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# HOME & GARDEN



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## Five fun and affordable ways to revitalize your home

Does your home need an update? If a full renovation isn't in the cards this spring, here are five fun and inexpensive makeover tips for reinvigorating your home.

all over again. So which ones will you undertake this spring?

### 1. New accessories

Inexpensive upgrades such as new throw pillows on the couch, a fresh tablecloth in the dining room or a chic frame for a painting or photo will help revitalize your home.

### 2. Rearrange your furniture

Sometimes changing the layout of a room is all you need to do to make it come alive again. Move your bed to the other side of the room or switch the living room furniture around.

### 3. Update your bathroom

Replacing accessories like the soap dish, shower curtain and hand towels can make your bathroom feel brand new.

### 4. Switch up your lighting

A lamp for your bedroom or a new fixture in the dining room will shed new light on a room that's lost its sparkle.

### 5. DIY upgrades

If you want new cabinets in your kitchen, try painting the ones you have for a cost-effective alternative. Consider a DIY approach to other desired upgrades for your home.

These simple and affordable changes can make you fall in love with your home



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## Potting soil vs. garden soil

If you want your plants to thrive, you need to use the right type of soil. Here's a look at the difference between potting soil and garden soil.

### Potting Soil

Potting soil has a mixture of organic materials and minerals that help plants grow in containers. Moss, compost and other matter feeds the plants, while minerals like perlite and vermiculite facilitate drainage and prevent the soil from compacting. Additionally, potting soil is sterile, which protects plants from fungi and other pathogens.



### Garden Soil

Garden soil is regular dirt enriched with compost or other organic materials. It can be used to create and maintain gardens or raised beds to ensure the soil contains enough nutrients to support plant life. Without additives like perlite, garden soil doesn't provide enough drainage for potted plants, but it can help pre-

vent flower beds from drying out by retaining moisture. It's also more affordable than potting mixes.

If you're not sure what type of soil you need, speak with an expert at your local farmers market, nursery or garden centre.

## Why use a rain gauge in the garden?

A rain gauge is a practical instrument that measures rainfall.

Using a rain gauge can help you adapt your watering schedule to avoid over or underwatering your plants. However, to make good use of the data you collect, you must first know how much water each type of plant requires.

You can use a rain gauge to compare the amount of rainfall from year to year, which can help you plan your future crops.



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## How to grow microgreens

Microgreens contain more nutrients than mature vegetables and can be used to add colour, texture and flavour to a variety of dishes. Some of the simplest microgreens to grow are broccoli, cabbage, collards, mustard and radish. Here's how to do it.

1. Cover the bottom of a seed-starting tray with about five to seven centimetres of damp potting soil.
2. Scatter the seeds over the soil in an even layer, then cover them with a

bit more damp soil.

3. Mist the surface using a spray bottle, and repeat this once or twice a day to keep the soil damp but not soaked.

4. Place the container on a sunny windowsill once the sprouts appear, and continue to mist the plants daily.

5. Harvest the microgreens when they're about three to seven centimetres tall (after one to three weeks) using scissors to cut them at soil level.

Rinse your microgreens and use

them in salads, sandwiches or as a garnish. They can be stored in a sealed container in the fridge for about a week.



## Building a treehouse with your child: an exciting project

A beautiful wooden treehouse instantly adds whimsy and fun to your backyard. While you can purchase many pre-made models, most people will agree that nothing beats a treehouse built by your own hands.

An activity that brings people together

Instead of assembling a mass-produced treehouse in a few minutes, you can invest many hours with your child. You won't regret this opportunity to spend quality time together.

A learning opportunity  
You can make your tree-



house look like a cozy cabin or a tiny replica of your home. No matter what style you decide to build, you can teach your child about tools, technology and the construction process. They'll also learn how to plan and execute a project, providing them with valuable life lessons.

A great environmental option

Your custom-built treehouse will easily outperform its commercial rivals if you choose the right materials. Whether you buy wood at a hardware store or gather it in a nearby forest, your treehouse will be unique and ecologically sustainable.

A pleasure to rediscover

If your child is usually glued to their video games, it may take some effort to convince them to get their hands dirty building a treehouse. You may be able to persuade them to participate by implementing screen-free days or rewarding them with small prizes for spending time outside.

Building a treehouse is a satisfying project that could turn into one of your child's fondest memories.

