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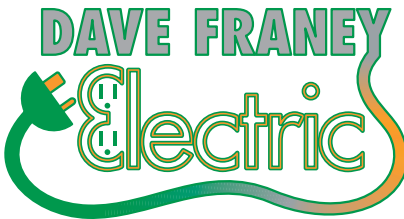
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5 mistakes to avoid when cleaning your windows and mirrors

Clean mirrors, windows and glass furniture add instant sparkle to your decor. In your haste to get the shine, you may make mistakes that cause you to double your efforts. Avoid these five habits to get the best results the first time.

1. Cleaning when the weather or lighting is bad, like freezing rain or glaring sun
2. Neglecting to dust surrounding spaces, like mirror frames, before cleaning
3. Using a poor-quality cleaning solution
4. Drying surfaces with a non-absorbent, dirty or lint-covered cloth
5. Forgetting to wipe the squeegee after each pass



Purchase the best cleaning products and accessories at your local stores. You could also try hiring a cleaning pro for dazzling results.

How to clean your walls without damaging the paint

Washing painted walls can be tricky and requires special care. Follow these steps to avoid marring the paint or leaving unsightly scuffs.

1. Gently remove dust and cobwebs with a vacuum cleaner or duster.
2. Place old towels along the baseboards to absorb excess water.
3. Wash the walls with a sponge or mop, working from top to bottom. Gently scrub away stains as needed. Water alone is usually sufficient for surface dirt, but you may need to use a mild detergent for stubborn stains.
4. Dry the cleaned and rinsed surfaces with a fresh cloth as you go.



The darker the paint color and the more matte the finish, the less scrubbing you should do.

CONTINUED >>>

Give your home a spring refresh

Ready, set, declutter

Tackling spring cleaning without first decluttering a few rooms, drawers, or cupboards can be futile. Is this task worth the effort? The answer is a resounding yes. Getting rid of unnecessary things gives you, among other things, an incredible feeling of lightness and well-being. Here are a few tips on how to make this chore go smoothly.

Many find that sorting through their belongings brings up various emotions. Can you relate? To lighten the emotional load, start with items with little or no sentimental value, such as leftover renovation materials or take-out containers that can go in the recycling bin.

Once you've done this, sort through other items. When deciding if you should keep something, ask yourself if it's useful. If you haven't used it in over a year, it's not essential. If you're reluctant to part with an expensive item, remember that you



can sell it to someone else who can give it a new life.

If you have several duplicates of nearly identical items, keep only one or two (the least worn, for example). If you've been hoarding clothes that no longer fit, be realistic. Sell them if they're in good shape or donate them to an organization that helps needy people.

After decluttering, reward yourself with a relaxing massage or meal out.

Expert tips for maintaining your flooring

Have you finished most of your spring cleaning but haven't washed your floors? Here are a few tips for maintaining your flooring without damaging it.



Ceramic tiles. Clean the grout lines with a product specifically designed for this purpose. After letting the product soak in, scrub the grout with a clean brush or cloth and rinse. You can easily clean the surface of the tiles with a mixture of water and white vinegar.

Vinyl. This popular material is easy to care for and will look new for years. Gently mop the floor with a vinyl cleaner to remove grime. Then, rinse with clean water and let dry.

Floating floor. This type of flooring is practical and attrac-

tive but vulnerable to moisture. Therefore, avoid soaking it with water when washing it. Purchase a product designed for floating floors. Follow the instructions to restore your floor to its former glory.

Hardwood. Restore the shine of this elegant material with an environmentally friendly, no-rinse cleaner. That way, you won't leave behind streaks or residue. Avoid using scouring pads and other aggressive tools to remove stains. These items could damage the floor's finish.

Visit local stores to find products and accessories to make your floors shine.



4 tips for tidying your home



1. Take advantage of space. Go around your home and look for unused spaces underneath staircases and beds, over cupboards and behind doors. Make the most of this space with hooks, shelves and storage bins.

2. Store seasonal items. For instance, put your camping gear and Christmas decorations in marked bins or bags and store them in your basement or shed. Make sure these items are easily accessible when you need them.

3. Keep frequently used items at hand. It doesn't make sense to stow away items you use several times a day or week. Instead, place them within easy reach or on attractive displays. Keep rarely used products out of sight unless they're particularly decorative.

4. Invest in multifunctional furniture. Convertible furniture, multi-purpose shelving and storage benches or ottomans are perfect for stowing away things in style. Visit your local stores to explore options.

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Your summer haven:
updating
outdoor spaces

Beautify
your Backyard

If your backyard is in need of an upgrade, here are some ways to give it a makeover.

Install outdoor lighting
Enjoy your backyard both day and night by installing smart outdoor lighting that turns itself on when the sun goes down. You can even choose a system that allows you to match the intensity and color of the lights to the situation. This way, you can create the perfect atmos-



phere for every evening, from quiet nights at home to festive barbecues with friends.

