

How to pick paint for home interiors

Many components combine to define a home's interior. Some homeowners may be partial to certain styles, such as ultra modern or farmhouse, while others may opt for a more traditional look that cannot necessarily be categorized as one style or another. Though many homeowners may spend considerable time and devote a lot of energy to making their home embody a certain style, those who aren't willing to commit to a particular look can lean on one component to make a stylish statement all their own: paint.

Color can be a part of every homeowner's design arsenal. Bold colors can be used to create a stunning accent wall, while homes with open concepts often utilize color to define rooms. Homeowners who want to revitalize their home interiors can do so with paint, and this approach doesn't require homeowners to commit to a whole new design style.

Though paint may seem simple to novices, homeowners who have painted home interiors in the past recognize how complicated the process of picking paint can be. Paint retailers have a seemingly endless swatch of paint colors to choose from, and before long homeowners heads may be spinning as they try to narrow down their options. The following tips can help homeowners pick the perfect paint for their home interiors.

■ Take stock, and photographs, of your current furnishings. Many interior designers rely on a simple technique when recommending color schemes to their clients. Choose a standout color from existing furnishings, such as the dominant color from a patterned decorative pillow or piece of furniture, and then look for the same shade to paint the walls. A photograph of the item can be handy when visiting the paint store.

■ Lighten colors as you go up. The home renovation and

design experts at HGTV recommend picking darker color values for the floor, medium color values for the walls and light values for the ceiling. This approach mimics the look of the great outdoors, where the ground tends to be darker than the trees, and the trees are darker than the blue sky.

■ Utilize paint to create the vibe you want. The home renovation experts at This Old House note that colors evoke an emotional response. Cool colors like blue and green give off a relaxing vibe, which makes them ideal for bedrooms and bathrooms. Red is an intense color that can up the energy ante in any room, which can make it an option for homeowners who want to spark debate around their dinner tables.

■ Give personal preference its place at the table. Though interior designers may have years of experience picking paint colors for a home and researchers may have determined how certain colors can



File Photo

Following some easy guidelines will simplify the process of choosing the perfect colors for much loved spaces in your home.

be utilized to create a desired ambiance in a given room, ultimately homeowners are the ones who will be living in the home. So it's important that

homeowners pick colors they like for their home interiors.

Paint is an inexpensive way to transform a room. Homeowners can rely on a combina-

tion of color strategies and their personal preferences as they try to decide which colors they want on their interior walls.



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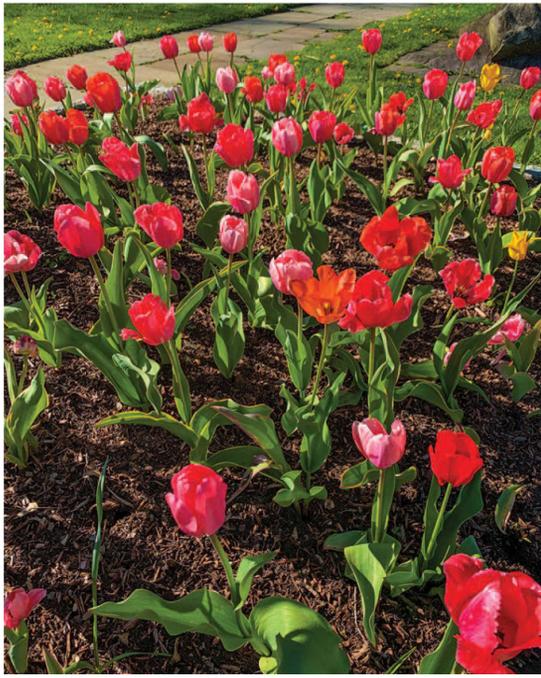
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How to prepare your garden for winter

Gardens provide an idyllic escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. In fact, many gardening enthusiasts typically cannot wait for the spring thaw so they can spend the next several months tending to their plants under the warm sun. But a gardener's work is never truly done, and the work to make gardens stun in the spring actually begins during the preceding fall.

Preparing gardens for winter is an important step that can help homeowners ensure their gardens return to full strength in the spring. The tasks necessary to prepare gardens for winter may depend on what homeowners are planting, but the following are some general maintenance suggestions that can keep gardens safe this winter.

