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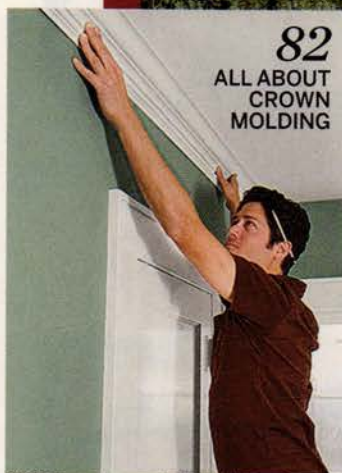
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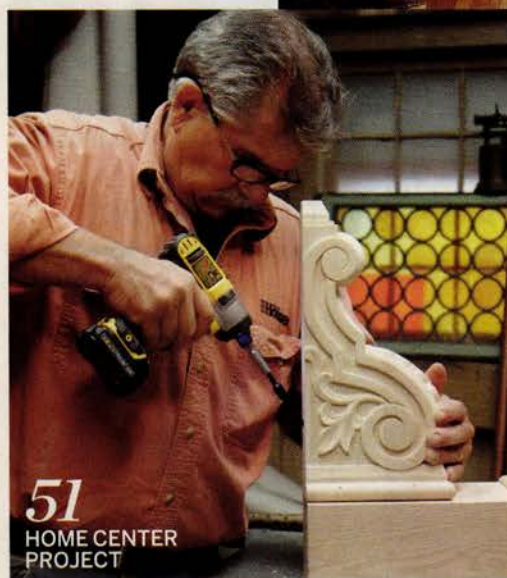
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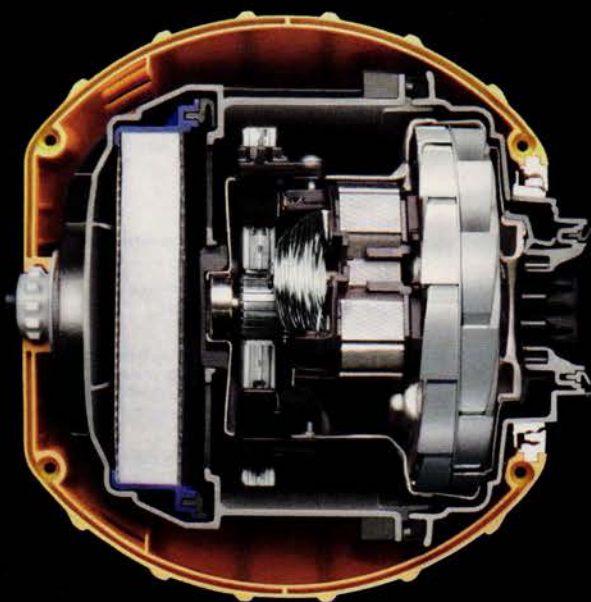


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readermail

This month a reader shared her battles with an invasive vine we reported on. Others continued the tradition of clever *TOH* reader solutions: one for wind-whipped storm doors, another—surely a contender for our Cheapskate Hall of Fame—a thrifty and practical alternative to our Weekend Remodel cold frame.

Oriental bittersweet

In your October Home Solutions you had a short heads-up about oriental bittersweet. This is the first report I have seen in any media source informing the public about this invasive vine. It is the north's version of kudzu. It strangles young saplings, and its canopy screens any sun from mature trees, killing them. I have been fighting it for several years. I've found mature vines with a diameter of 8 inches or more and have had to use a saw to cut them. I've pulled out root systems of 10 feet, and there was still more before it broke. It is very resistant to herbicides. There

needs to be more awareness about this plant. Thanks for the article.

AURIEL CHIN,
NORTH CHELMSFORD, MASS.

that way for at least 20 years now, and we've not had a problem with the wind since.

—MIMI KALMAN, MANCHESTER, CONN.

Wind-foiling storm door

In October's Ask This Old House, someone asked about repairing a storm door damaged by a strong wind. Given the way the wind hits our front entry, we'd repaired and replaced a few storm doors over the years. Finally we got the idea to put the hinges on the opposite side of the door so that the wind would push it shut instead of snapping it back and breaking it. It has been

Double-hung cold frame

Re October's Weekend Remodel project on making a cold frame, there is an easier and cheaper method. When some neighbors were upgrading their windows, I got an old double-hung in frame for nothing. I cut down a door frame—from a pre-hung door someone didn't want—to fit under the frame of the window. In use, just open the sashes to ventilate and control the inside temp. No need for hinges, a handle, or a stick to hold up the window.

—ALDEN HART, GREENVILLE, N.C.

Corrections

→ The price given for the bookcase on page 69 of the October issue was incorrect. It is actually \$320 as shown; gothiccabinetcraft.com.

→ The humidifier listed as "evaporative" in the chart on page 34 of the October issue was not the correct model. It should be Honeywell HCM-750, \$55; target.com.

home center project

Turn case molding into a mirror frame

reader project of the month

Fluted mirror frame

ALICIA HOFFMAN, ROCKVILLE, MD.

My husband had a large unframed wall mirror left over from a bathroom remodel. We had talked about building a frame for it for months, but when I saw your Home Center Project in the September 2010 issue, I knew that I could finally convince him to do it. After a fair amount of effort, the mirror looks great hanging in our dining room. Thanks!



how to reach us

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letter { from This Old House }

Ho, ho...uh-oh!

"Could you just give me a quick hand getting the decorations down from the attic before you go?" That was my mother, whom my wife and I were visiting, lying right to my face. "Sure," my wife said, volunteering me before I could say otherwise.

I should explain. You see, the deceit my mother, an otherwise honorable woman, was practicing right there—it was all about the "quick hand." There is nothing quick about my mother's Christmas decorating. It takes her many days, hundreds of man-hours all totaled up. The sheer volume of tchotchkes makes it impossible for the process to be otherwise.

Nonetheless I went up the stairs, through the door, and into the attic crawl space. Past the wood skis, past a milk can and a box with a little wool suit coat and knee pants I wore when I was 2.

On Trip 1, I got the tree stand. Trips 2 and 3 were for the lights. Trips 4 and 5 were for boxes of ornaments. Trip 6 was for a box of Santas that she's collected. Trip 7 was also for a box of Santas. Trips 8, 9, 10, and 11 were for one more box of Santas plus three Santas that were too big to fit in a box.

Sitting at the dining room table, surrounded by them, I said to my wife, "She has more Santas than..."

"Than what?" she asked. "Than you have junk in our storage space? Enormous kettle, meet tiny pot." I think she was implying that I had my own heaps of stuff—or that I was an enormous kettle. I'm not sure. "Look at all this," I said, gesturing around me. "Look at it! You can't even see me, there are so many Santa Clauses here." And just then my mother, clearly having heard every word I'd said, walked in.

"I can see you," my mother said, "but you're right. It's time to thin the herd." I looked at her, the satisfying smile of a long-fought victory starting to spread across my face, and then... "I'm going to get rid of the big one right in the middle. Yeah, I definitely don't need that one anymore."

"Come on sweetie," my wife said. "You heard your mother."


SCOTT OMELIANUK, EDITOR
scott@thisoldhouse.com



THREE THINGS I LEARNED FROM THIS ISSUE →

- 1 **How a candle stub** and some foil can help you get your shoes tied. [p. 18]
- 2 **How cut-up paper** and some painting savvy can make you feel like you just woke up in Casablanca. [p. 36]
- 3 **How a vintage window guard** can make your pots and pans feel safe. [p. 42]

P.S. Perhaps, dear reader, you're wondering what this has to do with *This Old House*. Well, it's meant to be a cautionary tale—not about being booted from your mother's house, which you may or may not desire—but about collecting. Hoard too much and you'll have no room for anything from my favorite new *TOH* feature: Our first annual Best New Home Products list. I can't do its fullness justice here; just turn to page 57 to check it out. Oh, and before I forget: Happy Holidays to you and yours. May they bring you as much joy as I brought Santas from my mother's attic.

checklist { December 10 }

EASY WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR HOME RIGHT NOW

☐ Give your fire extinguisher a safety check

Start by making sure the pressure gauge's pointer is in the green zone; if it isn't, call your local fire station to find out where to have the apparatus repressurized and refilled with its extinguishing agent. If the instruction label is illegible, contact the manufacturer for a replacement. See cracks, dents, or rust on the shaft? Time to buy a replacement.



☐ What's on your checklist?

"Using my roof rake to brush snow off the edge of my home's roof and gutters; it helps keep ice dams from forming."

—John Hollingsworth,
Lincoln, Neb.

E-mail us your ideas at
checklist@thisoldhouse.com.

☒ Secure the homestead

Before you visit family for the holidays, follow these steps to ensure your house doesn't fall prey to burglars:

- > Put your lamps on timers. Set them to switch the lights on for a few hours in the evening to give the impression that someone's at home.
- > Install exterior lights with motion sensors near ground-floor entries.
- > Trim trees and other climbable vegetation back at least 3 feet from windows.
- > Arrange for a neighbor to collect your mail and plow the driveway if it snows.



Don't let criminals just breeze through your door. Find more tips at thisoldhouse.com/bonus

TOH TIP

☐ Blow the dust from thermostats

Left unchecked, dust can accumulate inside thermostats, causing them to miscalculate room temperature—a confusing, and potentially costly, error. To clean yours, cut the power, remove its cover, and gently blow away dust, then nudge out any dirt with a cotton swab.

☐ Tighten exterior stair railings

A handrail won't help you scale slippery steps if it wobbles when you grab it. To secure a wood railing, apply construction adhesive to the top of the posts and reinforce with screws. For wrought iron, tighten all the fasteners, replacing rusted parts with stainless steel. If the rail has come loose from a masonry wall, be sure the anchor is set in framing or solid block, not mortar; if necessary, reset it with new concrete.

☐ Prep your snow-blower for winter

Refill it with fresh gasoline? Sure, but here are other steps you should take before a blizzard hits:

1. If the spark plug looks worn, replace it, setting the spark plug's gap based on the manufacturer's specifications.
2. Drain away old oil, following the manufacturer's guidelines, and fill with a fresh supply.
3. Check the scraper bar for wear. If it looks thin, replace it.
4. Examine the belt for cracks and replace as needed.



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home solutions

Edited by Jessica Dodell-Feder

inside

10 USES

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GIFT GUIDE

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→ SMART IDEA

House-parts trimmings

While ceiling-high evergreens might be the norm today, up until the late 19th century most Christmas trees fit tidily on a table. But the fact that they were small doesn't mean they couldn't make a big statement. Just check out our festive take, shown here. Set inside a box clad with tin ceiling tiles, and adorned with keyhole hardware and dollhouse doors and windows, this tree pays homage to the historic house in which it resides. To create your own version, simply pick out some architectural elements of your home you'd like to highlight. Then turn the page for pointers on building the tree box and assembling the ornaments.

Continued →



→ SMART IDEA CONTINUED



→ How-to: Build the tree box

1. Construct the legs. Glue and nail a 1x1 strip flush with the long edge of a 1x2 strip to form an L-shaped leg that's more than tall enough to accommodate your tree's pot. Repeat three times.

2. Build the body. Cut four panels from 1/4-inch plywood, making two of them 1/2 inch narrower than the other two. All four should be as tall as the legs you just made. Glue and nail the panels so that they sit inside the legs, as shown. Make sure the narrow panels face

each other and the wide panels face each other. You will now have a box that's open at both ends.

3. Support the bottom of the box. Glue and nail scrap blocking to either end of the box, then tack on a center support at the same height. To create the bottom panel, cut a piece of 1/4-inch plywood that's slightly smaller than the box's interior dimensions. Slide the panel down into the box, and rest it on your supports. Glue and nail, if desired, for extra support.

4. Trim the bottom of the panels. Create a bottom rail by cutting a 1 1/2-inch strip of 1x to fit between the box's legs. Nail, and repeat on all sides.

5. Insert the tin. Cut a tin ceiling tile with tin snips to fit snugly inside your box frame. (We used a standard 2-by-2-foot tile from americantinceilings.com that we cut into four equal squares). Apply vinyl adhesive caulk to the back of

the tin, fit it inside the frame, and seal with the caulk.

6. Cap and paint. Turn the box rightside up. Line the top inside edges with 1x1 strips. Cap the box by gluing and nailing four 1x4 pieces with mitered corners to the supports you just made. Sand the wood, then finish by priming and painting it with a latex in a color of your choice.

—J.D.F.

