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Think of lighting as art for your home

Lighting is possibly the most powerful tool you have when it comes to interior design. It does not make sense to invest in beautiful furniture, rugs, paintings and accessories if they are in the dark. The perfect light fixture not only illuminates a space - it is also a beautiful, decorative design element.

"When looking for a light fixture, think of yourself as a curator looking for a perfect piece of art," says interior designer Laurie Smith, known for her role as a featured designer on the hit television show Trading Spaces (2000-2008). Smith says, "Like art, a fabulous fixture can make a strong design statement, as well as provide illumination for your space."

Often consumers do not realize the difference updated lighting can make in their homes. Smith suggests finding one special piece and building a room around it. "In design school, we learned that lighting is the most exciting and mysterious medium in design. Lighting is sculptural; it's textural, it's exciting," she says.

"There are so many varying styles and designs in lighting today that the possibilities are endless. Different materials and shapes are just part of what goes into determining that perfect fixture," says Smith. "For instance, do you want the shape of your piece to contrast with your room's schematic or coordinate with it? Taking a traditional fixture and placing it into a modern setting creates interest through contrast, while taking a sleek modern fixture and putting it into a traditional setting infuses new vitality and



a sophisticated accent."

With so many choices on the market, the task of selecting a light fixture can be difficult and overwhelming for many homeowners. It's just a matter of developing a plan or one idea. To help consumers get started, Smith talks about the importance of lighting to interior design in a new video series. Each minute-long video, created by the American Lighting Association, focuses on a different aspect of lighting and ways to incorporate it into every homeowner's design plan.

Videos in the series include:

- * Choosing the Right Lighting Fixture
- * Find an Object of Inspiration
- * The Impact of a Single Lamp
- * Lighting Fixtures as Art

The videos can be viewed on the ALA website at www.AmericanLightingAssoc.com.

Whether looking for one fixture or a complete lighting design plan, a great place to start is at an ALA-member lighting retail showroom. There you will find professionally trained staff to help you select the perfect light for your space. To find a local ALA showroom, call 800-605-4448 or go to www.AmericanLightingAssoc.com. (ARA)

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Is your new home safe and secure?

Summer brings a full court press for moving season - with June being the busiest month for Americans to relocate.

While aesthetics often take precedence when settling into a "new-to-you" home, it's important for homeowners and renters alike to complete a safety check of their abode to reduce the risk of unintentional injuries. One of the greatest hazards in a home that usually is the furthest from the mind is fire. But, it's one of the easiest to address.

"As we approach Home Safety Month in June, there is an urgent need to educate families about fire safety," says Kate Carr, president and CEO of Safe Kids Worldwide. "Fire and burns remain a leading cause of unintentional injury and death for children, particularly those under the age of 5. Replacing older smoke alarms is a simple way for parents to help protect their families."

More than two-thirds of residential fire deaths occur in homes without smoke alarms or with non-working alarms according to the National Fire Protection Association. One in four families with homes built prior to 2002 is at risk due to aging (10 or more years old) smoke alarms, according to a recent survey from Kidde. Fire experts recommend replacing alarms every 10 years as



older smoke alarms may not operate efficiently and often cause nuisance alarms. By the time a smoke alarm is 10 years old, it has a 30 percent chance of not alarming due to age-related factors such as accumulated dust, insects and airborne contaminants, according to a Kentucky Injury Prevention and Research Center study. If you don't know how old your smoke alarms are, or if you know they were installed more than 10 years ago, it's replacement time.

Additionally, the survey found that most American families are under-protected when it comes to fire safety. Sixty-seven percent of respondents have four or fewer smoke alarms in their homes, but the average U.S. single-family home should have at least five alarms.

When replacing your home's alarms every 10 years, look for smoke alarms with a 10-year sealed lithium battery that will keep your alarms powered for a decade. The alarm will never need its battery replaced during its useful life. Or, select a combination smoke and carbon monoxide alarm, which offers a voice warning and uses the latest technology

to help minimize nuisance alarms that often occur when cooking.

