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If being stuck at home during the pandemic has given you the urge to renovate, you’re not alone. Here are some tips and ideas to help you upgrade your living space.

**RENOVATION TRENDS**

Home upgrades are set to ramp up in 2021. Here are some of the latest trends you may want to get in on:

1. **Making homes more hygienic.** Since porcelain only absorbs 0.1 percent of bacteria, many homeowners are using this material for their countertops and floors. Additionally, touchless faucets and smart soap dispensers have become increasingly popular.

2. **Enhancing outdoor spaces.** When public spaces were shut down, many homeowners focused their attention on upgrading their backyards. Screened porches, gazebos, decks, pools and hot tubs are now all the rage as people look for new ways to make the most of spending time at home.

3. **Creating multipurpose rooms.** For many people, working from home made it necessary to rearrange one or more rooms to serve as an office, school, gym or studio. Designing a multifunctional room is a great way to make the most of your living space.

4. **Letting in more natural light.** Pandemic lockdowns inspired homeowners to bring the outdoors inside with windows and skylights. Natural light not only makes a space brighter, but it can also boost your mood and productivity.

**REMODELING DURING THE PANDEMIC**

Before starting your renovation project, it’s a good idea to get quotes from several contractors. Since the price of building materials has skyrocketed due to a limit in supplies, shopping around for the right contractor can help you stay within your budget. In addition, you may want to find out if they offer a price adjustment clause in their contract to recoup any increased costs.

As with any renovation, planning for delays and unexpected bumps in the road is a must. Before starting your upgrade, make sure you have all the necessary building permits and licences. You should also sign an agreement with your contractor that outlines mandatory deadlines. This will help keep the project on track.

Lastly, if you want to minimize costs, look into receiving reimbursements from local energy efficiency assistance programs.

According to a survey by porch.com, nearly 60 percent of Americans said that spending more time inside during the pandemic inspired them to renovate their home.
4 AREAS TO UPDATE IN YOUR KITCHEN

From upgrading the sink and faucet to replacing cabinet hardware and installing a new backsplash, there are plenty of ways to modernize your kitchen.

FLOORING As a gathering place in your home, the kitchen’s floor gets a lot of wear. If yours is faded, scratched or stained, you have two options. Either you can repair it — swap out cracked tiles or sand and varnish hardwood — or replace the entire surface. To help you make a decision that suits your needs and budget, seek advice from a professional.

PAINT Whether the colors in your kitchen are out-dated or the walls have faded over time, a fresh coat of paint is an affordable way to breathe new life into a space. Consider repainting the cabinets as well as the walls. You can easily add a modern flair to your kitchen by choosing a second, bolder color for the island or lower cabinets.

COUNTERTOPS Even if the material is timeless, years of preparing meals on them can leave kitchen countertops looking a little worse for wear. Replacing them with a pristine surface can instantly change the look of the room. Visit specialized stores in your area to discover the wide range of materials, colors and textures available.

APPLIANCES The stovetop, oven and range hood, along with the fridge, microwave and dishwasher, are focal points in a kitchen. If yours are scratched, mismatched or out-dated, consider selling or donating them so you can invest in newer models. To get the most out of your purchase, be sure to select Energy Star certified appliances or smart devices.

5 CREATIVE DIY PAINTING PROJECTS

It’s amazing what a little paint can do. Here are five fun and easy projects that can have a major impact on the look and feel of your home.

GARAGE Elevate your home’s curb appeal by giving the garage doors a facelift. Choose a color that matches the trim and shutters and complements the house’s other exterior features.

FRONT DOOR First impressions matter. Make a great one by choosing a bright, welcoming color for your front door.

CABINETS In a kitchen, painting the cabinets can completely redefine the look and feel of the space. When choosing a color, consider the hues in your backsplash, countertop, floor and walls.

SHELVES If you have built-in shelves, consider painting them a bold color to draw attention to your collections, photographs and books.

DRESSER If you have a dingy old set of drawers or want to give a boring room a boost, consider refurbishing your wooden dresser. Use a punchy color if you want to create interest, but opt for a neutral if you prefer the piece blend in.

A variety of accessories can be used to transform the look of your kitchen. Visit your local home decor shops to find curtains, blinds, mirrors, light fixtures and more.
If your property doesn’t provide you with enough shade, here are four stylish structures that can give you a break from the sun.

**AWNING**

This type of device can be rolled out over a patio or deck when you need shade and is easily retracted when not in use. However, it needs to be secured to an exterior wall first. Although typically controlled by a hand crank, some newer models open and close with the press of a button.

**FREESTANDING GAZEBO**

This sturdy structure consists of a metal frame with four pillars and a canvas roof. Some models include curtains that can be closed for privacy or to block the sun.

