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living greener
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HOMIE front

Granite Quill's Quarterly Home & Garden Guide Fall 2015 • Free

Find new inspiration for your next home project

If you're looking to upgrade your home's exterior, include American hardwoods in the mix. New, environmentally friendly treatment methods now make hardwood an excellent and great looking material choice for outdoor living spaces.

"American hardwoods in outdoor applications used to be taboo," says Linda Jovanovich of the American Hardwood Information Center. "These days, restrictions and concerns are distant memories, and hardwoods are confidently being installed outdoors as siding, decking, fences - you name it - thanks to non-chemical heat treatments that improve the dimensional stability and durability of this wonderful product."

A recipe for success

Thermal modification is a non-toxic process that simply "cooks" wood in heat. During the process, oxygen is removed from the oven to prevent the wood from burning. The high heat - in excess of 400 F - produces a naturally durable wood that is permanently resistant to water, insects and decay. Bob Miller, director of sales and marketing intelligence at Frank Miller Lumber Company, says that because the treatment process drastically reduces modified wood's moisture content and limits its ability to absorb moisture, products are more dimensionally stable - making them less prone to cupping, warping, expansion, and contraction with changes in humidity.

At home in the outdoors



Successfully used in Europe since the 1980s, thermally modified wood has been slow to migrate to America. But, Scott Seyler, who handles export sales at Northland Forest Products, says the durability and dimensional stability of thermally modified hardwoods are major advantages that interest homeowners who are exploring outdoor home-improvement projects.

Finishing it off

Through the thermal modification process, a rich chocolate color results, highlighting the wood's natural beauty and providing a luxurious look. But like any other wood, over time, if not sealed, thermally modified hardwood will naturally weather to a shade of gray because of exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays.

"Most homeowners prefer the rich, dark

color of the modified wood, and choose not to apply a stain or to cover the grain pattern with paint," says Hal Mitchell, vice president of domestic sales at Atlanta Hardwood Corporation. "We do, however, recommend applying a UV-inhibitor sealant to all sides and ends of the wood, to preserve its color and prevent graying." He added that, "Since thermally modified hardwood is resistant to water, water-based finishes may not perform well. We've found that oil-based sealants and finishes work best.

Looking for ideas?

Consider adding timeless beauty to your home's exterior with thermally modified American hardwoods. To learn more visit the American Hardwood Information Center at www.HardwoodInfo.com for design ideas and inspiration. (BPT)



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5 steps to create an outdoor sanctuary at home

The wildly popular outdoor-living trend has inspired homeowners across the country to add value and comfort to their properties by revitalizing their backyards. In an increasingly hectic world, having a peaceful place at home where you can enjoy nature and fresh air has become a top priority. But when you look at your outdoor space, is it more boring than beautiful? By adding a few key elements you can transform any yard into a stunning retreat that is ideal for spending more time outdoors and disconnecting from stress.

Step 1: Add natural elements

The visual components that make up your outdoor space dramatically affect the emotion it conveys. To create a relaxing atmosphere, add low-maintenance touches that reflect Mother Nature. Try blending softer elements, such as containers of flowers, with hardscape elements, like landscape rocks. Because real rock can be expensive and difficult to move, opt for Fiberlite Landscape Rocks that are light, affordable and hand-painted for a realistic appearance.

Step 2: Increase comfort

To make your outdoor spaces comfortable, think about how you'll be using



it most often. For entertaining, you'll want to add a table, chairs and umbrella for dining al fresco. If you'll be relaxing solo most often, set up a plush chair and comfortable accents like blankets and pillows. If you have a garden or large yard, create meditative spaces with strategically placed chairs or benches for quiet contemplation.

Step 3: Eliminate the negative

Every yard has features that are less desirable. Things like utility boxes, air-conditioning units, HVAC compressors and hoses are necessary, but these items are eyesores that detract from the ambience of an outdoor space. Fortunately, it's easy to conceal unsightly yard features with vinyl outdoor fencing from Outdoor Essentials. This durable decorative fencing hides the negative while

adding a decorative accent that is visually appealing.