As you prioritize your move-in to-do list, remember that an ounce of prevention today could save a life tomorrow. (ARA)

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How to make sure your indoor air is healthy

Air pollution is a very serious concern indoors.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency lists poor indoor air quality as one of the top five environmental threats. It also reports indoor air is three to five times more contaminated than outdoor air, on average.

Some tips to keep the air you breathe inside as clean as possible include:

- Install hardwood floors versus carpeting. Carpeting traps particles, and with every step you take across it, those particles are released back into the air.
- Have carpets professionally cleaned with a truck-mounted system.
- Use natural- or botanical-based cleaners instead of chemicals.
- Regularly change your furnace filter - most experts recommend doing this every two months. This will help remove particles



circulating through the air.

- Have your heating and cooling system thoroughly cleaned. This is because dust and other air pollutants collect in the vents, and then are picked up by the air stream and blown back into the house.

The National Air Duct Cleaners Association recommends homeowners take off

the cover of an air vent and look down the vent with a mirror and flashlight or a digital camera. If the ducts are covered with dust or debris, it's time for a heating and cooling system cleaning.

To find a qualified heating and cooling system cleaner in your area, visit NADCA.com. (ARA)

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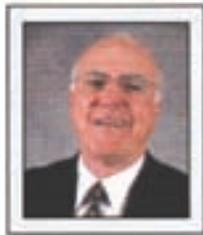
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The heat is on outside, keep cool inside

As summer heats up, air conditioning bills can rapidly rise. As homeowners feel the heat, many are looking for ways to save and stay cool. One way to help lower utility bills in the summer and year-round is to replace drafty or leaky old windows with new, energy-efficient products. For example, the Pella 350 Series vinyl windows provide durable, triple-pane insulating glass window options. These highly energy-efficient windows help keep your home cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter. Vince Iturbe from Salt Lake City replaced a westward-facing kitchen window and immediately noticed a difference in the temperature inside his home.

The product wasn't the only thing Iturbe was delighted in. Because of the Pella Promise, he found the right product for his home and budget; had a no-mess, no-guess installation day experience; and his investment is backed

by the total care guarantee - Pella's exclusive warranties on the product and installation.

Cool tips

Once energy-efficient windows are properly installed in your home, try these inexpensive, easy ways to help keep your house cool.

- Provide shade for east and west windows.
- When possible, delay heat-generating activities like baking or dishwashing until the evening on hot days.
- Use ceiling fans to circulate air to help make the house more comfortable without over-using the air conditioning.
- Seal air conditioning ducts and insulate ducts that run through unheated basements, crawl spaces and attics.
- Install white window shades or mini-blinds. Mini-blinds can reduce solar heat gain by 40 to 50 percent. (ARA)





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Translating a remodeling dream into reality

You've made the decision to remodel your home. The budget range and project scope have been set. You've even preemptively told your sister-in-law she'll need to host Christmas (alright, that was before you knew you were going to remodel). Now what?

Following these guidelines and tips will simplify the process of turning your vision (or lack of vision) into a ravishing remodel.

First, breathe. This is going to be fun.

■ Setting the style scene

Many homeowners know exactly where their preferences fall on the style spectrum. Others have no idea. As a first step, it's wise to identify and determine how to articulate your personal style before moving forward with any steps of the remodel. There are even websites that allow you to take a style quiz in order to determine where your style falls.

Flipping through magazines, home design blogs and even becoming aware of how you feel in other people's homes should help you determine your style. During this process, consider your long-term plans for the space and make sure the style will grow with you as your tastes develop and change.

Developing a mood board, even if you think you know what you want for a space, can help you visualize your design style. A mood board will ensure that others (professionals or family members) see eye-to-eye with you on your vision. Gather items on your

mood board such as colors, patterns and images that make you feel good. You (and a designer) can make sense and draw meaning from it later.

There are some great resources online for developing these boards. Pinterest, a tool that allows users to "pin" their favorite items, is growing in popularity and KraftMaid Cabinetry has a tool on its website that allows visitors to collect their inspirations in one place.