Incorporate natural materials
Natural materials like wood and stone are ideal for most landscaping projects and complement design esthetics ranging from traditional to modern. For a more contemporary look, pair wood and stone with corten steel, which can be used for fireplaces, garden edging and flowerpots. Additionally, plants like vines, grasses and succulents enhance wood and stone features.

Create a natural pool
In a natural swimming pool, water is filtered using oxygenating and purifying plants rather than chlorine and other chemicals. Besides being kinder to the environment, these pools are often designed to imitate natural bodies of water and therefore blend into your yard more than traditional pools. If you don't have room for a swimming pool, consider enhancing your outdoor space with a water feature like a fountain or small pond.



Rethink outdoor cooking
Outdoor kitchens are increasingly popular. Consider upgrading from your basic barbecue to an integrated grill with a counter and sink. Other features you may want to include are a bar, a smoker and a wood-burning pizza oven.

To get started on your backyard makeover project, be sure to get hold of a reputable landscaping company or general contractor.

Beautify your Balcony

If you'd like to give your balcony a makeover, here are some simple upgrades that will spruce up even the smallest of spaces.

Furniture
Purchase outdoor furniture with clean lines, neutral tones and natural fabrics. Add visual interest with bright-colored cushions and blankets. If you have the space, hanging chairs, hammocks and swings are great options.

Lighting
Use electric candles, paper lanterns or string lights to help set the right mood. Opt for multi-colored ones to create a festive vibe or white ones if you want something a little more romantic. Alternatively, install solar LED lights that will brighten up your whole balcony.

Accessories
If you have the space, install shelves to display your choice of outdoor decorations. You can also add a touch of color with an outdoor rug. An umbrella or curtains can be included to provide you with shelter from the sun.

Plants
If your balcony has a roof or overhang, use it to display hanging



plants. If not, let vines twist around the railings. For a rustic look, consider growing herbs and flowers in wooden crates.

It won't take much to transform your balcony into an outdoor haven. With a little effort, you can create a beautiful space to enjoy all summer.



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Get fresh with our recipes

Vegan poke bowl

This poke bowl is packed with tasty and nutritious ingredients and makes the perfect healthy summer treat.

INGREDIENTS

Servings: 4

- 2 sweet potatoes, diced
- 2 cups baby spinach
- 4 cups quinoa, cooked and cooled
- 20 cherry tomatoes, cut in half or quarters
- 2 cups arugula
- 1 can chickpeas, drained
- 2 ripe avocados
- 1 tablespoon white sesame seeds
- 1 tablespoon black sesame seeds
- 1/2 cup maple syrup
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 tablespoon sriracha sauce (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F.
2. Place the sweet potatoes on a baking sheet with a little bit of olive oil and bake for 30 minutes or until tender. Season with salt and pepper.

3. Place the baby spinach in the bottom of four serving bowls. Arrange the quinoa, cherry tomatoes, cooked sweet potatoes, arugula and chickpeas in separate sections. Set aside in a cool place.
4. Cut the avocados in half lengthwise. Remove the pit and skin. Place one avocado half on a cutting board. Cut into thin slices crosswise, taking care to maintain the shape. Using your hands, fan out the slices. Make sure to keep them stuck together to create a straight line. Take one end of the line and roll it over itself until it becomes an avocado flower. Repeat with the other halves.
5. Gently lift each avocado flower and place one in the middle of each bowl. Sprinkle a quarter of the white and black sesame seeds over each bowl.
6. Combine the maple syrup, olive oil and soy sauce in a separate bowl. Pour a quarter of the sauce over each bowl or serve separately.



Do you like spice? Give your recipe a kick by coating the chickpeas in sriracha.



Salmon, mango and avocado tartar

Delicate and refined, tartars are a gourmet delight. This fresh and exotic recipe will make you feel like you're in heaven.