Step 4: Create solace with sound

An outdoor sanctuary should go beyond what you see to tantalize all the senses. Sound is a key consideration that can help the space feel like a true escape. That's why adding a water feature is an excellent investment. A burbling water fountain is a beautiful decorative piece that also provides a soothing sound. Wind chimes are another option for adding serene sound to outdoor areas.

Step 5: Create attractive focal points

Gardening is a popular pastime that provides respite from life's demands. Whether you plan to grow vivid blooming flowers or scrumptious vegetable plants, you can transform your garden into a gorgeous focal point in your yard with a raised bed.

One final thought: While these steps will transform your backyard into a peaceful sanctuary, make sure to incorporate personal touches to make the space feel like your own. Choose decor, color palettes and patterns that speak to you. That way when you step outside your door, you'll feel like you've entered a personalized oasis. (BPT)

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Can your walls stand up to everyday life?

Let's face it. No matter how careful you are, an active family can take its toll on the interior of a house - especially on the walls. Depending on the season or day of the week, your family may come home toting cross-country skis, throwing off wet raincoats or banging football gear against the wall.

The average buyer stays in a home for 13 years - long enough for kids, pets, and the rough-and-tumble of everyday life to scuff, scratch and dent even the best of walls. Everything from pool cues hitting walls to dragging luggage up a staircase can do damage without even trying.

Having the right drywall installed is your first line of defense. Whether you're building a new house, remodeling an existing one or constructing an addition, you have drywall options to choose from and they're not all the same. The key is picking the right drywall to start with and then matching it to the right location. To help your walls stand the test of time, TV host and interior designer Anitra Mecadon, the National Gypsum spokesperson for PURPLE high-performance drywall products, has the following advice about



what to keep in mind when you're choosing drywall. A minimal investment now in PURPLE drywall will add long-term benefits such as unparalleled resistance to moisture, mold, mildew, scratches, dents and the ability to reduce the noise heard between rooms.

Protect against mold and moisture

Your washer and dryer introduce water, moisture and heat into your laundry room, which means mold is a constant threat. Every

room in the house can benefit from using moisture - and mold-resistant drywall.

Guard against scrapes, scratches and scuffs

Even though your playroom probably gets a real workout, you can still keep it looking like it never hosted anything more rambunctious than a book club. Choose a drywall with a tougher face like Hi-Abuse XP to protect your walls from scrapes, scratches and scuffs.

Reduce noise between rooms

When your kids are running around using their outdoor voices indoors, sound control is a must. If you've got a growing family, choose a drywall like SoundBreak XP that specifically provides noise resistance in the rooms where you need peace and quiet.

Put tough walls in tough places

A garage is the workhorse of the house. It's home base for car maintenance, lawn care, sports gear and tool storage. Garage walls can really take a beating from car doors, lacrosse sticks, shovels and rakes. Install Hi-Impact XP drywall specifically engineered to be dent- and damage-resistant, so the walls can stand up to whatever life dishes out. (BPT)

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Carve out more living space with a one-room renovation

A growing family, overnight guests, work-at-home demands and lifestyle changes can make for cramped quarters in any home. If you're not ready to move to a bigger house or take on a full-scale addition, carve out more space from your home's current footprint. Renovating an attic, basement or other unused area can add more living space now, provide flexibility for the future and increase your home's value. Whether you're creating a kids' playroom, extra bedroom or a new home office, here are some tips for getting the most out of a one-room renovation.

Find extra space: the attic. Check out your attic's current configuration. If it's an A-shaped space, with the highest point at the top and sloping walls down the side, it may have enough ceiling height to accommodate a bonus room. The lower walls and odd-shaped corners might also provide space to build in some shelving for items such as books or toys.