■ **Remove weeds and debris.** Weeds and debris are unsightly and detrimental to plant life in spring, but they also can be harmful in the winter. Weeds and debris left to linger in gardens through the winter provide overwintering spots for insects and can contribute to disease. So it's imperative that weeds and debris are removed before the ground hardens in winter. Don't wait until the



File Photo

Preparing your garden for winter is easy, but takes time.

ground hardens, as that can make it hard to remove the roots of weeds, adversely affecting the garden as a result.

■ **Prepare the soil.** The Farmer's Almanac advises homeowners to gently till the soil in their gardens so they

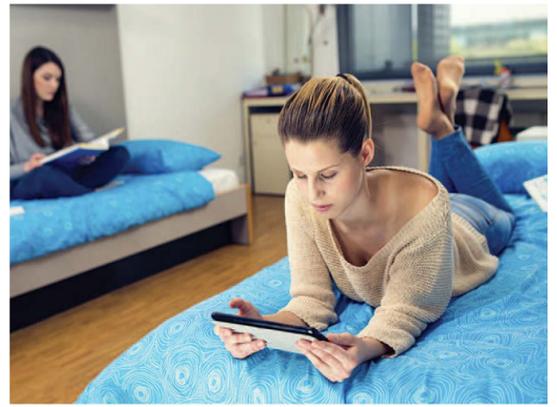
can expose any insects before they settle in for the winter. Once garden soil is exposed, add a layer of compost, leaves, aged manure, and, if necessary, lime, gently tilling it into the soil. According to the North Carolina Cooperative Extension,

the only accurate way to determine if lawn or garden soil needs lime is to test it. Lime makes soil less acidic and reduces soil pH. Low soil pH makes it hard for certain plants to grow, but acidic soil is ideal when growing blueberries. Test the soil for lime and amend it depending on what you hope to grow in the spring so it's ready to thrive when winter ends.

■ **Remove dead or diseased plants.** Dead or diseased plants should not be left in the garden through the winter. These plants can attract insects and are vulnerable to disease, which can make it hard for the garden to thrive in the spring.

■ **Protect fruit trees.** If you have fruit trees, install mouse guards around the base to prevent mice and voles from killing the trees over the winter. If left to their own devices over the winter, mice and voles may eat the bark of fruit trees, killing the trees as a result. The Farmer's Almanac notes that mouse guards made of fine mesh hardware cloth can effectively protect fruit trees from hungry mice and voles over the winter.

A gardener's work is never done, and the work to create beautiful spring gardens begins in the fall.



File Photo

Multi-functional furniture is one area to consider if you are able to add some furniture to your dorm room.

Follow form and function when outfitting your dorm room

College campuses are a home away from home for much of the year for students who go away to school. According to Azusa Pacific University, many universities, APU included, require students to live on campus during their freshman and sophomore years. Doing so provides many students opportunities to fully immerse themselves in their school communities and enjoy a little independence at the same time.

Dorm rooms afford students a chance to impart their own unique touches on their living spaces. A dorm room need not be drab. In fact, with a little creativity and some design tips, a dorm room become a space to be proud of.

■ **Coordinate your vision.** Once you meet your roommate, discuss how you see the dorm room evolving. Choosing a color palette is a great place to start. If you can't agree on bedding patterns, work with a color scheme so your side of the room and your roommate's will coordinate.

■ **Invest in high-quality linens and bedding.** Focus your attention on making the one area of the room where you'll spend most of your time as comfortable and attractive as it can be. Look for high thread counts on sheets and pillowcases. HGTV recommends a duvet cover that can be swapped out to change the look of your bed when the

mood strikes. Throw pillows and a throw blanket are ideal for lounging in style, and they can be arranged to make a tradition XL twin bed look like a daybed or chaise.

■ **Opt for multi-use furniture.** If your dorm room only has the basics and you can add a few pieces, maximize space and function with items that serve multiple purposes. Storage ottomans can keep belongings organized and also serve as extra seating for guests. A mirror behind your desk can serve as a vanity for getting ready when the shared bathroom is occupied.

■ **Set aside a kitchen area.** While you may not be cooking a four-course meal inside your dorm room — and most schools limit which types of cooking can take place in dorm rooms — set up a kitchen station with some essentials. According to the storage and organizational company Spacewise, a rolling utility cart equipped with a coffee maker, small microwave, mini fridge, and some cube storage containers is the perfect place to have snacks and beverages at the ready.

■ **Maximize storage.** Shelves over a bed, underbed storage, bedskirt organizers, closet caddies, and additional organizational gadgets can keep rooms tidy and functional.

Dorm rooms can be customized with some simple additions to make these spaces feel more like home.