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## 5 mistakes to avoid when cleaning your windows and mirrors

Clean mirrors, windows and glass furniture add instant sparkle to your decor. In your haste to get the shine, you may make mistakes that cause you to double your efforts. Avoid these five habits to get the best results the first time.

1. Cleaning when the weather or lighting is bad, like freezing rain or glaring sun
2. Neglecting to dust surrounding spaces, like mirror frames, before cleaning
3. Using a poor-quality cleaning solu-

- tion
4. Drying surfaces with a non-absorbent, dirty or lint-covered cloth
5. Forgetting to wipe the squeegee after each pass

Purchase the best cleaning products and accessories at your local stores. You could also try hiring a cleaning pro for dazzling results.



## Ready, set, declutter

Tackling spring cleaning without first decluttering a few rooms, drawers, or cupboards can be futile. Is this task worth the effort? The answer is a resounding yes. Getting rid of unnecessary things gives you, among other things, an incredible feeling of lightness and well-being. Here are a few tips on how to make this chore go smoothly.

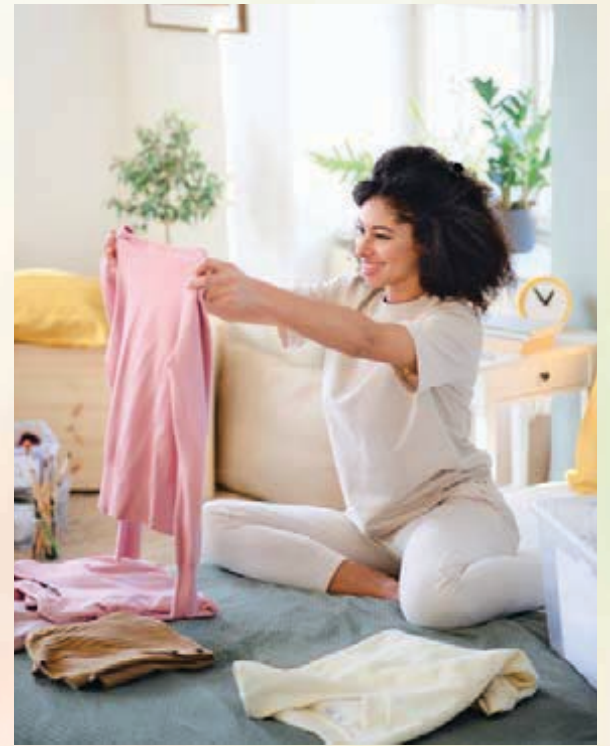
duplicates of nearly identical items, keep only one or two (the least worn, for example). If you've been hoarding clothes that no longer fit, be realistic. Sell them if they're in good shape or donate them to an organization that helps needy people.

After decluttering, reward yourself with a relaxing massage or meal out.

Many find that sorting through their belongings brings up various emotions. Can you relate? To lighten the emotional load, start with items with little or no sentimental value, such as leftover renovation materials or take-out containers that can go in the recycling bin.

Once you've done this, sort through other items. When deciding if you should keep something, ask yourself if it's useful. If you haven't used it in over a year, it's not essential. If you're reluctant to part with an expensive item, remember that you can sell it to someone else who can give it a new life.

If you have several



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## Update your bedroom with new curtains and bedding

Does your bedroom need an upgrade? Change the look of the room with new curtains and sheets. Here's how to choose the perfect new linens for your room.

### Curtains

When selecting curtains, think about the look you want in the room and then find a fabric that corresponds. Linen and cotton blends are more casual and cheerful, while silk and velvet are refined and regal.

Next, think about the colour and pattern you'd like. You can match your curtains to the colour of the wall and use pattern and texture to make them stand out. Alternatively, you could hang a multi-coloured pattern and make them a focal point.

### Bedding

You don't need to match your bedding to your curtains but they should co-ordinate. You can pull a colour from the pattern on your curtains or use a contrasting colour. If you'd like to use different patterns for your curtains and bedding, stay in the same colour palette.

When buying your sheets, invest in high-quality, natural fabrics. Egyptian cotton is classic and comfortable, while silk feels luxurious and has the added bonus of being gentle on your hair and skin. By changing the linens in your bedroom, you'll wake up feeling like you're somewhere new.

## How to keep your lawn healthy



Do you want your lawn to look great all summer? Adopt these practices.

- Sharpen your lawnmower blades. Clean-cut grass grows back faster than grass that's been ripped or torn.

- Leave the clippings on the ground. They'll slowly release nitrogen. However, avoid leaving a layer thicker than half a centimetre. This will smother the grass.