▶ more step-by-step

Find more photos showing how to make this tree box at thisoldhouse.com/bonus



→ How-to: Gather the ornaments

Tiny replicas of architectural details are a clever alternative to traditional baubles. Search flea markets, hardware stores, or online auction sites for skeleton keys and keyholes, which can cost as little as \$1 each. Or buy new reproductions—ours come from houseofantiquehardware.com (from \$2 each), and string them on colorful ribbon. Look in your local crafts store or on a website such as houseworks1td.com for wood dollhouse doors and windows that you can paint. Whatever your home's architectural style, you'll likely find small-scale pieces that will fit right in. —J.D.F.

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Candle stubs

Even after you've burned them down quite a bit, candles still come in handy around the house. Here are a few ways to see them in a new light

1 Waterproof a label.

Lightly rub the end of a pale-colored candle stub over a package's mailing label to prevent moisture from making the ink bleed.

2 Fix a shoelace.

Melt a stub onto a piece of foil, then immediately dip the end of a frayed lace into the wax. Wait a few seconds, then mold the wax into a point that can be guided through lace holes.



3 Unstick drawers.

Lubricate the runners of a drawer with a candle to help it open and close with ease. (This trick also works on window and sliding-door tracks.)



4 Ignite kindling.

Drizzle a melting candle stub liberally over a pinecone or small branch, and let dry. Toss into a fireplace or woodstove as a fire starter.

5 Make a smooth cut.

Rub wax along the sides of a saw blade to help it slice cleanly through lumber.

6 Distress furniture.

Before staining a wood piece, lightly rub random sections with a white or beige stub. The stain won't penetrate where

there's wax, giving the wood a weathered look.

7 Seal envelopes.

After addressing holiday cards, drip wax over the tip of the envelope flap to keep it sealed—and add a bit of historical charm.

8 Illuminate a party.

Melt the bottom of a

candle stub and stick it securely inside a glass jar. Light, then suspend the luminaria from wire wrapped around the jar's mouth to cast a glow.

9 Deter bugs.

Make mosquito repellent by melting unscented stubs in a double boiler, adding citronella oil, and pouring into a heat-resistant jar.

10 Prevent snow and ice buildup.

Coat the edge of a shovel or scraper with wax so that snow and ice will slide right off.

—JENNIFER STIMPSON

more 10 uses

Find clever ideas for more leftovers at thisoldhouse.com/bonus



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- Prof. Nathaniel Burke



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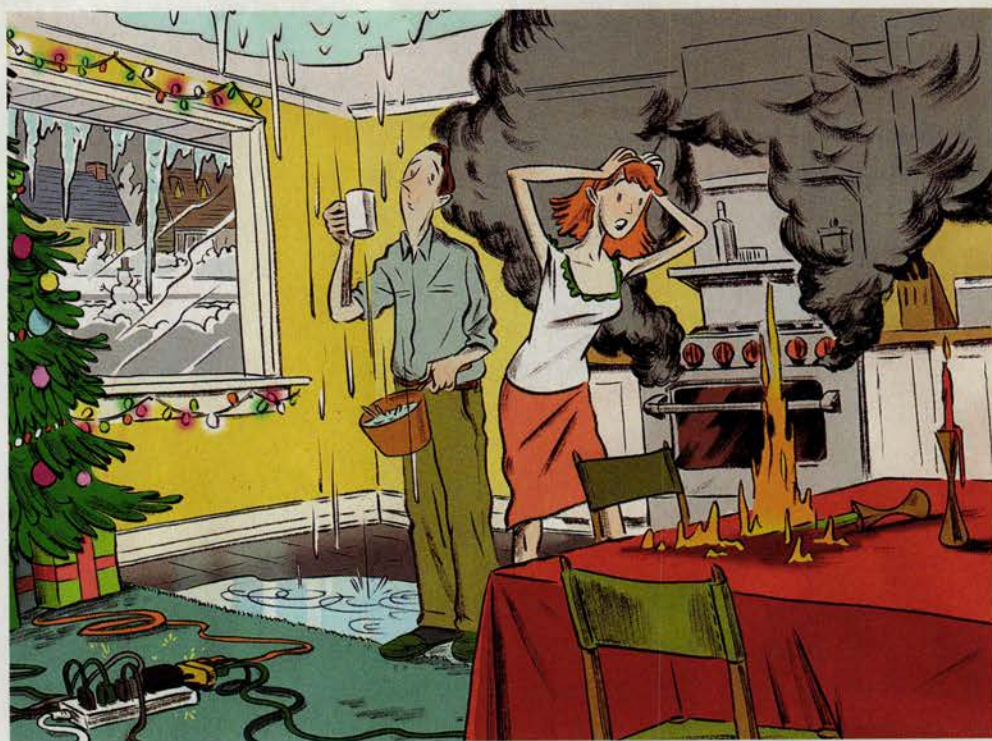
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→ UPGRADE

Update old chairs with paint

Transform even an ordinary dinner into a festive affair by perking up the legs of your dining chairs with a coat of cheerful color. Start by going over the legs with medium-grit sandpaper until they're as smooth as possible. Wipe away any dust with a tack cloth, then use a small brush to apply a coat of latex primer. Follow with two coats of latex paint in your desired hue; let dry completely between applications. If the legs feature detailed woodwork, avoid drips by painting with a side-to-side motion. —J.D.F.



→ SAFE HOUSE

Avoid holiday horrors

Big gatherings are a sign of the season, but with so many people in your home at once, a minor mishap can turn into chaos. Here's how to save your house from devolving into a disaster:

1_Sparking holiday lights

Multiple light strings crammed into a single outlet can lead to a fast-igniting blaze.

Prevent it: Keep an outlet's total amperage or volts

under 15 amps, or if using a power strip, within the manufacturer's rating. If you notice sparking, pull plugs out of the outlet immediately.

2_Fiery candles

Those tapers look great glowing on your table—until someone knocks them onto the linen tablecloth.

Prevent it: Never sit a candle directly on flammable material. Before lighting, trim

the wick to ¼ inch; blow it out when there are 2 inches of wax left (½ inch if the candle's in a vessel).

3_Smoking turkey

Bye-bye birdie: Smoke starts pouring out of the oven while you're cooking.

Prevent it: Clean the oven thoroughly at least a day before the meal. When broiling, keep food at least 2 to 3 inches from the flame and place a sheet pan underneath

to catch drippings that could smoke.

4_Leaky toilet

Lots of guests means a busy bath. A clog can make your toilet overflow, causing water damage to the ceiling below.

Prevent it: Routinely flush a natural enzyme down the drain to keep it clear. Avert an overflow by closing the water valve and using a plunger at the first sign of a slow drain.

—SAL VAGLICA



reader tip MATT KNOWLTON, STOUGHTON, MASS.

"Some cordless tool chargers keep charging even after they're done, shortening the battery's life. To prevent this, plug the charger into a timer sold for indoor lights and set the switch for how long you want your battery to charge."

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→ GIFT GUIDE

Stocking stuffers from \$13

Proving that good things come in small packages, these nine clever, affordable gifts will make any DIYer merry.

1_Circular-saw pizza cutter

Show off serious slicing skills with the Pizza Boss 3000. \$15; spoonsisters.com

2_Wood-shaving ornaments

Roost's shapely decorations will make you rethink the scraps on your workshop floor. \$30 for eight; Sundrees; 607-387-8811

3_Claw-hammer hook Need extra storage? The Claude hook hits the nail on the head. About \$20; touchofginger.com

4_Beechwood flashlight The LED Torch looks far too good to be hidden in a drawer. \$48; areaware.com

5_Gingerbread house plans Build the best house on the block with blueprints from *The Gingerbread Architect* (Clarkson Potter). \$15; amazon.com

6_To-do-list mug Multitasking at its finest: Plan your day on this cup between sips of coffee. \$16; fredflare.com

7_Bent-nail bottle opener This magnetized kitchen essential opens cold drinks in style. \$20; areaware.com

8_Plane key chain With this pewter bauble, you never have to put away your tools. \$13; garrettwade.com

9_Lever-handle nutcracker Tinkerers will love the adjustable lever action for shelling hazelnuts and the like. \$13; northerntool.com

—DANIELLE BLUNDELL

1



2



3

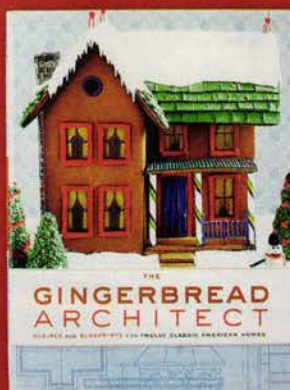


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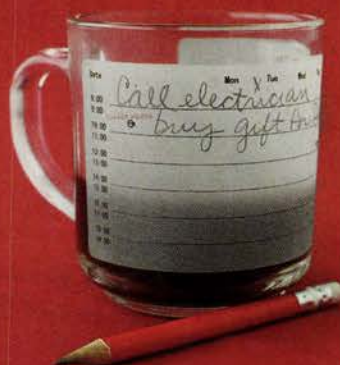


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Practicality meets period style

With four young kids in the family, this couple's 1920s Tudor Revival needed a handsome, hardworking cook space

By JILL CONNORS + Photographs by NATHAN KIRKMAN



before A previous redo left behind beige tile floors and laminate doors.
after Now the space has a period look that suits the Tudor-style house. Here, Tracy Wysocky with Beau, 6, and Livy, 4, two of her four kids.
Pendants: Schoolhouse Electric

The kitchen can play a pivotal role in the “move or improve” debate. It certainly did for Tracy and Michael Wysocky of Oak Park, Illinois. While they loved the architecture of their 1920s Tudor Revival—think black-and-white-marble foyer, leaded-glass windows, paneled oak doors—just five years after moving in, they were considering selling. With four young kids in the mix, navigating the room’s dysfunctional layout was making daily living a chore. There was minimal counter space; the fridge door blocked the entryway; and worse, an unheated pantry closet made the space uncomfortable in winter. Ultimately the couple turned to kitchen designer Rebekah Zaveloff to reimagine the space. She found that by cutting back a wall leading to the back staircase and removing the pantry, she could gain 6 square feet for a new layout that included a center island and a more open connection to the eating area. To create a period style in sync with the house, she used creamy subway tile with charcoal grout, custard-glass schoolhouse lights, a farm sink, and dark cabinetry. Now traffic flows more easily, there’s more counter and storage space, and life is good. Says Tracy, “I never knew I could like a kitchen this much!”

before+after: kitchen

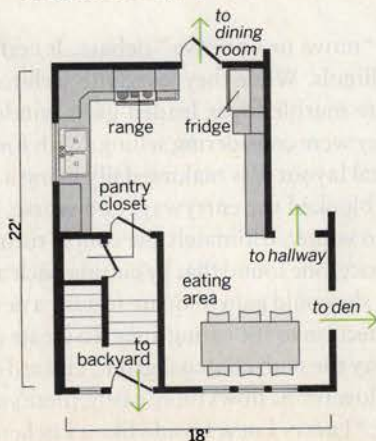
→ **Black X-front cabinets** with opaque ribbed-glass doors nod to the house's black-and-white-marble foyer and distinguish a desk area that doubles as a bar.

↓ **Chalkboard fridge panels** hide fingerprints and show off doodles. The same wall holds the microwave, cookbooks, and small appliances. Refrigerator: GE



before

The fridge and range flanked the door to the dining room, impeding traffic flow. Prep and storage space were minimal.



after

Annexing the pantry closet and cutting back the wall opposite it allowed for an island and reconfiguring the appliances.

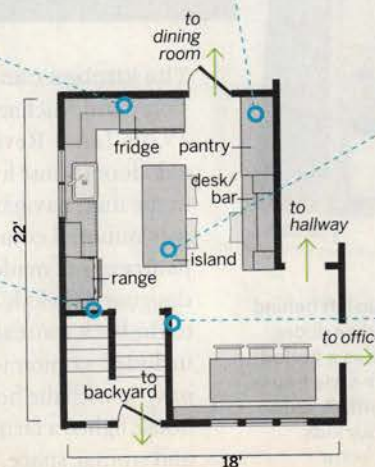
3 Created a new pantry with floor-to-ceiling cabinets. The long counter next to it acts as a desk and doubles as a bar when the couple entertains.

2 Moved the fridge to where the range had been, so it's now just steps from the sink.

1 Removed the pantry closet to create a new home for the range and hood.

4 Added an island to gain more prep space as well as a family gathering spot.

5 Cut back the wall opposite the old pantry for a better connection with the eating area.





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before+after: **kitchen**

• the key details

↓ A built-in bench in the eating area helps streamline the space and adds architectural interest.



← **Pale colors**
—white trim and beige walls—make the opened-up dining space feel light and bright. New windows and oak floors blend with those in the rest of the house.
Pendant: Circa Lighting

vintage details

See how other homeowners have added period style to their kitchens at thisoldhouse.com/bonus



↑ A tile border made of stone mosaic lines the desk/bar wall; it coordinates with a geometric accent along the range wall.



homeowner tip

TRACY WYSOCKY,
OAK PARK, ILL.

