

OUR COUNTRY HOME

FALL 2024

RIVER REPORTER^{COM}



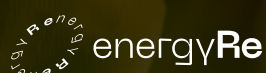
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CONTENTS

<i>Kitchen renovation 101</i>	<i>page 5</i>
<i>By JUDE WATERSON</i>	
<i>Our old house</i>	<i>page 11</i>
<i>By ANNEMARIE SCHUETZ</i>	
<i>Home staging</i>	<i>page 15</i>
<i>By BARBARA WINFIELD</i>	
<i>Old apple trees</i>	<i>page 17</i>
<i>By IRENE SOLOWAY</i>	
<i>Get ready for fall</i>	<i>page 19</i>
<i>By BARBARA WINFIELD</i>	
<i>What's in the toolbox?</i>	<i>page 23</i>
<i>By ANNEMARIE SCHUETZ AND JOE COOKE</i>	

On the cover:

A web is certainly a country home for the spider that inhabits it.

RR photo by Amanda Reed

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Editor's letter:

A time to repair and renew

It's still September as I write this, and fall's chill has already descended. (Never mind that a few days ago, the temps hit 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Now it's cold. Fall is confused about what it wants to be when it grows up.)

As we turn homeward and settle in, we see the work that needs to be done. You can't hide from it.

Our old house can tactfully be described as "shopworn." Or maybe "in need of work." Can you relate? Anyway, I've outlined our list of projects that demand attention, and suggested ways to deal with your own home.

Maybe your issue is maintenance, not significant repairs. Barbara Winfield gives us a list of tasks that should be completed before winter. There's nothing like a list by an expert—a do-able list, a reasonable list—to help galvanize a homeowner.

Jude Waterston, who writes about food, tackles a different sort of kitchen task: renovation of the small things. The pots

and pans, the knives, the spice rack. What do you need to renew in your kitchen? And she offers a recipe for those renovated spices.

Barbara steps up again with tips for those who might be renewing the home prior to a planned move. How do you stage a home? Should you consider a professional home stager? Staging can make the difference between a sale and vanishing potential buyers.

Irene Soloway, Wayne County Master Gardener, shares a symbol of fall: the apple tree, specifically the old apple trees in the region. They've borne their fruit for a long time, and their age is reflected in their craggy glory. Age has its own beauty.

And finally, check out our list of useful tools. Good stuff to have on hand.

Fall is here, and winter is on its way. Enjoy.

Annemarie Schuetz
Section editor
Our Country Home

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Mailing Address:
PO Box 150, Narrowsburg, NY 12764
Phone: 845/252-7414 • Fax: 845/252-3298
Have a comment or idea for the magazine?
Contact: Annemarie Schuetz at 845/252-7414, ext. 129 or copyeditor@riverreporter.com

Publisher: Rev. Laurie Stuart
Section Editor: Annemarie Schuetz
Production Manager: Amanda Reed

Sales & Business Development
Amy Janzen
Ad Sales Associate:
Lily Skuthan, lily@riverreporter.com

Sales Administrative Assistant:
Kathlyn Leggio ext. 134: sales@riverreporter.com
If you would like copies for your place of business:
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KITCHEN RENOVATION 101

By JUDE WATERSTON

This isn't about replacing your funky old dishwasher, too small fridge, peeling cabinets or stained countertops—though my sister, Janet, and I did do a total makeover of our kitchen some years back, and it made a big difference in our lives.

Renovating your kitchen can also be about looking at what kinds of knives you use (and how you care for them); what basic dried herbs and spices you have handy (and how often you replace them); and checking out the current quality of the pots and pans you use daily. Which cooking utensils and implements, such as colanders and sieves, salad servers, cutting boards, measuring cups and spoons, spatulas, stirring spoons and soup ladles are important?

View this as a beginner's course in renovation of a different sort. It's useful information even if you've been cooking for years. If your passion, as is mine, is focused on having the right and best tools at your fingertips, while pursuing your vision as an unusually good and dedicated cook you might just discover some ideas that hadn't occurred to you. Dig right in!

