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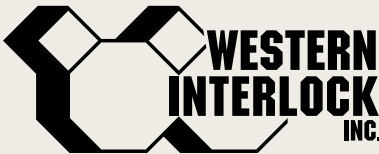


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CONTENTS

Get your home winter-ready.....**4**

8 trends to adopt in 2024.....**7**

Recipes: Tastes of Europe.....**10**

8 affordable DIY projects.....**14**

GREENIDEAS

How to de-ice surfaces.....**19**



7



10



14



Get your home WINTER-READY!

Here are five things you can do inside your home to keep you warm and cozy over the coming months.

1. Check the doors and windows for leaks

Windows and doors can account for up to a quarter of your home's heat loss. If your windows are drafty, try installing weatherstripping to reduce your heating bill before you consider replacing them.

2. Remove the window screens

Leaving the bug screens on your windows encourages and traps condensation. Now is the time to clean and remove them for winter. This'll also allow more light and solar heat to enter your home.

3. Maintain your heating and ventilation systems

Clean your electric base-board heaters to avoid an unpleasant burning when you turn them on. Wash or replace the filters on your air exchanger, keep furniture and curtains away from heat sources and inspect your appliances. Wipe down the grille of your bathroom exhaust fan with a damp cloth.

4. Check the condition of all detectors

Dust your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and replace the batteries if necessary. Moreover, verify that they haven't expired and test them to ensure they're working properly.

5. Clean your wood stove and chimney

Wash and inspect your wood stove or fireplace before using it for the first time. Contact a professional to sweep your chimney to ensure it's clear. Avoid using sweeping logs, as they're not as effective.

Is your heating system old or not working properly? Don't wait until the temperature plummets to make an appointment with a specialist for a full inspection or repair.



Safe stairs for winter: 3 non-slip options

To keep you and your visitors safe during the winter months, here are three materials that make exterior stairs less slippery.

1. Recycled rubber

Black tread covers made of recycled rubber are remarkably resistant to shocks, inclement weather, humidity, ultraviolet rays, oil and mildew. They are easy to install, maintain and store. They can, however, be quite heavy.

2. Polypropylene fiber

Available in an array of colors and patterns, polypropylene fiber can be bought in mats or rolls. While this product can stand up to heavy traffic, it should be treated against UV rays. To prevent seepage, it has waterproof backing made of vinyl or rubber, which increases its durability.

3. Coir

This material, made of coconut fiber, typically comes in a natural ecru color. It can give your exterior a unique look and works best on wood and concrete surfaces. The downside? Coir tends to retain water and dust. In addition, if not installed well, it may become loose over time.

To learn which materials will work best on your stairs, visit the flooring experts in your area.



Photo: www.technoflexintl.com

What outdoor work can you do to prepare for winter?

Tidy

Empty, clean and store your rain barrels and garden hoses. Put your garden furniture, outdoor games and barbecue in your shed, garage or attic. However, make sure to leave the propane tank outside.

Inspect

Take a walk around your property to make sure everything is in order.

For example, ensure your outdoor taps and the flaps on your dryer vent and extractor hood are closed. Check the condition of your roof and gutters and dead leaves and branches. Inspect your stucco or siding and window frames and look for cracks that could allow insects, water or air to seep inside. Seal any holes if necessary.

Protect

Bring annual plants and flowers you want to keep over winter inside your home. Provide adequate shelter for small plants, like young conifers and rose bushes, which could be damaged by heavy snowfall. Cut back any branches that could fall on power lines, but only if it's safe to do so.





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8 trends to adopt in 2024

In 2024, the world of interior design is experiencing a new wave that will transform our living spaces. The trend is to balance elegant functionality with optimistic expressiveness. Here are some trends worth considering.

1. Maximalism
A departure from recent minimalist esthetics, maximalism celebrates boldness and extravagance. It encourages homeowners to combine various textures, colors and accessories to create visually captivating interiors. Let your unique style shine through!

2. Multifunctional living
As the demand for adaptable living spaces grows, multifunctional furniture is becoming more popular. Items like Murphy beds, folding tables and modular storage units can serve multiple purposes, allowing homeowners to make the most of their living areas for different activities.

3. Curvy esthetic
Curved furniture, rounded archways and circular decor create a fluid and comfortable space, making the home environment more welcoming. These elements celebrate traditional decor without unnecessary embellishment and soften the harsh lines associated with modern architecture.

4. Gold, gold and more gold
Gold accents add a touch of luxury and sophistication to any room. For example, you'll see gold-plated fixtures, gilded mirrors and metallic gold accessories everywhere this year. The warmth of gold helps create an inviting atmosphere in your home.

