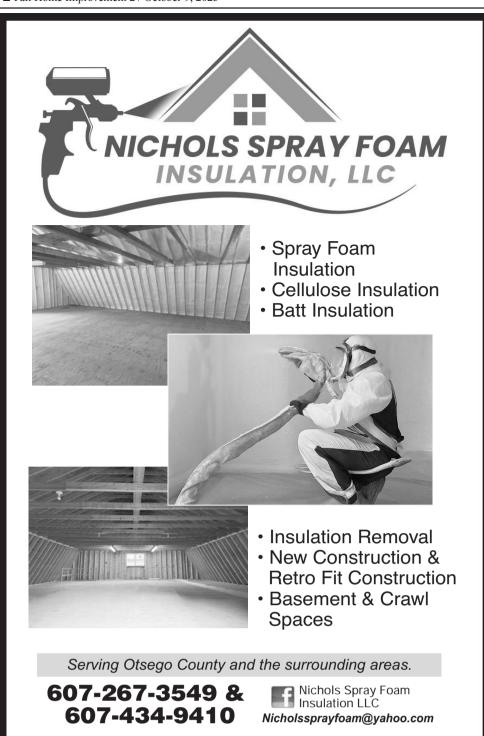


A Turnpike and Oneonta-Cooperstown Pennysavers, Gazette Publication • October 9, 2025

Issue Two

- What to do when a project stalls
- How to make your dishwasher work better
- Things to consider before warming up next to your first fire this winter





Things to consider before warming up next to your first fire this winter

A warm fire can make even the coldest winter day more enjoyable. Fireplaces may not get much use in spring or summer, but come late fall and throughout the winter, the fireplace can be a great place for families to gather.

Before fireplace season hits full swing, homeowners might want to brush up on a few fireplace facts so they can safely enjoy nights spent sitting by the crackling flames.

The Chimney Safety Institute of America advises homeowners with fireplaces to hire a CSIA-certified chimney sweep to clean their fireplaces. After a lengthly period of non-use, various issues could be affecting the chimney, many of which might not be noticeable to an untrained eye. Professional, certified chimney sweeps have extensive knowledge of fireplaces, making them valuable resources who can let homeowners know if any safety issues developed since fireplaces were last used. The National Protection Agency recommends that chimneys be swept at least once per year.

A full inspection of the chimney might be in order as well. Chimney service technicians will conduct thorough examinations of readily accessible portions of the chimney exterior and interior and accessible portions of the appliance and the chimney connection. The CSIA recommends that homeowners who plan to use their chimneys as they have in the past request a Level 1 inspection, which will examine the soundness of the chimney structure and flue as well as the basic appliance installation and connections. Technicians also will verify if the chimney is free of obstruction and combustible deposits.

Homeowners also should inspect their chimney dampers before lighting their first fires of the season. Dampers should open and close smoothly. If



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not, a service technician can help fix or replace the damper.

Firewood is another thing homeowners must consider before lighting their first fires of the season. The CSIA says that wellseasoned firewood works best, noting that wood that is not well-seasoned will produce more smoke than heat. In addition, the home improvement resource This Old House recommends using dense wood that's been split and stored in a high and dry place for at least six months. Oak is an example of dense wood that, when



stored properly, can make for an enjoyable fireplace experience. Avoid softwoods like pine. Pine can produce a lot of creosote, which is a byproduct of wood combustion. Creosote is highly flammable, and as it builds up in a chimney, the risk for a chimney fire increases. Choosing the right wood, making sure it's wellseasoned and having a chimney professionally cleaned can reduce the risk of a creosote-related chimney fire. A Level 1 inspection should determine if there are potentially dangerous levels of creosote deposits in the chimney. Before nestling up to a fireplace this winter, homeowners should consider a host of factors and safety measures to ensure their fireplaces are safe and ready for the season ahead. TF199248

