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A Special Supplement to the L'Anse Sentinel April 28, 2021





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Outdoor improvements boost home value

Whether home improvement projects are design to improve the interior or exterior of a house, focusing on renovations that make the most financial sense can benefit homeowners in the long run. The right renovations can be assets if and when homeowners decide to sell their homes.

So how does one get started? First and foremost, speak to a local real estate agent who is knowledgeable about trends in the community. While a swimming pool may be something coveted in one area, it may impede sales in another. It also helps to study generalized trends and data from various home improvement industry analysts to guide upcoming projects.

The following outdoor projects are just a few renovations that tend to add value.

- **Fire pit:** A fire pit is a great place to gather most months of the year. Bob Vila and CBS news report that a fire pit realizes a 78 percent return on investment, or ROI.

- **Outdoor kitchen:** Many buyers are looking to utilize their yards as an extension of interior living areas. Cooking, dining and even watching TV outdoors is increasingly popular. Outdoor living areas can be custom designed and built. In addition, prefabricated modular units that require a much smaller commitment of time and

money are available.

- **Patio:** Homeowners who do not already have a patio will find that adding one can increase a home's value. Patios help a home look neat, add useable space and may help a home to sell quickly. The experts at Space Wise, a division of Extra Space Storage, say that refinishing, repairing and building a new patio offers strong ROI.

- **Deck:** Deck can be as valuable as patios. A deck is another outdoor space that can be used for entertaining, dining and more. Remodeling magazine's 2018 "Cost vs. Value" report indicates that an \$11,000 deck can add about \$9,000 in resale value to the home, recouping around 82 percent of the project's costs.

- **Door update:** Improve curb appeal with a new, high-end front door and garage doors. If that's too expensive, a good cleaning and new coat of paint can make an old door look brand new. These easy fixes can improve a home's look instantly.

- **New landscaping:** The National Association of Realtors says an outdoor makeover that includes well-thought out landscaping can net 105 percent ROI. Installing a walkway, adding stone planters, mulching, and planting shrubs are ideas to consider.

Many different outdoor projects can add value to a home.

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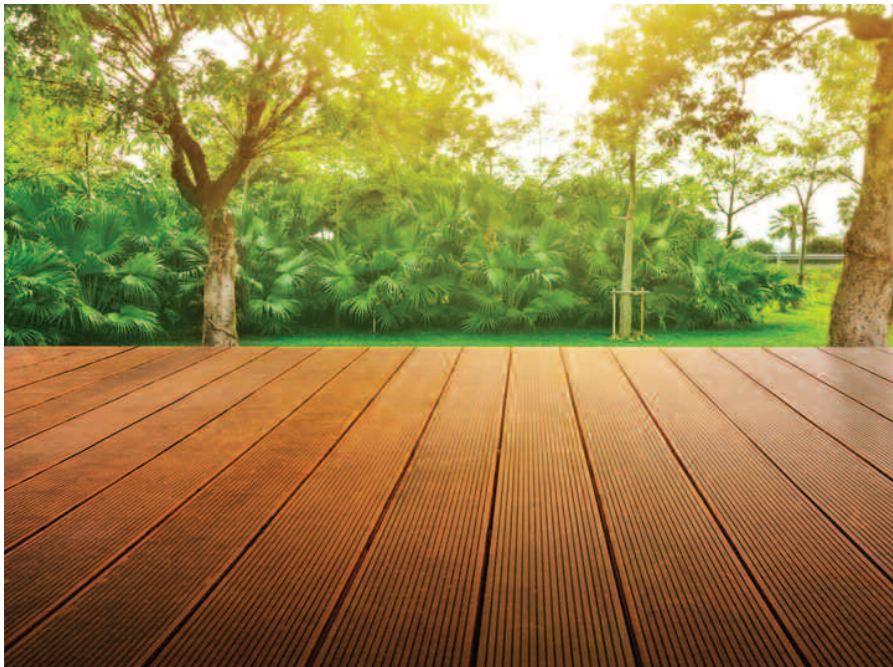
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Composite decking a smart choice



Composite decking can mimic the look of wood, but requires much less maintenance.

Decks add character and functionality to a home, increasing outdoor entertaining space and oftentimes improving the resale value of a home. Homeowners have various options when choosing decking materials, but one such option, composite decking, is growing in popularity.