"Don't hesitate about an island because you think it will clutter the room. It's great for bringing the family together."



↑ **Library lamps** provide over-the-sink task lighting and another sophisticated bronze accent in the room.

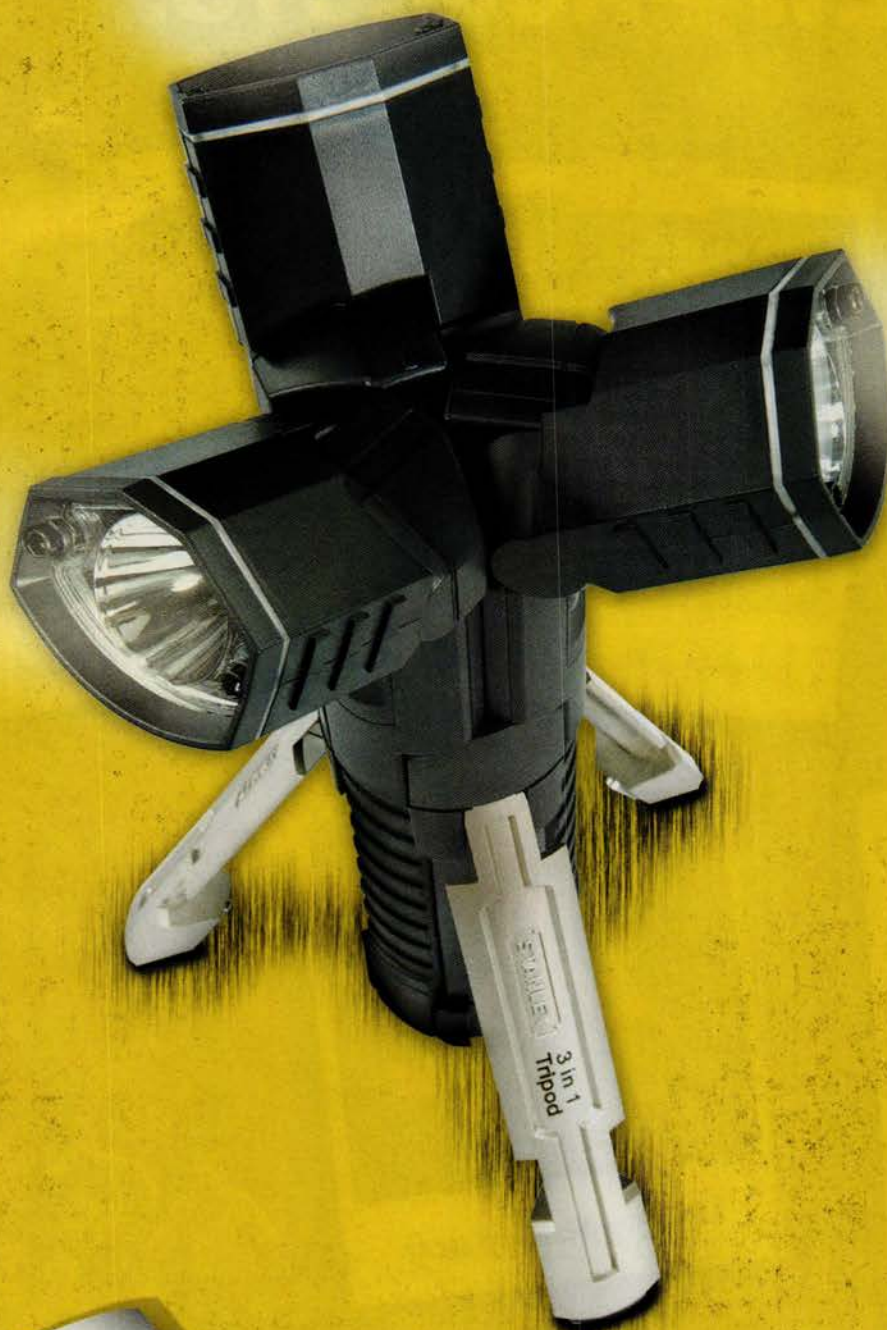
Wall-hung fixtures: Circa Lighting

← **A sliver of white granite** to the left of the range gives the cook some elbow room.

Range: Five Star. Hood: Vent-A-Hood. Custom cabinets: KitchenLab. Knobs and pulls: Restoration Hardware

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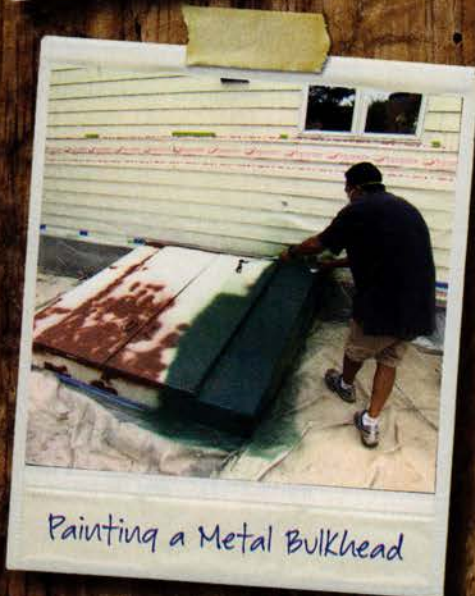
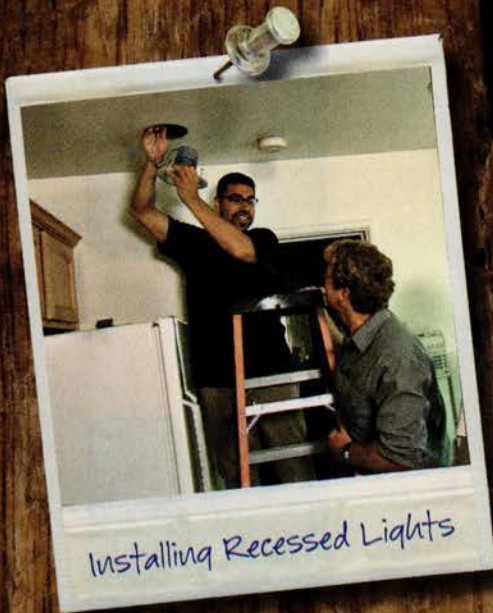
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A transformed half bath for just \$172

Changing the fixtures and finishes gives a tired powder room a whole new look By NATALIE RODRIGUEZ



It can take an extra bit of creativity—and energy—to keep the last project in a whole-house remodel from looking like an afterthought. With little cash left by the time they got to the powder room of their 1941 cabin, Mark and Mary Leidelmeyer of Poulsbo, Washington, knew they'd be working with what was there. They replaced things that were unequivocally dated—the green laminate counter, the gold faucet—and updated the paneling with paint. They scoured closeout sales for deals, such as a \$30 copper sink, and slightly damaged goods, like a \$4 sheet of beadboard for the ceiling. Mark even replicated the tongue-and-groove pine paneling to clad the sink wall and the sides of the vanity. Says Mary, "It's been a long journey for such a tiny bath, but it's now one of our favorite spaces." ■



before The gold fittings, laminate counter, and pale paneling had a 1980s vibe.
after Fresh green paint, a copper sink, lantern-style sconces, and a wood vanity top warm up the room.

the project tally:

Stripped the wallpaper behind the vanity and removed its laminate top.	\$0
Installed a stained and polyurethaned pine counter, routed to give it an ogee edge.	\$40
Added an oil-rubbed faucet, vanity trim, and new pulls.	\$46
Put in a copper sink found at a closeout sale.	\$30
Hung discounted exterior sconces as vanity lighting.	\$28
Turned existing pine shelves into tongue-and-groove paneling for the sink wall.	\$0
Used a 4-by-8-foot sheet of MDF beadboard (marked down because of a damaged corner) on the ceiling.	\$4
Coated the cabinets and walls with 1 gallon of green paint.	\$24

total

\$172

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Wall-mount mailboxes

Whether aged copper or graphic steel, these letter holders will add vintage charm and a boost of curb appeal to any home **By DANIELLE BLUNDELL + Photographs by TED MORRISON**

A familiar sight today, mailboxes weren't always a house-front staple. Letters were first hand-delivered to residents in urban dwellings in the mid-19th century. Wall-mount boxes didn't appear until the 1890s. Back then, some were made of glass; their transparency offered a convenient letter check. In these security-conscious times, wall-mount mailboxes are made almost exclusively of metal with weather-resistant finishes, and many have locks to secure homeowners' personal information. With bold graphics, raised design details, and various finishes, today's styles are also larger to accommodate catalogs, greeting cards, small packages, and—of course—the latest issues of *This Old House*. Here, find 15 designs that will look at home on a wide variety of house styles.

arts and crafts style

ARROYO CRAFTSMAN

Made of: Patinated solid brass

Size: 17"W x 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ "D x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ "H

Try it: On a bungalow or other low-slung cottage, where its verdigris patina and C.R. Mackintosh-inspired angles can play off earth-tone shingles and a low roofline. \$217; bellacor.com



french twist

BLINK MANUFACTURING

Made of: Galvanized steel with a painted panel

Size: 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ "W x 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ "D x 14 $\frac{1}{8}$ "H

Try it: If you like to change things up on a regular basis. Tire of the golden fleur-de-lis design, and you can swap in another artwork panel or background color for an instant update. \$175; mailboxixchange.com



nordic classic

LIDAB

Made of: Powder-coated galvanized steel

Size: 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ "W x 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ "D x 14"H

Try it: Anywhere its simple shape and hot shot of color will be welcome. French horns like the one depicted here once announced the arrival of mail in 19th-century Sweden. \$57; hemslojd.com



vertical victorian

SPECIAL LITE PRODUCTS

Made of: Powder-coated aluminum

Size: 13"W x 4"D x 17½"H

Try it: On a Second Empire or Queen Anne home. The burgundy hue will mesh well with historically accurate paint colors, and the scrolled backplates will complement decorative trimwork. \$135; signaturehardware.com



embossed emblem

ARCHITECTURAL MAILBOXES

Made of: Stainless steel with antiqued-brass plating

Size: 16½"W x 6½"D x 13½"H

Try it: For a dose of classic charm on a 20th-century home, where the clean lines, raised motif, and hand-polished finish will gracefully stand out. \$194; homedepot.com



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hand hammered

WATERGLASS STUDIOS LTD.

Made of: Copper with an oxidized antiqued finish

Size: 9½"W x 4"D x 17"H

Try it: On a rustic cottage or Craftsman-influenced home, where its retro news-paper scrolls, hand-burnished finish, and dimpled detailing will look at home. \$432; houseofantiquehardware.com



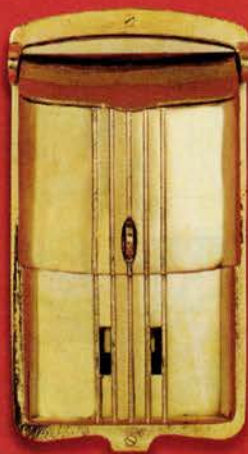
black beauty

SALSBURY INDUSTRIES

Made of: Aluminum with a brass flap

Size: 15¼"W x 5¼"D x 20"H

Try it: If you're nostalgic for a box that harks back to the Pony Express—with a 21st-century tweak: a front access door that allows for quick retrieval of deliveries kept under lock and key. \$80; mailboxes.com



deco detailing

REJUVENATION

Made of: Lacquered polished brass

Size: 7⅞"W x 4"D x 14½"H

Try it: To add vintage character to a pre-World War II home. Scaled up from its original size, this reproduction of a popular style from the 1930s and '40s eschews magazine scrolls for a larger vertical shape. \$275; rejuvenation.com



well aged

SALSBURY INDUSTRIES

Made of: Solid brass with an antiqued finish

Size: 11"W x 3½"D x 14½"H

Try it: If you're an old-house owner who prizes convenience: The decorative window grid lets you see from afar when the day's mail has been dropped off. \$80; mailboxes.com



natural charm

STREETSCAPE INC.

Made of: Brass with a patinated finish
Size: 15"W x 4½"D x 11¼"H

Try it: If you're looking for a box that'll only get better with age. The hand-finished metal will darken over time to a rich weathered hue. \$135; mailboxes4less.com



colonial style

AMCO CORPORATION

Made of: Powder-coated aluminum
Size: 12½"W x 2¼"D x 22"H

Try it: On a Colonial Revival or New England saltbox, where the filigree accents, subtle scrollwork, and cast-iron look of this locking box will complement the surrounding architecture. \$87; mailboxworks.com



rugged wrangler

GAINES MANUFACTURING INC.