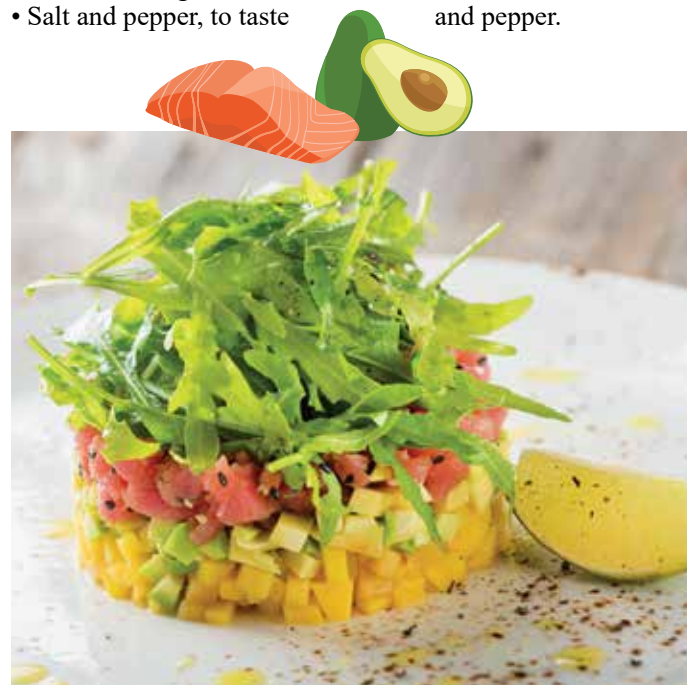
INGREDIENTS

Servings: 4

- 16 ounces salmon (or red tuna), cut into small cubes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon sriracha sauce
- 1 French shallot, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon black sesame seeds
- 1 teaspoon white sesame seeds
- 1 mango, finely diced
- 1 ripe avocado, diced
- 2 cups arugula
- Olive oil, for garnish
- Salt and pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine the salmon, olive oil, lime juice, Dijon mustard, sriracha, French shallot and black and white sesame seeds in a bowl.
2. Place a cookie cutter in the middle of a plate. Arrange a layer of mango, a layer of avocado and a thin layer of the salmon mixture.
3. Garnish with arugula and drizzle with olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.



Barbecue grilled sweet corn

Do you usually boil your corn on the cob and slather it with butter and salt? Dare to think outside the box at your next barbecue with this recipe.

INGREDIENTS

- 6 ears of fresh sweet corn with husks
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1 clove of garlic, minced
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1/4 cup crumbled feta cheese, for garnish
- 1 teaspoon paprika, for garnish
- 1 bunch of fresh coriander, chopped, for garnish



DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the barbecue on high.
2. Soak the cobs for about 10 minutes in a bowl of cold water. Keep the husks on. Drain.
3. Grill the cobs for 12 minutes or until the husks are charred. Peel the cobs and continue cooking until they're toasted in some places. Turn the cobs often to prevent them from burning. Remove from the grill and allow to cool for a few minutes before serving.
4. In a bowl, combine sour cream, mayonnaise and garlic. Add salt and pepper. Brush the ears with this mixture. Sprinkle with feta cheese, paprika and cilantro.



Caesar pasta salad

INGREDIENTS

Servings: 4

Salad

- 1 box (16 ounces) Campanella (or other short pasta of your choice), cooked and drained
- 2 cups romaine lettuce, torn
- 16 cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 cup store-bought croutons
- 2 chicken breasts, cooked and diced
- 4 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese, for garnish

Dressing

- 1/4 cup store-bought mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1 clove of garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- Salt and pepper, to taste



DIRECTIONS

1. Combine the pasta, lettuce, cherry tomatoes, croutons and chicken in a large bowl.
2. In a separate bowl, whisk together the dressing ingredients.
3. Pour the dressing over the pasta and toss well. Add salt and pepper to taste.
4. Arrange pasta salad in serving bowls and top with grated Parmesan cheese.

Glazed fruit skewers

Sweet and juicy, fruit makes a great summer dessert. This delicious glaze enhances the natural flavor of the fruit to create a crowd-pleasing favorite.

INGREDIENTS

Servings: 10

Skewers

- 10 strawberries, halved lengthwise
- 10 kiwi cubes
- 10 blueberries
- 10 pieces of pineapple
- 10 pieces of cantaloupe
- 10 wooden skewers



Simple syrup

- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 cup brown sugar



DIRECTIONS

1. Combine the water and brown sugar in a saucepan and cook over medium heat until the sugar is completely dissolved. If the mixture starts to boil, lower the heat slightly.
2. Once the sugar has completely dissolved, remove from the heat and allow to cool for 45 minutes.
3. Thread the fruit pieces one after the other on the skewers.
4. Brush the skewers with the simple syrup.



THE REAL ESTATE MARKET



3 questions to ask yourself before buying a vacation home

Are you considering buying a vacation home to spend your summers or weekends? Whether you want to buy a cabin a few hours away or a villa in the south of Spain, here are a few questions to ask yourself before taking the plunge.