Decks used to primarily be made from pressure-treated lumber. While lumber remains a popular material, more and more homeowners are opting for composite decking products. As anyone who has pressure-washed, stained and sealed wood decks can attest, such spaces require lots of upkeep to look new year after year. Composite decks require much less maintenance, making them highly attractive to homeowners who would rather spend time using their decks instead of maintaining them.

Composite decking is any type of

decking material that is formulated from different recycled materials. The majority of these materials include hard plastic and wood shavings of pulp. Unlike wood, which can fade, crack and rot, composite decking, which has been available for roughly a decade, does not degrade quickly and requires very little upkeep.

Available in a variety of wood colors to match outdoor decor, composite decks also can feature artificial wood grains to make them look similar to wood planks. Although composite decks are not completely impervious to the elements, with some occasional washing to impede mold growth and new technology that has improved stain-resistance, many of the pitfalls of other materials can be avoided with composite decks.

Composite decking fits in with eco-friendly lifestyles. The planks are made

from recycled materials that would normally end up in landfills. Products from Trex, a popular composite decking manufacturer, are made from 1.5 million shopping bags and wood mill waste. As composite decks do not rot away and are long-lasting, they will not need to be replaced frequently, which is another eco-friendly benefit.

When comparing composite decking brands, look mainly at the colors, materials used in the composition and the fastening systems. Many are fastened with regular deck screws, offers This Old House. The newer systems have channels for hidden fastening, and the composite deck tiles snap into place.

Composite decks do have a few drawbacks. They can be expensive — nearly double the initial cost of wood decks. And although they don't rot, composite planks can scratch. Without refinishing, damaged boards will need to be replaced. Harsh chemicals may fade color and damage the composite

materials, so caution is needed.

Composite decking remains an in-demand choice for outdoor spaces. Low-maintenance and long-lasting, these decks have quickly become favorites among homeowners.







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Simple ways to make a front door pop

Visitors' impressions of a home are often dictated by the home's entryway. Much as one may judge a book by its cover, the same can be said about the impression that a front door and entryway can create, regardless of how accurate that impression is.

Making certain changes to an entryway can go a long way toward improving curb appeal. Entryways also can set the scene for a home's interior. Whether one chooses to be classic or bold, modern or traditional, there are various ways to quickly transform a home's entryway.

- Bold front door color: Color can

dramatically enhance an entryway. Painting an existing door or replacing it with a more vivid option can do the trick. The DIY Network says certain colors stand out as favorites. These include turquoise, yellow, red, indigo, orange, and black. The door color should complement the other shades of the home, such as those on siding and trim.

- Custom walkway: Guide guests right to the front door with an attractive (and safe) walkway. Stamped concrete or decorative paver blocks may fit the bill. This walkway can extend to the street or to the driveway.

- Contain plants. Landscaping around the entryway should be neat and well-tended. Overgrown plants or shrubbery may give off an air of neglect. Container plants and carefully curated shrubs can create a neat and inviting aura.

- Highlight the address. Make sure the home can be found easily with bold and decorative house numbers. Consider two different address signs: one illuminated and easily viewed from the curb, and another closer to the front door.

- Utilize high-end materials. The relatively small area of real estate by the

front door enables homeowners to splurge on more opulent materials that can really add a feeling of luxury. These can include colorful tiles, ornate planters, decorative wooden doors, or elaborate knobs and lighting fixtures.

- Add architectural details. Find out which architectural elements will meld with the style of the home and then incorporate them. Moldings, columns, shutters, and trim are areas to consider.

The entryway to a home garners a lot of attention. Homeowners can enhance their spaces with entryways that really make a statement.



Entryways also can set the scene for a home's interior. Whether one chooses to be classic or bold, modern or traditional, there are various ways to quickly transform a home's entryway.





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Questions to determine if it's best to renovate on your own

A do-it-yourself mentality has taken hold in millions of households across the globe. Popular television channels like HGTV and DIY Network as well as accessible home improvement content on apps like YouTube has inspired many homeowners to tackle renovation projects around their homes. Taking such initiative is admirable, though it also can prove costly if homeowners end up biting off more than they can chew.

Home improvement videos and television shows have a tendency to oversimplify renovation projects, potentially giving homeowners a false sense of confidence in their DIY abilities. A concerted effort on the part of homeowners to determine if it's best to renovate on their own or hire a professional should always be the first step of any renovation project. No two homeowners are the same, but the following three questions can help homeowners determine if DIY is their best option.