Made of: Aluminum with solid brass
Size: 14⅞"W x 7½"D x 14⅝"H

Try it: If you're a frequent traveler. This generously sized box, with its handsome leaf plaque and locking insert, can hold about a week's worth of mail without overflowing. \$187; mailboxworks.com

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stenciled statement

HOUSEART

Made of: Powder-coated aluminum
Size: 12¾"W x 4½"D x 12¾"H

Try it: On a mid-century home. The custom hand-painted tree adds an artisanal touch to the shapely Moderne-inspired box. \$275; houseart.net



personalized plaque

WHITEHALL PRODUCTS

Made of: Powder-coated aluminum
Size: 15"W x 8"D x 14½"H

Try it: If you want a box to multitask as your house number. The dark bronze finish and clean lines will work with virtually any style. \$204; csnstores.com



simple and silvery

FIRST CLASS BY POST MASTER

Made of: Aluminum with satin-nickel finish

Size: 14"W x 4⅞"D x 10¼"H

Try it: Where the front door has a suite of brushed-steel, nickel, or chrome hardware. \$59; lowes.com

extra, extra

Got a post-mount box? No worries; find 18 charming options at thisoldhouse.com/bonus

Create a curvy Moroccan-star design

The secret to making this hand-painted pattern? Two templates you cut out of paper

By DEBORAH BALDWIN • Photographs by DEBORAH WHITLAW LLEWELLYN



Cost: About \$75 for a 10-foot-long wall
Time: Two days
Difficulty: Moderate, once you master painting the curves. Practice on posterboard first.



When it comes to small tools with great impact, few painting accessories can compete with a template. To make one, simply draw a shape on heavy coated paper or flexible cardboard, cut it out, place it on the wall, and outline it in chalk, as if drawing around a cookie cutter. Repeat. Once you've outlined your whole design, put the template away and paint freehand right over the chalk. Here, a tailored bedroom in minimalist shades of brown, bronze, and ivory got a welcome infusion of color and pattern with the help of two templates, three cans of paint, and a small brush. Atlanta-based decorative painter Brian Carter loosely based the design for this accent wall on a Moroccan tile, then added a twist. "Blowing up the pattern keeps it from being fussy," Carter says, while the wavy, diamond-shaped stars it creates and the way it's interrupted by the ceiling and corners keep it from appearing too rigid. Bronze dots, dabbed on with the same brush, add a graphic touch to the pale blue-and-cream scheme. For the how-to, read on.

HOW IT'S DONE

1 Once your base coat—here, it's Benjamin Moore's Palladian Blue—is dry, measure the wall side to side and snap a vertical chalk line down its center. Snap more lines to the left and right at 18-inch intervals till you hit the corners. About 3 inches from the ceiling, mark the bottom of the top row of interrupted stars with chalk. Move down the chalk lines, marking dots at 18-inch intervals. Use a yardstick to connect the dots diagonally to create a grid of 18-by-18-inch diamonds.

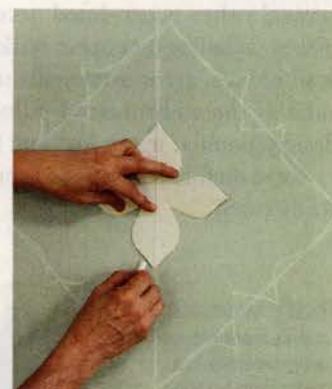
2 With a pencil, sketch the 18-by-18-inch and 6-by-6-inch star patterns on paper. Fold into quarters; cut out along one side. Unfold; you should have two equal-sided templates.



3 Placing the big template under the topmost dots, use chalk to outline a row of whole stars. Continue, working in vertical rows. Outline interrupted stars last, bending the template to help.



4 Center the small star within each of the large stars you just drew, and outline it in chalk. (Note: The outlines of adjacent large stars create similar shapes that don't get small stars.)



5 Using a 1/2-inch round artist's brush, paint the large stars right over the chalk outlines, using a color that contrasts with the wall—here, it's Benjamin Moore's Standish White. Make sure the stars touch at all four points. Let dry.



6 Paint the small stars over the chalk outlines. Let dry.



7 Using the same brush and an accent color—here, it's FolkArt's Metallic Solid Bronze acrylic latex craft paint—paint dots at the intersections of the stars. Give the dots a second coat as needed.



pro advice

BRIAN CARTER,
DECORATIVE PAINTER, ATLANTA

"Keep a damp sponge on hand to erase any errant marks in chalk or paint. You'll need it again when you're all done, to erase the chalk-line grid."

free templates

Download the two star templates at thisoldhouse.com/bonus

Craftsman-style holiday entry

The earthy tones and nature-themed motifs that define this architectural style make for a festive, welcoming porch. Here's how to duplicate the look at your home

By JESSICA DODELL-FEDER + Photograph by JOHN ELLIS

'Tis the season for leafy greenery, burnished metallics, and sprightly shots of berry red, right? No matter what era house you call home, taking a cue from the Craftsman style's emphasis on natural materials, artisan handcraft, and simple, sturdy design offers fresh inspiration for gussying up your front door this season. The house shown here gets its holiday cheer from a wreath of fir, magnolia, and boxwood; a red-painted bench; and several other warm-hued accessories. Many of the pieces, including the copper bucket, house numbers, and wall sconce, are in some part made by hand. Others, such as the embroidered pillows, reference specific designs popular in the Arts and Crafts era.

Read on for more ways to approximate this holiday-ready entry.

leafy wreath

Leaves were a popular design element in Craftsman textiles and pottery, so what better way to deck your door than with a wreath made from fresh fir, magnolia, and boxwood. \$134 for 24-inch size; themagnoliacompany.com. Add some sparkle with copper taffeta ribbon and faux berries. Ribbon, \$5 for 10 yards; berries, \$7; jamaligarden.com



natural mat

Greet guests with a coir rug adorned with winter berries. \$28 for a 24-by-36-inch mat; garnethill.com



STYLING: SUNDAY HENDRICKSON. PRODUCT PHOTOS: (EXCEPT BENCH) WENDELL T. WEBBER



get
this look



banded sconce

Modeled after a fixture from the early 1900s, this antiqued-copper light casts a warm glow, thanks to hand-blown amber glass. \$259; rejuvenation.com

terra-cotta-look planter

A weatherproof take on a classic earthenware container, this resin planter's simple cube shape and warm finish fall right in line with the style's rustic simplicity. \$70; jamaligarden.com



painted wood bench and rose-motif pillow

This outdoor seat is an affordable take on a design used by Gertrude Jekyll, a famed garden designer of the Arts and Crafts era. \$199; grandinroad.com. Flatter its weathered red finish with a linen pillow embroidered with a cheery rose wreath. \$100 each; oakparkhome-hardware.com

firewood bucket

Give logs pride of place by storing them in a hand-hammered copper vessel. \$180; plowandhearth.com



copper house numbers

Add instant character to your door with hand-cast numerals made from 95 percent recycled material in a classic Craftsman typeface. \$22 each; oakparkhome-hardware.com



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Iron window guards

Made to protect a house's entry points, vintage metal grilles can double as interior decor. Use one as the base for a pot rack, a headboard, and more

By AMY R. HUGHES + Photographs by KRISTINE LARSEN

A far cry from the prison-like bars sold at home centers today, 19th-century window guards were designed to make people feel secure, not confined.

Used primarily on sidewalk-level windows in urban areas from Charleston to Chicago, they kept intruders out while letting air and light in. Made from cast or wrought iron, and featuring elegant scrolls, twists, and flowers, they also enhanced the look of a home.

By the 1880s, there were dozens of foundries competing to satisfy Victorian-era America's appetite for highly ornamental window guards, as well as newel posts, stair railings, fences, and gates. These foundries hired skilled pattern-makers, who followed all the latest European trends. At the time, builders and homeowners could choose from a vast assortment of window-guard models sold through mail-order catalogs.

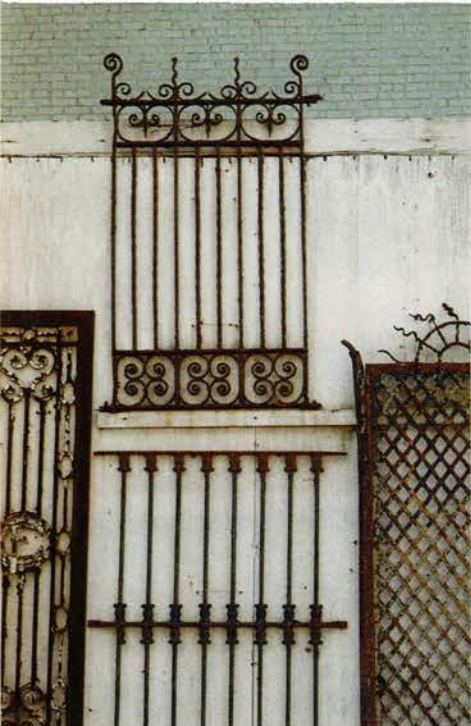
Because of their strength and



Make
this pot
rack

Turn the page to
learn how





shop smart Ornate window guards, like the ones shown above at Demolition Depot in New York City, range from \$300 to \$3,000. Simpler ones can be found on eBay and at house-part recycling centers for less than \$100.

enduring style, many vintage iron window guards still adorn homes and beautify city streetscapes today.

But for those that have found their way to salvage yards as a result of a remodel or demolition, there are myriad other ways to use them inside and outside the house. A guard with vertical rails can be turned on its side to serve as a wall-mount towel bar in the bathroom; one with a filigreed design or an intersecting grid pattern would be great as a headboard in the bedroom or a trellis for climbing vines in the garden.

Or you could follow my example and turn a window guard into a rack for hanging pots, oven mitts, and utensils in the kitchen. Read on to learn how to boost storage in your cook space with a guard-turned-pot rack. ■

Make a pot rack out of a vintage window guard

While some iron guards were panels anchored within window surrounds, the vast majority were attached directly to a home's exterior siding or framing with integrated strapping. The latter type is best for a pot rack because you can use the existing fastener drill-outs in the strapping to secure it to your wall. To suspend a rack from the ceiling, simply loop chain through the holes.

For my wall-mount rack, I bought a simple 3-foot-tall wrought-iron guard with two widely spaced twisted rails from Pasadena Architectural Salvage for \$90 (pasadenaarchitecturalsalvage.com). →

Cost: \$90 for guard; \$2 each for hooks at eagle-emporium.com

Time: 1 hour

Difficulty: Simple. Just have a friend help steady the rack while you secure it in place.



Hang your rack within arm's reach of the range so that pots will be easily accessible.

STEP-BY-STEP

1 Protect the iron surface from rust by rubbing on metal polish, such as Renaissance Wax (\$20; amazon.com). Then buff to a soft sheen.



2 Prep the fasteners by spraying them with black paint formulated for metal, such as Rustoleum American Accents (\$5.20; kmart.com), so that they'll match the iron rack.



3 Determine locations for the fasteners. Hold the rack against the wall where you plan to install it; ideally there will be studs to anchor into. Use a level to check alignment, and mark the center of the rack's existing holes with a pencil.



4 Drill pilot holes for the fasteners and anchors that work with your wall type. For drywall, I used 1½-inch-long ¼-inch lag bolts with plastic anchors. Because the bolt heads were smaller than the rack's holes, I added washers.



5 Steady the rack on the wall and use a ratchet wrench to twist in the lag bolts. Make installation easier by screwing all four bolts loosely in place before going back and tightening each one.



6 Arrange the S-hooks on the top and bottom rails. I used 10 hooks for my 3-foot rack. Now pull your favorite pots and pans from those dark cabinet recesses and hang 'em on your rack, where they'll be easy to grab.



get inspired

See many more salvage ideas at thisoldhouse.com/bonus

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Bow-back Windsor side chairs

Two models share the same spirit while parting ways on style, manufacture, and price By DEBORAH BALDWIN + Photograph by DON PENNY

Popular among American Revolutionaries, the Windsor remains an emblem of democratic taste, with versions to fit every dining room and budget. But not all are made the same way or even with the same proportions. Before deciding which Windsor deserves a place at your table, take a look at one that's handmade in Missouri (and expensive to ship) and its plainer, low-cost cousin, which you may be able to pick up at the store.

High-End

The Windsor Chair Shop

NEW YORK CITY SIDE CHAIR

Dimensions: 32"W by 17¼"D by 17¼"H **Weight:** 10 pounds

→\$500

IS IT FOR YOU?

If you want a handmade, heirloom-worthy chair that looks like an antique.

finish

Coats of traditional red and black milk paint followed by antiquing with a sanding pad, a linseed oil rubdown, and furniture wax. Occasional rewaxing is recommended.

materials

As with many originals, the seat is white pine; the bow back and spindles, red oak; and the legs and stretchers, hard maple. The spindles taper slightly; two form a brace in back with a tailpiece. The legs are well turned and have a pleasing rake, or flare. Custom made with hand-drilled holes and dowels; takes months for an order.

feel

The nicely shaped shield seat is a natural fit, and the back offers plenty of support. By today's standards, this sturdy little chair has a petite profile.

