



Spring

HOME

IMPROVEMENT 2

- Turn your yard into a vacation-worthy oasis
- Preserve your pile: Carpet maintenance tips
- Design ideas to give your home a farmhouse feel



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Notable features of modern bathrooms

Bathrooms are more than just places to wash up. These spaces are evolving from utilitarian rooms to high-tech sanctuaries with all the modern conveniences one can imagine. Homeowners are increasingly investing more into their bathrooms, reflecting a growing desire for quiet luxury and personal health.

According to the 2026 National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA) Trends Report, 72 percent of designers report that clients are enlarging their bathrooms to accommodate new wellness-centered features.

Modern bathrooms are defined by some notable features.

Home spa shower

The NKBA reports more homeowners now prioritize a larger, feature-rich shower over just a bathtub. Steam showers are no longer niche; they integrate aromatherapy and chromotherapy (mood-enhancing light) systems into the designs. Although open, walk-in showers are still popular for their accessibility, there's a rising trend in shower pods, which are enclosed, cozy spaces that more effectively retain heat and steam.

Aging in place elements

Features once associated with getting older are now being rebranded as high-end design elements. According to Forbes, curbless entries and built-in benches are some luxury safety features built into modern bathrooms.

Smart technology

Polaris Market Research says the global smart bathroom market is projected to exceed \$11 billion in 2026. Technology focused on efficiency and hygiene is popular. Intelligent toilets that have self-cleaning UV nozzles, heated seats and motion-activated lids are rising



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in popularity. Smart faucets with precise flow control and leak detection also are becoming standard, with Houzz saying sustainability features like these are a must-have for 84 percent of renovators.

Evolving minimalism

Organic minimalism is a defining style within modern bathroom trends for 2026. This idea prioritizes clean looks with natural materials like stone and wood, which are replacing cool grays and stark whites that have been dominating bathroom schemes for some time, according to Re-Bath design expert Jenny Mars. Designers favor large-format slabs or tiles to minimize grout lines. Earthy tones like sage green, terracotta, and warm wood vanities also are popular.



Layered lighting

Design pros are using lighting as a functional tool, and say that task lighting must be layered for the best effect. Nighttime-specific low-glow lighting and integrated mirror LEDs support a natural circadian rhythm while offering comfort and safety. The NKBA says 91 percent of respondents cite lighting as a top priority in their bathroom designs. Mood lighting in showers and other lighting features are popular requests.

Modern bathrooms continue to evolve with features that add aesthetic appeal, sustainability and technology to these historically utilitarian spaces. HI264740



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Plan a playroom all can enjoy

There's no shortage of ways to utilize interior spaces in a home. Interior spaces have grown considerably in recent decades. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median size of a new home in 1980 was 1,595 square feet. By 2018, the median size of a newly constructed home was 2,386 square feet. Though Realtor.com data indicates the median home size started to shrink between 2015 and 2025, modern homes continue to provide lots of room to maneuver.

When confronted with ample interior space, homeowners may wonder what to do with all that extra room. Playrooms can be a great way to utilize extra space to the fullest, particularly in homes with children. Parents planning a playroom in their homes can consider these tips to ensure the space becomes a fun room everyone can enjoy.

- Measure the space. Measuring the dimensions in a prospective playroom can erase any doubts homeowners may have regarding how much space they have to work with. Taking measurements also makes it easier to identify which furnishings, including couches and storage units, will fit comfortably into the space. Homeowners who plan to install new flooring or carpeting also will need to know the dimensions to get an accurate idea of how much that portion of the conversion project will cost.

- Keep in mind young children's preferences to stay close. A basement playroom may work as children enter their tweens and early adolescence, but such separation from the rest of the home may compel young children to avoid the space. Elementary school children and younger kids generally like to stay close to Mom and Dad, so a basement playroom may not be ideal for such youngsters. In such instances, converting a seldom-used formal dining room into a temporary playroom may be a better option. As children age, the basement can be utilized as a playroom with greater frequency until it

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becomes the lone play space in the home.

- **Emphasize organization.** Playrooms can quickly be overrun by toys. Though no two children are exactly the same, the professionals at Brain Balance Achievement Centers note the expected attention span of a two-year-old is four to six minutes. A four-year-old's expected attention span may peak at 12 minutes, while an eight-year-old's expected attention span is between 16 and 24 minutes. That means kids will pivot from one toy to another with frequency, which underscores the need for ample storage. Storage should be built into the design of the space after measuring its dimensions. Avoid storage solutions that extend too high up the wall, as that's hard for children to reach and might lead to accidents. Creative storage solutions abound online, and parents are urged to exercise due diligence to find the safest, most effective units for their children and their space.

