



Home & Garden 2017

Overflowing closets, cupboards and drawers?

Tradition holds that the chore of cleaning out your home should be done in the spring; we're all familiar with the routine of de-junking closets and scrubbing cupboards. But it can seem as though the job is never done if your storage space is poorly organized and your cupboards are always overflowing. If this is finally the year you're setting your mind to get rid of the mess, here are a few tips to help you.

First of all, try not to let your feelings get in the way. Remember that the goal is to make your closets, cupboards and drawers visually appealing when open and much easier to access. Start by placing everything that needs sorting out in the middle of the floor of a room that doesn't get much use. Ask yourself the following questions about each item:

- Is it in good condition?
- Do I have other, identical objects?
- Was it stored in the right place?
- Is it useful to me?
- Does it have sentimental value?

If an object is broken and can't be repaired, throw it out immediately. Put it in the garbage or take it to a recycling centre. An object is no longer useful or you never use it? Give it to someone who needs it more than you. You have two or more

identical items? Keep the one you feel is in the best condition. An object was stored in the wrong place? Simple! Put it in the right place.

Sentimental value

Are you brought to tears at the thought of getting rid of a trinket that reminds you of your grandmother? Then ask yourself why you keep it hidden away in a closet. If you can't bring yourself to get rid of it, give it pride of place in your home instead. On the other hand, if hundreds of youthful love letters are cluttering up half your closet, you could always scan them and store them on a CD so they take up less space.

One out of two

Of course, it can be difficult to get rid of items that you think are still useful or ones that bring back good memories. However, you can make it easier on yourself by using the "one out of two" trick. With this approach, you keep one out of any two items you're hesitating over, whether they're items of clothing, books, photographs, toys or decorations. That way, you only keep those that really matter to you.

One thing's for sure: decluttering closets, cupboards and drawers will lift a weight off your shoulders. Are you ready for the big spring sorting?

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Five tips for a healthier home

1. ELIMINATE DUST

Dust contains a variety of contaminants that can harm the health of your family, especially children and people with asthma. That is why vacuuming, dusting furniture and cleaning bedding thoroughly should be done on a regular basis. A tip to remember: to eliminate as much dust as possible from a carpet, vacuum each square metre of surface for at least one minute.

2. THROW OUT EXPIRED FOOD PRODUCTS

Inspect the contents of your fridge and freezer twice a month and throw out any food products that have passed their expiry date. By the way, did you know that most meat should be eaten within eight months of freezing? When it comes to your fridge, it is best not to wait for bad smells to show up before you clean.

3. USE AIR PURIFYING PLANTS

Whether you have a green thumb or not, stock up on plants that are known to improve the air quality in homes. Here are the best choices:

- Spathiphyllum, an elegant plant that produces pretty white flowers.
- Sansevieria, commonly called "mother-in-law's tongue."
- Philodendron, a plant with exotic foliage often used by florists.
- Ivy, an exceptionally vigorous creeper.

- Ficus, a plant that absorbs heat and releases moisture.
- Dracaena, a very resistant plant also called "dragon tree."
- Chlorophytum, a common species often referred to as "spider plant."
- Aloe, whose many virtues are recognized in herbal medicine.

• Aglaonema, an easy-to-care-for houseplant.
To boost your air quality, choose at least two or three species and place them in every room of your home. A professional horticulturist will be able to tell you how to care for them properly.

4. LOOK AFTER ALL APPLIANCES THAT CIRCULATE AIR

Call in a professional to inspect and clean all the heating, cooling and air circulation systems in your home. The kinds of appliances that should be serviced regularly:

- air conditioner
- dehumidifier
- air exchanger
- furnace
- hood
- humidifier
- heat pump
- fan



Eliminate dust, stock up on plants, sort out food items: there are many ways to create a healthier home.

5. DISINFECT SURFACES

Just because your walls, floors, furniture and appliances look clean, it does not mean that they really are. Most contaminants are invisible to the naked eye, so take the precaution of cleaning all surfaces using a suitable product. Don't forget the doorknobs!

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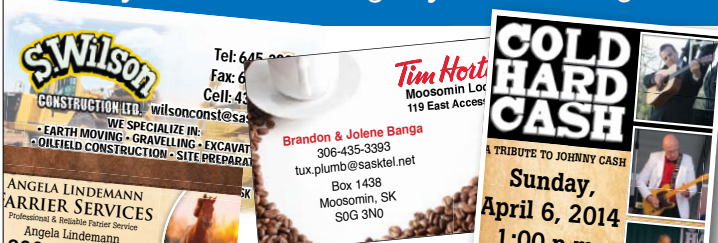
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Take a table, add two chairs and *voilà*: you've got yourself a bistro set. Specially designed for outdoor use, a bistro set allows you to soak up the sun and feel the fresh air from the comfort of your balcony or patio. Either on your own or with a friend, it's finally time to savour the arrival of spring, fresh lemonade or soothing tea in hand.

needs. Before you head to the stores, however, make sure to properly measure the space where you intend to set up your furniture. It would be a shame to find *the* perfect ensemble, only to realize that it doesn't fit on your balcony!