5. Antique and retro accents
Whether you're a seasoned collector or a connoisseur of trends, antique and retro accents are a hot choice in decor. Features like mid-century modern chairs, vintage

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8 Trends continued

wallpaper and antique mirrors bring nostalgia and sophistication to modern interiors, creating a timeless appeal.

6. Geometrics

Geometrics express the epitome of balance in decor. Simplistic in design, these patterns can be combined or stylized to create complex — even abstract — looks. From hexagonal tiles and geometric wallpaper to triangular shelving units, this trend can add a modern and dynamic touch to your interior.

7. Close-to-nature spaces

In 2024, interior design continues to prioritize organic elements, such as indoor plants, wood and stone. Earthy color palettes also help bring the natural world indoors, promoting relaxation, well-being and sustainability.



8. Home technology

With the increasing popularity of smart bulbs, motion sensors and integrated lighting, technology is becoming a major focus in homes. Total home automation platforms provide homeowners with a truly futuristic experience. Modern, unimposing design helps prevent your devices from overpowering your home's esthetics.

5 tips to ensure your reno will last

Do you plan to renovate your home? If so, here are a few tips to ensure your project stands the test of time.



1. Project yourself into the future
Don't base your renovation decisions solely on your current wants and needs. If you anticipate expanding your family over the next few years, or if your children are getting ready to leave the nest, take these eventualities into account.

2. Invest in quality products
When purchasing or replacing pricier items like your bathtub, stove or sofa, it's best to seek out brands with a reputation for reliability. Though they may cost more initially, you won't have to replace them as quickly, and their longer lifespan will put money in your pocket.

3. Integrate trends economically
If you like to keep up with trends, do it with accessories like curtains, mirrors and cushions. These items are easy to replace without breaking the bank when they wear out or look dated. You might also want to ex-

periment with paint, which is a relatively affordable way to update a space.

4. Opt for neutral colors
For anything you intend to be permanent and for items that are more expensive or difficult to replace, such as a shower stall or ceramic floor, choose neutral colors. Consider white, beige or grey, and opt for a design that'll age well.

5. Consider functionality
Take some time to reflect on your options to ensure your choices are as practical as they are fashionable. Don't leave things like lighting, storage and clearance space to chance. These details can make the difference between a successful renovation and one you regret.

To ensure your renovations live up to your expectations, be sure to rely on the expertise of your local contractors, architects and interior decorators.

Choose the perfect blinds for every room in your home

In addition to regulating the amount of natural light entering a room, blinds allow you to enjoy more privacy. Here are a few tips to help you choose the ideal blinds for each room in your home.



Bedroom
If you want a good night's sleep, opt for blackout window coverings that provide thermal insulation, such as aluminum Venetian blinds. You could also consider fabric blinds to add a touch of softness to your decor.



Living room
Venetian blinds are a great choice for the living room. You can play with different fabrics and patterns to add style to your living space. Roman and vertical blinds also look great in this room.

Bathroom
Vinyl blinds are a winning choice for this humid room. You can also find PVC blinds that look just like wood, an ideal option to create a serene feel.

Kitchen
Aluminum Venetian blinds are often recommended for kitchens because they're easy to maintain and can withstand moisture. Fabric roller blinds can also create a cozy atmosphere.

Can't decide between several options? The team at your local drapery shop will be happy to help.

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Tastes of Europe

Transport your tastebuds

Italian wedding soup

This tasty, hearty soup is an Italian classic. Serve it on a cold day for maximum comfort!



Servings: 6

INGREDIENTS

- 7 ounces ground beef
- 7 ounces ground pork
- 1/2 cup Italian breadcrumbs
- 1 egg
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped, divided
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, grated, divided
- 1/2 cup fresh Italian parsley, finely chopped, divided
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 1/2 cups carrots, finely diced
- 1 cup onion, finely diced
- 1 cup celery, finely diced
- 8 cups chicken stock
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 3/4 cup uncooked orzo (or puntalette)
- 7 ounces fresh spinach
- Salt and pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large bowl, combine the beef, pork, breadcrumbs, egg, 2 cloves of garlic, half the Parmesan cheese and half the parsley. Season with salt and pepper. Using your hands, shape them into small balls about 1 inch in diameter.
2. In a large pot, melt the butter and brown the meatballs on all sides, a few at a time. Set aside.
3. In the same pot, sauté the carrots, onions and celery for a few minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Add the remaining garlic and continue cooking for about 1 minute. Add the chicken stock and all the dried spices. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to a gentle simmer.
4. Add the meatballs and pasta and simmer for about 10 minutes until the meatballs are fully cooked. Adjust seasoning if necessary. Add the spinach right before serving.
5. Pour the soup into 6 pretty serving bowls. Garnish with the remaining fresh parsley and Parmesan cheese.