- **Make it multi-generational.** Free play is important for youngsters, but kids will want Mom or Dad and even older siblings nearby even when they're playing on their own. So it makes sense to equip the space with areas that accommodate everyone in the household. A reading chair for adults and a ping pong table and arcade game for older kids can ensure everyone gets to have fun in the playroom.

A playroom can make for a fun way to utilize extra space inside a home. HI264743

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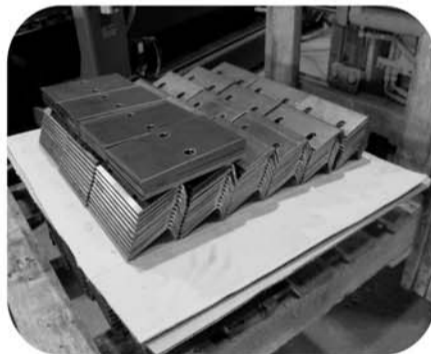
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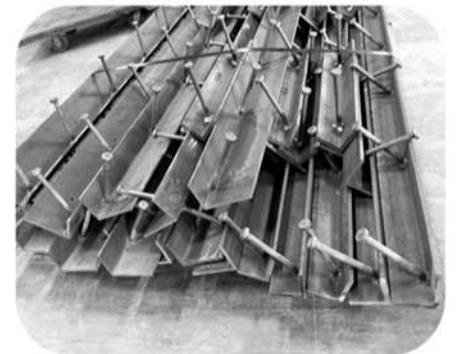
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Features that can redefine a living room

Spring is widely cherished as a season of rejuvenation. As winter winds down, many people embrace the arrival of spring blooms and the regrowth of grass on the ground and leaves on the trees, which can breathe new life into landscapes that might have grown a bit stale in previous months.

That same staleness can affect a home's interior as well. Home interiors can benefit from periodic updates in much the same way a landscape benefits when spring blooms return. As homeowners seek to refresh their living spaces, they can consider these features to redefine their living rooms.

- **Fireplace:** A wood-burning fireplace is undeniably a game changer when looking to redefine a living space. But such a project could be a significant undertaking in a home that does not already feature a wood-burning fireplace. Homeowners who want to add a wood-burning fireplace can reinvent a living room, but they will likely need to adhere to building codes, secure permits and even consult with an engineer to ensure such an addition does not affect the structural integrity of the home. A gas-powered fireplace is a less demanding project, but will also require some extra work if homeowners need to connect a gas line where no such line currently exists. A plug-in electric fireplace can create a new ambiance and will not require as much time, effort and money as the alternatives.

- **Coffered ceiling:** A coffered ceiling can immediately redefine the impression people get of a living space. Coffered ceilings feature a series of rectangular, square or octagonal grids that are typically



accentuated by molding. Coffered ceilings provide a luxurious and even historic aesthetic, making them an ideal addition for homeowners looking to redefine an existing space.

- **Windows:** New windows are another option when homeowners are hoping to redefine a living room. Modern windows are energy-efficient, so replacing aging windows may help homeowners combat rising energy costs. If a yard is a notable feature of a home's exterior, new windows that accentuate the view from a living space can quickly redefine how residents and guests see the room. Permits may be necessary if you're expanding existing windows, but that can be worth it if you're able to design the space around the view. All that extra natural light also may reinvent the feeling people get upon entering the space.

- **Wallpaper:** Interior design specialists note that wallpaper is making a comeback. Wallpaper can be used to draw attention to a wall in much the same way bold colors are chosen for accent walls. Wallpaper on an accent wall can feature a bold pattern or a strong color to add a sense of personality to a room that might be lacking if the walls are currently painted in neutral colors.

Homeowners can consider any number of features when looking to give their living spaces a fresh look. HI264730



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Many people decide to upgrade from their apartments or condominiums out of a need for more space. But even after moving into a new home, homeowners may soon begin to outgrow the room they have.

Rather than looking for a new home, some homeowners consider expansion. Expanding a living space can be expensive, and a more affordable option

An architect can help suggest design elements that will camouflage the original garage look and make the space seem like it was always part of the main living area of the home.

may be converting existing basement or garage space into something more livable. Garages already are built on a foundation, have four walls and a roof overhead, so a garage-conversion project is merely a matter of turning this utilitarian area into a living space.

Before beginning the renovation, homeowners should consider the

benefits versus the cost of converting the garage. For those who are planning to grow old in a house, a garage conversion can be a worthy investment. But those who intend to sell their homes rather than retire in them may learn that a converted garage can affect home value and make it less desirable at resale. Compare your home to others in the area and see what your neighbors have done. If converted garages are the norm where you live, your own renovation may fit in with others.

Always apply for the proper permits and learn the zoning laws to see if a garage conversion is acceptable in your town or city. It's best to go by the book so that work can be done in a proper manner and be inspected for safety.