Budget

Pottery Barn

WINDSOR SIDE CHAIR

\$199←

Dimensions: 41½"W by 23"D by 22"H **Weight:** 15 pounds

IS IT FOR YOU?

If you want a simpler, wider, more casual take on a classic design.

finish

After being stained and glazed, the chair is sealed with a lacquer that protects it from moisture and stains.

materials

Made of mahogany and held together with dowels and glue. The legs and stretchers have traditional bulbous styling but are less refined. The legs' rake is also less dramatic and the bow back less taut.

feel

While less traditional, its larger proportions may better suit some people. The seat is wider, higher, and less deftly contoured.



This Old House blueprint

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Front and center

The TOH TV project house is getting a boost from a bigger, brighter entryway. Learn why fixing up these little spaces has such a large impact

By KEITH PANDOLFI • Photographs by ANTHONY TIEULI

"It was like entering a black hole." That's how architect Harriet Christina "Chris" Chu described what it once felt like to walk through the front door of the current *This Old House* TV project house in Auburndale, Massachusetts.

Indeed, the 1940 Colonial Revival had one of the most unwelcoming entryways imaginable. The recessed front door was almost invisible from the street. And anyone who managed to find it entered into a claustrophobic 3-by-3-foot vestibule that led to a diminutive hallway lined with oppressively dark millwork. "Seriously," says Chu, "it was one of the most depressing entryways I've ever seen."

While homeowners Raveen and Allison Sharma agreed that the area could use some work, they had no idea how to make it better. "We wanted to open it up, but we didn't have much space to play with," says Allison. Luckily, Chu had just the fix: a modest, bumped-out entry that would vastly improve their



ABOVE: A photo illustration shows the Auburndale house's new front entry as it will look when completed, with square columns and a bluestone walkway; a pergola (not pictured) will connect it to the detached garage. LEFT: TOH general contractor Tom Silva installs a skirt board for the front door.



house's bland facade, bring in extra light, and add a bit more square footage where it was sorely needed.

The 6-by-9-foot addition, shown in the rendering on the previous page, will include a new, wider door flanked by sidelights, as well as a double window on one side and a single window on the other. Topping it will be a small gabled roof to match the lines of the new roof that *TOH* general contractor Tom Silva is building on the garage, giving the house more visual interest and the eye-pleasing symmetry it lacked. "Enlarging the front entry was an extremely practical idea," says Allison. "And it meant that our family of four could walk into our house without tripping all over each other."

Chu has worked her magic in this spot before. Over the years, she's retrofitted several homes with new entryways—some purely to improve a house's exterior, others to make coming indoors a more hospitable, less cramped-into-a-sardine-can experience. "People are always amazed by how much impact these little spaces have," says Chu. If you're thinking about remodeling your entryway, see the examples at right for inspiration.



Tom Silva adds trim around a window in the enlarged foyer of the Auburndale house.



pro advice

CHRIS CHU, ARCHITECT, WEST NEWTON, MASS.

"If your budget won't let you add a whole new entryway, consider simply installing a new door with sidelights to brighten up the interior."

Three reasons to revamp an entry

No matter why you're doing it, overhauling a front entry is a smart investment that can enhance a house both outside and in. Here's how architect Chris Chu improved a trio of Colonial Revivals she remodeled.

1 make room for a half bath

After a kitchen expansion designed by Chu gobbled up their first-floor powder room, the owners of this 1933 home were looking for a place to put a new one. Since their house had always been a knockout from the street, they were initially leery when Chu suggested relocating the half bath to a new entryway, which would require altering the exterior. Taking her cues from the house's symmetrical form and Greek Revival touches, Chu pulled off a small bumpout with a larger overhang that looks like it's been there from the beginning.



2 create a better first impression

After Chu redesigned the kitchen, basement, and master bedroom of this 1930s house, homeowners Jenny and Bob Bortnick decided the front stoop—with its rickety wrought-iron railings and crumbling brick steps—wasn't up to snuff with the rest of the place. Like the current *TOH* TV project, their house also had a tiny vestibule and cramped, dark foyer. Chu gave the home a handsome new focal point with an entirely new entryway, complete with square columns, a gabled roof, and a staircase and landing clad in natural stone veneer. A boxed-out lamp post and new balustrade complete the look, making the approach to this house much more pleasant and welcoming, while the interior also benefited from a much-needed makeover.



3 add storage space

"A coat closet—that's all they wanted," says Chu of the couple that owns this charming 1930 Dutch Colonial Revival. The new entry is similar in form to the old one, with a gabled roof that commands

attention but is low enough to permit views from an upstairs window. Inside, a new double window helps illuminate the front hall. The homeowners liked the extra sunlight so much that they decided to skip the built-in closet; instead, Chu designed a freestanding armoire and placed another window above it. ■





LEFT: The new entryway, though modest in size, has a deep overhang to shield visitors from bad weather.
RIGHT: The enlarged foyer has enough space for a half bath.



LEFT: A wider, heavier staircase and mahogany front door lend grace to the exterior.
RIGHT: Cheery yellow paint and a raised ceiling help the front hall feel airy.



LEFT: The front door's original sidelights were reused in the new entry.
RIGHT: Chu designed the freestanding wardrobe (left) to provide a place to park coats and hats.





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—Ronald Andring, Sr., Tieton, WA



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Make a trestle table

Corbels and staircase parts helped us craft a handsome table with plenty of room for a holiday crowd By JENNIFER STIMPSON • Photograph by WENDELL T. WEBBER

If you're hosting a holiday meal, a big dining table is as much a necessity as extra silverware and a seating chart that doesn't cause a family feud. But a solid-wood table can be a four-figure investment, so we scoured the home store looking for materials to help us build one that wouldn't dry up our gift budget. With the help of *This Old House* general contractor Tom Silva, we designed a generous trestle table that incorporates some decorative flourishes without breaking the bank. The legs are simply newel posts that were cut to size, stabilized with feet made from corbels that have carved scrollwork details, and connected by a stretcher cut from a length of handrail. Stock lumber and molding finish off the top. Spend a weekend making it and we guarantee you'll get as many compliments on your newest piece of furniture as the food you serve on it.



**For complete
instructions, turn
the page**



56-inch red oak newel posts, 10½-inch decorative whitewood corbels, and poplar interior stairpart railing; lowes.com. Paint: Valspar's Deep Earth; valspar.com

Cost: \$475

Time: 8 hours, plus painting

Difficulty: Moderate. The cuts are straightforward, but moving the cumbersome pieces may require a helper.

HOW IT'S DONE

Build a trestle table

Dining tables are typically 28 to 32 inches high. Make yours lower (or higher) by cutting more (or less) off the ends of the newel posts. Find a full cut list and a diagram of parts for the table Tom built at thisoldhouse.com/bonus.



1 Cut the top and legs. Use a circular saw guided by a straightedge to cut the plywood tabletop and leg plates. With a miter saw, cut the 1x2 cleats, 2x4 stringers, dowel plugs, handrail, and newel posts to size. If your miter saw can't cut all the way through the posts, cut halfway through them, flip them over, and finish the cut through the opposite side.



5 Plug the recesses in the legs. Apply wood glue to one end of a dowel plug you cut in Step 1. Hammer the plug into the recess you drilled on the outside face of the newel post, letting it remain slightly proud of the surface. Repeat for the second plug and post.

2 Drill recesses in the feet. Fit a drill/driver with a $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch paddle bit. Holding the drill at a 45-degree angle, drill two recesses side by side that penetrate halfway through the back of the long side of a corbel, toward the adjacent short side, as shown. Repeat for all corbels.



3 Attach the feet to the legs. Glue the short side of a corbel to the base of a newel post, flush with its bottom edge. Hold it in place by driving 3-inch deck screws through the top corners of the corbel and into the post (drill countersinks first, if necessary). Drive 8-inch lag screws diagonally through the corbel and into the post, as shown. Repeat for all corbels.



4 Add the stretcher. Drill pilot holes through the newel posts and ends of the handrail. Using the $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch paddle bit, drill 1-inch recesses on the outside faces of the posts, centered over the pilot holes. Hold the rail between the posts and attach it by driving 6-inch lag screws through the posts and into the rail.



6 Attach the leg plates. Center the leg plate you made in Step 1 on top of the newel post. Use a drill/driver and 3-inch deck screws to secure the plate to the post. Repeat for the second plate and post. These plates will give you a bigger, more stable surface for attaching the leg assembly in Step 12.

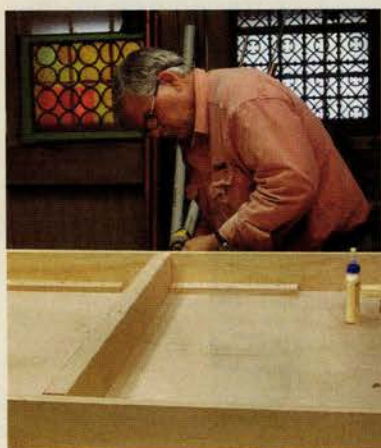


7 Attach the cleats. Draw a guide line on the underside of the tabletop that's 3 inches from each edge. Secure 1x2 cleats on the flat along the inside edge of the line, using $1\frac{1}{4}$ -inch deck screws. Space the cleats to leave enough room to install two 2x4 stringers between the spots where the leg plates will be attached.



8 Add the apron. Miter the ends of the 1x4 apron pieces to size. Apply glue to the ends and top edge of each piece. Set them in place on the underside of the tabletop, against the outside edge of the cleats, as shown. Secure them by driving 2-inch finishing nails through the apron and into the cleats.

9 Insert the stringers. Set two 2x4 stringers on edge between the spots where the legs will be installed so that their ends butt against the long sides of the apron. Secure them by driving 3-inch deck screws through the apron and into the ends of each stringer.



10 Trim the tabletop. Miter the ends of the quarter-round trim to size. Secure the pieces to the edges of the tabletop, flush with its top surface, using a bead of glue and 2-inch finishing nails.



pro advice

TOM SILVA,
TOH GENERAL
CONTRACTOR

"For a stable table, make sure the corbels measure at least 10½ inches on the long side."



11 Position the leg assembly. Flip the leg assembly over and place it on the underside of the tabletop. Make sure the leg plates lie flat, without wobbling or rocking. The legs should sit an equal distance from the short and long ends of the table.



12 Attach the leg assembly. Affix the leg assembly to the table by driving 1¼-inch deck screws through the leg plates and into the underside of the tabletop. Use screws in all corners of the plates and at least one screw along each side. Fill all fastener holes and sand the table with 120-grit paper. Prime and finish with two coats of satin latex paint. Apply a coat of waterborne polyurethane to the tabletop for more protection. ■

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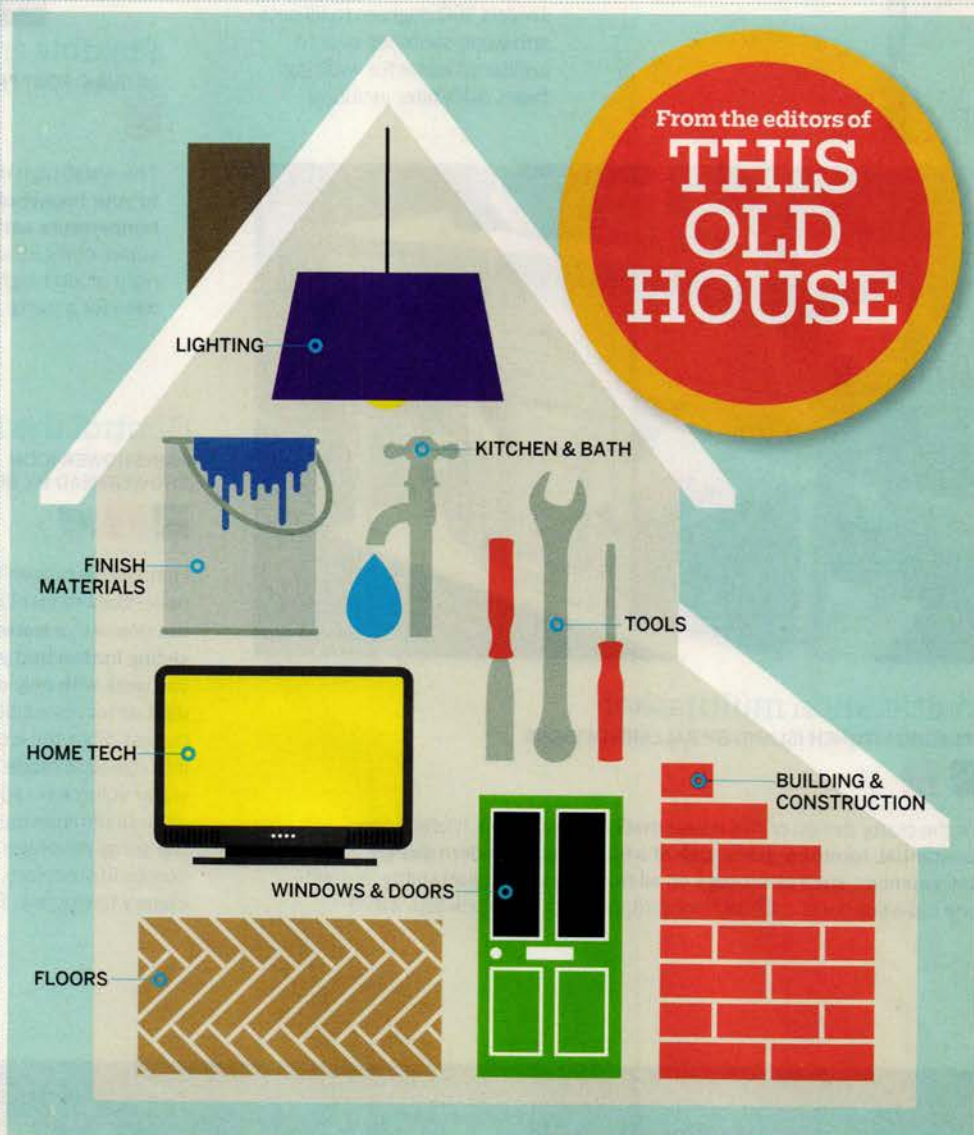
BEST NEW HOME PRODUCTS