Lighting considerations.

Natural light may be at a premium in the new space. With an attic, you may be able to install windows at either side of the house at the highest point, but a basement is even more limited. Consider supplementing natural light with recessed lighting that maximizes your available ceiling space. Task lighting can also help, while creating a cozy atmosphere.

Reliable heating and cooling. Ensuring year-round comfort can be challenging if the new space is not connected to a ducted heating system. A Trane Ductless Mini-Split Heat Pump is an easy, energy efficient solution for areas where installing ductwork may be impractical or too expensive. The compact indoor unit can be mounted on a wall or ceiling, and connects to an outdoor compressor. It comes with a convenient remote control, giving you precise heating and cooling, without the need for ductwork.

Entrances and exits. Whether you're going up or down with a renovation, it will require using the stairs. This is a good time to make repairs or modifications to the current stairway to ensure safe and easy access. Also be sure to check out your local building codes as to the number of windows and fire exits that are required and plan accordingly.

Create bonus storage with cabinetry. Any renovation also offers the opportunity to squeeze in extra storage, and installing cabinetry is an easy way to do that. Manufacturers offer multiple options for cabinets with built-in storage features, from drawers with built-in organization dividers to cabinets with pull-down shelves that let you pack a lot of items into a small space. These will keep your newly renovated room looking clean, neat and inviting. (BPT)

I don't mean to be unneighborly but your noisy garage door is hurting my ears.



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Four steps towards living a greener lifestyle

(BPT) - Living a greener lifestyle isn't just about conserving natural resources, it's also about saving money. Whether you're renovating your existing home, or building from the ground up, you can create a home that's more efficient, cost effective and "green."

1. Insulate against air

In terms of heating and cooling, a well insulated home conserves the most energy by creating an airtight seal, locking out any potential hot or cold air drafts. To properly insulate, replace old windows and doors with more energy efficient options, such as those made by Pella, including triple-pane glass, and add extra insulation to the walls, roof and basement.

2. Make energy-efficient choices

Inefficient appliances can cause a spike in your gas, water and electric usage. For a simple change, choose LED bulbs for all your light fixtures. To conserve even more energy, opt



in for high-efficiency upgrades for your larger appliances, like refrigerators, dishwashers and clothes dryers, and install water conserving bathroom fixtures to help cut down your home's overall water usage.

3. Maximize natural light

When you're able to rely on natural light for most of the day, the cost of your electric

bill decreases. If you're renovating, think about ways you can incorporate new window openings to increase the amount of natural light your home is currently receiving. If you're building, think about incorporating an open floor plan with lots of windows to maximize the flow of natural light from room to room.

4. Design it to last

Trends come in and out of style quickly. For the larger architectural features of your home, choose design elements that will stand the test of time - reducing the likelihood of another renovation. Leave the trendy design choices to smaller decor pieces that can easily (and inexpensively) be switched out when it's time for a change.

For more design inspiration, visit Pella Windows and Doors on Houzz or visit Pella.com to schedule an in-home consultation with a local Pella expert.



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Tips for creating curb appeal

Soon, all things pumpkin spice will be here, including the home visitors that bring them. In preparation of the door bell ringing, create a little spice of your own with some seasonal curb appeal. You don't have to limit yourself to pumpkins and hay bales - below are tips and projects for sprucing up your home's view from the curb this season.



Front door, first impressions

Your front door is one of the first things people notice about your home. Give your door a fresh face with a coat of paint in a bold fall color to draw the eye to this focal point of your home. Another project is to replace the door entirely. Consider options with decorative glass accents, and stunning sidelights (windows on either side of the door) to add more natural light while maintaining a sense of style and privacy. Plus, as temperatures start to drop, Energy Star -qualified entry doors, like those from Pella, will help maintain your home's energy efficiency. For entry door inspiration check out Pinterest, your resident showroom or your local home improvement store.