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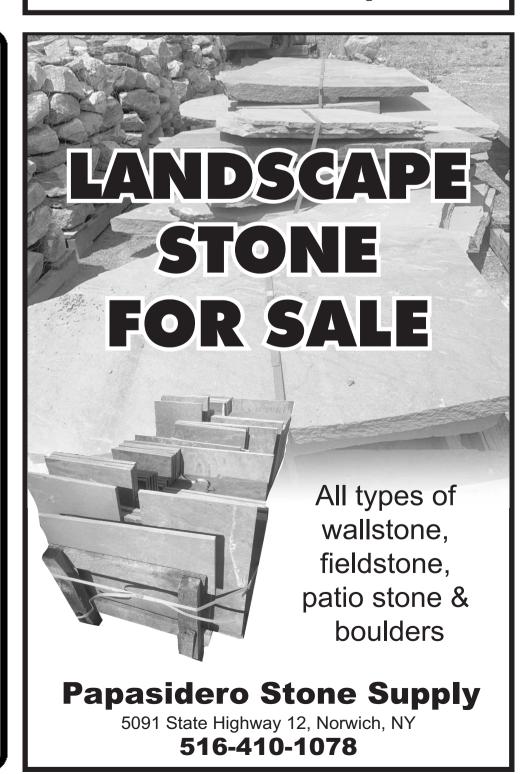
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Must-have kitchen remodel features

Homeowners looking to renovate often see room for improvement in their kitchens and bathrooms. The National Association of Home Builder's Remodeling Market Index Survey, which measures conditions in the remodeling market, indicates that, in 2015, the two most common remodeling jobs were bathroom remodels (81 percent) and kitchen remodels (79 percent). According to HGTV and Statistics Brain, a new kitchen remodel for a kitchen measuring 12 by 12 feet may cost homeowners anywhere from \$17,000 to \$37,000.

Before investing so much into their remodeling projects, homeowners should think carefully about the features that will improve their time spent at home. When planning a kitchen renovation, homeowners may want to consider the following upgrades to make the room more enjoyable while improving its functionality.

Oversized sink

Although high-efficiency dishwashers are popular, deep sinks to soak soup pots or woks are still useful. Deep sinks may be preferable to double sinks, especially for homeowners who use lots of kitchen tools when preparing meals.

Soft-closing hinges

When replacing cabinets (or just the hardware), consider installing softclosing hinges and slides on doors and drawers. These devices eliminate slamming and caught fingers, reducing noise and injuries in the kitchen.

Foot-pedal water operation

When outfitting a sink, think about foot controls, which are popular in doctors' offices and hospitals. Turning on the water with the tap of a foot can reduce the transfer of pathogens to faucets from hands during food preparation. These pedals also free up hands for other tasks.

Bottom's up

People likely spend more time raiding the refrigerator than the freezer on any given day. Rather than having to bend down to seek out that favorite flavor of Greek yogurt, choose a model with the fridge on top and freezer on the bottom, especially if anyone in the household has



mobility issues. When shopping for refrigerators, French-door style units may offer even more access, making it easy for homeowners to slide fruit trays, sheet cakes and other large items into the fridge.

Extra lighting

A kitchen should be a balance of form and function. A combination of overhead lighting, decorative lighting and task lighting can illuminate all areas of the space effectively.

Appliance garages

Architectural and design resource Houzz says that appliance garages are popular kitchen additions, too. Set at countertop level, these cabinets allow people to keep small appliances plugged in but tucked neatly behind closed doors.

Kitchen remodels are a sizable investment, and renovations can be customized to make the kitchen more hospitable for all in residence. FH178195



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What to do when a project stalls

Upon embarking on a home improvement project, homeowners who have never before lived through such undertakings are often told to expect their projects to take more time than initial estimates suggested. Unforeseen complications can compromise project timelines, and some homeowners may find their projects stuck in neutral.

Stalled projects can make life at home difficult, and homeowners may feel helpless with regard to getting a project back on course. But there are ways for homeowners to get stalled projects back on course.

- Start off on solid financial footing. It's important that homeowners who want to upgrade their homes enter the home improvement process with a realistic grasp of their finances. Many home improvement projects stall when homeowners run out of money. Homeowners can avoid such unfortunate situations by only beginning a project they know they can afford. Whether funding a project with a loan or savings or a combination of both, homeowners should make an honest assessment of what they can afford to commit to a given project. If the amount of money available does not add up to the estimated cost of the project, delay the project now or you might be facing a stalled project down the road.
- Honestly assess whether or not you can finish the job. Do-it-yourselfers may have the abilities to complete a project, but they should not let their pride get in the way of their ultimate goal, which is the completion of the project. In addition to money, time or lack thereof, is often the culprit behind stalled projects. Homeowners with full-time jobs, families or both may not be able to find the time to complete a job in a timely fashion. If the project has been stuck in neutral and no sudden windfall of free time is on the horizon, start contacting contractors to finish the job for you.