Many homeowners hope their garage-conversion projects will make their



garages seem like a seamless part of the rest of the house. To do so, you will need to remove evidence the space was once a garage. Slab floor will need to be raised and insulated. Walls also will need to be insulated and finished to improve comfort and soundproofing. Many garages do not have windows, so for the garage to function as a renovated space, windows may need to be added.

One of the biggest transformations will come by way of modifying the garage door entry. Some homeowners prefer to leave the existing door so that the home still has the appearance of a garage from the curb, while others remove the garage door and rebuild the exterior wall so that it has a window or another architectural element. An architect can help suggest design elements that will camouflage the original garage look and make the space seem like it was always part of the main living area of the home. Landscaping work also can minimize the appearance of an old garage. Rather than having the driveway end at the wall of a home, shrubbery, pavers and other techniques can blend the garage renovation into the rest of the yard design.

Transforming a garage into a living space can add several hundred square feet to a home. Hire a reputable contractor and follow the municipal guidelines for modifying the space to ensure the job is done right.

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Preserve your pile: Carpet maintenance tips

Carpeting adds warmth and comfort underfoot, but residential carpeting is a significant financial investment. Homeowners should do all they can to ensure carpeting remains in good condition for as long as possible. According to the Carpet and Rug Institute, properly maintained carpet may last between 10 and 15 years. However, without the right care, the durability of carpet can be slashed in half. Maintaining carpeting is not just about preserving aesthetic appeal; protecting carpeting from too much wear and tear helps manage indoor air quality and maintain home value. These guidelines can help any homeowner protect their pile.

- Remove shoes when coming indoors. Industry experts say that the majority of the soil entering a home is dry particulate matter that is brought in on the soles of shoes. Particulates can act like micro-abrasives that grind against carpet fibers, dulling the sheen and weakening the structure. Removing shoes upon entering the home will cut down on the amount of soil that reaches the carpet.
- Utilize high-quality mats. Place mats both outside and inside of every entrance to cut down on the amount of debris that is tracked into a home. The industrial matting company NoTrax indicates at least 15 feet of matting is required to remove the majority of dirt and debris from foot traffic. Carpet industry experts refer to this as the "Rule of 15."
- Frequently vacuum the home. The CRI recommends vacuuming high-traffic areas daily, while other areas around the home may require less



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attention. Vacuuming removes dry soil before it can be ground into the backing of carpeting. For the best results, a vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter will ensure the machine effectively removes dust instead of just redistributing it into the air while vacuuming.

- Get a deep cleaning. Major carpet manufacturers, including Shaw and Mohawk, require Hot Water Extraction every 12 to 18 months on their carpets to maintain warranties. Professional cleaning removes even more debris and keeps carpeting in pristine shape.

- Apply a protectant. While most new carpets come with a factory-applied finish to protect fibers, this wears off over time. Reapplying a carpet protector (like Scotchgard™) creates a shield that lowers the surface tension of the fibers, helping homeowners clean up spills fast before stains set in.

Reducing dirt tracked inside, vacuuming frequently and arranging for periodic professional deep-cleaning will help prolong the longevity of residential carpeting. HI264735

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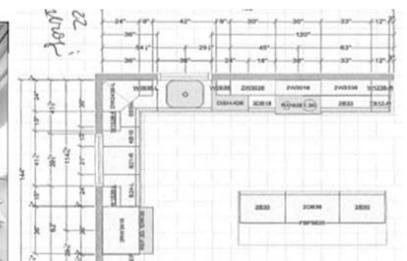
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How To Create A Rainwater Harvesting System



Rainwater collection is a way to conserve water that can be adopted by both private homeowners and businesses. Harvesting water during peak times of precipitation ensures water will be on hand during drought or when water restrictions are implemented. Making use of rainwater reduces reliance on underground wells or municipal water systems. Harvesting rainwater also can help prevent flooding and soil erosion. The average homeowner can collect thousands of gallons of

rainwater each year. To learn just how much water can be harvested, as well as how many natural resources can be produced from that rain, visit www.save-the-rain.com, where men and women can calculate their rain collection potential by geographic location and average rainfall. Afterward, homeowners may be inclined to establish their own rainwater harvesting systems. Here is how to get started.

- Determine your roofing material. Potable water can be harvested from homes with sheet metal or slate roofing. Clay or adobe tiles also may be acceptable. Asphalt, wood shingles and tar roofs may leach toxic chemicals into the water, making it unsafe for drinking. This rainwater may only be collected to use for irrigation methods or washing cars and outdoor items.
- Check gutter materials. Some gutters are made with lead soldering components. A commercial lead swab test can help you determine if there is

lead present in your gutters. At a later time you can choose to replace the gutters if you desire a potable supply of water.

- Invest in a collection tank or barrel. A number of manufacturers offer prefabricated rain collection systems complete with collection barrels.

