

FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT

Inexpensive upgrades that scream “luxury”

(BPT) - Hand-planed, reclaimed hardwood floors? Beautiful but pricey. Custom drapery? The cost can be blinding. When it comes to home decorating, it's easy to blow your budget on one or two upgrades – and maybe that would be OK if those improvements also amped up the drama in your decor. Too often, however, costly decorating ploys disappoint, wearing out or becoming dated before you've paid off the financing.

Fortunately, a handful of upgrades just scream “luxury” – while the price tags quietly snicker “this look didn't cost an arm and a leg.” They may not be as cheaply priced as fresh paint or some new throw pillows, but these surprisingly affordable improvements deliver high impact at a manageable cost.

• Adding skylights

Luxury, drama and energy efficiency are the trifecta of home decorating and improvement – and a few up-grades deliver all three qualities as well as skylights. Because they admit abundant natural light into a room, skylights have a powerful impact. Install Energy Star-qualified, no-leak, solar-powered fresh-air skylights like those from Velux America, and they can help reduce electric bills by providing natural light and passive ventilation. They draw no power and operate by a remote control that can be programmed for multiple functions. You can even add solar-powered blinds!

If you're only interested

in more natural light from above, or if a traditional skylight won't fit in your space, VELUX Sun Tunnel tubular skylights, which are less expensive to both purchase and install, are ideal for closets, hallways, interior baths and other special spaces. To download a free app that can help you visualize how skylights will look in your home, visit www.veluxusa.com and click on “Rooms.”

• Gas fireplaces

Few improvements create ambiance as effectively as a fireplace. While adding a wood-burning fireplace to an existing home may be difficult or impossible in many scenarios, modern gas fireplaces can go virtually anywhere – including interior walls. Advancements in the technology to make, operate and insulate gas fireplaces have made adding one a relatively easy process. Direct-vent fireplaces go on exterior walls and eliminate the need for a chimney. Vent-free models are also available for interior locations in a house.

The cost of installing a gas fireplace will vary, depending on many factors, including whether you have existing

natural gas service to your home and a line in or near the room where you'll be installing the fireplace.

• Wall murals

Humans have been painting scenes on the walls of our abodes since the days of cavemen. A wall mural can create virtually any effect you desire in any room of the house – drama in a living room, elegance in a dining room, relaxation in a master bath, cozy comfort in a kitchen or whimsy in a child's bedroom. While a professional, hand-painted wall mural may cost more than your entire redecorating budget, affordable modern wallpaper murals can allow you to completely alter the look of a room.

Requiring no paste or trimming, wallpaper murals can easily be installed by the average homeowner. Repositionable varieties can even be taken down and moved from room to room.

• Granite bathroom vanities

Granite remains the gold standard of luxury, beauty and function when you're talking about countertops. Installing granite in a kitchen can be costly, especially if you

have a lot of counter space to cover. With smaller vanities and less counter space, however, bathrooms cost much less to outfit in granite.

Professionally installed granite bathroom vanities can cost just a few thousand dollars. To get an idea of costs for your bathroom, use an online calculator like those found at remodelingexpense.com.

Solar powered skylights, with decorative and energy efficient solar powered shades, both operated by remote control, provide natural light and fresh air to your kitchen while saving wall space for other uses where windows aren't needed.



FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT

Hints to keep your power bills down in cooler weather



Proper planning can help you save money and keep your home and family safe in rough weather.

(NAPSI)—Now is the time to make sure your home is as energy efficient as possible before storms and cold temperatures hit and in the rare event of a power outage.

Here are some simple steps you can take to help keep monthly power bills down:

Short-term actions

Schedule an annual maintenance appointment for your furnace, boiler, or heat pump. They should be checked, cleaned, and repaired annually. This will improve ef-

ficiency, find small problems before they become big problems, and extend the life of your furnace

- Bleed radiators. Letting out air that gets trapped in your heating system will heat your home more effectively and reduce energy bills. If you hear pipes banging or gurgling, it's a sign your system needs to be bled.