A complete cheat sheet to this year's freshest ideas for your home

Our lists, well, most of them, are really just long to-do lists. But we, the editors of *This Old House*, do have a special one. It's the one we keep of all the cool new home products we come across in the course of the year.

From finds at trade shows to briefings from big tool manufacturers to peeks at the genius of basement inventors, we see it all, and then some. And without fail we want most of it. At least at first. But that's just silly, of course. Because when it comes right down to it, most new products aren't all that special. Or necessary. Some—Toilet Tattoos, anyone?—are downright absurd, not much more than thinly veiled excuses to separate us from our money.

But the products you'll find on the following pages—some budget-friendly, some breakthrough, some stylish, some sustainable—they're different. They are, still now, at the end of the year, the special ones. We could go on, but then we'd have less space for the good stuff. Better to just turn the page and see for yourself.



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MOUNT FAUCET WATER FILTER
BY PROCTER & GAMBLE



This water filter wins our vote because, unlike the rest, it **clicks onto your faucet without major tools**. The filter purifies about 100 gallons of drinking water before it needs changing, and a red light tells you when to do that. The whole thing swivels 360 degrees to fill pots and easily switches over to unfiltered water for washing them. \$40, filter included



Flexible fridge

28 CUBIC FOOT FRENCH DOOR REFRIGERATOR BY SAMSUNG



The waist-high drawer in this family-size fridge adapts to your household's ever-changing needs with **four temperature settings**. You can store meat or fish at a super-chilly 29 degrees F, a week's worth of juice boxes—right at kid height—at 33, a cheese platter at 37, or wine for a party at 42. \$2,999 in stainless steel (shown)



Multistation multitasker

BEDFORD KITCHEN ISLAND BY BALLARD DESIGNS



It's the crafty design of this island that caught our eye. It offers the substantial, furniture-grade look of a built-in plus modern design conveniences, such as storage on all four sides—and portability. A solid-pine base supports a 57-inch-long maple butcher-block top. \$899

Control the flow

RAINSHOWER ICON
SHOWERHEAD BY GROHE



Handshowers aren't new—they're just Euro—but one with a **water-saving sliding button that you can work with only one digit** deserves a slot on our list. Shift the Icon into LOW-FLOW mode and water volume is reduced without diminishing the spray coverage. It comes in six colors, from cheery to elegant. \$114



PHOTOS: (SHOWERHEADS, STOOL, TOWEL HOOKS) ANDREW MCCALL



RAM

PLUG INTO YOUR



Curvaceous new classic

MERIDIAN STOOL BY THOS. MOSER



We couldn't help but sit up and take notice of Thos. Moser's latest barstool design. With its gracefully arched legs and sculptural back, the handmade solid-cherry perch delivers a **wholly original silhouette that's still timeless**. Call it a modern heirloom. \$1,200



Seamless style

INTEGRITY SILESTONE SINK BY COSENTINO



As fastidious as you may be about cleaning, the joint where your kitchen sink meets your counters always fills up with crud. Cosentino gets the nod here for resolving this issue with an **integrated-sink-and-countertop combo** made of its popular antimicrobial scratch-and-stain-resistant quartz Silestone—the first of its kind. Starting at \$800

Think what you'll save on takeout!

"INSPIRED BY MARCUS" RANGE BY BLUESTAR



This admittedly pricey range packs **more commercial-kitchen features into a residential model than we've ever seen**. It boasts easy-close French doors and blazing 22,000-Btu burners, comes in a 30-inch and a 36-inch model, and is available in a raft of striking finishes, including matte black, bronze, silver, and copper (shown). From \$6,300



Queue of handy hooks

GRUNDTAL HANGER BY IKEA



This nearly 2-foot-long stainless-steel towel rod **ingeniously packs in six pegs in alternating directions to boost the usability of each**. Bonus: It fits on even the slimmest sliver of wall. \$7.99



Lav faucet with a big reach

OUTREACH CENTERSET LAV FAUCET BY AMERICAN STANDARD



We'll give this a Why Didn't We Think of That? award for **adapting the kitchen pull-out to the bath**. We also appreciate that it comes in traditional styling at a nice price. Available only from The Home Depot. \$98 in polished chrome or \$118 in satin nickel

WHERE TO GET IT? Go to thisoldhouse.com/best for links to all the manufacturers.

COMFORT ZONE
RAM LARAMIE 1500



THIS OLD HOUSE BEST NEW HOME PRODUCTS LIGHTING



LEMNIS LIGHTING

PHILIPS

LIGHTING SCIENCE GROUP

GE

LEDs FOR ALL

Affordable LEDs for every fixture



No, we're not crazy. If these LEDs still seem pricey, consider that most of them will last longer than your mortgage. The widely spaced heat-wicking fins on **GE's** Energy Smart 40-watt **distribute light evenly** by letting it slip out the sides (450 lumens; \$50). **Lighting Science Group's** A19 EcoSmart, a 40-watt equivalent, **boasts the longest lifespan**—46 years!—and the most lumens, 429, per dollar (\$19). **Lemnis Lighting's** Pharox 300 Flame is an **inexpensive 60-watt equivalent** (330 lumens; \$30). **Philips** is gunning for the honor of brightest with its 806-lumen EnduraLED, which squeezes a 60-watt equivalent out of 12 watts. As for the funky design, the yellow phosphor coating **casts a warm incandescent glow**—just like the one we've grown used to over the past 100 years or so. \$40



Re-creating the past with renewed style

HOOD HANGING
FIXTURE BY
REJUVENATION



We find this pendant globe a **welcome substitute in period lighting, bridging the gap between industrial and decorative**. A 1915 fixture created to vent heat from high-wattage bulbs inspired its open-top shade. Choose from 13 finishes for the handcrafted brass fixture; \$220. Shades: \$76–\$220

An outdoor fixture that you never have to touch

FRANCEASI LED LANTERN BY KICHLER



A thumbs-up for knowing that **old-world looks don't have to come with old-school technology**. The outdoor-rated cast-aluminum fixture has a traditional filigree pattern with a bronze finish but is fitted with a 40- or 60-watt-equivalent LED that lasts up to 15 years (it's replaceable). Choose from four sizes. From \$255



Stealthy fan

WHISPERGREEN-LITE BATH EXHAUST BY PANASONIC



This 80-cubic-foot-per-minute bath fan has a **motion sensor that activates it automatically** when you enter the room. And though you may not hear the quiet motor (0.3 sones), listen to us when we tell you you'll appreciate it. \$393



RAM

EVERY TOOL NEEDS



THIS OLD HOUSE
BEST NEW HOME PRODUCTS

FINISH MATERIALS



Fancy wall finishes

FAUX IMPRESSIONS PAINT BY SHERWIN-WILLIAMS



As specialty wall-finish paints go, this one has to be the easiest to apply—it goes right over a flat latex undercoat—and among the least pricey. Available in effects from polished quartz to antiqued plaster, the 12 paints come pre-tinted or can go over other colors for a custom look. \$50–\$75 per gallon

Groovy teak tiles

INDAH TILE SERIES BY ANN SACKS



These decadent 12-by-12-inch wood tiles—hand-carved by Indonesian artisans from sustainably harvested plantation teak—make us do a double take every time. The seven designs include the Horizontal Lines in natural wax and the Circles in dark French polish shown here. From \$82.50 per tile

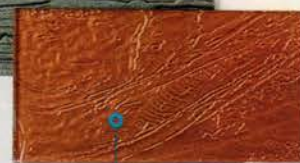
ANCHOR BAY



TRIKEENAN



BENDHEIM



Eco-friendly tiles



We're always leery of greenwashing, but these get the nod for their looks, too. **Trikeenan Tileworks** repurposes scrap brick for its Boneyard Brick tiles and also **waste glazes for a unique sheen**; from \$8 per square foot. **Anchor Bay Tile's** unique 3-by-6-inch Bamboo Subway Tiles are **veneered with bamboo** harvested when the reeds are between five and six years old, for optimal hardness; \$25 per square foot. **Bendheim's** unique **Color Coated EcoGlass** is remarkably clear, considering **that the majority is recycled content**: 25 to 40 percent consumer-recycled glass, 20 percent factory waste. 2 by 2 inches to 5 by 10 feet; from \$25 per square foot

Fine lines

DRAGGED PAPERS BY FARROW & BALL

After waiting years for an update to this company's classic, textured Dragged papers, our patience paid off in the form of 34 new colors, from brilliant jewel tones to muted pastels. They include Ruby Red (DR 1289), Mint Green (DR 1299), and Royal Blue (DR 694). About \$190 for a double roll



COLORFUL UPDATE

WHERE TO GET IT? Go to thisoldhouse.com/best for links to all the manufacturers.

A TOOLBOX.
RAMBOX 1500





THIS OLD HOUSE
BEST NEW HOME PRODUCTS
**HOME
TECH**



Who needs cable TV?

BOXEE BOX D-LINK MEDIA CENTER BY D-LINK



We cherish the notion of cutting the cable bill out of the picture, and now it's tantalizingly possible. **Link this magic cube to your router, and it pipes any streaming video on the Internet to your HD television.** There are other ways to do this, but none with such a user-friendly interface. \$199



Snap-in surround sound

RAILTONES TRACK-LIGHT SPEAKERS BY TECH LIGHTING



Truly one of the most ingenious entries we saw, **these 15-watt speakers snap onto most any track lighting as easily as the lamps do**, creating an entirely new A/V arrangement. Plug the wireless transmitter into your source of tunes and get the party started. \$479 per pair



Home automation at your fingertips

INFINITYEDGE TOUCH SCREEN BY CONTROL4



This gadget actually does what so much new tech only promises to do: make life easier, by **combining all your home-automation controls into one touch pad.** It retrofits with components that talk to your home's electronics, from the thermostat and alarm to the tube. From \$599

Clean heat

HERITAGE PELLET STOVE BY HEARTHSTONE



It took this vaunted stove purveyor two years to **marry the romantic aesthetics of a wood-burner with the clean-burning efficiency of a pellet stove**, and we're thrilled they made our deadline. It's the first pellet stove we've seen with panels of soapstone—a distinctive material that happens to hold twice the heat of metal. \$3,999



RAM

THE RIGHT TOOL

Pint-size powerhouse

DC26 MULTI FLOOR VACUUM BY DYSON



If *TOH* had been handing out these awards eight years ago, Dyson's pioneering root-cyclone model would've been a sure bet. As it is, we'll give one to its **first truly totable canister vac.** It's 12.2 pounds. \$399



3D for the masses

VIERA GT25 3D TV BY PANASONIC



Those who lack the space or the desire for a TV the size of a billboard now have access to some of the best television technology going. **At 42 inches, this is the first 3D plasma TV under 50 inches.** And even if you don't own *Avatar* on DVD, the TV features Panasonic's best 2D plasma technology. 3D glasses sold separately, at \$150 a pop. \$1,700



It will gladly eat your vegetables

XE SERIES COMPOSTER BY NATUREMILL



Designed to make composting as easy as throwing out the trash—and a lot less smelly—this pick was a cinch: **a home composter sporting a carbon odor filter and an automated grinder that renders garden-ready fertilizer in just two weeks.** The indoor/outdoor bin slips inside any standard 15-inch-wide base cabinet for easy access. From \$299

IT'S ABOUT TIME!