Accessorize with new hardware

Replace your front door hardware for a quick, easy facelift. Choose hardware finishes that compliment light fixtures, mailbox and house numbers for a polished, cohesive look. You'll be delightfully surprised what a difference new hardware can make in creating an updated look to your home.

Refresh exterior body and trim colors

For a dramatic change, repaint your home's exterior. It's bold and can make your home stand out from other homes on the block. Not up for the bold change? To make an impact with a smaller change, add new trim colors. When updating trim, choose color schemes that match your home's primary exterior color, or complement it with a fresh twist.

Create points of interest with plants

You don't have to stop enjoying beautiful plants and flowers simply because summer is over. Add pops of color by arranging pots filled with hearty fall flowers like mums, sedum or asters around your front door, or on a porch or deck. Incorporate planters or container gardens of varied sizes, shapes and colors to add visual interest.

Accent with lighting

As summer light fades into shorter, darker days, add exterior accent lighting to the front of your home. Illuminate a walking path with ground-insert solar lights. Or consider solar spotlights to bring out landscaping or to shine on your updated front door. Install matching light fixtures outside your front door, garage door or patio door to provide well-lit entrances that are stylish and inviting to neighbors and guests.

For more curb appeal inspiration, follow Pella on Pinterest and Houzz and visit Pella.com to connect with your local Pella representative for ideas on how to transform the look and comfort of your home inside and out. (BPT)

Heat your home without wasting energy this season

If you're interested in living a greener lifestyle, perhaps you're already trying to reduce your energy usage as much as possible. Maybe you ride your bike to work, unplug your electronics when they're not in use, use fans during warm weather and avoid wasting water. Saving energy can get more difficult, however, when the seasons change and colder weather sets in. Heat is a primary source of energy usage. In fact, research from Tulikivi, the world's largest manufacturer of heat-retaining fireplaces, shows that 52 percent of a home's annual energy consumption is allocated to heat. Now is the time to think about reducing your energy usage during the winter. Here are some ideas that will help you enjoy a warm, cozy home while saving both money and energy.

Heat more efficiently

A crackling fire makes for more than just a



pleasurable experience; it can also be an energy-efficient heating source. Fireplaces from Tulikivi help heat your home long after the fire goes out. Tulikivi fireplaces are built from soapstone, which has better thermal conductivity compared to other materials because of its dense structure and mineral composition. For homeowners, this means once you start a fire in your fireplace, the soapstone will store heat in its thermal mass, allowing a two-hour burn to radiate heat for up to 24 hours. This lets you enjoy the clean, comfortable, cost-saving warmth without using additional energy. You can learn more about Tulikivi, the recycled materials used in its manufacturing process, the clean combustion of its masonry heaters and its commitment to sustainability at Tulikivi.us.

Close the drafts

One of the best ways to improve your energy efficiency is to reduce your energy waste. Window cracks and door drafts allow warm air to escape, which means you're leaking both energy and money. Seal those areas by using caulk to shore up any drafty windows and put plastic wrap over the window surface to keep out the chill. For the door jambs, you can purchase a door stopper to plug the gap or you can use a towel at the base to block the opening. Try to close off the bottom of any exterior door, particularly the doors you seldom use.

Make sure your other heating options are running efficiently

When you're not using your fireplace, it's good to know your backup heating options are operating efficiently. Have your furnace inspected routinely and make sure you change the filter each month. You should also invest in a smart thermostat. This technology allows you to set the temperature of your home for different times of the day so you can lower it when you're sleeping or away. The calendar option means you can program your home's temperatures ensuring you never waste energy. Although it's still nice outside, colder temperatures are on their way. That doesn't mean you have to sacrifice your green lifestyle when your cheeks turn red. By using the tips above, you'll still enjoy the same warmth and comfort without the additional environmental impact. To learn more about Tulikivi, visit Tulikivi.us or find them on Facebook. (BPT)



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