- Service chimneys. Also, close your fireplace damper if you're not going to be using it and consider investing in

a glass screen that lets heat radiate but prevents warm air from getting vented out the chimney.

- Weatherstrip doors and windows. A removable door draft stopper can make a big difference.

- Make sure air vents aren't blocked. If furniture or curtains block your vents, the furnace works harder than it should to warm the house, driving fuel costs up. If you really like the position of furniture covering a vent, consider a low-cost vent extender.

- Keep the thermostat between 68 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit while you're awake, and lower when you're asleep or away.

- Add insulation to walls and pipes. This is a very inexpensive way to reduce your energy bill. Focus on your attic because heat rises, and this will keep heat in your living spaces. Also pay attention to electrical outlets, anywhere utilities enter the house, pipes (to prevent freezing and bursting), and appliances such as water heaters.

- Adjust ceiling fans. Run fans clockwise in winter to push rising warm air down,

potentially enabling you to lower the thermostat. In the summer, run fans counterclockwise to create windchill.

- Unplug unused electronics. Also, consider switching to LED light bulbs, which are more energy efficient. Putting lights on a timer is both easy and cost-efficient. Put rugs on hardwood floors. This provides a layer of insulation and can warm up a room—both literally and figuratively.

- Open the curtains during the day and close them at night. Letting the sun in—even the weaker sunlight of winter—can help naturally warm a room, while drawing shades and drapes at night helps keep heat in and prevents drafts.

Thinking long-term

- Get a professional energy audit. The auditor will ask about your bills and check your home to make sure it's properly sealed.

If you're income eligible, this audit could be free—along with additional discounted or no-cost services such as insulation and air sealing upgrades, new appliances and heating or cooling systems and more. Find out more at <https://www.nationalgridus.com/NY-Home/Bill-Help/Energy-Savings-Programs>.

- Consider zoned heating. Target heating and cooling to where it's needed.

- Switch to a smart thermostat. A programmable thermostat lets you fine tune when your furnace runs, letting you pre-set it at a lower temperature while you sleep or are away and have it turn up just before you come home.

Just in case

Big storms happen, as do power outages.

National Grid is working to reduce power outages, which involves everything from the simple (trimming trees around lines) to the complex (installing smart meters and technology that automatically locates and isolates outages and restores service as quickly as possible). To make sure you and your family are prepared if the power does go out, do the following:

- Keep a gallon of water per person per day in an easily accessible, air-tight container.

- Have three days of non-perishable food on hand (including for your pets)

- Put together a first aid kit

- Make sure batteries work in flashlights, lanterns, radios etc.

- Keep matches, candles, flashlights, etc., where you can find them easily

- Fully charge phones

- Have extra medication at the ready

- Fill your bathtub with water (for toilet flushing)

- Turn refrigerator and freezer to coldest settings, keep doors closed as much as possible

- Gas up the car

If you have a generator, make sure it's at least 20 feet away from the outside wall of your home. Never operate it in an enclosed space, employ GFCI protection, and use the proper cord.

To learn more about the services and advice National Grid offers customers related to safety, reliability, affordability, and storm and power outage preparation, visit www.nationalgridus.com/NY-Home/Storms/Storm-Safety#:~:text=Turn%20off%20and%20unplug%20unnecessary,to%20also%20avoid%20power%20lines.

FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT

Evergreen Fall Home Show October 20-22

The 19th annual Washington State Evergreen Fall Home Show will be held October 20-22 at the Evergreen State Fairgrounds (14405 179th Ave. SE).

This is the biggest Fall Home Show event in Northern Washington!

With over 200 booths, the Washington State Evergreen Fall Home Show has experts to provide all of the inspiration and know-how you need for any home-related project, from minor repairs to a complete remodel.