• Ask for help. There's no shame in asking for help to complete a project. Some homeowners may underestimate the scope of a project until it's too late. Asking family, friends or neighbors for help might be the only way to get a stalled project back on track. Certain home improvement projects may not require advanced skills, and even friends or family with little or no home improvement experience can pitch in to complete such projects. When more advanced projects stall, homeowners may want to hire contractors to complete the work. If

budgets have not left



much room for hiring a contractor, homeowners can perform some of the labor on their own.

• Be mindful of permits. Some home improvement projects require permits, and these permits often have expiration dates. Homeowners must keep permits in mind when projects start to stall, recognizing that they may need to reapply for permits if projects go unfinished for especially long periods of time.

Stalled home improvement projects can be a nightmare. But homeowners can address such delays in various ways to get projects back on track. FH178262





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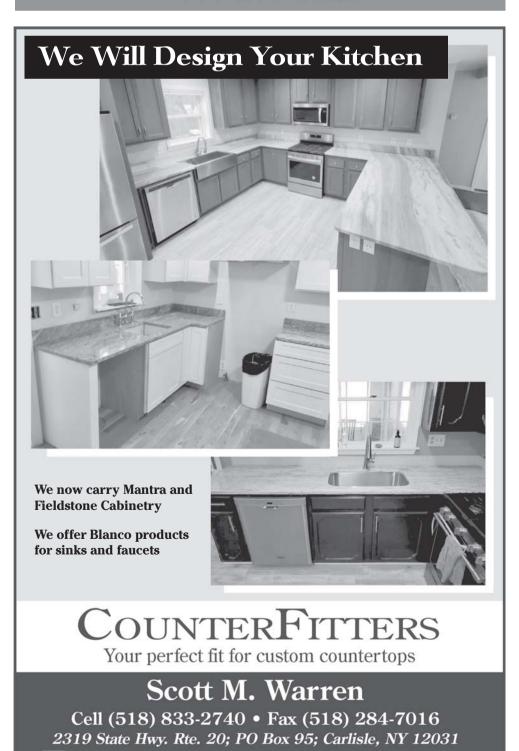


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How To Make Your Dishwasher Work Better

The dishwasher is an unsung hero of many a kitchen. When a dishwasher is working properly, it can make fast clean-up of scores of dishes, silverware and glasses.

As handy as dishwashers can be, sometimes they seem to lose their cleaning power. While inadequate cleaning may indicate the time has come to replace the dishwasher, many times all the appliance needs is a little maintenance and TLC.

Begin by investigating the interior of the dishwasher. Check for any visible food particles or debris, cleaning out any food traps at the bottom of the dishwasher. The mat-like item at the bottom is called the coarse filter and is meant to catch big particles that could prevent your tub from draining. Don't forget to clean the rubber seals around the perimeter of the dishwasher where the door meets up with the tub of the dishwasher, as this is a prime location for debris to gather.

Running an empty dishwasher with a clarifying rinse can help wash away any residue and improve performance. Plus, this maintenance task can remove odors and refresh the dishwasher. Put two cups of white vinegar in the bottom of the dishwasher so that it will distribute through the appliance during the cleaning cycles. White vinegar will naturally break down old dishwasher soap and scale buildup inside of the unit. Consider a short rinse afterward with some baking soda to remove odors and scour the interior of the appliance as well. Baking soda and vinegar are popular cleaning substances and are safe to use around food items.

For more intense cleaning, create a bath of vinegar and water in your sink basin. Remove parts from the dishwasher, such as shelving and the utensil holder, so that they can soak in the solution.

Some dishwashers have removable spinning cleaning arms. Take these off, if possible, and let them soak to dislodge any residue that has clogged the water jets. Use a pipe cleaner or another flexible device to carefully remove





any debris from the water holes. You may be amazed at what has built up in these small holes.

You also may need to inspect the drain line, which is often made of plastic and connected to the trap under the kitchen sink. On occasion, this tube can get blocked and prevent the dishwasher from draining effectively. In addition to these cleaning techniques, using a rinse agent may help the dishwasher work better. According to Jet Dry, the maker of a popular rinse agent, rinse agents help your dishwasher rinse away residue that causes spots and film on dishes and glasses. They are designed to lower the surface tension of the water, causing it to sheet off the dishes during the final rinse. This prevents the formation of droplets of water that can remain on the surface of the dishes and form spots and film.