1. How much will it cost?

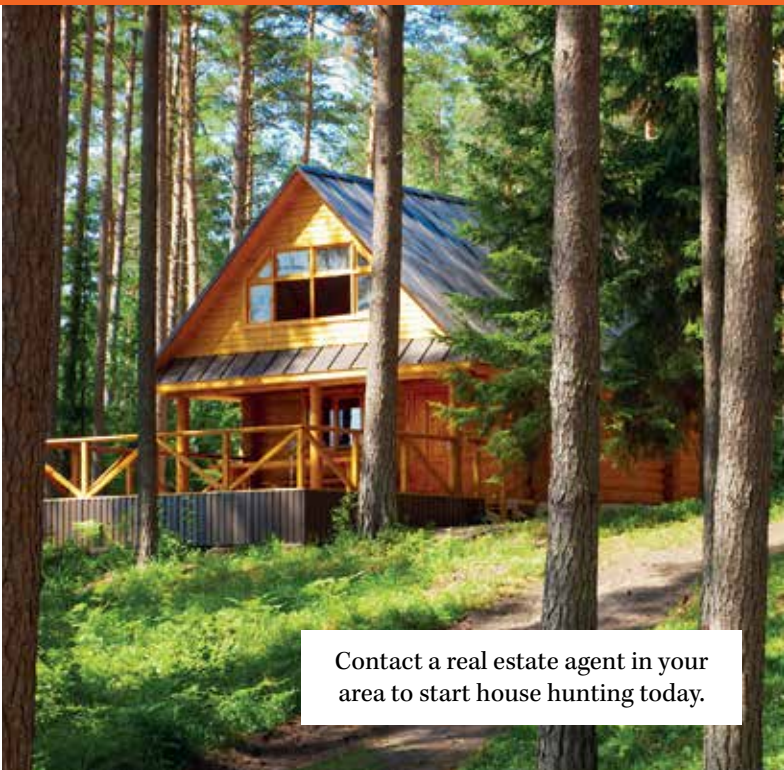
On top of the mortgage and down payment, you must factor in expenses like property taxes, insurance, utilities and maintenance fees. You should also budget for future renovations and upgrades.

2. Can you afford it?

As a rule of thumb, your mortgage payments and other forms of debt should account for less than 36 percent of your monthly gross income. If you think buying a vacation home will put you over this threshold, it may not be the right time to invest.

3. How will you use it?

It's essential to decide whether the property will be used exclusively as a second home or a rental property. This will determine, among other things, where the house is located and how big it needs to be.



Contact a real estate agent in your area to start house hunting today.

The pros and cons of having an open house



Speak with your real estate agent to determine if an open house makes sense for your sale.

Are you selling your home and wondering if an open house is the best move? Here are a few pros and cons.

Pros

First and foremost, an open house will give your home a lot of exposure through online and newspaper ads. Street signs can also attract spontaneous and curious buyers.

Open houses often attract first-time buyers who may not know how to start the home-buying process. These laid-back events allow your real estate agent to establish relationships with these prospects and convert them into buyers.

Cons

On the other hand, an open house allows people to walk around your home with little to no supervision. Opening your home to strangers can make your property vulnerable to theft, vandalism and unintentional damage.

Additionally, although open houses attract many people, you'll likely end up with unqualified buyers or inquisitive neighbors who are curious to look at your home but have no capacity or intention to purchase. It can potentially waste your time and that of your real estate agent.



3 benefits of co-buying a home

Are you ready to buy your first home but don't have enough savings? You may want to consider co-buying. Co-buying is when two or more people purchase a property and agree to share ownership. This can be a partnership between a couple, relatives or close friends. Here are a few benefits.

1. It's more affordable.

Splitting down payment and mortgage payments makes owning a home more affordable. This can help you purchase a nicer home in a better neighborhood. You can also save on utilities and other household expenses.

2. It helps you build equity.

Co-buying can help you start building equity in a home earlier in life. Building equity helps build wealth, and wealth can give you financial stability.

3. It can give you a second income.

If you co-buy an investment property with a friend, you'll each benefit from the ability to use the rent to pay off the mortgage and ultimately gain passive income.

Finally, keep in mind that co-buying doesn't come without risks. It's best to speak with a real estate agent and financial professional to determine if co-buying is the best decision for you.

What's a short sale in real estate?

In real estate, a short sale occurs when a homeowner sells their home for less than they owe on the mortgage. This often happens when the homeowner is in a difficult financial situation and can't keep up with payments.



A short sale isn't the same as a foreclosure. In a foreclosure, the lender forcibly repossesses the property and then tries to sell it for enough to recover its costs. In a short sale, the homeowner voluntarily chooses to sell the property and then gives the lender all the proceeds. The lender can then either forgive the difference or get a deficiency judgment, which requires the homeowner to pay what's left over.

Homeowners may decide that a short sale is right for them for various reasons. For example, a short sale does less damage to your credit score than a

foreclosure. If you want another mortgage, you may have a much shorter time to wait after a short sale than after a foreclosure.

Moreover, a short sale allows you to stay in your home until the sale is completed, whereas a foreclosure forces you to vacate immediately. It also allows you to retain the dignity of knowing you sold your home.

If you're having money trouble, reach out to a financial professional in your area to help you get back on track.

The dos and don'ts of taking listing photos

If you're selling your home and want to save a bit of money, you may want to consider taking the listing photos yourself. Here are some dos and don'ts on how to make your abode look its best in photos.



Do get rid of clutter. Tidy up your home and remove personal belongings like knick-knacks, fridge magnets, family pictures and children's toys. Display only essential pieces of furniture so people can picture themselves in your home.