1. Can I afford to DIY?

Professional home improvement projects are costly for a variety of rea-

sons. Materials can be costly, but so are the tools and labor necessary to do the job right. Homeowners may not have the tools necessary to complete complicated projects. Specialty tools can be expensive to purchase or even rent, and the cost of acquiring such tools should be included in any DIY project cost estimates.

Labor also factors heavily into professional projects, and for good reason. Talented contractors have unique skills that have been developed and perfected over many years. Those skills can ensure projects are completed quickly and correctly. Labor may seem costly, but such costs may ultimately prove to be a bargain compared to the cost of fixing DIY mistakes. Projects that are minor in scope and don't require the use of potentially costly specialty tools may be better suited for weekend warriors than more complicated renovations.

2. Do I have the time?

Homeowners must determine how much time they have to complete a project before deciding to do it them-

selves. No one wants to spend months staring at an unfinished renovation project. Homeowners who are already pressed for time may not be able to



3 questions can help homeowners determine if DIY is their best option

complete projects in a timely fashion, which can make homes less comfortable and even less safe.

3. Can I pull this off?

DIY projects can instill homeowners with a sense of pride in their homes, but it's imperative that homeowners considering the DIY option conduct an honest assessment of their skills. A lack of renovation experience does not necessarily mean a homeowner cannot successfully complete a DIY project. But in such instances, it may be best to start with small, straightforward projects and then gradually move up to bigger, more complicated projects as skills are fine tuned. And homeowners who have never been at their best with a hammer in hand should not be ashamed to leave the work to the professionals.

Television shows and online tutorials can make renovations appear easier than they actually are. Homeowners considering DIY renovations can ask themselves a handful of questions to determine if they're ready for the challenge of renovating their homes on their own.

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Preparing for window replacement

Winter is a factor for millions of people who reside in areas of the country that see the mercury drop considerably between December and March, that means prioritizing staying warm. Inefficient or aging housing materials may compromise your ability to do just that.

Drafts from doors, poorly protected attics and basements and aging windows may force heating systems to work extra hard to maintain interior temperatures.

Replacing old windows can make a home quieter by blocking out exterior noises. Consumer Reports also notes that new windows are often easier to clean and maintain than older varieties.

Many homeowners are interested in replacing their windows, but may not know where to start. These guidelines can help the process along.

1. Get several estimates. Ask for recommendations from neighbors or other people in your area on which companies they used to install their replacement windows. When you interview the prospects, ask several questions about how they go about installing the windows. Questions can include:

- How long will the project take?
- Will I need to remain home during

the process?

- Do you discard of old debris?
- What is the protocol for installation during inclement weather?

2. Research permits. Most home renovation projects need to be approved by the local municipality. Go to the permit office and find out the requirements. Some window contractors will include securing permits in the cost of the project. After the project is completed, an inspector will come by and ensure the work was done according to code.

3. Change up the appearance. Look at the type of hardware you have around the home and other fixtures. Choose windows that have locks or latches that can match those features for continuity of style. Think about choosing a different style or frame color of the window, or a different type of window to improve efficiency and function.

4. Research top window manufacturers. It's tempting to purchase windows based on price alone, but replacement windows are often a decision that only has to be made once or twice for the life of the home. Invest in durable windows that will have staying power. Consumer Reports offers unbiased reviews on various window brands and can help

homeowners make sound decisions.

5. Prepare for installation. Clear pathways, remove window treatments and disconnect window alarm systems. Plan for one to two days of installation, advises Andersen Windows and Doors. Keep pets and children away from work

areas.

Replacement windows can be a smart investment. New windows can improve the look of a home, reduce heating costs and can keep interior spaces comfortable.



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Effective tips for powerwashing houses

Powerwashing, also known as pressure-washing, utilizes a high-velocity water spray to remove dirt and residue from the exterior surfaces of a home. It is frequently used on vinyl siding, concrete and sometimes wood decks to treat mildew and other growth that accumulates over time.

Powerwashing can be a great way to remove grime without having to scrub by hand. But it requires a delicate touch to get it right. Sometimes it is best to leave the job to professionals. But homeowners willing to give it a go can try powerwashing themselves, as various stores rent power washers.

The home improvement website ImproveNet says that, until very recently, pressure washers were almost exclusively commercial machines sold to professionals or rented to do-it-yourselfers. Lately manufac-

turers have targeted homeowners looking to buy with lightweight options. For those who see powerwashing as a routine venture, purchasing a unit may be worth the investment.