Knives

There are three types of knives which cooks and chefs must have. These are a paring knife, a serrated (bread) knife, and a chef's knife (the last should be 8-10 inches in length).

An important aspect is that the knife has a full tang. That's the part of the knife that extends past the blade and into the handle, making the knife stronger and more durable. Stainless steel blades will stay sharper longer, as will carbon steel. I have both German knives, which tend to be heavier, and Japanese knives, which are lighter and sleeker. Either way, it has to feel right in your hand.

If possible, have your knives professionally sharpened twice a year. If not, treat yourself to a good-quality sharpener or learn how to use a whetstone. (I have not done the latter). Hand wash and dry your knives immediately after use and store them in a slotted wooden knife block; a magnetic knife rack affixed to the wall; or in separate sheaths, which come in a variety of materials. I favor sheaths.

Lastly, purchase a honing steel or rod and use it each and every time you are about to use a knife. This tool keeps your knives extra sharp by straightening and aligning tiny metal fibers on the knife's edge.

Cutting boards

I like to have cutting boards in a variety of sizes and prefer those made from bamboo, but other wood is fine as well. Plastic or polyethylene are too soft and eventually the cut marks made in them harbor bacteria. Wash and dry your cutting boards well, which will add to their longevity.



Grate! A sharp grater makes shredding easy.

RR photos by Jude Waterston



Measuring tools are key to good cooking.

The colander

I have an enamel-coated colander for rinsing foods or straining pasta and vegetables. I use a fine-mesh sieve when I want to squeeze out as much liquid as possible or strain soup of its solid pieces to obtain a broth. A miniature fine sieve is also good for dusting powdered sugar over cakes and cookies.

Pots and pans

What pots and pans are most useful? I prefer nonstick skillets in at least two sizes for frying eggs, making omelets, cooking quesadillas and sautéing pretty much anything, as well as stir-frying vegetables. A well-seasoned cast iron skillet (made by the Lodge company) is indispensable and nearly indestructible. It retains heat well and

can reach high temps, making it ideal for searing. It's a good source of iron and can go directly from stove-top to oven easily.

Saucepans are great for myriad preparations. I have a small one, which I use for making sauces, and a medium-sized one for boiling water for pasta or for making popcorn. Pots and pans should have some heft to them. It's worthwhile to



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KITCHEN ~ Page 5

do some research. Check out various offerings. I prefer to shop in person, rather than order online, so that I can look closely at what I might purchase and how it feels in my hands.

Dutch ovens can also go from stove-top to oven, and they are the perfect vehicle for making stews, soups, sauces, stock and braises. They are made from a variety of materials. I find the ultra-heavy ones made by Le Creuset, Staub and Lodge too cumbersome for me. I prefer one made of enamelware. They come in many colors and look great on the dining room table.

Finally, I have a wok, which I could probably live without, but I do a great deal of Asian-inspired cooking and enjoy having it.

Herbs and spices

I have a ridiculously large number of dried herbs and spices, somewhere around 50. Most are certainly not essential for your larder. I cook dishes from a variety of countries and so many of my herbs and spices are particular to specific ethnicities. I also like spice and herb mixtures and rubs, which make life easier. I don't have to concoct them myself, though I have done when I've had the time.

First off, I never use onion or garlic powder, though some recipes call for their use. That's up to you, but it's not for me. Large supermarkets, such as ShopRite in Monticello and Liberty, now carry a large variety of herbs, spices and spice mixtures. If what's available to you is limited, there are a lot of spice purveyors out there and their inventory tends to be fresher, so they're more potent and flavorful. I like The Spice House, Penzeys and a company called Spice Islands.

Dried spices and herbs can last for different lengths of time depending on the type of spice and how it's stored. In general, they should be kept in airtight containers in a cabinet or drawer away from heat, light and moisture. If the color has faded, the flavor has likely faded too. If they don't smell like much, or the scent is faint, they're probably past their prime. Whole spices retain their flavor longer than ground. Dried and ground spices and herbs should be, if possible, replaced at any point from every six months to one year.