Smørrebrød

This divine open-faced Danish sandwich features a variety of gourmet toppings, making it perfect for breakfast or brunch.



Servings: 2

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 a ripe avocado
- 1 egg
- 2 slices rye bread
- 1 tablespoon butter, softened
- 3 sprigs fresh dill
- 1 shallot, sliced
- 2 tablespoons capers
- 3.5 ounces smoked salmon, sliced
- 1/4 cup fresh watercress
- Salt and pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. In a small bowl, mash the avocado with a fork. Season with salt and pepper and set aside.
2. Fill a small pot with water and bring it to a boil. Reduce the heat, gently place the egg into the water, and simmer for 6 to 7 minutes, depending on its size. Remove the egg from the pot and immediately immerse it in cold water to stop cooking.
3. Toast and butter the slices of rye bread.
4. Divide the avocado mixture between the 2 slices of bread. Place a few dill fronds on each slice. Divide the shallot, capers, smoked salmon and watercress evenly between the slices.
5. Peel the egg and cut it in half. Place each half on the smørrebrød. Garnish with the remaining dill and season with salt and pepper.



Swiss cheese fondue

Want to enjoy an interactive meal in good company? This cheese fondue from Switzerland is a pure delight.



Servings: 6

INGREDIENTS

- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 14 ounces Gruyere cheese, grated
- 7 ounces Vacherin cheese, grated
- 7 ounces Emmental cheese, grated
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons kirsch
- 1 baguette, cut into cubes

DIRECTIONS

1. Rub the inside of the fondue pot with the crushed garlic clove. Add the cornstarch and wine to the fondue pot and whisk to combine.
2. Turn the fondue pot up to medium-high. Once the wine is hot, gradually add the cheeses, stirring to melt them. Season with nutmeg and pepper to taste. Finish with the kirsch.
3. Serve with cubed bread. Guests can dip the bread into the sauce with a fondue fork.

In addition to cubed bread, feel free to serve other foods for dipping, such as cold cuts, sausages and vegetables. Let your imagination run wild!

Speculoos cookies

These spiced Belgian biscuits pair perfectly with a cup of tea. Enjoy one for dessert or as a snack.



Servings: 24

INGREDIENTS

- 2 1/4 cups brown sugar
- 2 egg yolks
- 1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
- 3 tablespoons 35% heavy whipping cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- 1 cup almond flour
- 3 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom
- 1/4 teaspoon ground aniseed

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large bowl, combine the brown sugar, butter, egg yolks, cream, vanilla and lemon zest. Mix for about 5 minutes using an electric mixer until pale and airy. Add the almond flour and mix until well incorporated.
2. In a separate bowl, combine the remaining ingredients. Gently pour the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients, beating constantly. Form a ball with your hands, cover it with plastic wrap and let it stand at room temperature overnight.
3. Preheat the oven to 375 F. Using a rolling pin, roll out the dough to about 1/2 inch thick. Cut out pretty shapes with a cookie cutter or knife.
4. Place the cookies on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake for 12 minutes or until lightly browned. Let cool completely before serving.

Classic paella

Craving a bright, tasty meal? Paella is a typical Spanish dish that's a feast for the eyes and the taste buds!



Servings: 8

INGREDIENTS

- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3 cloves of garlic, chopped
- 1 red pepper, diced
- 4 chicken thighs, diced
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 pinch saffron
- 1/4 cup dry white wine
- 2 cups paella rice
- 5 cups hot chicken stock
- 9 ounces jumbo shrimp or scampi
- 9 ounces mussels, well cleaned
- 9 ounces squid rings
- 1/2 cup frozen peas

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large, deep frying pan, sweat the onion and garlic in the butter. Add the pepper, chicken, tomato paste, paprika, bay leaf and saffron. Continue cooking for about 5 minutes. Then, deglaze the pan with the white wine.
2. Add the rice and stir well to coat with the seasonings. Pour in the chicken stock and simmer gently for 10 minutes without stirring.
3. Arrange the prawns, mussels (opening upwards) and squid on top of the rice. Continue cooking for another 10 minutes.
4. Remove from the heat, add the peas, cover partially and let sit for 10 minutes before serving.