It is important to exercise caution when operating a powerwashing machine. The high-velocity spray can



Powerwashing the exterior of the home can be an effective way to clean it in the spring and fall.

tear through skin. It is key to get a feel for the washer, and try less pressure first to get a handle on the magnitude of the tool.

Don safety gear prior to using a pressure washer. Gloves, eye protection and ear protection can be handy. Most units will connect to a standard garden hose. Choose old clothing and expect to get wet. Never point a power-washer hose at anyone and do not attempt to rinse feet or hands in the spray.

The renovation resource The Family Handyman suggests starting with a wide-degree nozzle to test out the spray on the surface that needs to be cleaned. A 15- or 25-degree nozzle is usually the wand for general cleaning and paint stripping without damaging the surface of the home. Experiment with an optimal distance of the washer wand to get the desired cleaning effects without

causing any damage. Work using a horizontal and slightly downward angle to avoid driving water up under the siding of a home.

Avoid spraying any electric wires or components on the home. Also, try not to spray upward, and angle the spray away from doors, windows and vents.

Some washers have reservoirs that will hold a detergent solution. Choose the right detergent for the job. Keep in mind that cleansers containing bleach can damage surrounding plants, so they may need to be covered while the washing takes place.

Avoid the use of ladders when operating a powerwasher. The push-back from the wand can cause falls. Instead, opt for an extension wand to address the upper reaches of a home.

Powerwashing a home is an effective way to remove stubborn grime and refresh the look of a home's exterior.

Tips to improve WiFi around the house

Speedy, reliable internet is something people have quickly grown accustomed to. That's no doubt why dropped WiFi signals can be so frustrating.

Various things can contribute to slow or interrupted Wi-Fi. As a result, there's no one-size-fits-all solution to address underperforming Wi-Fi. But that's good news, as it means there's an assortment of strategies that consumers can try to improve the Wi-Fi in their homes.

- Upgrade your router. Many people rent their routers from their internet service providers, but it may surprise some to learn that they can buy their own. Buying your own router can be beneficial in various ways, not the least of which is it can save money. Router rental fees vary, but they typically cost between \$10 and \$15 per month. Consumers will save money in the long

run by buying their own router rather than renting one from their ISP. When buying their own routers, consumers also can pick from a host of options, including routers with strong performance ratings that may contribute to better WiFi performance.

- Set up automatic firmware updates. It's easy to forget a router after it's been plugged in and internet service starts working. However, manufacturers routinely issue firmware updates to improve router performance. Turning on automatic updates may improve WiFi performance, and such updates also can provide a host of additional benefits, including added security measures.

- Relocate the router. PCMag.com notes that the location of the router can affect WiFi performance. If possible, locate the router in the center of the



Many strategies can improve Wi-Fi

home so it can easily reach all parts of the house. Locating wireless routers away from walls and other obstructions also may improve performance.

- Switch frequencies. Switching frequencies can help wireless consumers whose service might be adversely affected by congestion. Consumer Reports notes that wireless congestion can affect WiFi performance in apartment buildings and densely populated neighborhoods. In such instances, consumers can check their routers to see if they're running on the 2.4 GHz frequency band. If so, switching them to the 5 GHz band, which has more channels and is likely to be less congested, may improve WiFi performance.

Slow and/or interrupted WiFi signals can be very frustrating. Thankfully, various strategies can help consumers quickly remedy such issues.

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What causes curled shingles?

No homeowner wants to look at the exterior of his or her home and see roof damage. Such damage may lead homeowners to think they need a new roof, a potentially costly expense that can quickly throw household budgets into a state of disarray.

According to the HomeAdvisor, the average homeowner spends a little more than \$7,600 installing a new roof. Various factors, including the size of a home and the type of roof homeowners

prefer, will affect the cost of a roof replacement. In addition, homeowners who see roof damage can rest assured that not all roof problems will necessarily require a replacement roof to be installed.

Curled shingles are a problem many homeowners have encountered. This particular problem is not always indicative that a roof is on its way out. In fact, the home improvement resource This Old House notes that, as asphalt shingles

age, their corners often begin to curl downward or upward. Homeowners who notice this early enough can glue down the curled section of each shingle that's beginning to curl.

tion to causing damage such as curled shingles, a poorly ventilated attic allows moisture to build up, potentially contributing to mold growth. Mold presents a host of additional problems, including some that can adversely



Curled shingles are a problem many homeowners have encountered.