So, as to the basics, let's start with salt and pepper. Buy a good pepper grinder, such as those made by Peugeot or Le Creuset. Never buy pre-ground pepper in a jar. Pepper should be freshly ground. Tellicherry peppercorns, if you can find them, are India's highest grade of black pepper. They taste piney and peppery with supporting flavors that are citrusy, fruity and pungent.

Kosher salt is good for cooking or baking, but I like coarse Himalayan salt crystals, which I use in a grinder made specifically for salt, for seasoning and finishing a dish. You might be able to find pre-ground Himalayan salt in the spice aisle of the supermarket, as well as in adjustable grinders (for both salt and pepper) by such brands as McCormick.

You should also have: Cinnamon, paprika (either Hungarian, sweet or smoked), bay leaves, rosemary, thyme, tarragon, red pepper flakes (I prefer Aleppo for its complexity), ground ginger, oregano (and/or



RR photos by Jude Waterston

Spatulas, spoons and whisks are among the essential tools in the kitchen.



Colanders and sieves make straining easy.

an Italian spice mixture), curry powder, chili powder (ancho chili powder has fruity overtones and is not extremely spicy) and dried cumin.

Depending on what kind of cooking and baking you do, you might want to consider many other spices and herbs, such as turmeric, ground nutmeg (though I prefer to buy whole nutmegs and grind them on a fine grater), pumpkin pie spice, ground coriander, taco and Cajun seasoning, yellow mustard seeds and seasoning mixtures or rubs made specifically for fish, beef, pork and chicken.

Finally, we get to the essential tools used in the kitchen. I like a wide plastic or silicone spatula for flipping pancakes, French toast and fried eggs from my nonstick

skillets. Always useful is a flexible rubber spatula used for scraping batter, dough and sauces from a bowl or pot. Its flexibility allows for getting every last drop from the vessel. Some people like a fish spatula for gently getting underneath the piece of fish to flip it. Personally, I don't find it necessary.

I have cooking spoons, some slotted and others in well-worn wood or silicone. These are for all purposes and I own an assortment. I use whisks often, so I have a few sizes.

Then there is a need for a vegetable peeler, salad servers, soup ladle, hand-held can opener, pie cutter, box grater and hand-held long, fine graters for hard cheeses, ginger and garlic.

Find the best help for your kitchen

Are you overhauling your kitchen? Not just renovating the small equipment, but doing major work? Check out the BEST home renovation stores, contractors and designers at riverreporter.com/stories/best-of-2023-for-2024,137222. And if you've had the work done, vote for your favorite now at <https://riverreporter.com/stories/vote-for-the-best-of-2024,154988>.

I tend not to measure ingredients unless I'm working on developing a recipe, but it's helpful to have a measuring cup and measuring spoons.

I own a blender, a food processor and a hand-held immersion blender for making chunky soups or lumpy sauces smooth.

Everyone needs some kitchen tools, but this category can be more personal than most. I'm not one for bread machines, pasta or ice cream makers, canning or pizza-making equipment. Each to their own in that department.

This is true of condiments, as well. Am I the only one with mango chutney and pomegranate molasses in the fridge?

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Spiced Moroccan swordfish

Serves 3-4

I used one premade spice mixture in this recipe. You can get it online at specialty spice purveyors, but I will include the recipe for it at the end, should you want to make it yourself. Don't fret if you're missing one ingredient—it will still suffice. This dish is very flavorful but will only become spicy if you use the harissa or chili garlic sauce—your call.

1 tablespoon cumin seeds

1 tablespoon coriander seeds

1 teaspoon ras-el-hanout spice mixture (easily found online, and a fantastic spice mixture for stews, tagines, and oven-roasted vegetables)

1/2 teaspoon turmeric

1/4 teaspoon cinnamon

1 teaspoon harissa or Asian chili garlic sauce (optional)

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for garnishing

1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro

1 garlic clove, grated

4 skinless swordfish steaks, 6 ounces each, ideally at least an inch thick

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Juice of one lemon

In a small, nonstick skillet over low heat, place the cumin and coriander seeds and cook, stirring until fragrant, about 3 minutes. Remove to a mortar and pestle and let rest for 5 minutes.

