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Home & Garden 2024

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HOME & GARDEN



Buying a hot tub: avoid these faux pas

Are you dreaming of owning a hot tub? Before you go shopping, be aware of these three common mistakes:

1. Miscalculating your budget. Do you have enough money to buy a hot tub? Don't forget the cost of installation, electricity and maintenance. Carefully evaluate your budget to avoid going into debt.
2. Not trying it out. Imagine getting in your hot tub for the first time and real-

izing it's uncomfortable or the water doesn't cover your entire body when you sit down.

3. Paying for unnecessary extras. Having a hot tub with the latest stereo system, for example, can be costly. Why consider flashy extras if you have no intention of using them?

Visit your local hot tub retailers to find one you can enjoy year-round!



5 golden rules for a productive vegetable garden



Do you want to start your very first vegetable garden? Did your last attempt go differently than planned? Put on your gardening gloves and follow these five tried-and-tested tips.

1. Choose the right spot

A healthy garden needs at least six hours of sunshine a day. Choose a bright spot sheltered from the wind to minimize the risk of damaging your plants. Pro tip: don't plant anything within five metres of a tree to prevent the roots from interfering with the growth of your vegetables.

2. Fertilize the soil

Give your garden soil a helping hand to yield a good harvest. Add compost to the soil when planting your seeds and seedlings, and use a natural, commercial fer-

tilizer every three or four weeks.

3. Sow reliable plants

Before getting your hands in the soil, select plants that are easy to care for and produce a lot of veggies. Tomatoes, carrots, radishes, cucumbers and zucchini typically guarantee success.

4. Water regularly

This may seem obvious, but you must water your garden often. If you water in the morning, the foliage will have time to dry out during the day, reducing the risk of disease and fungus.

5. Harvest with care

When harvesting vegetables, use garden shears or clippers to avoid breaking the plant. This allows the plant

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HOME & GARDEN

3 landscaping trends for 2024

LET YOURSELF BE INSPIRED!



Do you want to add some flair to your yard? Here are a few trends that'll be everywhere in 2024.

1. ZEN SPACES

It's essential to make time to escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and recharge your batteries. That's why many homeowners are creating Zen gardens on their property. These gardens are distinguished by their stunning rock arrangements, flagstone paths, minimalist plants, soothing sculptures and water features like pools, waterfalls and fountains.

2. PERGOLAS

Often made of wood, vinyl or aluminum, these struc-

tures are a must for elegantly defining your outdoor space and creating a casual shaded area. Depending on your preferences, you can install yours on a paved surface or your deck. With some well-placed furniture and decorative elements, it'll become your favourite place to enjoy the summer!

3. ROCK GARDENS

Rock gardens are ideal for creating a modern-looking

landscape, featuring a few well-chosen plants that require very little maintenance. If mowing the lawn and weeding aren't your go-to pastimes, a rock garden is the way to go.

Visit your local nurseries and garden centres to find everything you need to enhance the beauty of your yard this year.

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The importance of inspecting your roof: how to avoid unpleasant surprises

Every spring, it's a good idea to inspect your roof to see if it withstood the winter months. This will help you identify any problems and take necessary action. Here's what you need to know when doing a thorough visual inspection of your roof.

SAFETY FIRST

Climbing onto your roof can be risky, so use appropriate safety equipment, including closed-toe, non-slip shoes, a sturdy ladder and a safety harness. Having someone help you stabilize the ladder and be available in an emergency is also a good idea.

Additionally, ensure the roof is dry before inspecting it. Choose a day with minimal wind and cool temperatures to avoid working on a screaming hot surface.

THINGS TO CHECK

First, remove any debris, such as leaves. Then, inspect all accessible parts of the roof to identify problems such as:

- Standing water
- A damaged or deformed membrane
- An uneven gravel layer
- Cracked sealing joints
- Rusted or flimsy flashing
- Protruding nails
- Missing, broken or lifted shingles
- Mould

It's also a good idea to examine your attic, walls and ceilings while you're at it. Check for signs of water infiltration or poor ventilation. Unpleasant odours, mould, excessive moisture and peeling paint are telltale signs that something's amiss.

If you notice an issue, don't wait for it to worsen. Seek professional help. If you're uncomfortable inspecting your roof, call a local roofing professional to get the most accurate assessment of your roof's condition.



"Which lawnmower should I choose?"