Do pick the right time of day. Take pictures in the morning or early afternoon when the sun is shining into your home. This way, everything is brightly lit and visible.

Do choose the right angle. Keep your photos straight and at eye level to avoid any distortion. When people look at the pictures, they should feel like they're standing or sitting in your home.

Don't overedit the images. You can minimally retouch your photos to adjust aspects like lighting and clarity. However, the pictures should accurately depict what your home looks like.

Don't take too many photos. Avoid overwhelming potential buyers with hundreds of pictures of every single room in your home. Pick general shots that capture the best angles of your house, including critical spaces like the kitchen and bathrooms.

Finally, poor-quality photos can make or break a potential buyer's perception of your home. Therefore, if you aren't confident in your abilities, contact your real estate agent for help. They'll put you in touch with a professional photographer.



What you should know about recycling batteries

Batteries are used in many everyday items like alarm clocks, flashlights, TV remotes and more. However, they must be recycled when they reach the end of their usable lifespan to prevent them from leaching toxic chemicals into the environment. Here's what you should know.

How to recycle batteries

Store your used batteries in a clear container or plastic bag and take them to your local drop-off center as soon as possible. It's also a good idea to place a piece of masking tape over the battery's positive and negative terminals to prevent them from creating a spark.

How batteries are recycled

Before being processed at a recycling center, batteries are sorted according to their weight and interior components like nickel, alkali, li-



thium and lead. Once there, the spent batteries are stripped of their metals and other elements. These components are then used to create a variety of products like silverware, pots and pans, golf clubs, concrete aggregates and more.

Do you want to do your part to protect the environment? There are now eco-friendly batteries available for purchase. Look for them at your local stores.

4 tips for sustainable gardening



The produce sold in grocery stores often travels hundreds or even thousands of miles before ending up on your plate. Do you want to grow your own fruits and vegetables? If so, here are four tips for gardening sustainably.

1. Choose the right place

Do your research to find the best location to plant your garden. Take into account the soil type and amount of sunlight the area receives to ensure your plants grow well and won't require much maintenance.

2. Feed the soil

Feeding your soil with compost is the best way to grow healthy plants. Doing so will allow you to avoid concentrated fertilizers that could make your crops more vulnerable to

disease or pollute the water table if incorrectly applied.

3. Save water

Avoid planting vegetables that require a lot of water. Instead, choose varieties that can easily adapt to the average amount of rainfall in your area. You should also set up a rainwater collection bin. Remember to water generously but not every day. This will promote root oxygenation and allow your plants to draw water from deep within the soil.

4. Embrace imperfection

Gardens are living things. Therefore, you must accept that yours won't look perfect. Inevitably, insects will nibble on your plants. Just remember that birds will feed on the bugs, and pollinators will visit your flowers. Simply sit back and watch nature in action. For more tips, visit your local garden center.

How to apply the principles of sustainable design to your home renovation projects



Adopting sustainable design practices is a key component in fighting climate change. Here's how the average homeowner can make their renovation projects greener.

What is sustainable design?

The guiding principle behind sustainable design is that the negative environmental impacts of erecting and maintaining modern buildings can be minimized by implementing certain practices. These include curtailing waste, reducing the consumption of non-renewable resources, conserving water and creating healthy, functional spaces.

Building an energy efficient home with recycled materials is a prime example of how sustainable design methods can be used to construct residential buildings.

How can I apply these principles?

Homeowners who are renovating can implement sustainable design practices in a number of ways. Here are some ideas:

Flooring options. Reclaimed wood, such as from scaffolds, is a great way to revamp your floors. Plus, they're pre-seasoned and won't warp once installed.

Paint options. Eco-friendly paints, which contain no volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are a good option. For an even greener choice, seek out retailers who sell recycled paint.

Surface options. Countertops made from recycled materials are increasingly popular and vastly more sustainable than those made from man-made materials such as engineered stone. Some companies also offer ceramic tiles made from recycled television screens.

Plumbing options. If updating a bathroom, opt for low-flow toilets, faucets and showers.

Furniture options. Consider looking for reclaimed furniture, or furniture built from recycled and upcycled materials.

Where can I find sustainable materials?

Most hardware stores carry at least some of these materials. Low-flow fixtures, for instance, are readily available. In addition, there are suppliers and artisans who specialize in offering sustainable and recycled products.

Did you know? North America produces nearly 600 million tons of construction waste per year, most of which ends up in landfills.

How to make your pool more energy efficient

Swimming pools require a ton of energy to heat and operate. Here's how to make it less costly for you and the environment.

Use a solar cover. It'll capture the sun's heat during the day and help maintain the water's temperature at night. To maximize the benefits, keep your pool covered for at least 16 hours a day. A solar cover also allows you to conserve water (and the pool chemicals in it) by reducing evaporation.