Some shingles may be curling because they're defective. Fortified Roofing, a New Jersey-based roofing company that specializes in the repairing and replacing of various roofing configurations, advises homeowners to contact a local roofing professional to diagnose the cause of the curling. Doing so quickly can prevent curled shingles from contributing to more widespread damage.

Moisture and poor ventilation may be contributing to curled shingles as well. Homeowners with attics in their home may see curled shingles on their roofs because moisture is building up in their poorly ventilated attics. In addition

to the health of a home's inhabitants.

Improper roof installation also may be the culprit behind curled shingles. When a roof is not installed correctly, shingles may not be aligned or nailed down in the right way. This might be what's causing shingles to curl on recently installed roofs.

Curled shingles are unsightly and can pose a significant threat to a home if not addressed promptly. Homeowners can protect themselves and their roofs by working with skilled roofing professionals, who can diagnose issues like curled shingles and offer the right solutions.

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Low-maintenance lawn alternatives

A traditional lawn may not be right for every property nor desired by every homeowner. There is no denying that lawns take time and effort to establish and daily or weekly maintenance to thrive. Homeowners who find that a traditional lawn is not practical can explore some low-maintenance alternatives.

Wildflower meadow

Homeowners with wide swaths of property may discover meadows are cost- and time-efficient. Stores sell special wildflower meadow mixes of seeds or homeowners can use wildflower plug plants throughout areas where grasses are left to grow longer. This natural area can be a home to wildlife and an idyllic backdrop to a home. Most meadows only require a spring or summer and autumn cut to thrive and look good.

Ornamental grasses

Partition areas of the property for ornamental grasses to grow. The gardening resource Elemental Green says ornamental grasses tend to be drought-resistant and low-maintenance. They won't need much fertilizer and are often resistant to pests as well. Ornamental

grasses grow in tufts or sprays and will not require mowing. However, they are not ideal for areas that get foot traffic.

Moss

Moss can thrive in shady areas and ones where the soil tends to stay a bit damp. Moss is velvety soft and green, so it can mimic the look of a traditional lawn but won't require mowing and other upkeep. Because it spreads quickly, moss can take over quite rapidly. You will need to protect areas where you do not want moss by creating barriers to stop spread.

Gravel

Stone and gravel areas can reduce maintenance in the landscape and require very little upkeep. When gravel is installed correctly, weeds may not grow readily. Gravel installation may include laying heavy-duty, semi-permeable landscape fabric, which is available in home improvement centers. Gravel is cheaper than pavers and can be just as beautiful.

Artificial turf

If the desired look is a lawn without all the upkeep, there are various artificial grass options on the market.

Homeowners who opt for artificial turf can save money and space devoted to lawn mowers and other lawn tools.

Grass may be ideal for some, but

there are alternatives for people who have troublesome landscapes or desire a low-maintenance product for their homes.



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Lawn watering, 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 your lawn

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.

Create watering schedule

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.



A well-fed and watered lawn will develop a better root system, which makes the lawn less vulnerable to stressors.

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Planting a tree for successful growth

More sunlight and warm temperatures frequently inspire homeowners to spend more time in the great outdoors during spring and summer.

Outdoor projects often top homeowners' to-do lists in spring and summer, with gardens and landscapes taking center stage. Planting more trees around the yard is one popular project that can improve property value and benefit the environment.

Why plant trees?

There are plenty of reasons to plant trees. Trees provide a natural form of shade, reducing air temperature by blocking the sun's rays. This can reduce reliance on air conditioning systems and make it more comfortable to spend time outdoors during the summer.

North Carolina State University College of Agriculture & Life Sciences says trees absorb and block noise and reduce glare. They also can trap dust, pollen and smoke. Trees also absorb carbon dioxide and potentially harmful gasses from the air. One large tree can supply a day's worth of oxygen for as many as four people, while also storing 13 pounds of carbon per year.

Getting started

Visit a garden center or nursery and select a tree that will be hardy in your planting zone. Choosing native trees can increase the likelihood that the new tree will adapt to its surroundings. Also, inspect trees to determine if they're healthy before taking them home. Look for evidence of root

girdling, which occurs when the roots circle around the perimeter of the container and surround the trunk. Trees should not have any dead or dormant

branches.

The DIY Network suggests locating the tree where it can thrive. This means

selecting a spot that can make it easier for the tree to grow tall and wide. Avoid planting near the house, where roots can crack concrete or asphalt, and always plant away from underground pipes.