During the summer, mowing your lawn is a must. It can be a moment of relaxation for some, while others may see it as a chore. Whatever your perspective, having the right equipment is essential. If you're looking to buy a lawnmower but can't make sense of the numerous options available, these tips can help you make an informed decision.

Consider the size and type of lawn

The larger your lawn, the more energy it takes to maintain it. If your yard is less than 15,000 square feet, an electric mower will generally be quite efficient. However, the power cable could make it challenging to manoeuvre in hard-to-reach areas. In

this case, a battery-powered mower could be a better option. A self-propelled gas-powered model might be suitable if your lawn is steeply sloped.

Keep maintenance costs in mind

Different types of mowers require different levels of care. Unlike their battery-powered counterparts, gas-powered models

must be regularly refuelled and topped up with oil. However, electric models can lose their charging capacity over time, forcing you to replace the batteries. This can end up costing up to half of the original price of the mower.

Weigh the pros and cons. Remember that an advantage can hide a disadvantage. Electric and battery-powered mowers are lighter but less robust than gas-powered mowers. Plug-in models are less polluting, but the cable can easily get tangled. Manual reel mowers are still the most environmentally friendly option but require more physical effort.

What's the most critical feature for you? Durability? Ease of use? Low emissions? Make sure your choice matches your preferences, and don't hesitate to ask a salesperson for advice before you buy.

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HOME & GARDEN

Lighting options to brighten your yard!

There are endless options when it comes to outdoor lighting. Halogen or LED? Electric or solar? Here are a few ideas to help you make the right choice.

BULBS

Each type of bulb has its advantages. LED bulbs are renowned for their durability. Plus, you'll end up saving on replacement costs. They also consume up to 75 per cent less electricity than halogen bulbs. However, halogen bulbs give off more heat, which can melt the snow around your trees in winter and save you some time and effort shoveling.

POWER

One big question remains: is it better to opt for lights that run on electricity or solar energy? Here's a quick comparison:

- Electric lights are affordable and reliable. However, they require more equipment, and it can be hard to hide the cables.

- Solar lights are practical, removable and low maintenance. However, the light's intensity is weak and limited to the amount of sunlight the fixture receives during the day.

You'll also need to consider the characteristics of your yard, the slope and the visual effect you want to achieve. Not sure which product to choose? Talk to a landscaping professional for enlightenment.



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Are you itching to buy an air fryer? Read this first!



Have some of your friends or family members bought an air fryer and swear by this versatile appliance? If their enthusiasm has convinced you to get one for yourself or you want to get on board with the trend, keep these points in mind.

SPACE

Before you start shopping, ensure you have enough space in your kitchen to accommodate an air fryer. These appliances can be bulky, so ensure you have enough

counter or cupboard space. If necessary, declutter by getting rid of items you no longer need.

CAPACITY

Next, consider the capacity of the air fryer. If you cook large quantities of food or have a big family, it's best to opt for a model with a capacity of at least five litres. A smaller model will require you to cook in batches, which can be time-consuming.

MAINTENANCE

Some air fryers are easier to clean than others because of a non-stick coating. If you hate handwashing and prefer to put items like the basket or grate in the dishwasher, ensure the air fryer you choose has dishwasher-safe parts.

Many advantages

Air fryers use less electricity and produce less heat than conventional ovens. This makes them perfect for summer! They can cook all kinds of food quickly, including meat, French fries and desserts. Depending on the model, you also use little to no oil.

Happy shopping!



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Kitchens: Spotlight on 3 key trends in 2024



Are you thinking about renovating your kitchen? Are you building a new home and designing your kitchen from scratch? Here's a look at some of this year's latest trends to inspire you.

1. Create a spa-like atmosphere. Melt away the stresses of everyday life by creating a relaxing, warm and uncluttered space. This means doing away with bright, clinical lighting (think low lighting!). Fill the space with soft, organic colours like sandy brown and warm grey. Ideally, the cupboards should have no handles and focus on natural materials.
2. Curate a space for social interaction. Modern kitchens are designed to be a space for cooking together or breaking bread with loved ones. Spacious islands with rounded corners, along with stools or benches and other types of dining areas, are all the rage. The focus is on creating a convivial atmosphere where family and friends can gather and enjoy each other's company.
3. Make eco-responsible choices a priority. Incorporate sus-

tainable practices into every aspect of the space. This includes using recycled materials, VOC-free paint and wood from sustainably managed forests. You can also choose intelligent or ENERGY STAR-certified electrical appliances, such as the refrigerator and dishwasher, to reduce your carbon footprint further.