When cool, grind the spices well with the pestle.

Pour the spices into a small bowl and add the ras-el-hanout, turmeric, cinnamon, harissa (if using), oil, garlic and cilantro.

Set the fish in a glass baking dish and cover evenly with the spice marinade. Cover with plastic wrap and let marinate in the fridge for 3 or 4 hours. Remove from the fridge half an hour before cooking.

Lower the top rack of the broiler until it's about four inches from the heat source. Preheat the broiler. Line a jellyroll pan with aluminum foil and grease it lightly with some oil.

Remove the fish from the marinade and shake gently to release any excess oil, but leave the spices intact. Lay the fish steaks on the pan and season them with salt and pepper. Broil for 5 minutes. Remove from the oven and carefully flip the steaks over. Return to the oven and broil for 4-5 minutes more.

Remove the fish steaks to a shallow serving dish. Carefully cut each steak in half. Pour the lemon juice over all and drizzle each steak with a bit of extra-virgin olive oil. Serve immediately.

Ras-al-hanout spice mixture:

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon ground ginger

1 teaspoon kosher (or sea) salt

3/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon ground coriander

1/2 teaspoon Syrian Aleppo pepper (or 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper)

1/2 teaspoon ground allspice

1/2 teaspoon ground cloves

Place all ingredients in a clean glass jar and shake well to combine.



Spiced Moroccan swordfish

RR photo by Jude Waterston

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OUR OLD HOUSE

or, The corpse hole and other problems

By ANNEMARIE SCHUETZ

My husband and I live in an old house, built in 1896. It's been in the family from the beginning, and so the history of repairs and changes and improvements is documented. My father used to say he learned the best swear words from watching those repairs and changes and improvements, but that is a claim without proof.

This story is for people like us. They have an old house, maybe a very old house. One that needs significant work. And maybe, like us, they need to save some money and do as many repairs as possible themselves. In, you know, their copious spare time and with their extensive home repair skills.

I'm going to walk you through our collection of starter projects, which range from easy (kill the plant) to harder (stained wallpaper in closet) to very scary (the corpse hole).

If you're interested in a brief history of the repairs etc., see riverreporter.com/our-country-home-page.

That first step

Is of course the hardest. Maybe you have projects too. Maybe you're unsure where to start.

Breaking down the projects into manageable sections helps make it less overwhelming.

Or maybe you'll give up, save up and hire a professional. That's fine too! (Start with the people listed at www.riverreporter.com/stories/best-of-2023-for-2024,137222.)

~ Page 12

RR photo by Joe Cooke

See the bulge on the right? No? Well, it was a lot worse before part of the wall fell off. Behind that bulge lurked the Corpse. Granted you cynical adults can make cracks about how the Corpse had to be as thin as paper to live there, but I feared that bulge as a kid.

OLD HOUSE ~ Page 11

1. Planning

The first step is to list everything that needs doing. Buy a notebook.

Start at the top of the house. Attic or second floor or only floor, whatever you have. Leave plenty of room, or maybe devote a page to each project. You'll flesh out each entry as you learn what needs to be done and what you'll need.

Attic

Do something about the mice.

Repair the mouse damage on the ceiling.

Second floor

Despair.

The chimney damage. (See photo, page 13.) What even happened? It looks like a leak leaked while we were away.

Mouse damage. A theme. (See photo, right.) This is in a closet. Probably from a food stash the mice built up over a year or more while living in a pile of fabric. I guess we steam off the wallpaper? Put up new paper? Maybe there's some of the old stuff under the bed. Hopefully the mice didn't eat it.

~ Page 13



RR photo by Joe Cooke
A really stellar shot of a closet interior, where a mouse colony stored its food supply. Until I accidentally pulled their fabric house down, scattering sleeping mice and cat food everywhere.

Don't trail behind...

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A closeup of damage around a chimney. We assume it was a leak. The flashing got fixed but this mess needs to be repaired.