Materials

Patio bistro sets need to withstand the fading, rust and mould that all outdoor furniture is subjected to. They're usually built out of one of the following:

- Steel
- Aluminum
- Wicker
- Ceramic
- Resin
- Polyester
- Rattan
- Glass

Designed to combine functionality, durability and elegance, bistro sets are available in a variety of styles (rustic, urban, minimalist, etc.) to fit every homeowner's



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Decorate your rockery with style



Variegated plants add elegance and light to flowerbeds and rockeries.

many variegated plants in one place may not give the desired effect. Use them to liven up shaded or semi-shaded areas and in planters or pots to give your deck a sophisticated look. An esthetic tip: grow golden variegated plants in white resin pots and cream-based mixes in terracotta pots.

Garden centres introduce new species of variegated plants every year in order to meet the growing demand for them. A sales associate or landscaping specialist can help you find perennials, annuals, trees, shrubs and conifers that will make your yard the envy of your neighbourhood.

In horticulture, a plant is said to be variegated when its foliage displays two different colours. Using colourful foliage brings elegance and light to your flowerbeds and rockeries. Here are some tips to help you show off your variegated plants to advantage.

affect all variegated plants.

For a more striking effect, variegated plants have to be showcased. Plant them next to species with dark green foliage, and play with contrasting colours and textures. In small spaces, opt for quality, not quantity; too

First of all, to preserve the bi-coloured foliage, you need to be very careful about respecting the needs of the plant, especially hours of sunshine, soil type and watering. You should also apply a low-nitrogen fertilizer. Remove any completely green leaves that appear as soon as you notice them; this is a phenomenon called reversion, and it can

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Home & Garden 2017

Understanding hardiness zones

Hardiness zones are geographical areas in which a given category of plant can successfully be grown. The concept was first developed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and countries around the world have since adapted the system to their own territories. But while hardiness zones can be quite useful, both for the casual gardener and the agricultural world, the model is far from perfect.

Hardiness zones are largely decided on a given plant's ability to survive in each zone's lowest winter temperature, without factoring in summertime data or snow cover. As a result, two areas that have similar winter temperatures but vastly different amounts of snow — or summers that have nothing in common — can end up in the same zone. With so many variable factors, hardiness zones aren't always true to reality.

Furthermore, climate change is an unpredictable force that modifies weather conditions around the

world, which means that hardiness zones are always evolving. In 2012, the USDA updated its map of hardiness zones in the U.S. to reflect the warmer weather of the previous three decades, but even this newer data will likely be obsolete before long.

The bottom line is that hardiness zones are useful tools when it comes to choosing plants adapted to a certain area, but they should be taken with a grain of salt. Find out what your area's hardiness zone is, and do your own research to see how accurate — or not — the assessment actually is.



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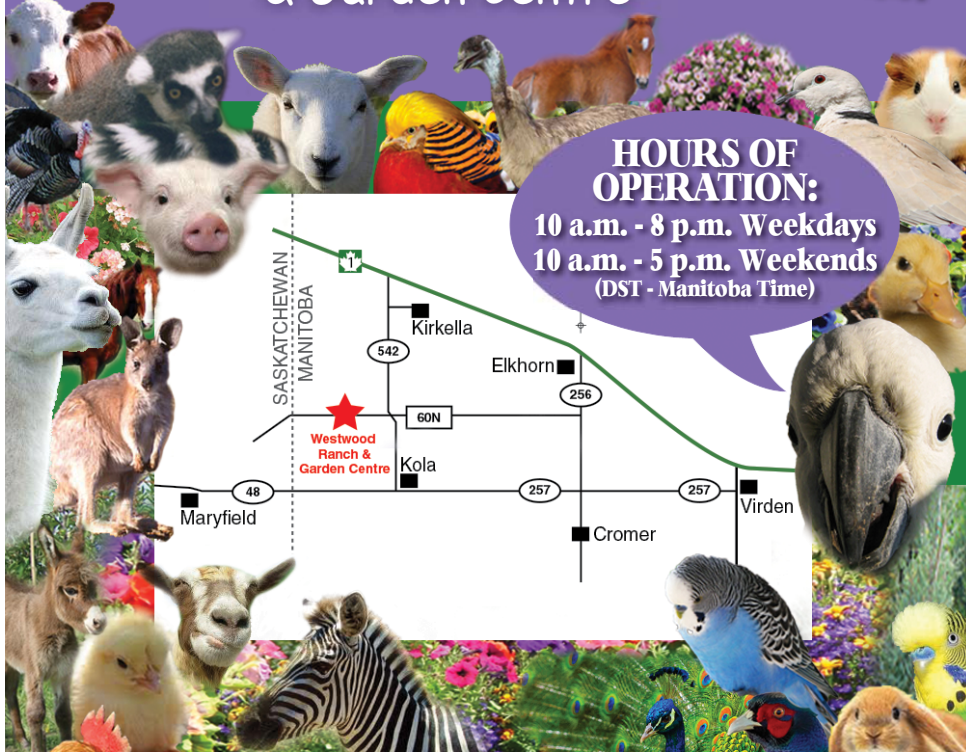