Wall coverings: essential materials

Whether you want to create a warm, contemporary, rustic or eccentric atmosphere in your home, there's a wide range of materials to suit your needs. Do you want to give one or more walls a makeover? These popular coverings will help make your home more beautiful.



Wood

Wood adds a sense of warmth and comfort to any room. Whether you opt for natural wood, reclaimed barn wood or laminated wood panels, this material adds a serene, organic touch to your decor.

Brick

Bricks are perfect for creating a rustic or retro look. They can be used on an entire wall or as an accent in a room. You have many choices, such as real brick or faux brick covering.

Stone

Stone wall coverings are synonymous with luxury and sophistication. Stones like marble, granite and schist are highly prized for their natural beauty and durability.

Metal tiles

Metal tiles or panels add a touch of refinement and shine to your space. They can be used to cover an entire wall or create strategically placed accents.

Vinyl

Vinyl coverings are available in a wide range of patterns and colors, often imitating other materials such as wood or stone. They're resistant to moisture and easy to install.

Wall coverings offer a multitude of possibilities for adding style to your home. Speak to the staff at your local home renovation store for more information.

5 interior design tips to make your windows look bigger

Have you always dreamt of building a workshop dedicated to your practical or creative projects? If you have an unused area in your garage, turn it into a DIY space.

1. Hang the curtain rod strategically. If you want your window to appear taller and broader, install the curtain rod about four inches above the window trim. Moreover, the curtain rod should extend about eight inches off the window frame on each side. This will trick the eye into thinking the window is bigger than it is.

2. Invest in high-quality drapes. Choose a high-quality fabric made of thick, sturdy material to help hide the line between the wall and the window. Patterned fabrics also draw the eye upwards, making the window look taller.

3. Paint the wall around the window a dark color. If the window frame is white, painting your walls white may make it fade into the background. Consider painting the wall surrounding your window a cool, dark color to make it pop.

4. Put up a large mirror. Hang a large mirror on the wall across from the window to let more light into the room. This will give the illusion of a bigger window.

5. Place low furniture around the window. When decorating your space, place small or low-profile furniture pieces near the window, so the eye is tricked by the scale.



Ethical interior design choices

Consumers are increasingly concerned about their ecological footprint and want to support companies that care about the well-being of their employees. When it comes to furnishing, decorating or renovating their homes, sustainability and eco-responsibility reign supreme. Here's an overview of some of the trends in interior design.



Furniture

Locally designed and manufactured furniture made from recycled materials is all the rage. Be wary of extremely cheap imported furniture, as it may have been manufactured using toxic products by companies that don't value human rights. Various shops also sell second-hand furniture in excellent condition. Keep an eye out!

Accessories

It's becoming less and less common to buy new cushions, rugs or picture

frames just to throw them away after a few years when they get broken or discoloured. Just as in the clothing industry, fast fashion is receiving criticism in the world of interior design because it contributes to the depletion of natural resources and feeds landfills.

Material

When refinishing your floors, for example, opt for wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or a composite material made from wood residue or recycled plastic. When it

comes to painting, look for paints made from renewable minerals or plant-based raw materials. If you need to rework the structure of your home, opt for recycled steel.

Finally, if you need to buy new household appliances or replace your doors and windows, choose products with an ENERGY STAR rating.

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Home improvements

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Don't feel like tackling a major renovation project but still want to breathe new life into your space? Here are eight affordable DIYs you can do to transform the look of your home in no time.

1. Swap out the hardware. All it takes to change the look of your drawer, closet, dresser and interior doors is brand-new hardware. Choose modern, retro or timeless handles to match the style in each room.



2. Resurface the cabinets. Give your kitchen a facelift by resurfacing the cabinets. You can either apply a self-adhesive coating to the exterior or replace the doors while keeping the cabinets intact. Painting them is another simple solution.

3. Replace the plumbing fixtures. Upgrading your faucets and showerheads is a simple way to update your kitchen or bathroom. Take the opportunity to reduce your environmental footprint by installing low-flow options.



4. Repaint the walls. Repainting the walls is an easy way to revamp your space. Choose cool, light colors to make the space look bigger and airier. Warm, dark hues will help create a more intimate atmosphere.

5. Reupholster the furniture. Couches, armchairs and kitchen or office chairs can all be given a makeover with new upholstery. For beautiful, long-lasting results, choose fabrics that don't pill. Covers are an economical option but measure carefully to ensure you buy ones that fit.