RR photo by Joe Cooke

OLD HOUSE → Page 12

The corpse hole. When I was a kid, my dad told me there was a dead body behind the bulge in the hall wall. This, it turned out, was not true: when part of the wall fell down in the middle of the night while I was home alone, it was obvious that nothing was there except lath and plaster. (Or the body finally broke out. Opinions are divided.) My mom, by the way, argued that Dad invented the corpse so he wouldn't have to fix the bulge. Knowing what's in the bulge hasn't stopped us from not fixing the wall. (See photo of corpse hole, page 11.)

First floor

Finish fixing the plaster on the stairway wall.

Do something about the floor, which looks like a 128-year-old floor.

Outside

The house-eating plant. It's invasive. Kill it. Kill it now. (See photo, page 14.)

Kill all the weeds.

2. Permits

Go to the permit people and make sure you can do this work yourself and that no permits are required. For example: I have been told that depending on where you live, you might not be able to do your own repairs and then someday sell your house.

→ Page 14

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OLD HOUSE

- Page 13

3. Process

How will this be done? YouTube has a plethora of videos showing you how to do your own repairs. There are books! Visit the local library. If you stop by a local hardware store, ask the people who work there for advice, and then buy what you need there.

4. Price

Research the materials needed and get the costs. Are there alternatives that might be cheaper? If your carbon footprint is important, that needs to weigh in as well. You might prefer something that's more expensive but easier on the planet.

What about tools? Do you have everything you'll need? Add the cost of new (or rented) tools.

Congratulations! You have a plan!

The final step, of course, is:

5. Begin work.

Start small. Keep going. Ask for help if you need it. Good luck!



The plant. It reaches out for us as we try to sit on the porch.

RR photo by Joe Cooke



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Home staging

Getting the best price for your home



Photo by Douglas Sheppard on Unsplash

Staging a home for sale is not about redecorating, renovating or reinventing your space; it is about transforming your home into an attractive commodity.

By **BARBARA WINFIELD**

What is home staging?

Staging is not about redecorating, renovating or reinventing your space. It is about transforming your home into an attractive commodity.

Homeowners rarely stop to think that selling a home really comes down to marketing. A seller is in competition with other properties on the market. The homeowner who does the best job of presenting the product in the most appealing way has a better chance of closing the sale.

Most of us have a psychological attachment to our homes. This attachment can remain strong even if you are ready to move on. In order to sell your house quickly and get the best price, it is very important to detach from feelings and memories you have for your home.

Many homes are put on the market in need of a facelift: the walls are cracking and the paint chipping, or the house and property might be in need of a thorough cleaning inside and out. Studies show that clutter; personal mementos such as photos, diplomas and awards; collections; bright color schemes; and messy yards tend to distract buyers from seeing the details of a house.

First impressions are formed instantly; this is why it is so important that the home look its best inside and out and appeal to a wide audience.

This may sound like a lot of work, but clearing the house

of clutter and personal items, repainting rooms in neutral colors and removing old carpeting is an investment that will make your house look bigger, brighter, cleaner, warmer and best of all, it will make homebuyers want to buy it.

Besides, if you are planning on moving anyway you will have to pack these items eventually. Why not do it sooner rather than later? Working with a staging professional will provide the incentive you need to get going.

Another reason to stage your home is money.

Although you might have to invest anywhere from \$5,000 to \$10,000 to get your home in shape, you will probably get twice that amount back (or more) on the sale of the house. Properly staged homes draw in more buyers than one that is in disrepair or messy. Statistically, houses sell faster and for more money when professionally staged. Plus staging your home will actually end up costing you less than that first price reduction.

This is money well spent.

Also, keep in mind that you are not going to be living in your home for much longer, and in order to sell it, you will have to compromise—you can't go on living "as usual."

After the For Sale sign goes up, your house will have to look neat and clean at all times and staged to accommodate a wide range of tastes. Whether you hire a painter, a cleaning company or a landscaper; whether you rent a storage unit, bring in a construction crew, hire a stager—or all of

the above, making your home appealing to a wide variety of buyers is a very wise investment.

Staging doesn't always require renting furniture or involve a major remodeling project. Most stagers will work with what you have, but first you have to have a consultation.

How does that work?