Planting the tree

Now it is time to amend the soil. It's not enough to enrich only the soil in the hole where the tree will be placed. Move out into a circular area beyond where the roots will start so that roots can expand and properly anchor the tree. The next method of success is to ensure that the tree has a large enough hole to contain the existing root ball and allow for roots to grow and expand. Better Homes and Gardens experts say to prepare a hole that is two to three times as wide as the root ball of the tree. Treat the root ball gently. If the roots are wrapped in burlap, remove the burlap or push it to the bottom of the hole.

Backfill the hole with soil and check that the tree is straight. Stake the tree to help it stay upright and straight until the roots anchor it more effectively. A layer of mulch around the base of the tree can prevent weeds and reduce water loss. Water daily for several weeks until the roots have fanned out.

It's best to leave trees be for the first growing season, only removing broken or diseased limbs. Resist pruning and shaping until the tree has survived its first growing season.



Learn the right way to plant a tree to improve the landscape and the environment.



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Preparing 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 com-

pacted 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.



Gardeners can consider a number of tips as they try to restore their gardens and get them ready for spring planting.

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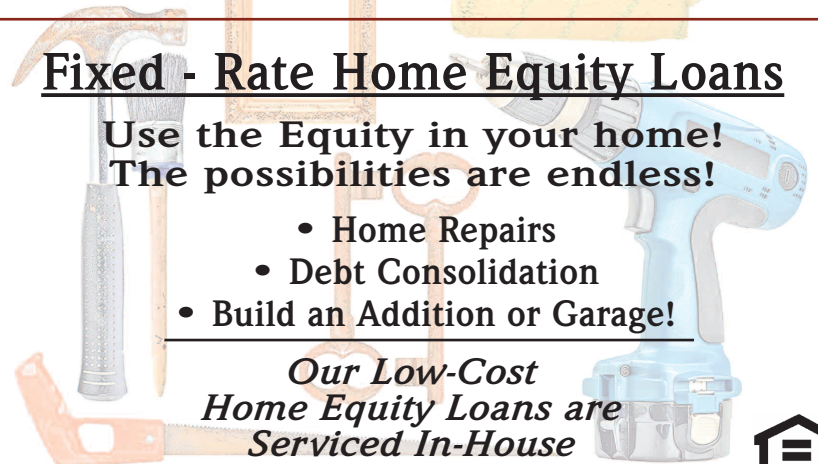
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Sod vs. seed: Which is best option?

A pristine lawn can be the finishing touch to a landscape and add significant value to a home. According to a joint study by the University of Alabama and the University of Texas at Arlington, homes with high curb appeal sell for an average of 7 percent more than similar houses without inviting exteriors.

When it comes to establishing a lawn, homeowners have two key options: starting from seed or installing sod. Each comes with its share of advantages and disadvantages. Which option makes the most sense for a given lawn will boil down to various fac-

tors, including homeowners' budgets.

Lawn from seed

Seed is the first thing homeowners may think of when planning a lawn. Seed is an inexpensive, easily installed option. Plus, garden centers sell a variety of seeds specific to particular regions and climates. The home improvement resource Fixr says seed will cost an average of 24 cents per square foot installed compared to \$1.29 for sod. That affordability compels many homeowners to turn to seed. However, seed can take up to two years to produce a lush lawn and it requires high maintenance in the initial months



When it comes to establishing a lawn, homeowners have two key options: starting from seed or installing sod.

to establish the grass.

tion as seed.

Seed also requires greater soil preparation, including tilling to loosen soil and keeping the lawn well watered until the grass is hardy. Weeds also may mix in with seed more readily, meaning weed prevention becomes an additional task.

Sod: An instant lawn

One of the advantages to sod is that it can produce an instant lawn. When time is of the essence, sod will produce a complete lawn nearly as soon as the sod is laid. Sod can be used to mitigate soil erosion, as it works faster than seed, which needs to establish a root system to keep soil in check. Also, sod does not require as much soil prepara-

The potential disadvantages to sod are its cost and the time it takes to install it, particularly on a large property. In addition, sod will require careful maintenance for at least the first two weeks until the sod takes stronger roots. It can be an expensive mistake if sod doesn't thrive and new pieces need to be installed. The Family Handyman says sod tends to be sun-loving and may not work in shadier areas of a property.

Sod and seed are the two main options for lush lawns. Each has its perks, and homeowners can speak with a local lawn specialist to determine which option is best for their lawn.



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