■ Dreams turned into design

Now that you're in tune with your style, it's time to get moving. The remodeling process is overwhelming. Some brave souls attempt to tackle it on their own, and it can end up being a full time job - a time commitment most homeowners simply can't afford. Designers are a great resource and should be engaged early on in the process.

"One of the biggest advantages working with a designer on a home project is they really understand functionality, while accomplishing your desired style," says Sarah Reep, director of designer relations and education at KraftMaid Cabinetry. "By telling a designer more details about your lifestyle and gripes about your current layout, they will turn out a well-designed space that will fit your needs."

Working with professionals doesn't have to break the bank and can actually save you time, money and your sanity. Make sure the professionals you engage are fully certified



and qualified for the task. For example, NKBA members are designers that specialize in kitchens and bathrooms. Homeowners can locate these individuals by visiting www.nkba.org and searching for an NKBA professional in their area.

At the end of the day, you'll be thankful for the time spent during the dreaming and designing process. Transforming a space into one that you truly enjoy will make loving your home even easier. (ARA)

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Look for installers certified through a program sponsored by the Vinyl Siding Institute (VSI). A VSI Certified Installer knows how to:

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When Margaret Seibert needed to have her 30-year-old siding replaced after a particularly heavy Minnesota storm, she looked to a firm that used only VSI Certified Installers to ensure a quality job.

"They did a really good job, and I'm very satisfied with how it looks," Seibert says. "The main thing is not nailing the siding too tightly, but letting it move," says Matt Ocel, owner of Ocel Buildings in Farmington, Minn., which completed Seibert's re-siding job. "Especially

with a climate where you go from 100-degree days to 40-below, you have to leave room for vinyl siding to expand and contract."

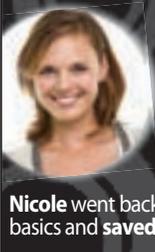
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Practical 2-for-1 solutions for gardeners

What gardener doesn't find tasks like weeding and watering tiresome? To tackle recurring chores like these and more with greater ease and efficiency, consider some practical tools that offer two-in-one solutions.

■ **Watering well:** For a new twist on watering, try the new Dramm ColorStorm Spinning Sprinkler. It takes the usual hose-attached sprinkler experience in a different direction. The spinning head is designed to cast arcs of water up to 38 feet in diameter, while atomizing water into fine droplets for more efficient water usage and more thorough soil penetration. It's geared for use on properties with practically any water pressure, from low to high, making it an especially welcome solution for those on the no-oomph end of the pressure spectrum.

■ **Weeding and mulching:** To gardeners, weeding is the very definition of "relentless." With new Preen Mulch Plus you can apply mulch and prevent weeds for six months in one easy step. Preen Mulch Plus is a premium shredded wood mulch with two highly effective weed preventers already mixed in. It stops weeds, as seeds, before they start growing. It comes in three non-fade colors that add a finished look to any garden or landscape:



midnight black, russet red and chestnut brown. As an added benefit, Preen Mulch Plus provides full weed protection when spread only 2 inches deep, instead of the usual 3-inch depth recommended for other bagged mulches, so each bag covers 30 percent more ground. The only mulch with six month weed protection, it's available at Lowe's and independent garden centers.

■ **Cutting, digging, rock removal, crack cleaning, planting and more:** A. M. Leonard's classic soil knife is a multi-solution tool that now comes in a deluxe model. The horticultural tool and supply company founded

in 1885 considers this their "must-have tool!" The Deluxe Soil Knife is made of rust-resistant Swedish stainless steel, which adds strength to its versatility, with each 6-inch blade crafted to withstand over 300 pounds of pressure. Definitely a two-for-one item, on one side the blade features a tapered slicing edge, on the other a deeply serrated cutting edge. New features include a more comfortable grip and inch markings on the blade shaft.