Install an efficient pump. Water needs to circulate through the pump faster for cleaning than it does for filtration. A variable or two-speed system automatically adjusts the flow rate based on its operation. An in-ground pool will use up to 65 percent less energy if an Energy Star certified pump is installed.

Opt for a heat pump. This type of pump draws considerably less electricity because it mostly relies on ambient summer air to heat the pool's water. For increased energy savings, lower the programmed temperature by a few degrees.

Even without investing in this equipment, you can reduce the amount of energy it takes to maintain your pool. Set up a timer on the pump so it'll turn it off periodically. This allows the pump to use less power without compromising water quality.



Hot tubs

Ideally, hot tubs should be sheltered from the elements, particularly the wind. Choose a sturdy, well-insulated cover and make sure to close it after you use the hot tub. If you know you won't be using it for a while, set it to sleep mode. Shut it off completely for the winter.



Reduce food waste with gleaning

What's gleaning?

Gleaning is the act of collecting leftover or overlooked fruits and vegetables from fields and orchards after they've been commercially harvested. This practice limits food waste by allowing people to pick produce before it's thrown away or no longer edible. It also allows people to eat fruits and vegetables that don't meet the strict esthetic requirements of retail markets.

How does it work?

Gleaning has been around for hun-

dreds of years and was often practised on grain crops. However, today it applies to a wide variety of produce, including blueberries, strawberries, apples, squashes, pears, cucumbers and more. The harvested food is usually divided between volunteers, producers and community food banks to help those in need and prevent large quantities of fruits and vegetables from going to waste.

You can enjoy fresh, local food and save on your grocery bill by looking for gleaning groups in your area.

Do you enjoy being outdoors and eating fresh produce? If so, you may want to try gleaning. This activity combines both these elements and helps reduce food waste. Here's what you should know.



How to reduce your home's energy consumption in summer

Making your home more energy efficient is good for the planet and your wallet. Here are a few tips to help you reduce your energy consumption during the summer months.

Upgrade your air conditioner. You can lower your energy bills considerably by switching to an Energy Star certified model, especially if your current unit is more than 10 years old. For best results, use HEPA filters.

Allow fresh air to circulate. A ceiling fan can help cool a room and reduce strain on your air conditioner. Choose an Energy Star certified model to minimize energy consumption.

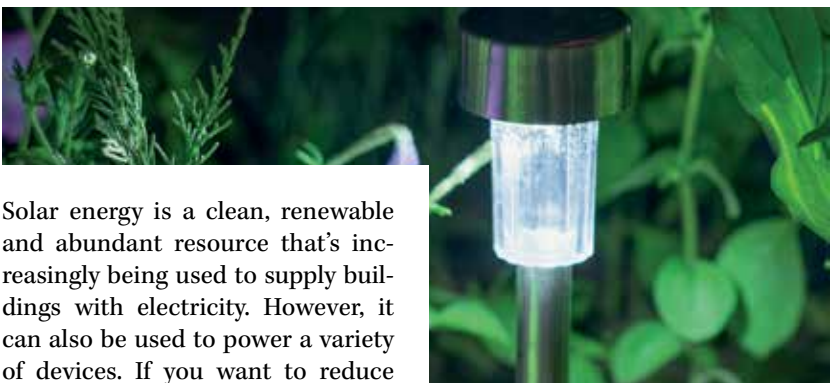
Keep the heat out. Close blinds and curtains during the day, especially those on southern-facing windows. This will help regulate your indoor temperature.

Rethink outdoor lighting. Use solar-powered lights to brighten up the patio and opt for motion-sensor lights around the sides of your property.

Set up timers. Program your outdoor lights to go on when it gets dark and turn off when you go to bed. You should also consider installing a timer for your pool pump.

Dry laundry outside. A clothesline or drying rack will allow you to take advantage of sunny days and avoid turning on the dryer.

14 practical solar-powered devices



Solar energy is a clean, renewable and abundant resource that's increasingly being used to supply buildings with electricity. However, it can also be used to power a variety of devices. If you want to reduce your reliance on single-use batteries and lower your energy bills, here are 14 types of solar-powered gadgets.

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Lighter | 8. Lantern |
| 2. Calculator | 9. Watch |
| 3. Phone charger | 10. Projector |
| 4. Water heater | 11. Radio |
| 5. Keyboard | 12. Alarm clock |
| 6. Fountain | 13. Backpack |
| 7. Flashlight | 14. Thermometer |

If properly cared for, high-quality solar panels can last several decades. Plus, their silicon cells are made of aluminum, glass and plastic, which means they can be recycled.

If you need to buy a present for an environmentally conscious friend or family member, consider gifting them with a solar-powered device.



7 types of reusable kitchen waste

In many households, the kitchen is a major source of waste. Fortunately, you can reuse plenty of items to extend their lifespan or keep them out of the garbage altogether. Here are a few suggestions.