Pre-winter perennial pruning pointers

Foliage and football might be two things people instantly associate with fall, but there's more to this beloved season than brightly colored leaves and action on the gridiron.

Gardeners know that spring is an ideal time to plan and plant their favorite flowers and most flavorful fruits and vegetables. However, seasoned gardeners know that gardening is a year-round commitment. Pruning is one of the keys to keeping perennials coming back for years to come, and fall is an ideal time to take on this important task.

Pruning perennials in the fall is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor. According to the Old Farmer's Almanac, some perennials can be cut down after the first killing frost, while others can be left to benefit wildlife, including birds and insects. Understanding pruning and when to do it this fall can help gardeners lay a strong foundation for their gardens that will benefit them next spring.



File Photo

Make sure to always use a clean pair of shears when pruning to prevent any transfer of disease.

Why should some perennials be pruned?

The College of Agricultural Sciences at Pennsylvania State University notes that perennials that have become diseased or infested with insects are pruned to prevent those problems from resurfacing in the spring. In addition, according to the Old Farmer's Almanac, many herbaceous perennials have old foliage and dying stems after several hard frosts.

If dead foliage or dying stems aren't pruned, disease, slugs and other pests can overwinter in the plants. Cutting these plants down to the ground after several hard frosts allows the base of the plant to remain dormant over the winter but makes the plant less hospitable to disease and insects.

Which perennials should I prune?

The first step to pruning perennials is to recognize which need to be pruned and which can be left intact for the winter. The Old Farmer's Almanac notes that bee balm and phlox are prone to powdery mildew and should be cut back once they're gone. Hostas harbor slug eggs, so they, too, should be pruned after a hard frost. Hosta leaves that have fallen on the ground should be removed as well. There's no need to cut back certain perennials if they're healthy. For example, hardy geraniums do not require pruning in the fall, and Penn State Extension notes that hardy perennials like garden mums are more likely to survive a cold winter if they're left intact. That's

because the tops of such plants will collect leaves and snow for insulation and moisture over the course of winter. Gardeners who are unsure about fall pruning can speak with their local gardening center for additional advice regarding which plants to cut back before winter.

When to prune perennials

Gardeners need not rush to prune perennials in the fall. Diseased or infested plants can be pruned at the first sight of disease or infestation, but gardeners can wait until several hard frosts have occurred before they prune healthy perennials. In gardening parlance, a hard frost refers to when temperatures drop below 28 F. Several hard frosts kill the uppermost growth of most perennials, making this an ideal time to prune them.

Pruning perennials in fall can be the first step toward creating an awe-inspiring spring garden.

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How to maintain hardwood floors

Hardwood floors have long been sought after by home buyers. In its 2019 "Remodeling Impact Report," the National Association of Realtors® revealed that new wood flooring was the fourth most popular project to attract buyers.

Of course, hardwood floors aren't just for buyers. Homeowners who already have hardwood floors know just how impressive these floors can be, especially when they're well maintained. Maintaining wood floors is not necessarily as straightforward as it may seem, and homeowners may benefit from a tutorial on how to keep the floors under their feet looking good.

To polish or not to polish?

Polishing floors is an expensive way to keep them looking good. But the home improvement experts at BobVila.com note that not all floors can be polished, and determining which ones can depends on the finish. Floors with waterproof barriers such as urethane will benefit from routine polishing. However, floors with penetrating finishes like tung oil will need to be waxed rather than polished.

What finish is on the floor?

The Hardwood Distributor's Association recommends a simple way for homeowners to determine which type of finish is on their hardwood floors. Homeowners are advised to rub a finger across the floor. If no smudge appears, then the floor is surface sealed. If a

smudge is created, then the floor has been treated with a penetrating seal. The HDA also notes that recently installed wood floors are likely surface sealed.

How often should floors be polished or waxed?

Wood flooring professionals recommend polishing floors that can be polished once every few months. Waxing wood floors does not need to be done as frequently, and most can benefit from a fresh coat of wax every 12 to 18 months.

What can I do on a daily basis?

Some simple tricks and daily maintenance can help wood floors maintain their impressive look.

- Utilize floor mats. The HDA notes that floor mats near entryways can reduce the time it takes to clean hardwood floors and reduce the wear and tear they endure. For example, tiny particles like dirt can scratch the floor and contribute to the kind of minor damage that adds up to significant scarring over time. Floor mats near entryways ensures that most of that dirt never makes it to the wood floors.