6. Create an accent wall. Liven up your bedroom, living room or study by painting a single wall in a contrasting color or applying patterned wallpaper or panelling. You could also create an eye-catching faux brick or stone wall.



7. Replace the light fixtures. Lighting plays a vital role in creating the right atmosphere. Swap your old light fixtures for stylish ones to change the look of your rooms, and switch to LED bulbs for better energy efficiency.

8. Add storage. Adding a few well-placed shelves and hooks can help organize your space and drastically change its appearance. They're also great for displaying accessories like plants and picture frames to elevate your decor.

Visit your local shops to get everything you need to transform your space — one project at a time.

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THE REAL ESTATE MARKET

Don't let winter put a chill on your house hunt

Most buyers prefer to shop for a new home during the warmer months. However, if you're willing to brave the cold weather, winter can be a great time to go house hunting. Are you able to take winter in stride? Here are some tips to make the most of your winter house hunt.



1. Plan your viewings. Since the days are shorter in winter, it's important to schedule your viewings so that you can see the houses in natural light. Make sure you give yourself enough time at each location to thoroughly assess the property and its surroundings.

2. Pay attention to seasonal issues. House shopping in winter allows you to spot season-specific problems, such as possible pest infestations and heating and drainage problems. Don't be afraid to ask about the home's most recent energy bills. Hire a building inspector to get an accurate

assessment of the general condition of the house.

3. Be flexible with deadlines. Winter weather conditions can often cause delays with real estate transactions. Be prepared to adjust your timeline to accommodate unforeseen events.

Buying a house in winter can be an excellent opportunity for buyers to take advantage of reduced competition, lower prices and higher availability in the real estate market.

Trust the professionals to help you get the property of your dreams.

How to financially prepare for home ownership

Today, becoming a homeowner can be difficult. However, with the right preparation and discipline, you may be able to realize your dream of owning a home more easily than you think. Here are three tips on how to financially prepare to become a homeowner.

1. Focus on paying off debt
When you borrow money to buy a home, lenders will evaluate your credit history and financial situation to ensure you can meet your mortgage obligations. For example, you can boost your credit score by paying off your debt as quickly as possible. It's much easier to get a mortgage once you no longer owe creditors money.

2. Create a detailed and realistic budget
Although sticking to a budget can feel a bit tedious, it prevents you from making blind decisions you may later regret. A well-thought-out budget must account for several expenses, like your mortgage, school taxes, electricity bills and home maintenance expenses.

You must also consider the costs associated with purchasing a property, such as moving expenses and title transfer fees. If your budget is in the black, go ahead and make your home purchase.



3. Improve your spending habits
You may be consciously or unconsciously overspending instead of putting money away for a down payment. Implementing healthy financial habits and trimming unnecessary spending could help you save more money. Use credit as a last resort and look for opportunities to save on essentials.

Do you need help managing your debt or saving for a down payment? Consult a professional, like a licensed insolvency trustee, financial advisor or accountant and follow their recommendations.