1. Roots and stems. Green onions, bok choy and herbs, among other vegetables, can easily be replanted to grow fresh produce for future meals.

2. Vegetable scraps. Collect potato peels, celery leaves and other scraps in the freezer until you have enough to boil and strain to make broth for soups.

3. Hard bread. Turn stale bread and the end slices of a loaf into seasoned croutons, breadcrumbs or French toast.

4. Eggshells. When crushed up and added to soil, they provide calcium for your plants. Alternatively, place larger pieces at the bottom of a pot to improve drainage.

5. Apple peels. These scraps can be used to make everything from oven-baked chips and infused water to homemade apple vinegar, syrup, jelly and cider.

6. Butter wrappers. Save them so you can grease pots and pans with the remaining bits of butter that cling to the wrapper.

7. Plastic mesh. The net bags that hold onions and citrus fruit can be balled up and used to scrub dishes.

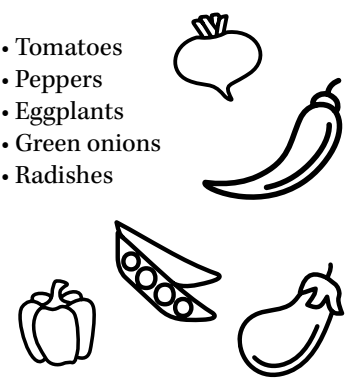
How to grow vegetables on your balcony

Gardening is a wonderful way to stay active, relieve stress and spend time outdoors. If you grow your own vegetables, you'll enjoy the added benefit of saving money on food and having access to organically grown produce. Plus, you'll reduce your carbon footprint and be less likely to waste food that you grew yourself.

However, not everyone has a backyard or enough green space on their property for a regular garden. Fortunately, many of the vegetables you might plant in your yard can thrive in pots on your balcony or patio.

Here are just some of the many vegetables that can be grown in containers:

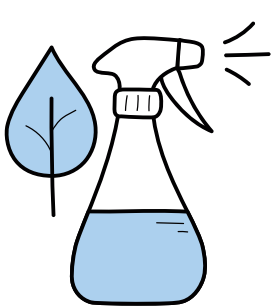
- Tomatoes
- Peppers
- Eggplants
- Green onions
- Radishes



Once you've selected your vegetables, choose pots with good drainage and enough depth to accommodate the plant's growth. You'll also need to water your vegetables every day and ensure they get enough sunlight.

Finally, it's best to use potting soil for your balcony garden, as it contains more nutrients than other types and can help prevent root rot.

3 non-toxic disinfectants



Kitchen countertops, bathroom vanities and other surfaces need to be kept clean. Here are three non-toxic disinfectants that'll kill germs without harming you or the environment.

Accelerated hydrogen peroxide You're probable familiar with hydrogen peroxide, a disinfectant that breaks down into water and oxygen.

Accelerated hydrogen peroxide contains stabilizers and compounds that reduce surface tension, increasing both its germ-killing properties and shelf life.

Plant-based disinfectants Botanical disinfectants have been on the market for a while. One example is thymol, an oil extracted from thyme that's used in a variety of household cleaners. It's been found to have very little environmental impact.

Silver dihydrogen citrate The antibacterial properties of silver have been known for a long time. Silver ions combined with a citric acid solution is commonly used as a non-toxic antibacterial agent in cosmetics, but it could also serve as a household cleaner.

Keeping your home clean doesn't need to involve potentially toxic chemicals, even when it comes to the surfaces in your bathroom and kitchen.



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Advantages of growing fruits and vegetables in greenhouses

Interest among consumers and producers for greenhouse fruits and vegetables has been steadily growing in North America. Here are three advantages of greenhouse farming.

1. It protects crops from bad weather. Greenhouses protect crops from storms and cold temperatures. This makes them especially practical in northern communities that have short growing seasons. Greenhouses make it possible to grow produce year-round.

2. It allows for high-quality produce. Generally, greenhouses produce higher yields and better-quality fruits and vegetables than fields. This is because greenhouses are equipped

with irrigation, ventilation and heating systems. This controlled environment provides optimal growing conditions.

3. It facilitates organic farming. Greenhouses are closed environments. This makes them well suited to organic farming because producers can control pest populations without using pesticides. For example, they can introduce beneficial insects like ladybugs to help control pests that might otherwise damage crops.

The next time you're at the grocery store, keep an eye out for greenhouse-grown fruits and vegetables like lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, raspberries and strawberries.

GREEN IDEAS



A brief guide to upcycling



Did you know there's more than one way to recycle? When you toss scrap paper, plastic containers and glass jars into a bin, it's called downcycling. However, it's also possible to upcycle. Here's a look at this eco-friendly practice.

What's upcycling?

Also known as creative reuse, upcycling is the process of transforming used objects and waste materials into new, higher quality products.

For example, worn out fabric from old clothes can be repurposed to create fashion accessories and one-of-a-kind garments. This is in contrast to downcycling, which breaks down the original materials.