- Vacuum without a beater bar. Some vacuums contain beater bars, which are designed to pick up human hair, dog hair and other things that conventional vacuums may not be able to pick up. The HDA advises vacuuming without the beater bar, as it can contribute to small scratches in the floor. Sweeping with a high-quality broom or microfiber cloth is another way to pick up dirt without damaging floors.



File Photo

Maintaining hardwood floors isn't necessarily straightforward and can be confusing to many homeowners.

- Use manufacturer-recommended cleaning products. Local home improvement stores sell a host of hardwood floor cleaning products, but the HDA notes that many flooring manufacturers now sell their own hardwood floor cleaners designed specifically for their floors. These products are likely homeowners' best

bets. Homeowners who can't find them can seek recommendations from a local flooring retailer.

Hardwood floors are attractive for many reasons. And they look even more stunning, and last much longer, when homeowners make an effort to maintain them.

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How to help houseplants survive a long winter

As fall gradually gives way to winter, gardeners expend ample energy preparing their flowers and plants for the months ahead. Plants may be pruned to increase the likelihood that they will return in full bloom come the spring, while lawns may be aerated so cool-season grasses can get the nutrients, water and oxygen they need when the temperatures dip. But what about houseplants? Do indoor houseplants need the same type of pre-winter TLC that outdoor plants need before winter arrives?

As the seasons change, so, too, do the conditions outside. And those conditions affect indoor houseplants much like they do lawns, gardens and trees. So it's vital that people with houseplants do not overlook the need to keep houseplants going strong as fall gives way to winter.

Location

Hours of daylight shorten in winter, which means some houseplants won't get as much sun as they were accustomed to over the last several months. That means plants may need to be relocated closer to windows where they can make the most of each day's sunlight. However, it's important that



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Proper location, watering, and cleaning are essential to helping houseplants to survive through the winter.

there's ample distance between the plant and the window, especially when winter temperatures get especially cold. If the plants are too close to a window on cold days, they could freeze. Keep them close enough to the windows to get ample sunlight but far enough away so they don't get too

cold. In addition, keep plants away from drafty windows as well as heating vents, as extreme temperatures are not conducive to healthy houseplants.

Watering

Watering needs also may change when the temperatures drop. The indoor plant experts

at Pistils Nursery in Oregon note that all houseplants need less water in winter. In fact, overwatering in winter can be especially harmful to indoor plants. Plant owners can try decreasing the frequency of their watering by half each winter and see how the plants respond.

Cleaning

Cleaning plants is another way to help them survive a long winter. Dust settles in many homes in winter, when windows tend to remain closed for months on end and fresh air isn't circulating around the house as much as it is in spring and summer. Pistil's Nursery notes that dust inhibits a plant's ability to photosynthesize, thus compromising its ability to make it through a winter unscathed. Better Homes & Gardens recommends using a soft-bristle paintbrush, a toothbrush or pipe cleaner to remove dust from African violets and other fuzzy-leaved plants. Gently washing plants with a paper towel or cloth that's been moistened with water can remove the dust. Oils and polishes should not be used to make leaves shine, as these substances can block pores on the plant.

Houseplants may need some extra attention in winter as hours of daylight dwindle and indoor conditions make it hard for plants to survive.

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How to recognize when you can stop mowing

Each weekend in spring, summer and fall, millions of homeowners fire up their mowers and cut the grass in their yards. A few hours spent mowing the lawn can be a great time to get some sun and some exercise in the great outdoors.

As fall gradually transitions to winter, homeowners may wonder when to stop mowing their lawns. Each lawn is different, and when to stop mowing may depend on a host of factors, including local climate and the type of turf. In addition to climate and turf, homeowners can keep an eye on these conditions to determine when the time is right to put their mowers away for the winter.

■ **Frost:** Warm-season grasses typically go dormant after a couple of significant frosts. Homeowners can jot down each frost during fall. Frosts are most noticeable in the early morning hours, so be

sure to check lawn conditions each morning as the weather begins to grow cold. Frost may be noticeable without even going outside, but homeowners may need to go outside to check on chilly mornings or on days when the previous night was especially cold. If you must go outside, stay off the grass to protect it. Two or three frosts might be enough to make warm-season grasses go dormant for the winter. Cool-season grasses may keep growing and require mowing even after a few frosts, so it's imperative that homeowners determine which type of grass is in their yards.