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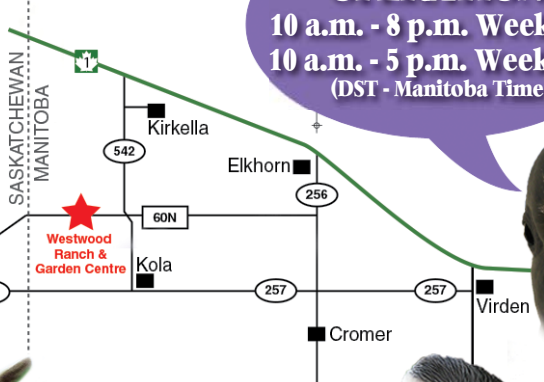
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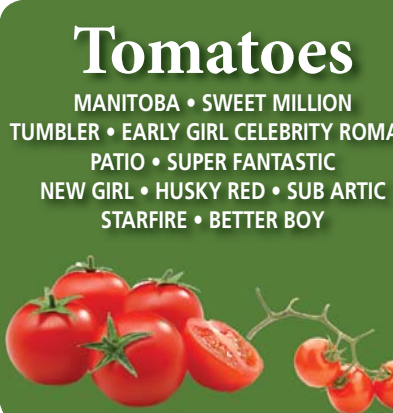
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How to discourage cats from visiting your yard

Does it seem as though all the neighbourhood cats have turned your backyard into their very own meeting place? Are you faced with the problem of cats eating your plants or using your flowerbeds as giant litter boxes? Here are some tips that will help you keep cats away from your yard without hurting them.

- Sprinkle your garden with citrus peel or pepper, or cover the soil with a thin layer of coffee grounds or human hair. Cats don't like these smells.
- Set up some aluminum plates that will bang together in the wind.
- Cover the soil with rough mulch, branches or small stones.

- Plant types of vegetation that cats hate, such as garlic, onion, lemon thyme, geraniums or lavender.
- Install a sprinkler system with a motion detector —cats hate getting wet.
- Protect seedlings by covering them with chicken wire or a trellis.

You could also create a "cat zone." Organize a small corner of your yard especially for your four-legged visitors by planting some catnip well away from your flowerbeds. This perennial is easy to grow and attracts cats, who love to lick, chew and rub against it. As a last resort, you could use a repellent containing piperine and oil of black pepper, which is readily available in stores. This kind of product should be used with care, and you should always follow the manufacturer's instructions to the letter.



To keep cats away from your garden, plant some garlic, onions, lemon thyme, geraniums or lavender.



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Home & Garden 2017

Five plants that grow anywhere



Whatever the weather, these tenacious plants are up for the challenge.

Every region in North America has its own specific weather quirk, whether it's freezing winters, scorching summers or heavy rainfall. It can be a daunting task to plan a garden when Mother Nature is so unpredictable, so here are some plants that will survive every season's tests.

1. PEONIES

You could forget entirely about these beauties in your garden and they'd still probably find their way back year after year. Even if mould or weather gets the best of them in the summer, you can still expect an encore next spring.

2. DAYLILIES

These cheerful yellow flowers can withstand extreme temperatures, which explains their popularity from coast to coast.

3. HOSTAS

You know the ones: these green, leafy plants require virtually no maintenance and are native to almost every region of North America.

4. HOLLY

Holly is often associated with Christmas time, and for good reason: it looks great all winter! With more than 400 varieties, you're sure to find a type of this berry-yielding plant that suits your garden.

5. TULIPS

These perennial bulbs are very easy to grow and care for. There are endless varieties, and thus tulips can be grown

in many different colours and sizes. Gardeners delight in picking their hardy spring flowers. Plant bulbs in the fall and enjoy the show for many years to come! So, no more excuses — wherever you live, grab a shovel, put on some gloves and get planting.