The Washington State Evergreen Fall Home Show features hundreds of specialized local businesses ready to help you customize, update, or even design, the home you have always



wanted.

Take advantage of the unmatched savings that only an annual event like the Washington State Evergreen Fall Home Show can offer! This is the one event you truly can't afford to miss!

Show hours are Friday, Oct. 20 from Noon to 6 p.m., Sat., Oct. 21 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday, Oct. 22 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Admission is cash only (ATM on site). Tickets are good for all three days! Adults \$8, Seniors (62+) \$6, youth 16 and under are admitted free. There is also free parking at the show.

For more information and as a special offer to show attendees, print out a HALF OFF coupon at www.EvergreenFallHomeShow.com

The Evergreen Fall Home Show is produced by Westlake Promotions.

Four ways to renovate your home this autumn

(BPT) - Fall is the perfect time to take on some home renovations, before the holidays hit and winter sets in. With just a few changes, you can make your home into a more functional space and create a warm, inviting atmosphere.

Let these four home renovation ideas inspire you.

1. Make over the mudroom

If you have a mudroom, upgrade it to make it more functional and easier to maintain. For example, you can incorporate storage solutions to store and organize your boots, add a bench to sit on while you take your shoes off and install hooks to hang your coats.

2. Upgrade your flooring

A great option that brings fantastic, real-wood looks coupled with kid-and-pet-proof performance is LL Flooring's new ReNature by CoreLuxe. This floor is waterproof and resistant to dents, scratches, scuffs, and stains - plus it's made from 25% recycled materials, another perk for homeowners



who prioritize aesthetics, functionality and responsible manufacturing. What's more, with renovation season upon us, DIY'ers will love this easy-to-install flooring.

The company also offers myriad stylish, quality options in solid hardwood and Duravana hybrid resilient flooring, so you can choose the perfect flooring for your fall home renovation project.

3. Give your fireplace a facelift

As the weather cools down, it's time to light your fireplace. But before you do, give your fireplace a makeover so you can transform your living room into a relaxing and welcoming space for your friends and family.

Some easy ways to give your fireplace a facelift include updating or replacing the mantel or replacing the current surround with new stone or tile. If you're feeling ambitious, add a built-in seating area nearby. This seating area

makes it easier to enjoy the warmth and glow of the fireplace and acts as a focal point for fall gatherings.

4. Extend your entertaining space outdoors

Don't limit your entertaining to the indoors. With a few additions, you can easily extend your living or dining room into your outdoor space.

Add a firepit or fire table to your deck or patio so you can have cozy conversations around the fire underneath the stars. Also, consider investing in comfortable outdoor furniture so you can dine outdoors or enjoy drinks surrounded by the fall foliage. These additions make it easy to maximize your time outdoors.

This fall, give your home a little time, love and care. Using these four tips, you'll be well on your way to turning your home into a space you'll love to spend time in this season and beyond.

FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT

Check out these five exciting new trends in home design



Photo credit: Signature Hardware and James Martin Vanities at Ferguson Bath, Kitchen & Lighting Gallery / Linear Vanity and Lentz Faucet

(BPT) - If you love home renovation and design, you'll be excited to discover up-and-coming trends that are transforming the look and functionality of home spaces. Here are design trends to explore this year.

1. Say hello to wet rooms

Creating a cohesive space for your shower and bath is a great solution to enhance design and functionality, especially in smaller bathrooms. Durable surfacing that can be utilized for flooring and shower walls – as well as built-in seating and storage to optimize the space – can

leave your bathroom feeling luxurious. Make sure your contractor is experienced in creating a well-designed wet room, including proper drainage, lighting and non-slip flooring to ensure safety.

2. Say goodbye to all-white kitchens

Opting for custom cabinetry colors, unique backsplash designs and dramatic countertops are subtle ways to express your personal style.