■ **Soil temperature:** If it's hard to determine if frosts have occurred, homeowners can try checking the temperature of their soil to decide if they need to keep mowing. The lawn care experts at Pennington recommend homeowners continue mowing warm-season grasses so long as they keep growing. Lawns may not grow as

quickly in fall as they do in spring or summer, and growth may not be as visible to the naked eye during this time of year as it is in other times. Homeowners can routinely check soil temperature to determine if their grasses have stopped growing. Warm-season grasses tend to stop growing once the soil temperature is consistently at 55 F or below, while cool-season grasses tend to stop when temperatures are 45 F or lower.

Falling leaves have long been a barometer used by homeowners to determine if they need to keep mowing their lawns. That's not necessarily a reliable metric, as grass can still keep growing even if leaves have been falling for weeks. In addition, using a mulching mower when leaves begin falling is a great way to provide the lawn with nutrients it can use throughout the winter. Some trees shed their leaves more quickly than others, but it's a good rule of



File Photo

Several factors indicate the end of the mowing season. Paying attention to the signs of fall can help determine when to stop mowing your lawn.

thumb that lawns will need to keep being mowed if trees are still retaining more than half

their leaves.

A host of factors can help homeowners determine when

it's safe to put their mowers away for the winter.

Tips for planting fall vegetables

Tending to backyard vegetable gardens can fill many hours of enjoyable downtime in the great outdoors. What's more, the bounty produced by such gardens provides healthy, fresh foods to gardeners and their loved ones.

Although spring and summer are widely seen as the peak of gardening season, the mild temperatures of autumn can be a prime time for planting vegetables as well. Certain late-season treats like carrots, kale, spinach, and turnips can thrive in fall gardens. Many different foods are quick crops that can go from seed to table in about six weeks. When sown in early fall, these vegetables will be ready to put on the table for mid-October feasts. Beets, green onions, broccoli, and cabbages can be planted in late summer for fall harvest. Gardeners who live in hardiness zones eight through 10 (the southern portion of the United States) can plant fall vegetables as late as December. Many of these plants can tolerate light frost, which may even help sweeten the vegetables.



File Photo
Fall gardening can be a bit tricky with the onset of cold weather, but many crops, like carrots, do well in fall.

A handful of unique factors need to be taken into consideration when planning fall vegetable gardens.

■ **The summertime location** of the garden may still be adequate, but be sure to choose a location that gets eight full hours of sunlight per day.

■ **If using an existing garden site**, clear out any detritus from summer plants and any

weeds that have sprouted. If you are planting a new garden, remove any turf before tilling the soil.

■ **Amend the soil** with sand, compost, manure fertilizer, and any other nutrients needed depending on the types of vegetables you intend to grow.

■ **While fall vegetables** can be grown successfully from seeds, it may be more time-friendly to work from larger transplants, advises the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension.

■ **Some plants** may need a little protection as they grow if temperatures begin to dip. Cover with a blanket, cardboard box or plastic tunnel to insulate.

Remember to water according to the vegetables planted and to keep an eye on readiness for vegetables. Turnips, beets, rutabagas, and carrots can be dug out when the roots are plump and crisp.

Vegetable gardens need not cease when the last days of summer vanish. Fall produce is delicious and can be easily planted and harvested even after the first frost.

Fresh veggies are not exclusive to spring and summer

Spring and summer may be the seasons most often associated with gardening. But people who love to grow their own vegetables can do so even when the weather outside is frightful.

Various vegetables thrive in cool temperatures. The home and garden experts at HGTV note that some winter vegetables are hardy. That means they can handle frosts in temperatures as low as 25 F without being damaged. Others are even sturdier in the face of all that winter can throw at them, capable of tolerating temperatures that dip into the high teens.

Growing vegetables in winter requires a different approach than growing in spring and summer, as gardeners must be ready to prevent damage from frost if temperatures get especially

chilly. For example, the experts at Michigan State University Extension note that gardeners may need to utilize floating row covers to protect sensitive crops from frost. Gardeners interested in planting winter vegetables can speak with a local garden center professional about which crops to plant and what to do if temperatures push winter vegetable gardens to the brink.

Though it's up to gardeners what they want to plant, the following are some popular winter vegetables that can make for wonderful, fresh

additions to any dinner table even after the traditional gardening season has come and gone.

- Arugula
- Broccoli
- Brussel sprouts
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Collard greens
- Endive
- Parsley
- Parsnips
- Kale
- Radishes
- Rutabagas
- Spinach
- Swiss chard

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