Otherwise, you can use your own barrel or tank to house the collected water. Ensure it is large enough to handle the volume of water collected.

- Purchase and install leaf guards. If your home is surrounded by many trees, you probably accumulate leaf and tree debris in your home gutters and downspouts. Leaf guards will help keep the gutters clear and increase water flow through the water collection system.

• Create a water collection area. A portion of the gutter system should be removed so that it connects to the collection barrel or tank. As the rain falls, it will run down the roof and into the gutters before it streams into the downspouts. The downspout connected to the tank will deposit the water directly inside. Filters can be installed to help block the flow of debris.

- Outfit the tank for overflow and water usage. A spigot and hose connection makes it easy to use the collected water for outdoor purposes. Many rainwater collection systems are designed with an overflow safeguard that will prevent the water from backing up through the system. It will divert the rainwater back out of the downspout when the barrel or tank is full.

A rainwater collection system harnesses a natural source of water to be used for gardens and other outdoor purposes. This water doesn't contain chlorine or other additives, making it relatively clean and safe to use. Homeowners should check to see if a permit is necessary to install a rainwater collection system and then begin gathering water for various uses.



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Turn your yard into a vacation-worthy oasis

Warm weather means more time to relax outdoors. For those homeowners lucky enough to have entertaining spaces outside, spring and summer provides plenty of opportunities to enjoy fresh air under the sun or stars. Over the last few years, families have become especially familiar with what works about their yards and where there is room for improvement. Pandemic-related travel restrictions and early stay-at-home mandates resulted in plenty of time spent in backyards on staycations. Even though many such restrictions have been lifted, homeowners may have seen the benefits of having functional respites right outside their doors.

A backyard renovation can cost anywhere from \$5,000 to \$50,000. The American Society of Landscape Architects suggests homeowners budget the cost of a major landscaping project at between 5 and 10 percent of their home's value. Large or small, here are ways to make an outdoor oasis at home.

Create living privacy

Living in close proximity to neighbors may make privacy harder to come by. Wood or vinyl fences, however effective, may not provide the all-natural look many people desire. Vertical gardening, which trains easy-care vines like English ivy, Clematis or various climbing roses to grow on trellis or fencing adds greenery and privacy. Hedges and fast-growing shrubs also can be used for natural barriers.

Install a pool

Pools are the ultimate spots to cool off on hot days. An elaborately shaped inground pool can blend in with the landscape and offer the ultimate hang-out zone. However, above-ground pools also serve the purpose and are more



budget-friendly. Stock tank pools are popular among those who want minimal pool expenditure or have small spaces to work with. Stock tanks are metal vessels traditionally used as watering holes for livestock. They also can be "adult kiddie pools" when combined with some plumbing. Galvanized steel frames make them sturdy. With floats and other accessories, they can become the perfect oasis.

Provide outdoor atmosphere

Create a bespoke bistro vibe by using freestanding planters and posts along with hanging lights to make an intimate outdoor hangout spot at night. For those with permanent structures, like a deck or a gazebo, lights can be strung across the area or on railings or edging.

Extend the living space

Decks and patios can help make outdoor entertaining areas more comfortable by eliminating the need to sit on the grass or gravel. Plus, they add another "room" to the home. When paired with weatherproof patio furniture, such as sofas, loungers and tables, a private seating area can be crafted and utilized for any number of entertaining desires.

Hang a hammock

Few things evoke feelings of relaxation better than a hammock. Fitted between two trees (or two posts if trees are sparse), a hammock is an ideal place to grab a nap or read a book.

Additional oasis-inspired ideas include outdoor kitchens, letting up lanterns, cascading water features, and bird feeders to attract the sounds of nature. SL226007

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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.

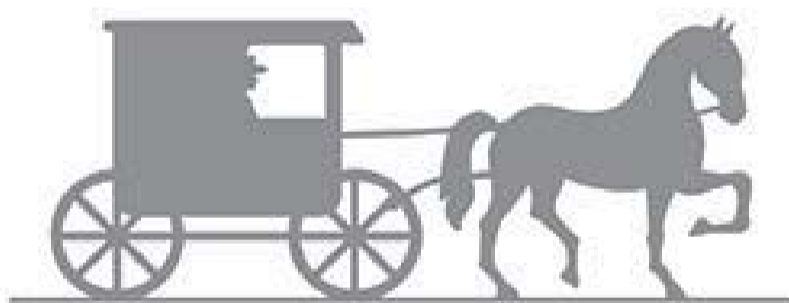
- **Exposed beams:** Exposed beams instantly evoke images of a farmhouse. The home improvement experts at BobVila.com note that this rustic renovation project can utilize real wood or faux beams that look like the real thing. Decorative beams that have nothing to do with a home's structural integrity 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



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