Maintaining a dishwasher with regular cleaning can help it perform better during each and every load. EL156198

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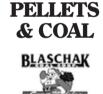
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The popularity of the color white.

White is a versatile color in home decorating and renovation. White helps any space look effortlessly chic, blends well with just about any color and can be incorporated into various design styles — from modern to traditional. White can be used nearly anywhere inside and outside the home. Improving interior and exterior spaces with white elements is easier than you might

White is a versatile color to use around the home. It's consistently a favorite among designers for its crisp appeal.

think, and it instantly can make anything look as good as new.

While rich cherrywood cabinets and deeply hued granite countertops have long been popular in kitchens, creamy white cabinets paired with blonde wood countertops can work together to make kitchens seem open and airy.

If all white is not your thing, brighten up kitchen spaces with white canisters, cookie jars and a fresh bouquet of white flowers to add instant appeal.

Living Room

Use white as a base color for living room spaces so you can build on it with other hues on pillows and draperies, mixing and matching however you see

Homeowners who have children and/or pets should look for furniture with removable slipcovers. This way they're easily removed and laundered.

Bathroom

White bathrooms look fresh and are easy to clean and maintain. White tiles provide a classic look. Include colored bath mats, towels and shower curtains to break up the white as you see fit. A neutral white base makes it easy to switch out color schemes whenever you feel like it.

Bedroom

Feminine and fresh, white bedrooms may not be the first choice for novice designers. If the prospect of white on white seems too sterile, offset deeper hues on bed linens and walls with white furniture. This provides some pop against the darker contrast.

Keep in mind that doing a bed up in all white means it will always be easy to find matching sheets and pillowcases, making it possible to ensure everything looks cohesive and crisp.

Outdoors

Use white paint on trims, shutters, mailboxes, and more to provide that pop of contrast against the rest of the home. White complements just about every color, making it a versatile choice on a home's accents regardless of the main exterior color of that home.

White and other light shades will reflect the sun as well, contributing to cooler temperatures on walkways, decks and other structures, which can be advantageous to homeowners who live in warm climates.

Is it any wonder that white continues to be a classic and popular color to use around the home? Whether you do so with monochromatic roomscapes or accent pieces, you can incorporate white into design plans throughout your home. FH168311



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Design ideas to give your home a farmhouse feel

Farmhouse style homes are having a moment. A 2020 survey from Homes.com asked more than 5,000 adults across the United States about their favorite house style from a list that included bohemian craftsman, mid-century modern ranch, French chateau, and Tudor, among others. Modern farmhouse was the runaway winner, as participants in 42 of the 50 states indicated this simple, cozy style was their favorite.

Home renovation projects can help homeowners put their own unique stamp on their homes, and such projects can be both aesthetic and functional in nature. The following are some farmhouse design elements homeowners can consider as they look to transform their home interiors with this popular style in mind.

- Exposed beams: Exposed beams instantly evoke images of a farmhouse. The home improvement experts at BobVila.com note that this rustic renovation project can utilize real wood or faux beams that look like the real thing. Decorative beams that have nothing to do with a home's structural integrity can be installed by skilled do-it-yourselfers. However, even faux beams are heavy, and BobVila.com recommends homeowners have an engineer assess their existing structure prior to installation.
- Distressed wood finishes: Distressing is designed to make something look less than perfect. Distressed wood finishes can be found throughout many farmhouse style homes. Furniture and picture frames can provide the distressed look farmhouse fans are looking for. This is a relatively inexpensive project that many homeowners can tackle on their own after watching some online tutorials that recommend the right tools and techniques to get the job done right.
- Kitchen sink: Many components combine to create a truly classic



farmhouse kitchen. But perhaps no component is more essential than the classic farmhouse sink. The renovation experts at HGTV note that a classic farmhouse sink features a deep, wide basin. Farmhouse sinks are large enough to handle all the dishes that come after a big family meal. Old-fashioned porcelain sinks are worth consideration by homeowners who want their kitchen sinks to evoke a traditional farmhouse feel.

• **Countertops:** HGTV recommends butcher block countertops for homeowners who favor European farmhouse style. Homeowners overhauling their kitchens to create a farmhouse feel should consider installing a large island with a walnut butcher block countertop for an authentic farmhouse feel.

Farmhouse style homes are wildly popular. Some simple renovations can help homeowners with a fondness for farmhouse style bring this classic look into their homes. FH218159