Put the squeeze on photons

E19/238 SOLAR PANEL BY SUNPOWER



We've been waiting for a breakthrough in residential solar, and here it is. **These panels convert up to 19½ percent of the sunlight they receive into electric power, far more than any other panels.** Specially shaped solar cells that occupy 3 percent more surface area than standard cells deliver up to 238 watts per panel. \$15,000 for a 2.5-kilowatt system (sans subsidies)



Making hot water out of thin air

ALTHERMA HYDRONIC SYSTEM BY DAIKIN



Why mess with a heat pump that generates only hot and cold air when **one system can supply AC, hot water, and heat through a radiator or radiant floor?** That's the level of innovation we're talking about. This system's efficiency rivals the best geothermal heat pumps—minus the pain of underground piping. \$19,000 for a 54,000-Btu system, installed

WHERE TO GET IT? Go to thisoldhouse.com/best for links to all the manufacturers.

FOR THE JOB.
RAM HD 3500





THIS OLD HOUSE
BEST NEW HOME PRODUCTS

WINDOWS & DOORS



High-design glazing for us all

CUSTOM FOLDING SLIDING
DOORS BY FOLDING DOOR CO.

Here's a secret we had to share: You **no longer have to refinance your property to afford an architectural wall of glass doors that collapses to create an indoor/outdoor space.** In fact, you can order this system as if you were ordering drapes—it's that simple. Custom made for openings up to 50 feet, these aluminum-framed doors are shipped in a DIY kit directly from the factory in Britain. \$10,000 for a four-door system

Fiberglass and wood, together at last

ESSENCE SERIES WINDOWS BY MILGARD



Behold, the first fiberglass window to feature solid-wood interior trim. Finally. Now **you can show off stained or painted woodwork without sacrificing the myriad benefits of fiberglass-framed windows—**which, as you know, are strong, stable, rot resistant, insect proof, paintable, low maintenance, and, now, attractive. A 3-by-5-foot double-hung starts at \$400.

WINNING
COMBO



For dogs of distinction

PET DOOR OPTION
BY YESTERYEAR



The typical plastic doggie door has as much charm as a mud flap. That's why we fell for **this wood pet hatch, which matches the door's decorative panels and preserves its design integrity.** Cottage Charm in Spanish cedar; \$789 as shown

Only you know it's faux

DOOR SURROUND KIT BY
FOCAL POINT



It's great to see this **exterior door molding offered as a kit.** The two pilasters, header with dentil detail, and keystone will put the finishing touch on your home's first impression. The primed molded polyurethane resists insects, mold, mildew, and rot, and promises to look good for years to come. \$174



Tint on, tint off

ELECTROCHROMICS
TINTING WINDOWS BY SAGE



While we're waiting for flying cars, we'll settle for **electronically tinted glass, now available in triple-pane construction with a whopping R-value of 8** (versus, say, 3 for double-pane windows). At the touch of a button, the built-in nanotechnology dims the glass to shade a room. Sync it with your home automation system to save energy. A 30-by-60-inch awning window from H Window Company costs \$1,575.



PHOTOS: (PET DOOR, SURROUND KIT, FLOORBOARDS,



RAM

ONE FINELY APPOINTED



THIS OLD HOUSE
BEST NEW HOME PRODUCTS
FLOORS



Wood grain without the pain—or a nail gun
LUXEPLANK PEEL AND GRIP VINYL STRIP FLOORING BY ARMSTRONG



The embossed wood-grain vinyl strips of this floating floor grabbed our attention for their **mercifully easy install**: They stick to one another rather than the floor. And that they go down like planks means no more uniformly obvious joint lines that reveal your preference for plastics. Beveled edges complete the ruse. From \$3.39 per square foot

Far-flung floorboards
NAUTICAL TIMBERS VENEERED FLOORING BY FONTENAY WOODS



Up until the 1970s, the way to fix level platforms in the V-shaped hulls of cargo ships was to pad them out with hardwood posts. We were thrilled to find that a salvaged cache of this exotic lumber—including Spanish maple and Honduran mahogany—is being made into beautifully patinated flooring as veneers on birch planks. Talk about character. From \$14 per square foot



Fun for the whole family
PUZZLE FLOOR BY BRAZFLOOR



Laying hardwood not challenging enough for you? Allow us to suggest this best-of pick from the brain-teaser category: a **life-size wood jigsaw puzzle custom made for your floor**. Call up with your room measurements, and the company will ship you numbered pieces—each roughly 1 foot or 2 feet square—along with a handy diagram. Bonus points for puzzling them together without peeking. From \$70 per square foot

History underfoot
SHAKER COLLECTION
RUGS BY DASH & ALBERT



Inspired by textiles shown at Massachusetts' Hancock Shaker Museum, this line of cotton rugs inspired us. It spins classic American weaving techniques, patterns, and colors into fresh designs that add a bit of historical flair to any floor. From \$34



No trees were harmed in the making of this floor

BIOESSENZE FAUX WOOD PORCELAIN TILES BY LEA CERAMICHE



Porcelain isn't a material we'd typically associate with faux wood, but this winner convinced us otherwise. Long tile planks printed with a wood grain make a very tough floor that looks as if it were made of hardwood. Great for areas where water might make caring for real wood a headache—and where guests can get a good look. From \$11.75 per square foot

WHERE TO GET IT? Go to thisoldhouse.com/best for links to all the manufacturers.

TED MACHINE.
INTERIOR RAM HD 3500





THIS OLD HOUSE

BEST NEW HOME PRODUCTS

BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION



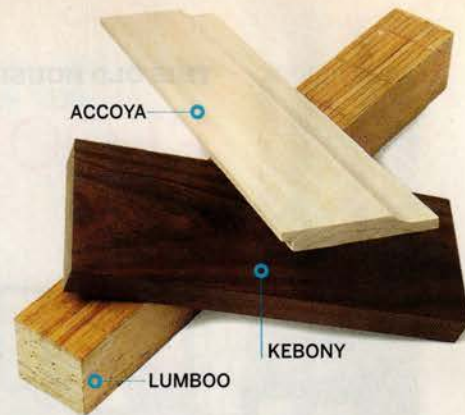
One word: PVC

CLASSIC R&R SHINGLES
BY NUCEDAR MILLS



These shingles are made with enough variation that you'd think no two were alike—something we can't say for factory-molded fare. Boards of cellular PVC are abraded with wire bristles to mimic the wood-grain warmth of real-deal cedar—but of course without the maintenance issues—and then band-sawed into individual shakes. From \$5.50 per square foot

Super-duper woods



Though wood may grow on trees, true inventiveness is a far scarcer resource. And yet we found these newly available—and virtually indestructible—modified woods. Cali Bamboo's **Lumboo**, the first dimensional lumber made from eco-darling bamboo, consists of bamboo strips compressed in a low-VOC resin; from \$3.12 per linear foot. **Kebony** and **Accoya** are molecularly tweaked to take on the traits of tropical hardwoods, with all their handsome stability: They're rot resistant, won't warp, and aren't subject to the insults of water and insects. Kebony, from \$2.75 per linear foot; Accoya, from \$3.20 per linear foot



Better than LEGOs

KERDI-BOARD BUILDING PANELS
BY SCHLUTER



Imagine a type of waterproof foam panel strong enough to form a partition wall yet soft enough to be trimmed with a box knife and assembled with adhesive.

Oh, wait—got it: With these panels you can build the most intricate of bath structures, like a shower bench, and tile directly onto them. No more framing and sheathing in backer board. \$2.60 per square foot

Impervious curb appeal

FIBER-CEMENT
CROWN MOULDING
BY JAMES HARDIE



Here's a no-brainer: Restore period details with classic crown moldings made from a material that won't

warp, rot, or even burn. Surprisingly light for fiber cement, they can be fastened in place with a nail gun. The colors come factory finished. From \$1.95 per linear foot



OUR
FAVE!

Less is more

SHEETROCK ULTRALIGHT
DRYWALL PANELS BY USG



Weighing about 30 percent less than the regular stuff, these 1/2-inch panels are that much easier to haul and install—and happen to be our favorite Best New Product. They bear the same Class A fire rating as conventional drywall, but thanks to the colloidal chemistry in the plaster core, the material is stiffer, less crumbly, and easier to cut. From \$4.40 for a 4x8 panel



RAM

EQUIPMENT IS



THIS OLD HOUSE BEST NEW HOME PRODUCTS TOOLS



Drywalling dynamo

WALLBOARDER'S BUDDY DRYWALL TRIMMER
BY WALLBOARDER'S BUDDY TOOL CO.



Only a professional builder could've invented this, but we're pretty sure that all DIYers can rejoice. A T-square fitted with a dual-sided, spring-loaded utility knife replaces the measuring, squaring, and chalking of each cut. Just set the knife to your width and pull the square along the factory edge, reverse, then repeat on the opposite face. \$60



Double duty

DUAL ANGLE BLOCK PLANE
BY BRIDGE CITY TOOL WORKS



Instead of switching planes, you can flip the lever and easily flop the blade on this eminently deserving design. One side gives you a 47-degree general-purpose plane to shave with the grain, the other a shallower, 42-degree plane for stubborn end-grain work. Equally sharp? The body, milled from a single billet of stainless steel. \$859

Ready set

58-500 NAILSET BY BOSTITCH



It's hard to rethink a tool that's been around for centuries, and that's why this one's a big winner. Bostitch paired a $\frac{1}{32}$ -inch and a $\frac{2}{32}$ -inch bit in one dual-sided tip that locks into a quick-change hex sleeve like those on drill/drivers—a combo that covers most common-size nails. \$10



A new breed of table saw

BLADERUNNER TABLE JIGSAW BY ROCKWELL



This pick is a slam dunk because it gives you the versatility of a jigsaw in the stable platform of a table saw. The inverted jigsaw blade lets you cut and scroll wood, metal, PVC, or tile with both hands firmly on the material while a shroud covers the blade to keep your digits intact. \$160



Grip it, then rip it

12-VOLT MAX COMPACT
LITHIUM CLAMPSAW RECIPROCAL
SAW BY PORTER CABLE



We love that an adjustable clamp secures pipes for one-handed cutting—a first—while a variable-speed trigger controls the $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch blade stroke. It also articulates, letting you get in there and demolish tight spots previously protected from your creative handiwork. \$130

WHERE TO GET IT? Go to thisoldhouse.com/best for links to all the manufacturers.

EVERYTHING.
INTRODUCING THE NEW RAM OUTDOORSMAN





THE ALL-NEW RAM HEAVY DUTY.
6.7L CUMMINS® TURBO DIESEL.
MOTOR TREND'S 2010 TRUCK OF THE YEAR.®



APPARENTLY, FOLKS WHO
WORK THE LAND FOR A
LIVING PLAN ON DOING SO
FOR A WHILE LONGER.



RAM





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MAKING A *Vintage Cottage* HER OWN



*How one
homeowner turned
a nondescript
..... 1940s HOUSE
into a light-filled
CRAFTSMAN-STYLE
HOME*

Though renovating an older home is an undertaking that succeeds or fails on hammer-and-nail realities, it surely begins with a dream. For a family doctor in Arkansas, all it takes is one glance at a forlorn house, and a vision of what-could-be takes over. Indeed, Dr. Susanna Shermer is on the verge of becoming a serial renovator. "This is my third renovation," she says happily, referring to this 1940s house she has been remodeling in stages over the past six years.

It all started during her medical residency in Tennessee, when she bought her first house and spent her precious downtime ripping up carpeting and tearing off wallpaper. "I loved the transformation—and it was great to do something physical after spending my days immersed in medicine and science and books," says Susanna, who grew up in Russellville, Arkansas, and still has family throughout the state.

BY JILL CONNORS

photographs by mark lohman

produced by colette scanlon styling by sunday hendrickson





WARM WELCOME

LEFT: Holiday decorations greet family and friends who step into the foyer of Susanna Shermer's house. The double-beaded paneling is original. Craftsman-style details added during the renovation include the boxed newel post and square balusters.



• *Moving back to Arkansas after her residency, she set her sights on The Heights,*

a neighborhood near downtown Little Rock known for its vintage houses, and pictured herself at holiday time, in a festive home with family and friends stopping by. After renovating a 1900 stone bungalow, the restless remodeler noticed another place on her street.