**ARBOR**

This classic garden feature is often used to create an entryway. However, since its arches are typically lined with vines and other climbing plants, it can also offer respite from the sun.

**FOLDING CANOPY**

This temporary structure can be unfolded and set up within minutes. It’s a practical solution for backyard parties and picnics when you need to accommodate a number of guests.

All of these structures can provide you with ample shade and a comfortable place to lounge in your backyard. This summer, minimize the risk of getting sunburned by installing one or more of these devices.
6 PRIVACY OPTIONS FOR YOUR YARD

If you want your yard to be a private oasis where you can relax unobserved, you’ll need to install a privacy screen. Here are six options to consider.

Louvres The angle of the slats on most louvered privacy screens can be adjusted to allow plenty of natural light in while still shielding your yard from view. They’re usually made of wood or steel.

Trellises Available in many different styles and sizes, trellises look great on their own or as a support for climbing plants. If you want a privacy screen that does double duty, grow fruitbearing vines along it like cucumber or grape.

Curtains One easy way to create privacy is to hang large swaths of fabric from a pergola or similar structure. Best of all, they can simply be moved aside when they’re not needed.

Hedges A sturdy hedge creates a natural screen, barrier and home for local wildlife. Cedar is a good choice, but there are many other types of shrubs that make nice hedges.

Fences Metal and wood fences are a pricier option, but they last a long time and add value to your property. For a modern look, combine materials.

Shades Typically made of canvas, outdoor shades are great for spaces that don’t require constant privacy. Simply pull the shades down when you want them and retract them when you don’t.

In addition to shielding you from view, privacy features add visual interest to your yard and make it a more beautiful place to spend your time.

TIPS FOR INSTALLING WATER FEATURES

If you want to install a fountain or similar type of water feature in your yard, there are three factors to consider: style, location and upkeep. Here’s what you should know.

Style
Some fountains are freestanding, which means they can be placed in the middle of your yard. Others are wall-mounted and typically incorporated into another water feature.

You should also think about the fountain’s size and shape as well as the durability of its material. Don’t forget to consider the amount of noise the fountain will make.

Location
The right spot to install your fountain is one that’s near a watertight electrical outlet. The location should also be protected from the wind and moderately shaded.

You should also think about the fountain’s size and shape as well as the durability of its material. Don’t forget to consider the amount of noise the fountain will make.

Upkeep
Fountains and other water features need to be maintained. You should check the water level periodically and replenish it as required. You’ll also need to remove debris from the pump and clean the filter on a regular basis. Additionally, you may need to use special products to help control moss, algae and plant growth.

At the end of the summer you’ll also need to empty the fountain, clean and store the equipment and cover the outdoor structure with canvas.
**SELECTION AN OUTDOOR FIREPLACE**

Do you want a fireplace for your backyard? With so many outdoor models available, you should take the time to find one that suits your needs. Here are a couple of things to think about.

**THE FUEL**

One of the first decisions you’ll need to make is whether you want a fireplace that uses wood or gas. While wood-burning fireplaces are easy to install and give off a pleasant aroma, they require regular maintenance. You’ll also need somewhere to store the logs, and some municipalities have restrictions on the use of wood firepits.

Contrarily, fireplaces that run on natural gas or propane are easy to maintain. Another advantage is that you can adjust the intensity of the flames with the push of a button. However, you must be able to connect it to a gas line or willing to periodically refill the tank.

**THE USE**

Consider how you want to use your outdoor fireplace. If you want to make it a gathering place for friends and family, opt for a round model. To create a relaxing corner where you can curl up in privacy, a rectangular fireplace may be more suitable. If you plan to cook over the embers, choose a model with a grill.

Finally, keep in mind your budget and space limitations when shopping for an outdoor fireplace. Consult the staff at your local hardware store for additional advice.

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**3 FRUIT SHRUBS FOR YOUR GARDEN**

There are several advantages to growing fruit shrubs. In addition to improving the look of your yard, many of these plants produce edible berries. Here are three species to consider.

1. **BLACK CHOKEBERRY**

   This easy-to-grow ornamental shrub will brighten up your yard in spring with its white and pink blooms. After admiring the flowers, you can harvest handfuls of the black berries, which are rich in antioxidants and can be used to make jam, juice and wine.

2. **ELDERBERRY**

   This plant produces large, flat clusters of tiny white flowers that have edible petals. As for the berries, they must be cooked prior to eating them. Failing to do so is likely to result in an upset stomach. However, their tart taste makes them a great option for pie fillings, jams and syrups.

3. **HIGHBUSH CRANBERRY**

   Though it’s different from a regular cranberry, this bright red fruit does have a similar taste. The berries are naturally high in pectin, which makes them ideal for making jams and jellies. Keep in mind, however, that this shrub can grow up to thirteen feet tall.