For more drama and style in your kitchen surfaces, Cosentino's new Silestone Le Chic collection features contemporary designs in cream and rich-colored shades that

are a modern interpretation of Parisian and Victorian inspired styles. Le Chic's six distinctive colors with expressive veins and metallic accents portray a sense of timeless allure, with a hint of nostalgia.

3. Embrace sustainability

Consumer demand is spurring many companies to create more sustainable processes and materials, while ensuring that they don't sacrifice design or durability.

For example, Cosentino Group has created Silestone, with HybriQ® Technology, a high-performance blend of premium minerals, quartz and recycled materials. With HybriQ+, Silestone products have an enhanced product composition and manufacturing method that uses 99% recycled water, 100% renewable electric energy, zero water discharge and at least 20% recycled raw materials. This new technology represents the first sustainable surfacing of its kind.

4. Rediscover industrials

Renewed interest in urban materials like unfinished concrete is largely driven by the desire for clean lines and calm spaces. However, today's industrials are softened

by combining concrete with natural elements like wood, stone and plants.

5. Explore mixed metals

Using metallic accents in a variety of materials and colors provides visual interest and elevates any room. Thoughtfully choose mixed

metals for hardware, lighting fixtures, mirrors or picture frames. Even metallic accessories like vases, trays or artwork can enhance your space.

Don't match metals, but stick with the same family. For the most pleasing effect, choose only from the cool

family (like brushed nickel or chrome) or the warm family (bronze, polished nickel, brass) - plus black, which can go with either family.

Learn more about innovative collections for the home at Cosentino.com.

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Six key steps for planning your kitchen remodel

(BPT) - Designing your dream kitchen is an exciting endeavor, but it requires careful planning and consideration. Follow these six essential steps to ensure you create a kitchen that perfectly fits your lifestyle and needs.

- **Assess your lifestyle:** Consider how you use your kitchen. Are you an avid cook? Is it a family gathering space? Do you often host large groups? Understanding your lifestyle will help guide your design choices.

- **Evaluate your existing kitchen:** Take a close look at your current kitchen. Identify what you love and what needs improvement. Think about storage, prep surfaces, and any changes you want to make.

- **Set your budget:** Determine a realistic budget for your project. Prioritize your needs over wants, but leave room for upgrades and extra touches that catch your eye.

- **Select the right professional:** Trust the expertise of a professional who communicates well and understands your vision. A skilled designer can bring your ideas to life and guide you through the process.

- **Plan smartly:** Measure your kitchen's size and consider infrastructure concerns like electrical and plumbing. Focus on workflow and customize storage solutions to fit your family's daily living.

- **Avoid common mistakes:** Stay away from overloading with cabinets, ensure sufficient counter space, and invest in quality materials for critical areas like cabinets and countertops.

Remember to be patient throughout the process and manage your expectations. Renovating can be stressful,

but the end result will be worth it. Take your time and make thoughtful decisions, even if it means leaving some décor choices for later.

Finishing touches for your dream kitchen

To truly transform your kitchen, pay attention to these key finishing touches:

- **Lighting:** Mix different types of lighting for various purposes. Use ambient lighting for mood, task lighting for meal preparation, and decorative lighting for the island and dining table.

- **Barstools:** Select comfortable and stylish barstools, ensuring enough space between them for easy movement.

- **Hardware:** Choose cabinet and drawer knobs and pulls that match your kitchen's style and size.

- **Sinks/faucets:** Consider modern features like pull-down spray nozzles, touchless or tap technology, and semi-professional functionality for added convenience.

- **Essentials:** Install under-cabinet lighting for countertop work areas, backsplashes for the sink and range, and sufficient electrical outlets, including USB ports for family tech.

By following these steps and incorporating these finishing touches, you'll create a kitchen that not only looks stunning but also functions perfectly for your lifestyle. Remember to trust the professionals, plan meticulously, and invest in quality materials like Cambria to achieve the kitchen of your dreams. As the finest countertop makers in the world™ Cambria has all the design tools, tips and tricks you need to envision your new kitchen all available at Cambriausa.com. Download your kitchen planner tool today.