A staging consultant (many interior designers are also staging consultants) will take you through the house, making suggestions regarding changes you can do yourself.

You will receive an in-depth written evaluation of your home with a list of recommendations of what you need to do to make your home appealing to potential buyers. The list might also include recommendations for professionals such as contractors, cleaning services and house painters.

If you decide to work with the stager on a project basis, you can then target major areas of your home that need the most work, or choose to stage the entire house inside and out. Fees for this service vary according to the size and condition of the property.

Real estate agents and brokers can also help you with staging tips; they have years of experience working with potential home buyers and know what sells and what doesn't. They can also help you connect to a home stager or interior designer if you want a professional design consultation.

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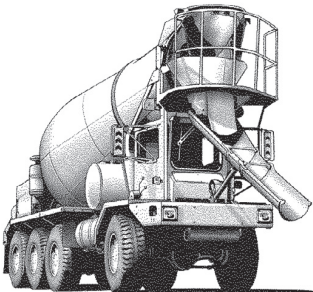
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Old apple trees



Anthony Biancovisio admires the twisted beauty of an apple tree relic in his field.

RR photos by Irene Soloway

By IRENE SOLOWAY

Apple trees are known to have the longevity of humans.

If healthy and lucky, we can live a good 100 years.

Old apple trees are scattered through our landscapes in fields and along roadsides, remnants of old farm orchards. Some grizzled trees are improbably pumping out fruit from their surviving branches, providing windfalls for humans and wildlife. Withered trunks become hunting perches for birds of prey and resting posts for songbirds. Woodpeckers excavate crevices and provide the starter holes for cavity nesters such as bluebirds, wrens and owls.

As fungi work their way in through cracks and crevices to the heartwood, the tree trunk hollows out over time. This rot, called “heart rot,” becomes habitat. Habitat collects fertilizer and provides nutrients for the tree to continue to age and grow.

Old apple trees can withstand the hollowing out of 70 percent of their radius before the tree is significantly weakened. At that point, shearing stress caused by wind, water and decay can cause limbs to fall.

The old trees are devolving, becoming snags—wildlife hotels that provide refuge and sustenance for a myriad of species. They are also shape-shifting living sculptures.

The late Michael Phillips, organic apple grower and author of the book “Mycorrhizal Planet,” describes trees as the rising of the earth and all its biology. The old apple tree eventually dies, but is recycled back into what Phillips called “the outrageous diversity of living earth.”



This neglected old apple tree of more than 70 years still bears fruit.

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Photo by Robin Jonathan Deutsch on Unsplash

Get your home ready for fall with Barbara Winfield's tips.

Get ready for fall

By **BARBARA WINFIELD**

Fall is here. It's time to get your house in shape for the cooler months ahead.

Although autumn can be one of the busiest seasons for homeowners who are preparing for winter, it's also the best time to take advantage of the moderate weather to repair any damage before the first hard frost sets in.

Here are some home maintenance ideas that will keep your home running in peak condition all winter long.

Exterior

Check the foundation for cracks and caulk around the areas where masonry meets siding, or where pipes or wires enter the house. Caulk around the windows and door frames to prevent heat from escaping.

Caulking and sealing openings is one of the least expensive maintenance jobs. Openings in the structure can cause water to get in and freeze, resulting in cracks and mold build-up. Winter can bring very harsh conditions, resulting in water or ice damage. A careful check of the outside structure combined with inexpensive maintenance can save you money in the long run.

Install storm windows and doors and remove screens. Before storing, clean and repair screens, spray with a protective coating and place in a dry area in the basement or garage.

Inspect exterior walls to see if any paint is peeling or blistering on the house or outbuildings. Peeling paint is a sign that the existing paint film is failing and can no longer protect the siding of the building. Left uncorrected, the siding itself will deteriorate, leading to expensive repairs in the future.

Make sure the roof is in good shape. Inspect for missing and loose shingles.

Your roof is your first defense in protecting your home. If it doesn't function properly, water damage can occur. Ice, rain, snow and wind combined with rapidly changing temperatures and humidity can wreak havoc on roofs.