Before you select a fruit shrub for your yard, make sure it’s well-suited for the climate in your area. Consult the hardiness zone on the plant’s label or speak with a specialist at your local Yamhill County garden center.
DIY birdhouses make a great summer project! You can find tons of step-by-step guides online and in bookstores. Grab your tools and get building!

BUILD WITH CONFIDENCE!

— David Attenborough

WHAT TO LOOK FOR
Choose birdhouses with the following features:

• Mold-resistant materials (cedar wood is an excellent choice)
• A design that allows optimal ventilation and drainage
• A roof that juts out a few centimeters over the entrance
• A door that allows easy access to the inside for cleaning
• A look that’s harmonious with the rest of your landscaping

GETTING STARTED
If you want to attract more birds to your garden, keep in mind that they have more or less the same physical needs as human beings: water, food, and shelter. That means the main elements in any garden should include a birdbath or fountain to provide water, trees and birdhouses for shelter, and edible plants as a source of food.

You can encourage birds to live in your garden by growing their favorite plants. Hummingbirds, for example, are attracted to brightly colored flowers. Other birds are attracted by plants such as sunflowers, asters, African marigolds, and other flowers that produce large quantities of seeds.

BIRDS LOVE WATER, but they don’t necessarily like to drink it from the ground, where they are vulnerable to predators, such as cats. Position your birdbath close to some trees or a hedge, where the birds can seek temporary refuge. Also ensure that any source of water is cleaned regularly, as birds won’t frequent places of doubtful cleanliness.

It goes without saying that you should never use pesticides in your garden — they are extremely harmful to birds. Whether natural or chemical, these products often disrupt the delicate balance of nature. Pesticides also kill a lot of insects, which are an important food source for many birds.

ADD LIFE TO YOUR GARDEN WITH BIRDHOUSES
Are you a fan of gardening and birdwatching? Then why not combine your two hobbies by incorporating birdhouses into your landscaping? Here are a few tips for creating a garden filled with colorful blooms and the chirps of winged creatures all summer long.

SPECIES TO CHARM
First off, determine which types of bird you’d like to attract. To avoid disappointment, find out which birds typically frequent your area. Next, go get some quality birdhouses from your local gardening center or hardware store. Ask a salesperson to help you choose the best models for the types of bird you’re looking to attract.

You’ll need to consider the size of the entrance and the available nesting space inside of the birdhouse.

ATTRACTING HUMMINGBIRDS
Who isn’t thrilled to see a hummingbird in the backyard, that tiny wonder of nature, frenetically swooping from one plant to the next. The best way to attract one to your home is to have a water feature in your yard, along with trees and vines or flowers at least two feet high.

Hummingbirds can travel up to six hundred miles, as they follow the flowering season of their favorite plants. Their beaks are designed to suck nectar: they insert their long, needle-like beaks into flowers and drink quickly with their tongues. These tiny birds are particularly attracted to flute-shaped red flowers, such as fuchsia, honeysuckle, morning glory, and sage — all plant varieties that are easily found in garden centers.

It is also possible to attract hummingbirds by installing feeders filled with artificial nectar. These are sold in most garden centers and department stores.

To get the best possible view of a feeding hummingbird, install a feeder on a windowsill, which will allow you to admire it from inside your home. It is also a good idea to install a feeder near a source of water, as these birds need to drink eight times their weight in water every day. Having trees and shrubs in which they can build their nests is another great way to keep them close to your home all summer long. You’ll soon agree that the pleasures of gardening go beyond fresh flowers and vegetables!
Looking to buy a home? Here are some strategies to keep you on the right track while you search for the perfect place.

Know your budget and stick to it. Being aware of the amount you can afford — which won't necessarily be the same amount that your lender will offer — is essential to the house hunting process. Only seriously consider those abodes that are within your means.

Make a list of needs and wants. Rate each of your wants on a scale from one to five. This list will allow you to instantly recognize a suitable find when you see one.

Pay attention to the neighborhood. Only consider houses that are in areas with the amenities, services and lifestyle that suit you and your family.

Research online to get an idea of what’s out there, but don’t let what you see on the web determine if a home's right for you or not. Always visit in person if the house meets your needs and the price and neighborhood are the right fit.

Take notes and pictures when you visit homes, as it’s easy to forget what you saw and where you saw it after visiting multiple properties.

Educate yourself on market values and trends in your desired neighborhoods. This way, you’ll know a good deal when you see one.

The most important thing when it comes to buying a home is to find a place that meets your needs and budget. Avoid being swayed by emotion and instead rely on reason and research to make the right decision.
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- **Location:** McMinnville

**$429,900**
- **Location:** McMinnville

**$399,000**
- **Location:** McMinnville
How to reduce your home’s energy consumption this 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. For best results, use HEPA filters.

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.

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