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Use cypress for outdoor spaces

(NewsUSA) - If you enjoy relaxing and entertaining on your porch or patio, you are not alone.

Today’s homeowners love being outdoors, and design professionals are being tasked with creating extravagant outdoor living areas with all the creature comforts that are typically found indoors – a task they’re accomplishing with natural building materials such as cypress.

Mark Tuck of the Southern Cypress Manufacturers Association, www.CypressInfo.org, says, “Cypress is a beautiful wood that looks exotic. More importantly, it is a durable wood that – when properly installed and maintained – provides long-lasting performance. It’s perfect for outdoor use!”

Unlike other species that need to be pressure-treated with chemicals for outdoor

use, cypress comes by its durability naturally. When growing, cypress trees produce cypressene in their heartwood. This preservative oil protects the wood from the elements, and it repels insects such as termites and carpenter bees that often feed on and nest in other species.

“Thanks to its natural characteristics,” Tuck adds, “cypress has typically been used as siding or as an outdoor ceiling product. But more recently, design professionals are using it for a variety of other outdoor applications.”

Cypress for the Outdoor Floor

“Outdoor rooms, peaceful spaces, and low-maintenance materials are the buzzwords I hear most from my clients,” says Nancy Moore of The Porch Company in Nashville, Tennessee.

“I like to use cypress in spaces that are exposed to the

elements. From my experience, it holds up well to blowing rain that may come in. I love its character, authenticity, longevity, and the fact that it is a renewable resource.”

Moore says that her clients prefer porch designs that flow from the inside to the outside, which includes the flooring.

“We typically use tongue-and-groove cypress for our porch floors because it makes the space feel like another room of the house – a room that just happens to have walls that breathe.”

The New Heart of the Home

The heart of the home has long been the kitchen, right? So as today’s homeowners spend more time outside, creating a secondary kitchen outdoors is a top priority.

When crafting cabinetry for outdoor kitchens, Rod Richardson of Associated Construction Group, Gonza-

les, Louisiana, relies on cypress, and for good reasons. “It offers value, appearance, and performance that lasts,” Richardson says. “In my 20 years of building outdoor kitchens with cypress, I haven’t had a callback.

“There are many building materials available, but one has stood the test of time and that’s wood. It offers an appearance, feel, and even smell that you can’t re-create with man-made products. And when I show customers different cabinet materials – even different woods – they usually lean towards cypress.”



Incorporate cypress into your lavish outdoor space. See how at www.CypressInfo.org.

Add pops of color to your kitchen



(StatePoint) If your kitchen is bland or boring, it’s time for an update. Consider those home projects that add pops of color and beauty.

Here are three beautiful ways to add new hues to any kitchen.

Natural Color

For a verdant, fragrant and useful pop of color, grow an herb garden right in your kitchen.

Evaluate your kitchen for direct sunlight. Many people choose to create a hanging wall garden. Others prefer a tiered counter for the floor or pots for the countertop.

Functional Focal Point

Consider creating a focal point in your kitchen in an eye-catching color. One great way to do this is by focusing on the heart of every kitchen – the range. Experts point out that black finishes in the kitchen have reemerged as a trending design element. If you choose black, emphasize this selection with a gloss finish, which can add a layer of elegance, drama and sophistication to the kitchen.

Standard colors are offered everywhere, but for something more unexpected, seek out brands that also offer classic choices such as ILVE. Through its Custom Color Program, you can select colors for your range or hood.

Another brand offering brilliant color options such as gloss red and light blue is Verona, which offers appliances that use exclusive cooking technology to minimize

fuel and energy consumption.

Brilliant Backsplash

Backsplashes are stylishly versatile and nearly any kitchen benefits aesthetically from the addition of one.

Choices of materials include mosaic glass tiles, marble and metal giving you a lot of flexibility in color and texture.