- Mow more often but leave it longer. Cutting your grass to a height of six to eight centimetres promotes root development and grass density. It also makes the grass less vulnerable to drought.

- Water only as needed. Water your grass to a depth of about two and a half centimetres a week, including rainfall. Water in the morning to limit evaporation.

- Apply compost. This provides essential nutrients, stimulates root growth and increases resistance to diseases and pests.

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## Garden shed considerations

Do you need storage space for your barbecue, patio set and gardening accessories? If so, it's time to get a shed. There are many prefabricated models made of synthetic materials, metal and wood. Here are a few tips for making the right choice.

### Synthetic materials

Plastic, vinyl and PVC sheds are resistant to water and insect damage. Moreover, they require very little maintenance. Although available in a wide variety of designs, they tend to have a commercial look that may not suit everyone.

### Metal

Metal sheds are lightweight, affordable and easy to assemble. If made from aluminum, the shed won't rust. However, metal sheds are easy to dent and come in fewer designs than those made of synthetic materials.

### Wood

Wooden sheds are sturdy and can complement the outside of your home. However, they require considerable maintenance and are more vulnerable to insects and rot than metal and synthetic sheds.

If you're handy, you can design and build your own shed. This way, you can choose its size and appearance. Furthermore, you can insulate the walls to create a workshop. But keep a close eye on your budget. This type of project can easily cost several thousand dollars.

Whether you choose to buy a prefabricated shed or build your own, make sure it's strong enough to withstand inclement weather. Finally, check the laws and regulations in your municipality for building this type of structure.



## When to prune your trees and shrubs

Although trees and shrubs can grow very well without intervention, occasional pruning helps promote optimal health. Here's what you need to know.

### Flowering

Shrubs like rhododendrons and lilacs bloom from last year's stems, whereas others, like roses and hydrangeas, bloom from new growth. It's best to prune shrubs that flower from old wood immediately after blooming. However, shrubs that bloom on new growth should be trimmed in the spring.

### Dormancy

In general, shrubs and trees go dormant in the spring before their buds open. This is the best time for pruning because the plants heal faster. Late fall is also appropriate. However, pruning in the winter should be avoided.

Furthermore, mid-summer is ideal for pruning trees that produce a lot of sap in the spring, like maple, birch and willow.

Lastly, pruning large trees and fruit trees should be left to the experts. For the best results, contact a professional tree pruner in your area.

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### 5 benefits of raised garden beds

Raised gardening is the practice of growing plants above ground level. Here are five reasons why this method is becoming increasingly popular among gardeners.

1. Easy access. You can design your raised garden bed so you can till the soil, pull weeds and pick vegetables from a comfortable standing position.
2. Reduced predators. Walled garden beds limit access to many unwanted visitors. Moreover, raised gardens allow less weed intrusion than ground gardens, making them easy to maintain.
3. Better soil control. Raised garden beds give you better control over variables that can affect the growth of your plants, like drainage, water retention, soil aeration and PH levels.



4. More abundant harvests. Many gardeners with raised beds report more bountiful fruit and vegetable yields than traditional ground gardens.

5. An asset to your decor. When it comes to outdoor design, raised garden beds give your yard a finished and tailored look.

Whether you build it yourself or purchase a ready-made raised garden bed, your new growing space will require an initial investment. However, you'll be quickly won over by its numerous advantages.

### What's late blight, and how do you prevent it?

Late blight is a plague known to many farmers because it affects several types of crops, including grapes, potatoes, tomatoes, gourds and peppers. No gardener, amateur or professional, is immune to this unpleasant issue. Find out a little more about late blight and how to prevent it.

**Causes**

Late blight is a disease caused by a fungus that develops in the earth when temperatures are warm and humidity is high. It can then spread to the plant's lower leaves, potentially leading to the loss of the entire crop. Late blight tends to set in when a plant has a deficiency of the nutrients that defend against fungus and related diseases.

**Symptoms**

Plants affected by late blight see their leaves turn brown and dry up. A white, downy covering may form under the leaves, and the fruits and vegetables may also show similar signs as the disease spreads. It gradually leads to the death of the plants.

**Prevention**

To prevent late blight, it's important to eliminate the conditions that cause it. That means controlling the humidity level around the plants and avoiding water

accumulation by removing the lower, older leaves that interfere with light circulation and spacing the plants to maximize aeration. Crop rotation also helps control late blight.

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