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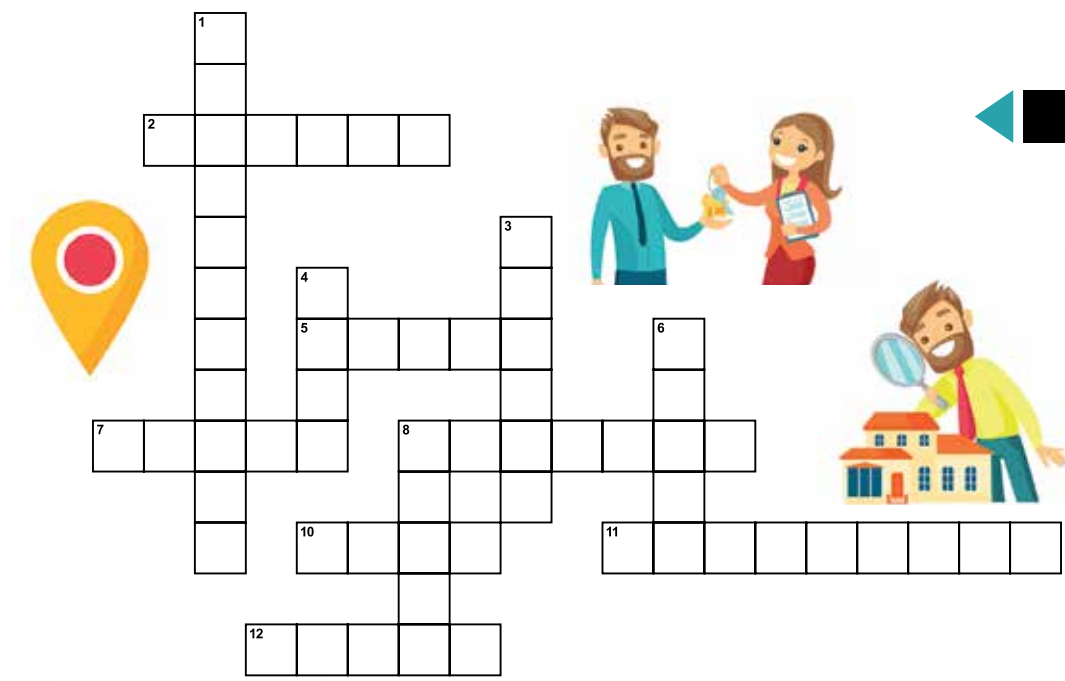
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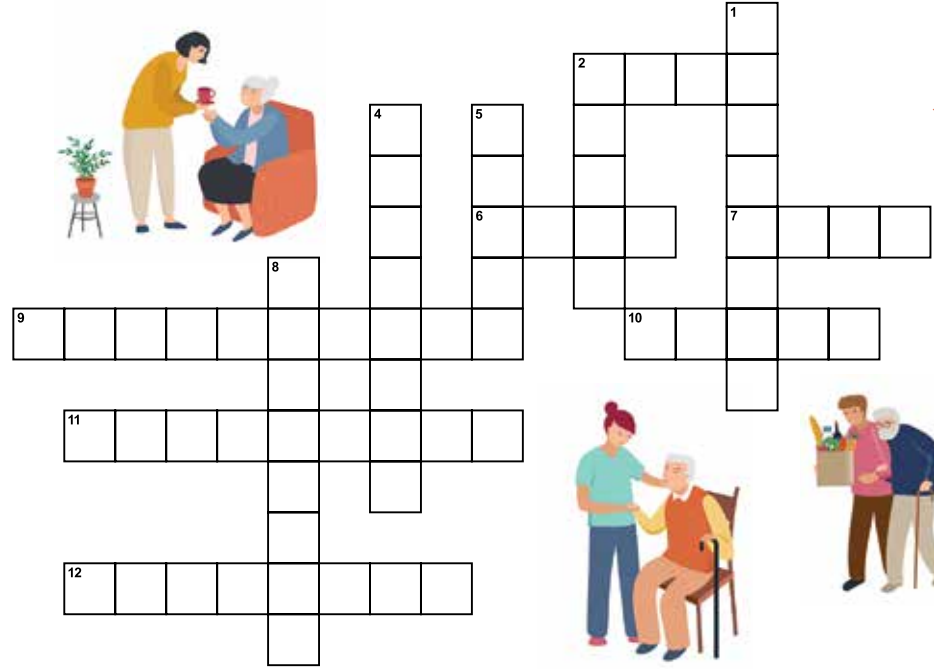
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THEME : REAL ESTATE

- ACROSS**
- 2. Supply and demand situation.
 - 5. Promise to buy.
 - 7. Cost.
 - 8. Touring a property.
 - 10. Transfer of property.
 - 11. Adjoining home.
 - 12. Purchaser.

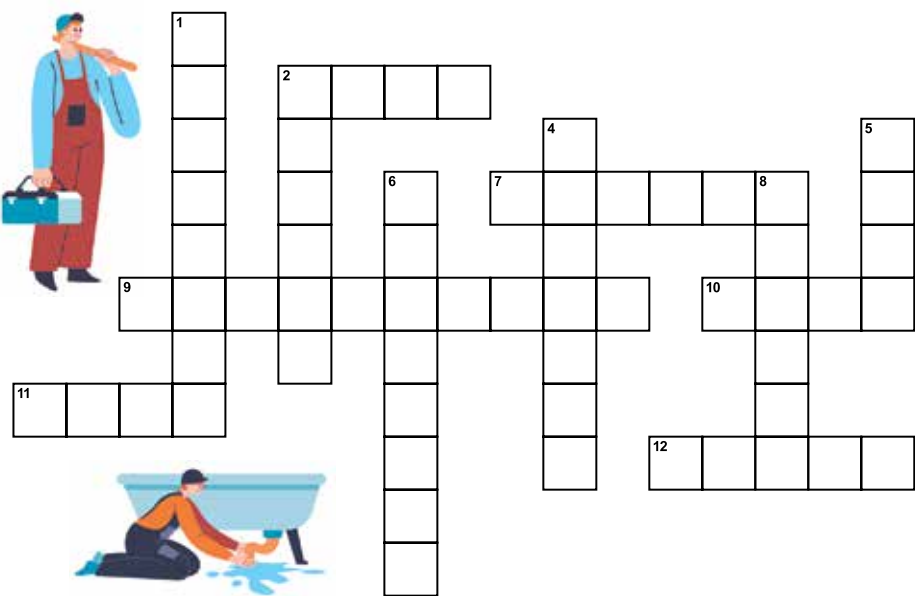
- DOWN**
- 1. Commercial operation.
 - 3. Part of an address.
 - 4. ... is where the heart is.
 - 6. Short for condominium.
 - 8. Price corresponding to the estimate.



