. Don't just look at the general star rating. If a company has five good reviews and one terrible one, their overall rating might be four stars, but do you want to take the chance that you'll be the one in five with a nightmare experience. Also, is the company local? If they're from out of the area or state, how many systems have they installed locally and how do they plan on servicing your system should there be a warranty issue or a problem? Take your time. Never feel pressured to say yes before you're ready, and get everything in writing. Get in-person, direct local references, and contact them.

SEE OMSE, PAGE 7

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Do your research on solar

By **ELVA K. ÖSTERREICH**

Las Cruces Bulletin

With New Mexico offering credits to those who install and use solar panels in their homes, businesses have jumped at the opportunity to help the consumer with their needs. But, according to John Miller, owner of New Mexico Water & Electric, potential customers should be extra careful about considering deals they may be offered.

“With advent of COVID-19, our industry has exploded,” Miller said. “Someone

might knock on your door, same as they once did with siding back in the 70s.”

Realistically a new solar system will probably cost the customer \$30,000 to \$40,000, he said. And ultimately, solar will not keep the lights from going out if the grid goes down. It doesn’t work that way.

“There is nothing in the world that is free,” Miller said. “I see people getting roped into crazy financing things.”

Ultimately, Miller believes strongly in the power of the sun though.

“Solar is a really fantastic product,” he said.

OMSE, CONTINUED FROM 6

Bulletin: How does the industry police itself for quality?

OMSE: New Mexico has standardized consumer protections, and every reputable installer should know the legal reporting requirements on the standardized form called the “distributed generation disclosure statement.” It’s required by law to be signed along with the installation contract by both the solar sales person and the homeowner or purchaser. Be sure that the information on the disclosure statement matches exactly the information in the contract and the in the original quote or proposal from the salesperson. If you are presented a contract to sign that does not include the disclosure statement, it’s an obvious red flag.

Bulletin: What else is critical for potential solar customers to know?

OMSE: All solar is not created equal. Even panels that on the surface look similar can have huge differences in power output, reliability and warranties. The same is true with the inverter or micro inverters which are actually just as important if not more important than the actual solar panel. Always be sure that you receive in writing and the specification sheets and documentation about exactly the equipment that is being installed. Be sure you know the details of any loan that is offered, and do your research. Many low interest loans look good on the surface, but have stipulations or extra fees that are often hidden from the consumer.

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Quality pays off in the kitchen

By ELVA K. ÖSTERREICH
Las Cruces Bulletin

Moving to Las Cruces from California was a retirement migration for general contractor Joe Sandino, but the retirement part didn't exactly stick. Sandino has jumped from the rat-race fire into the pan where he can serve his customers with care and personal professionalism.

Some people don't have entirely realistic plans when it comes to refurbishing their kitchens, said Sandino, who owns Cabinet Specialties in Las Cruces.

"The answer, I think, is to do a lot of planning in advance," he said. "For example, I meet with a customer and see what they

have in mind."

Sandino suggested a careful look at what you like and what you don't like about your kitchen. Then realistic guidelines can be established as to what is a comfortable expense for the project.

"Basically," he said. "What you are doing when you improve a home is increasing value of the home immediately. If you get a good improvement, it is good in the long run and you enjoy it while you use it."

The most valuable rooms to improve, he said, are kitchens and bathrooms but those are also where most things go wrong, and the value of licensed professionals is most important. In the kitchen, inches and fractions of inches can go

wrong and often do. It takes a slight miscalculation and that knob will prevent you from being able to open that drawer.

"Your best investment is to buy quality materials that will stay together and look good in the future," Sandino said. "I do a kitchen in a week or two, where, if you hire the wrong (unlicensed) people they may never finish."

He said he has had to finish up jobs where someone he knew had paid up front and waited a year, and none of the three different people hired ever finished the job.

"Here in Las Cruces you have very little leverage (if someone takes your money and messes up the job)," Sandino said. "They should

really be cautious because home improvements are the worst industry in America."

Hiring a professional not only means the job will be done well and in a timely manner but also can benefit the homeowner with professional connections. For example, Sandino said he has connections in the financing industry he can recommend. He also only starts with 10 percent and then draws expenses as needed. He suggested customers beware of companies that require 100 percent of the cost of a job up front. He also has professional sub-contractors and suppliers he is familiar with and trusts.