Creating the kitchen of your dreams requires careful planning. Otherwise, you could exceed your budget or run into other unpleasant surprises. Call on the services of a kitchen design specialist in your area to ensure your project goes off without a hitch.

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Is it time to replace your toilet?

Is your toilet showing its age? Are you thinking about investing in a new one? Are you renovating your bathroom and want to update this essential fixture? Beyond aesthetic considerations, here are some telltale signs it might be time for a new commode:

- The toilet leaks or is frequently clogged.
- The flush mechanism works erratically despite attempts at repairing it.
- There are cracks in the porcelain bowl or tank.
- The water tank runs continuously.
- The toilet is unstable and moves when you sit on it.
- The seat is uncomfortable. Modern models feature elongated bowls, which provide more support and

comfort than round seats.

- The plumber visits so often that you've become friends.

If your toilet is past its prime, you may want to consider swapping it for a low-flow model to reduce your water consumption. Has your water bill recently increased? A faulty toilet could be to blame. It may be wise and cost-effective to replace it.

When shopping for a new toilet, it's essential to consider the size and shape of the bowl, as well as the rough-in distance, to ensure you make the right choice.



A second living room outside? Of course!



There's nothing better than enjoying a refreshing iced coffee or lemonade in your backyard. An inviting patio, deck or courtyard will encourage you to spend more time outdoors and make the most of the season. Here's a quick guide to creating an ideal outdoor living room where you can entertain and relax.

Aim for comfort

Is the outdoor sofa set you have your eye on comfortable? It's always a good idea to try out furniture before buying it. Remember that if you're comfortable, your guests will be too.

Add some greenery

Plants can breathe life into your space. There

are many easy-to-maintain and affordable options, such as succulents, pansies and herbs. You can also use potted plants to mark pathways and high-traffic areas.

Evening lighting

String lights or electric lanterns are an excellent choice as they're affordable and durable and add a warm ambiance to your decor.

Whether you're reading a book or having a cocktail party with friends, your outdoor living space should be a place where you want to spend many hours. One final tip: choose weather-resistant materials to ensure your backyard oasis is charming and inviting all summer.

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How to plant a windbreak

Windbreaks are commonly used in the agricultural industry to protect crops and reduce soil erosion. However, they're becoming increasingly popular on residential properties. For instance, a windbreak can help protect your home from strong winds if you live in an area with few buildings and sparse tree cover.

CRITERIA

Planting a windbreak requires careful planning. To ensure its effectiveness, you must consider the following:

- The plant's growth, including its mature height, width and thickness
- The plant's orientation in relation to the wind
- The plant's permeability

SPECIES

If you want to get the most out of your investment, take the time to carefully select trees or shrubs that will block the wind while also beautifying your property. Avoid invasive exotic species at all costs. Instead, choose native species that are easy to maintain and can withstand temperature variations.



Before starting your project, consult your municipality's bylaws. For instance, you may need to plant your windbreak a certain distance from buildings, ditches, waterways and electrical wires.

Popular windbreak trees include spruce, pine, hemlock, cedar, elder, crab-apple and poplar. If you want to attract birds and pollinating insects, plant tree or shrub varieties they like. Need advice on planting

maintaining your windbreak? Consult your local nursery or contact a landscaping company in your area.

7 chores kids can do in the garden

Gardening is an ideal opportunity to learn, observe nature and develop a sense of responsibility. Include your children in your gardening activities by having them take care of these seven tasks.

1. Planting seeds. From designing the plot to planting the seeds, these steps can be the beginning of a great adventure.
2. Digging holes. This task is an opportunity for your kids to learn how to use gardening tools. They can also just use their hands.
3. Composting. Although it's recommended to keep dead leaves on the ground to make the most of their benefits, adding them to a compost pile is also an excellent initiative for your kids.
4. Harvesting. Harvesting helps your children understand where their food comes from and teaches them to recognize when a fruit or vegetable is ripe enough to be picked.
5. Weeding. Using gardening gloves or a tool to pull weeds can be a fun activity. You can add to their enthusiasm by rewarding them for each weed they remove.
6. Watering. It only takes a quick lesson to teach a child how to correctly water various plants.
7. Spreading mulch. Your youngest will have a great time spreading mulch with their hands. It's also an excellent opportunity for your older children to learn to use a rake.

There are loads of ways for your children to help you in the garden. Just be sure to assign them age-appropriate responsibilities.



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