THEME : SENIORS' RESIDENCE

- ACROSS**
- 2. Provided by staff.
 - 6. You eat one three times a day.
 - 7. You pay it every month.
 - 9. Recreation.
 - 10. Outdoor space.
 - 11. One-bedroom, two-bedroom, three-bedroom.
 - 12. Allows you to go from one floor to another.

- DOWN**
- 1. Synonym for safety.
 - 2. You do a big one every spring.
 - 4. Seniors' residences offer these.
 - 5. Puzzles and cards are types of...
 - 8. You celebrate yours every year.



THEME : PLUMBING

- ACROSS**
- 2. Gasket that ensures water-tightness.
 - 7. Water flows out of this.
 - 9. Doesn't allow liquids to pass through.
 - 10. You use this to wash your hands.
 - 11. Channel.
 - 12. Clear liquid.

- DOWN**
- 1. Synonym for redesign.
 - 2. ... head
 - 4. Basin for bathing.
 - 5. Unwanted water infiltration.
 - 6. Room in the house.
 - 8. Large bowl with a seat.



GREEN IDEAS

How to de-ice surfaces in an environmentally friendly way

The winter season is synonymous with slippery streets, sidewalks, parking lots and stairs. To prevent accidents, individuals and municipalities use a variety of substances, some of which contain ingredients that can have a negative impact on waterways, plants, animals and the soil.

De-icing solutions that don't harm the planet are becoming more widespread, which is excellent news. Are you responsible for de-icing a surface? Find out what environmentally friendly solutions are available to make it as safe as possible.

Get in the habit of regularly clearing snow from the ground with a shovel or snow blower. This will help reduce the amount of ice that accumulates. Spread coffee grounds, sand, gravel, bird seed or a commercially available chemical-free non-slip mix to improve the surface's grip.

If the ice is thick and poses a slip-and-fall hazard, apply a food-based de-icing product that's colored to help you avoid

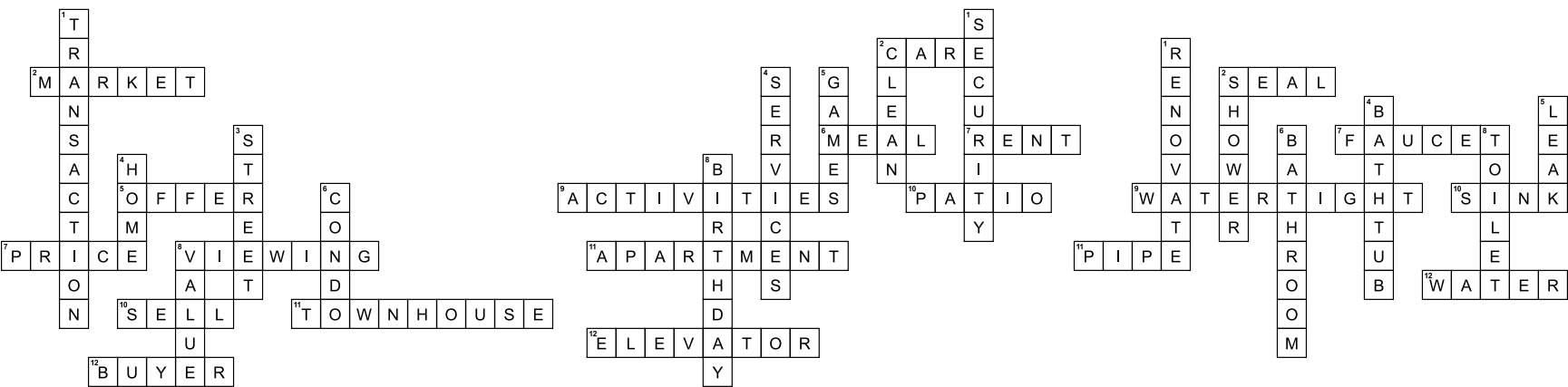
spreading too much. Grape pulp and beetroot, which have been used successfully on some highways in North America, are promising solutions.