■ **Lugging, trugging and cooling:** In Spain, where they're made, Trug Tubs are used in orchards for harvesting fruit. There are imitators, but the originals are sturdy, black and indestructible. This versatile garden carrier is one tool that tackles two, three and more garden tasks with ease. The Trug Tub is a broad, round, rubbery tub with two handles. Grab it by the handles with one hand and the flexible sides bend in to form an elongated trug shape, great for carrying tools or firewood. In its round tub shape, it's ideal for mixing potting soil or lugging yard debris. Made of 100 percent recycled polyethylene, it's easy to clean. Freezing cold temperatures are no problem so, when garden chores are done and it's party time, use it as an ice chest for cooling backyard beverages. (ARA)

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Ingenious gadgets keep smart gardeners playing in the dirt

Gardeners who like things easy, have mobility issues or get muscle fatigue are always on the lookout for smart gardening gadgets designed to keep them playing in the dirt. This season some of the best gardening gadgets are ingenious and, often low-tech, doing the job they're designed to do brilliantly without added fuss or bother.

■ **Make heavy lifting easier** - Why risk back strain lifting garden pots, rocks and bales that are too heavy for one person working alone? With a nifty labor-saving sling device called Pot Lifter, two people working together can move big bulky items with ease. Just slip the sling around the object and lift. The product can handle objects up to 200 pounds and as big as six feet across.

■ **Stop weeds before they start grow-**



ing - Preen garden weed preventers cut down significantly on the onerous task of weeding by stopping new weed seeds from rooting and growing for up to three to four months per application. Now Preen offers a smart battery-powered spreader-applicator cap that makes it even easier to apply Preen pre-emergent granules atop garden soil or mulch. Gardeners who have tried the new applicator found it comfortable to use, providing a steady, even application rate. Quickly cover large areas and

easily direct the granule flow into hard to reach places such as under shrubs and between plants. Weeds that don't root, don't grow. No weeds, no weeding.

■ **Spare knees while kneeling** - Jolly Kneeler is a molded polyurethane knee-rest that is orthopedically designed to support gardeners comfortably while they're on their knees planting, plucking or playing in the dirt. The simple one-piece kneeler has a handle for carrying ease. Its bright red color makes it hard to lose in green garden beds or grass.

■ **Water plants from the porch** - Have a cool drink on the porch, then repurpose a soda, tea or water bottle into a remarkably low-tech garden container watering device. AquaCones from Achla Designs are super easy watering spikes that attach to plastic bottles. Just flip over and sink the spike into the soil. The water in the upside down bottle slowly drains to the plant roots, rewarding gardeners with more free time on the porch.

■ **Try raking in circles** - Raking can be a pain, especially when moving heavy wet leaves or debris or mulch. The Ground Hog Circular Rake has a circular head with teeth. Its encompassing design minimizes raking labor by gathering and keeping raked materials together as it's being pulled or moved. Less spillage means fewer strokes and raking jobs are quickly done. (ARA)

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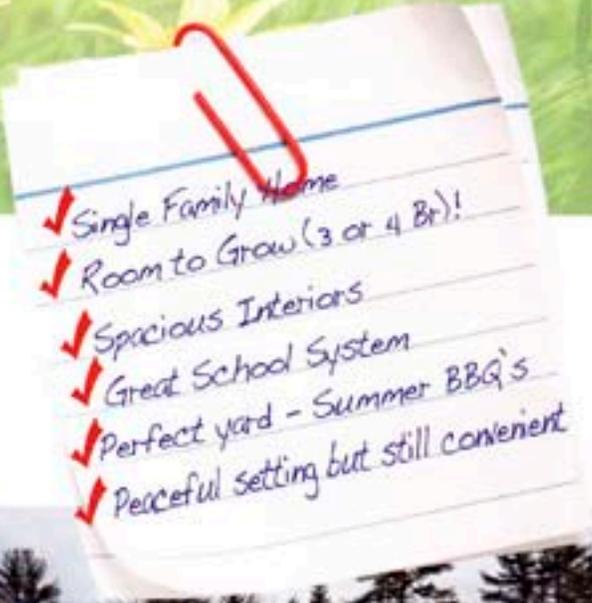
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