How can you do it?

Upcycling can be used to create art, home decor, clothing and a variety of everyday items. While an increasing number of companies have started to incorporate upcycling into their production process, there are also plenty of ways you can give new life to old objects lying around your home. For example, you can make a backpack out of empty juice pouches, transform Mason jars into light fixtures or use old curtains to make face masks.

What are the benefits?

As is the case with downcycling, upcycling reduces the amount of waste that ends up in landfills and limits the need to extract raw

materials. However, upcycling has less of an impact on the environment. This is because it doesn't need to break down materials in order to reuse them. Downcycling, on the other hand, relies on water to process paper and requires energy to melt plastic and glass.

If you want to help protect the environment and support your local economy, look for up-cycled products sold at the stores in your area.



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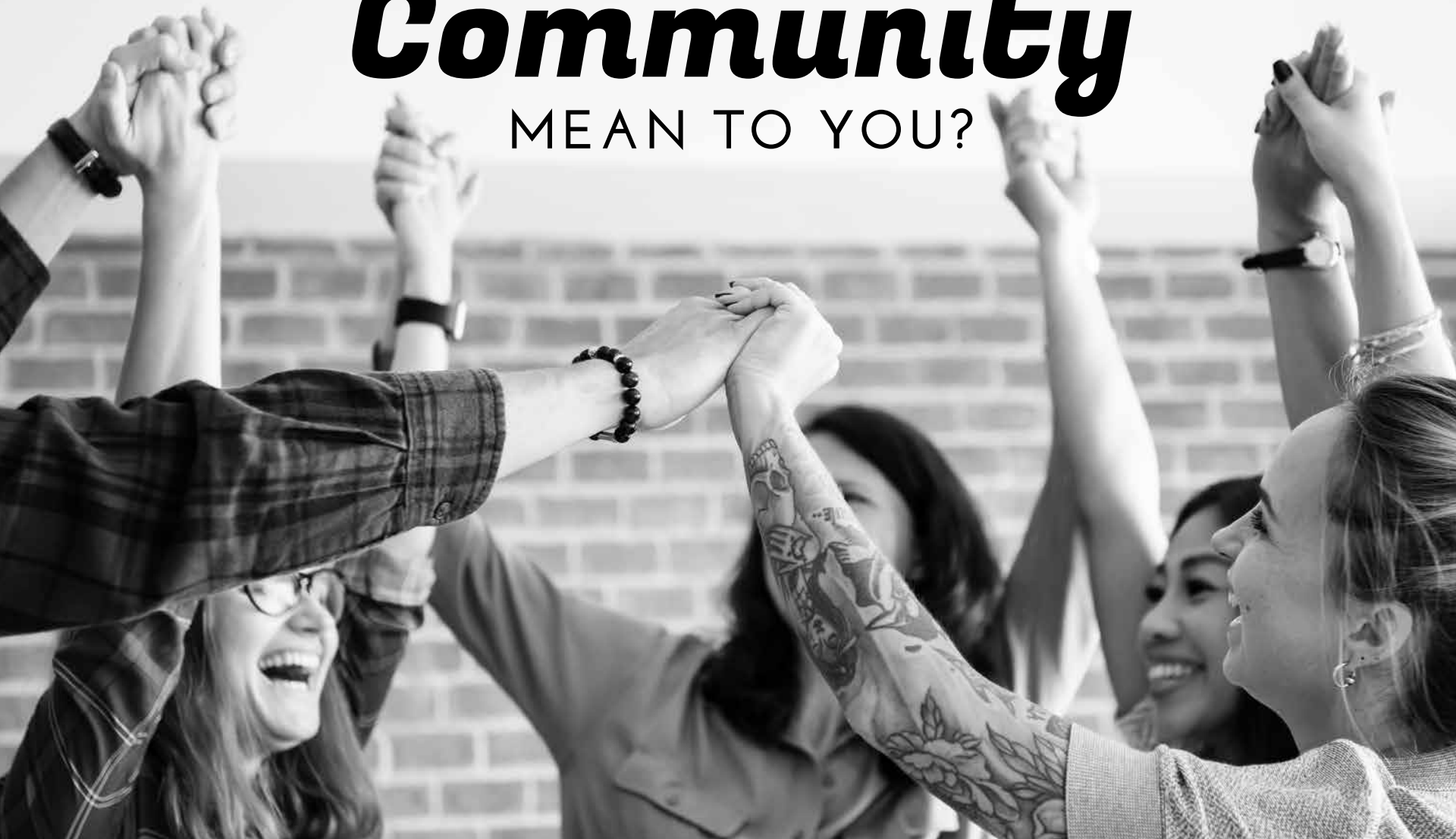
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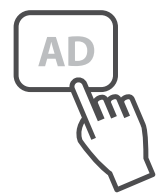
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