You can also find eco-friendly de-icers that don't contain harmful magnesium chloride or calcium chloride at your

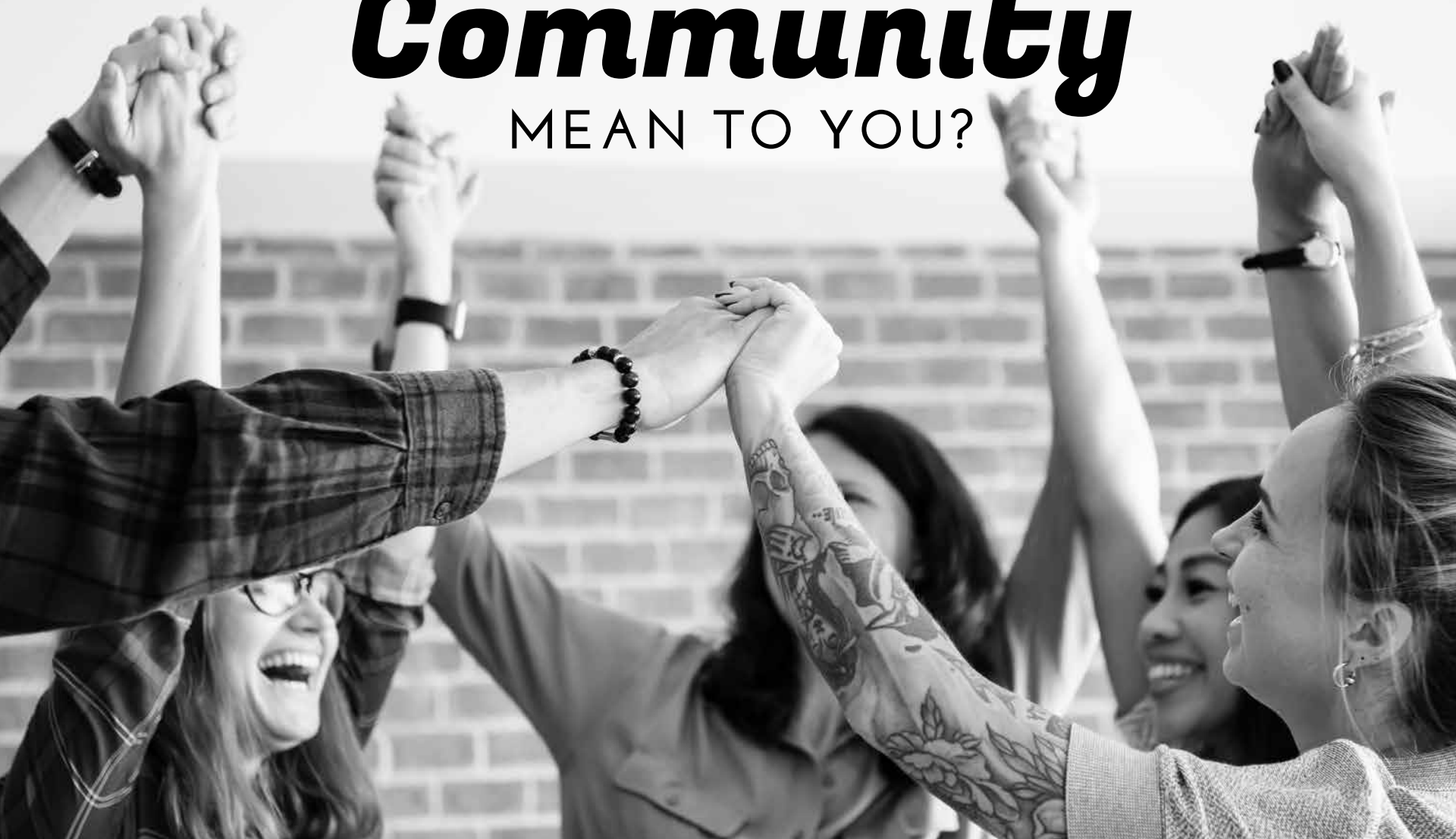
local hardware store. They're effective and harmless to vegetation and concrete when used as directed. They're also safe for pets, which is a big plus.

Visit your local retailers to get everything you need to make your surfaces safe for people, animals and, of course, nature.





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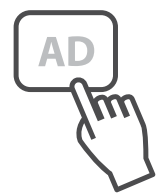
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