This causes deterioration to insulation, wood and dry-wall, making electrical, plumbing and HVAC systems vulnerable.

It's better to proactively deal with repairs in the fall than to discover a leaky roof during a snowstorm.



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FALL ~ Page 19

For safety's sake, have a licensed, certified roofing professional check the condition of your roof area. Ask the contractor to check the base of the chimney for cracks or openings while they're up on the roof.

After leaves have fallen, clean out the gutters and downspouts, flush with water, inspect joints and tighten brackets if necessary. Clogged gutters can freeze up and cause ice dams. Replace old or damaged gutters with new ones that have built in leaf guards.

Interior

Have your heating system checked by a licensed heating contractor. Call early in the season before the temperature drops and contractors get busy. Heating systems will use fuel more efficiently, last longer and have fewer problems if properly serviced.

Get your wood stove and fireplace in working order. Check your wood stove or fireplace insert's door gasket for a tight seal. Also clean and inspect the glass door for cracks and have the chimney cleaned by a licensed chimney sweep. A dirty chimney poses the risk of a chimney fire, which can be ignited by burning creosote—a combination of wood tar, organic vapors and moisture build-up.

Change the direction of your ceiling fan to create an upward draft, which redistributes warm air from the ceiling.

Check windows and doors for drafts or cracks and fortify with weather-stripping.

Test and change the batteries in your smoke and carbon dioxide detectors and keep extra household batteries on hand.

Vacuum internal parts of air conditioners. Remove units from windows or wrap the outside box with an approved tarp or plastic air conditioner cover to prevent rusting of vital parts.

Clean your humidifiers regularly during the heating season. Bacteria and spores can develop in a dirty water tank, resulting in unclean moisture misting out into your room.

Yard and garden

Don't rake the leaves! Research has shown that leaves provide a free source of organic fertilizer and improve soil texture by helping the ground to absorb more water and air leading to healthy plant growth.

Now is a good time to plant spring-flow-ering bulbs. If deer are a problem, start deer proofing by covering plants with netting and chicken wire.

Prepare your yard equipment for storage. This includes draining fuel from all gas-operated equipment such as lawn mowers, leaf blowers and chainsaws.

Check to see that all of your snow equipment is up and running before the first flurry falls. Organize your snow-clearing gear. When snow arrives you'll want to have shovels, roof rakes, snow blowers and salt where you can get to them.

Be careful where you store equipment. An outbuilding may not be as well insulated as a garage incorporated into a house. Equipment that is stored out in the elements, exposed to extremes of heat and cold, can develop problems when the gasoline can no longer vaporize and flow into the combustion chamber of the engine.

Drain garden hoses and store them inside. Also shut off outdoor water valves in cold weather. Any water left in exterior pipes and faucets can freeze and expand, breaking the pipes.

Inspect and fill bird feeders. Keep in mind that once you start feeding birds you should continue on a regular basis throughout the winter months. If bears are a problem, take the feeders down at night and store them in a safe space.

Porch and deck area

Inspect your driveway for cracks. Clean out and repair any damage with driveway filler, then coat with a commercial sealer.

Check the supports, stairs and railings on porches and decks. Make sure the handrails can support someone who grabs them when slipping on snow or ice.

Clean porch and deck furniture, and look for any needed repairs. Cover and store outdoor furniture and barbecues in a protected area.

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RR photos by Joe Cooke
Most of these tools can be used as a makeshift hammer, especially the chisels. All non-screwdriver tools can be used as a makeshift slotted screwdriver if the screw is right. This is a good caption. Yes.

By ANNEMARIE SCHUETZ and JOE COOKE

It’s a disposable world, right? Nobody fixes things; everyone just tosses them out because nothing is fixable anymore.

Not true. Witness the popularity of repair cafés. There are still items out in the world that can be fixed, and there are houses that can be fixed, and you might be the one considering fixing them.

Why?

Maybe you can’t find someone else to do the task, or maybe money’s a worry. Maybe you want to try before tossing something in the trash.

Your first step is to make sure you have the tools you need before you get started in a burst of enthusiasm and have to pause partway through for a dash to the local hardware store.