Sandino takes pride in his work now that he is out of



COURTESY PHOTO

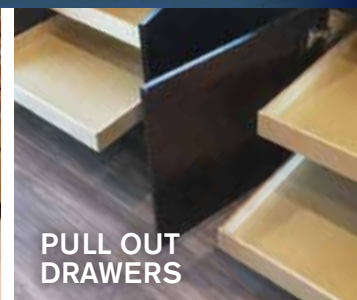
the California scene.

"I came to New Mexico to retire and I love the home improvement stuff," he said. "I'm a little guy and I do

this for different reasons. I hated it in California, managing 63 employees and never able to meet the customer in person."

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Carpet, hard surface, tile and more: local flooring companies have it covered

By **MIKE COOK**

Las Cruces Bulletin

The quality, selection and service of local flooring companies will absolutely ... floor you.

Among the oldest and best in Las Cruces are Malooly's Flooring Company, Casey Carpet of Las Cruces, Inc. and Stout Hardwood Floor Co., Inc.

Now is "an excellent time to re-do flooring," including for home improvement projects, said Casey Carpet owner Hank Schweinebraten, who has operated the family business in Las Cruces since 1989. Casey

Carpet includes teams of trained installers, which is important, Schweinebraten said, because "a professional should do your flooring."

Schweinebraten, Stout Hardwood Floors Residential Project Manager Marek Rogers and Malooly's Flooring Company Manager Chris Todd also said hard-surface flooring has overtaken carpets in popularity, although Casey and Malooly's also continue to offer many carpet choices as well.

"Our showroom at one point was 15 percent hard surface," Schweinebraten said. "Now it's probably 50



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percent." Hard surface is more durable than carpet, he said. For a living room, dining room or family room, "you're more apt to

go hard surface right now because it's something you won't change for a long time."

Casey Carpet's stock

includes "floating floors," Schweinebraten said, which "people can do themselves" because they simply click together and aren't attached

to the floor. They're easy to care for, he said, and can be moved from one room to another. Schweinebraten

SEE **FLOOR**, PAGE 10

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FLOOR, CONTINUED FROM 9

said his favorite aspect of the business he's operated for more than 30 years is "connecting with people," including Casey Carpet's "loyal customers:" builders, business and homeowners, "that have bought from me multiple times. You all work together," he said. "We try to do our part in the community."

Stout Hardwood Floor, which Harry L. Stout started in the 1930s, features hardwood and vinyl flooring, Rogers said. Barry A. Stout, Harry's grandson, is now the company president.

Rogers also touted the durability of hard flooring for all types of residential applications and said Stout Flooring also can completely restore floors in historic homes and properties – its

clients include the Amador Hotel. The company has crews skilled in residential and commercial installation, Rogers said, and offers a wide range of styles to create a customer's dream flooring. The design aspect – transforming the look and feel of a single room or an entire with the installation of new flooring – "from the beginning to the end, that's exactly what I do," Rogers said.

"Artistry is what it is," said Rogers, who began working for Stout when he was in college and returned to the company about 10 years ago. "I fell in love with doing this," he said. Rogers finds "certain aspects I love about every floor and every house that I do; they're all different."

He invited customers to visit the Stout showroom to see "a huge variety of

samples" and "pick out what your love."

Malooly's Flooring Co. will celebrate its 40th anniversary in Las Cruces in October. With his brothers Albert, Edward, Richard and Raymond, George Malooly opened a carpet and furniture store in El Paso in the late 1950s, continuing a tradition begun by their grandfather, Esau Malooly, who brought his family to El Paso from Lebanon in the early 1900s, and opened a furniture store in 1907. George's daughter and namesake, Georgette Malooly, took over the Las Cruces business, joined by her sister, Barbara, in 1987. Georgette and Norman Todd's oldest son, Chris, took over everyday management in 2018.

They all agree that the store's success is based on



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customer service. "We take the time to listen to the customer, help find the product that will work best and make sure the customer is 100 percent satisfied," Georgette said.

"We deliver the whole thing," Georgette said. "We help the customer learn about the product, choose

what they like, measure and install. If there's a problem or a question, we're here to deal with it."

The Maloolys' crew has more than 200 years' experience in the flooring industry, and its remodeled showroom includes a wide range of carpet and hard-surface flooring, including tile.

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