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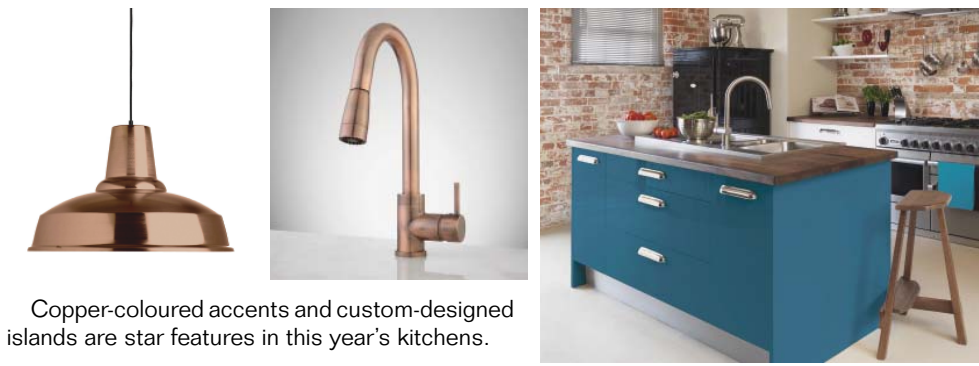
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Copper-coloured accents and custom-designed islands are star features in this year's kitchens.

Tips for a state-of-the-art kitchen

Does your kitchen need refurbishing? Would you love to create a cutting-edge decor worthy of a decorating magazine? Draw on as many of the 2016 trends as you like and turn your kitchen into a beautiful — and functional — room that's ideal for dreaming up mouth-watering meals for family and friends. Gasps of admiration, guaranteed.

Clean lines
With its cool colours and clean lines, the 2016 kitchen has the esthetic of a laboratory, but in a good way. Islands, cabinets and countertops have smooth, gleaming surfaces on which a bare minimum of objects are placed. Similarly, storage space is optimized so all the things you don't have an immediate use for can stay out of sight. The key word: minimalism.

Nostalgic colours
Add pale touches of colour (mint green, pale pink, baby blue, lilac or butter yellow) to neutral kitchens. These pastel shades from decades past are making a comeback this year, while the vintage trend is increasingly popular. Purity, softness and comfort are the magic ingredients for a user-friendly kitchen where everyone loves to hang out.

Copper
After stainless steel, gold, chrome and bronze, designers are now going crazy over copper. To give your kitchen a modern-yet-warm feel, integrate a few elements with a copper finish or even better, solid copper. This year, copper cabinet handles and knobs, light fixtures, faucets, utensils and even appliances blend perfectly with anthracite, brown and ivory tones.

Custom islands
Today's kitchen island is no longer used exclusively for preparing meals. Now it has been transformed into a multi-purpose element that's used as an extra table or for storage. To be really up to date, furnish your kitchen with a model that has been custom designed and made by a professional. What's the ultimate island in 2016? A brightly coloured one (bottle green, orange, electric blue) standing in the centre of a kitchen decorated in classic shades of gray, white, black or beige. You'll definitely create the "wow" effect!



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Home & Garden 2017

Tips for installing an acrylic shower



Installing a modular shower is a renovation project that anyone can do.

Putting in a shower stall is a great way to give your bathroom a facelift. Even with a little help from a plumber, you'll still be proud to show off your newly installed acrylic shower.

The first steps are to determine the location of the shower and choose the model you want. To install a modular shower, ensure that the walls the unit will be in contact with have studs every 40 centimetres and are reinforced in the middle. Next, make sure the plumbing is suitable. If you're replacing an old shower, everything will already be in place, but if you're installing a shower in a new location, have the drain and water supply pipes installed by a licensed plumber.

Now it's time to install the base of the shower. These are usually fairly flexible, but the better quality the

shower, the thicker and more solid the base. Make sure the subfloor is level. Cover the surface where the shower base will be located with mortar, taking care not to put any down the drain. While the cement is still wet, cover it with a sealing membrane. Place the base

of the shower on the wet cement, pushing it gently into the cement and making sure it's level. Anchor everything firmly and wait about 24 hours for the cement to harden.

The only thing left to do now is to install the walls and door

according to the manufacturer's installation instructions. This is where you'll need the licensed plumber again, as you need to have all the fittings properly installed. And there you go: a beautiful new shower.



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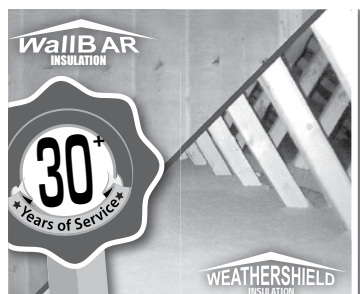
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