The internet is your friend here. YouTube has tutorials on almost any project you can imagine. (You have to assess your abilities, of course. For example, doing your own electrical work is usually a bad idea.) Reddit has subreddits on every topic imaginable, including home repair.

The old-home basic tool list

Got a leaky faucet or a stain on the wall? Repairs can be taken care of in minutes if you have the right tools.

What those tools should be varies depending on the handyman. Consider this a starting point, and acquire more tools as your skills advance.

Where to look: For many tools, yard sales are absolutely a place to try; you can get quality tools for very little cash. Your local hardware store will carry much of what you need.



A wrenching thought: Most mechanics will agree, any of these could be used as a hammer in the right circumstance.

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Hammerability? 2/10 for newer plastic ones. Old school metal ones like this are useful for tapping things into place to make them level.

RR photos by Joe Cooke

TOOLBOX *→ Page 23*

Remember to be sensible and careful. Respect your tools. Pay attention while you work. Whatever cuts or puts holes in something is also capable of cutting or putting holes in you.

Stepladder. For dealing with projects overhead safely.

Tape measure. They come in a variety of lengths, but the standard 25-foot is a good start.

Hammer. For hammering nails into a surface. A claw hammer has a flat head for hammering and a claw for pulling out nails.

Nails of varying sizes. Nails are good when you need some flexibility if force is applied to the surface. They're also useful for finishing work because once in, they're flush with the surface.

Drill. Power drills are lovely. Alternatively, you can take the old-fashioned approach and use a brace and bit or a hand drill. Augers are good for holes in the ground or in ice.

Make sure you use the correct bit for your project. It all depends on what you're drilling into.

→ Page 27



One of the few tools that are difficult to use as a hammer. However, these make excellent medic kits for emergency trepanations.



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TOOLBOX - Page 25

Phillips (cross) head as well as a large and a small slotted screwdriver. For turning screws.

Screws. They clamp onto surfaces better than nails, but they don't have much flexibility. Usually you have to drill a hole first.

Nuts and bolts. Very strong fasteners. Often used in appliances and other metal things.

Spirit level. Shows whether a surface is vertical or horizontal.

Wire cutters. Self explanatory.

Saw. Saws come in many flavors, from hacksaws powered by you, to table saws powered by electricity. There are chop saws, chain saws, jig saws and more. For cutting wood or metal, depending on the saw. They can also cut you, so be careful.

Sandpaper, coarse to fine. Use for removing finishes or smoothing away splinters, or getting a wall ready for painting or plastering.

Paintbrushes and other painting equipment. For painting. Obviously.

Toilet plunger. Hopefully you have one. Useful for unsticking a unflushing toilet or reducing the water level so you can clean the toilet.

Plumber's snake. Breaks up clogs in drains.



RR photo by Joe Cooke

Ah yes, the versatile hammer wrench. You can adjust the width of the head to really make this the penultimate hammer.

Duct tape. Wikipedia says this was originally made of cotton duck fabric and was called duck tape. Now made of other substances. Strong, flexible and very sticky. Tape a lawnmower seat, tape a package, tape all kinds of things. Actual ducts use a special duct tape.

Wrenches. Use on pipes (a pipe wrench) or nuts—for which you'd want an adjustable wrench or a socket wrench. Use the right size and type for the job.

Rags. For cleaning up after you're done for the day. Your local hardware store can suggest chemicals (or alternatives) you might need to help with that cleanup.

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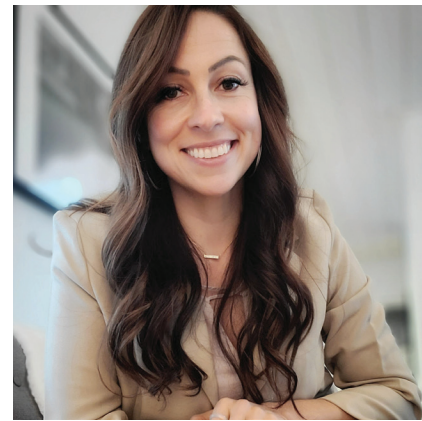
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