Friends, including general contractor Jonathan Rogers, took one look and told her she was crazy to consider it; the house looked tiny from the street, was covered in aluminum siding, and reeked of chlorine when you stepped inside. "There was a sunken hot tub in one of the back rooms," recalls Susanna. Undeterred and envisioning a Craftsman-style cottage with an exterior that suited the neighborhood, she set to work, enlisting Rogers as her builder. He recommended another local, designer Blake Jackson, to help put her ideas on paper.

OPEN-PLAN SPACE

ABOVE: The dining room is now open to the living room.

A pair of short half-walls with tapered columns that mimic the front porch posts sits where a wall came down.

Priority 1: "We needed to get rid of those rinky-dink posts on the front porch," says Rogers. Jackson designed four thick, tapered posts on chunky stone piers more in proportion to the house. To preserve maximum living space on the small porch, Rogers cantilevered the stone piers slightly by resting them on ½-inch-thick steel plates bolted to the porch floor. The porch roof overhang, meanwhile, gained a Craftsman-style look when Rogers removed a metal soffit, exposing the rafter tails and making the existing fascia board more prominent. Replacing the porch railing's turned spindles with square balusters completed the front-entry makeover.

Another key feature of the exterior face-lift was a centered shed dormer, built with three windows Susanna salvaged from a neighbor's house and the same exposed rafter tails as the porch roof. "I love the look of the dormer," she says, "and it lets in so much natural light upstairs."

Inside, the four-bedroom, two-bath house was roomier than it appeared from the street, with 2,268 square feet on two levels, but it lacked the Craftsman details



READY TO ENTERTAIN

LEFT: Open to the dining room, the kitchen maintains the same layout of fixtures and appliances, with all new surface materials: a travertine floor, granite counters, and refaced cabinets with new painted-and-glazed doors.

CLASSIC AND COZY

BELOW: In the living room, stockings hang on the new mantel, which the homeowner designed with square lines that echo the half columns at the other end of the room.

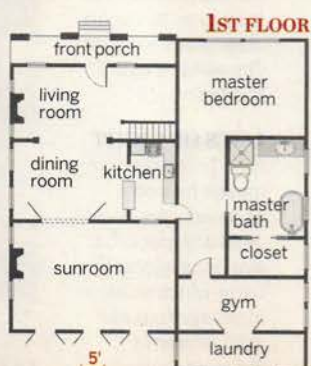


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FLOOR PLANS

A shed dormer and stone porch piers with tapered columns outside, plus an opened-up layout inside, turned a cramped, featureless house into a light-filled Craftsman charmer.



and feeling of spaciousness Susanna craved. The front staircase, for example, featured a spindle-style balustrade similar to one they replaced on the porch. Rogers swapped in square balusters and boxed out the turned newel post.

Then walls started coming down. The living and dining rooms at the front of the house felt too confined to Susanna; she really wanted to open up the space. So they removed most of the wall between the front rooms and put in a pair of Craftsman-style half-walls with tapered columns set on top to frame the wide opening. The red oak floors were in good shape, and Rogers found new planks to match, making a seamless transition between living room and dining room.

Susanna designed the new mantel for the living room fireplace. The existing mantel had leafy scrollwork ornamentation that was out of sync with Craftsman detailing, so she described the boxed panels she wanted, and Rogers took it from there.

Another wall came down between the dining room and kitchen, with Susanna preserving a portion of it as a peninsula snack counter. Underwhelmed by ornate kitchen cabinets, laminate countertops, and vinyl flooring, she replaced all the surfaces, choosing a travertine floor, granite countertops, and a natural stone tile backsplash. To save money, she kept the cabinet boxes, had them refaced, and added new doors with a hand-glazed finish.

One of the most perplexing aspects of the existing layout was the first-floor master suite, reached by a door off the kitchen. Because of the door's location and a step-down on the way to the master bedroom, Susanna is pretty sure this part of the house was originally a garage that was converted to living space by previous owners and topped with a second-floor gabled addition at some point.



FINALLY, A TUB

ABOVE: The master bath includes a longed-for claw-foot tub; the plumber had to shimmy through a crawl space to pipe it. The wall stripes are painted on.

LOTS OF LIGHT

RIGHT: The reworked master bedroom occupies a previously awkward space that was once a garage. Large windows allow in plenty of natural light, filtered by louvered shutters.





homeowner tip SUSANNA SHERMER, LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

"When remodeling your home's exterior, look at other houses nearby for details you can adapt. That way you can be sure your house will be in keeping with the neighborhood." •

The garage-size space was oddly partitioned, with a tiny central bathroom—sink, toilet, and shower, but no tub—and the rest of the space open, including the rear area that held the hot tub. To make sense of the layout, Susanna created a hallway that now leads from kitchen to bedroom, with a pocket door to the enlarged master bath along the way. She partitioned part of the room's central space as a master bedroom closet, adjacent to the master bath. The rear portion of the space now holds a gym with a polished wood floor—sans hot tub.

Although the dormer addition created a large, light-filled bedroom on the second floor, stretching from the front of the house to the back, Susanna reserves the entire second floor as a guest zone and lives exclusively on the main floor. "I go from kitchen to gym to bed," she says with a sigh, with the rest of her off-duty hours devoted to her dogs, Jackie O and Taylor.

After the initial remodeling phase, Susanna continued to tweak the floor plan. In the rear of the house, off the dining room, she added a 300-square-foot sunroom with exposed rafters, knowing that 12-foot ceilings there would bring a sense of volume to the first floor. And she had a 150-square-foot laundry/dog room built behind the gym.

So what's a restless remodeler to do next? Well, even though Rogers built shutters and Susanna's grandfather made window boxes to add another layer of detail to the exterior, the siding still gnaws at her. "I am dying to pull off that aluminum and restore the original wood," she says. "But I'm afraid it's going to cost a small fortune." For now, she'll just have to content herself with having created the kind of welcoming Craftsman-style home she had envisioned. At least until the next time she sees a FOR SALE sign go up on the street. ■

PERFECT PORCH

ABOVE: A broken flagstone floor and tapered columns on stacked-stone piers help give the house its handsome Craftsman look.

30 Down- and-Dirty Tricks for Big DIY Savings

by
John
Morell

photographs by Laura Moss

Penny-pincher. Tightwad. Cheapskate. Bring it on! Here at *This Old House*, we celebrate frugality, especially when it translates into increased efficiency, comfort, or style for our homes. From cutting your hot-water bill by installing a shower timer to brightening a room with handsome sconces that you hook up yourself, the secret to saving real money is a combination of thriftiness, smarts, and sweat. So read on for clever get-your-hands-dirty ways to shrink your expenses and improve your home without spending a dollar more than you have to.





**Save
up to
\$50**

1 Shop the dollar store rather than your local home center to buy specialty tools you may use only once or twice for projects such as cable or phone wiring.

COST: \$1 per item.

SAVINGS: \$25 for curved long-nose pliers and \$20 for a coaxial compression crimper at The Home Depot.

BONUS: No worries if tools break.

2 Extend the lives of filters in some air purifiers, bathroom fans, window air conditioners, and even your furnace by vacuuming out dust and loose dirt. Just be sure your vacuum is HEPA equipped to keep fine particulates from being released into the air.

COST: \$0

SAVINGS: About \$40 for two replacement air-purifier filters. You typically have to change them four times a year, but thorough cleaning can cut that down to just two times.

BONUS: While you've got the vacuum nozzle hooked up, use it to suck up dust bunnies and spiderwebs in hard-to-reach places.

3 Silence squeaky wood floors by sprinkling on talcum powder. Use a paintbrush to work the powder into the joints between boards and sweep away any excess. For tight spots you can use powdered graphite that's squeezed from a tube.

COST

\$5 for a large container of talcum powder or a small tube of graphite powder.

SAVINGS

Starting at \$50 an hour to hire a carpenter to make repairs.

BONUS

If you go with graphite, it's also good for keeping locks lubricated.

30 Down- and-Dirty Tricks



4 Remove marker "artwork" with toothpaste rather than repainting to cover it up. Simply squeeze the paste on a rag and wipe on the wall to make doodles disappear. Works with Crayola-type kids' markers as well as felt-tip and ballpoint pens.

COST
\$2 for a tube of white toothpaste.

SAVINGS
About **\$35** for a gallon of eggshell, a new roller cover, and a disposable paint-tray liner.

BONUS
Toothpaste doubles as polish for tarnished silver.

5 Prime walls with "oops" paint.

These mis-tints and returns at your paint or hardware store are sold at a deep discount. Just be sure to pick a matte finish in a shade that's lighter than your top coat.

COST: \$1–\$5

SAVINGS: About **\$18** for a gallon of interior latex primer.

BONUS: You'll be putting to good use a can of paint that would likely just be disposed of.

6 Dissolve mineral deposits plugging up your showerhead rather than replacing the fixture.

Remove the head, soak it overnight in a 50-50 vinegar-and-water solution, flush it out, then reinstall it to improve water flow. If the showerhead is too hard to remove, fill a plastic bag with solution and secure it around the head with rubber bands.

COST: \$2 for white vinegar.

SAVINGS: **\$20** or more for a new showerhead.

BONUS: This also works on clogged sink aerators.

7 Humidify your home in the winter. Furnaces can remove moisture from the air, making rooms feel cooler than they actually are and causing you to crank up the heat. For example, a house that's 69 degrees F with 19 percent humidity feels 3 degrees colder than one with 35 percent humidity.

COST: \$0 to place water pans on radiators or near heat registers. For baseboard units, try the Non-Electric Humidifier, \$16; realgoods.com. The reservoir mounts over the heater and mists the air without using any power.

SAVINGS: About **\$33** a year on your heating bill by turning the thermostat down 3 degrees.

BONUS: Boosting humidity can keep paint and woodwork from cracking.

8 Get a free smoke alarm and/or carbon monoxide detector.

As part of a national fire and poison prevention initiative, many state fire marshals and local fire departments offer the life-saving devices at no charge to low-income homeowners and renters, as well as seniors.

COST: \$0

SAVINGS: About **\$40** for a smoke alarm and a CO detector.

BONUS: Many departments handle the installation, too.

**Save
up to
\$100**

9 Loosen a stuck knob on a water valve with penetrating oil and heat rather than calling a plumber. Spray oil on the threads, dry with a towel, then point a blow-dryer at the knob to expand the metal and release the knob.

COST: \$5 for a can of Liquid Wrench.

SAVINGS: About **\$100**, based on an average plumbing service call.

BONUS: This trick can also unstick frozen nuts and bolts.

10 Mail and track rebates. People often don't redeem these because it can take so long to get the money back—eight weeks or more—and it's tough to keep track of the paperwork. But you can easily follow the money with help from the free online service allmyrebates.com.

COST: \$0

SAVINGS: It's estimated that up to 60 percent of rebates go unredeemed. So if you're eligible for \$200 in rebates and send all of them in, not just three fifths, you've pocketed an extra **\$80**.

BONUS: Getting a check in the mail makes anyone's day.

11 Remove or cover window air conditioner units when it starts to get cold outside, then weatherstrip the window to seal any cracks. If using a quilted cover, be sure to replace any side seals where the AC fits in the jamb.

COST: About \$18 for a cover.

SAVINGS: About **\$100** off your heating bill for three ACs.

BONUS: Weathertight rooms stay cleaner because fewer outdoor pollutants get inside.

12 Improve steam radiators' performance by clearing obstructions, such as drapes, and by insulating risers.

COST: About \$2 for insulating foam pipe sleeves.

SAVINGS: **\$50** to **\$100** a year off your hot-water bill.

BONUS: You can direct more heat into the room with a radiant screen made of sheet metal or reflective insulation that fits behind the radiator.

13 Don't buy a leaf blower to clean up autumn leftovers. Instead, raise your lawn-mower deck to its highest level and start rolling. The mower will slice and dice the dried leaves into mulch.

COST: \$0

SAVINGS: About **\$70** for an electric leaf blower.

BONUS: Your lawn gets a healthy trim at the same time.

14 Make a patchwork rug out of carpet remnants or samples.

All you need is a little creativity, some colorful strips or squares, and double-sided carpet tape to seam the pieces together and hold them tight to the floor.

COST: Many dealers sell the last few feet of carpet rolls for as little as \$3. Samples are often free, though you may have to cut off the binding with a utility knife. A roll of Intertape Indoor Carpet Tape is \$8 at amazon.com.

SAVINGS: **\$96**, the cost of the Fez 1 5-by-7-foot mosaic rug with four different-color carpet squares from Flor, a high-end maker of DIY-friendly stick-together plush tiles.

BONUS: Extra carpet squares double as garden kneepads.

15 Install and hide cable lines yourself. If you've got carpet, use a pry bar to loosen the rug at the tack strip along the room's perimeter, and fit the cable in the space under the baseboards. Rent a carpet kicker to reinstall the carpet. For hardwood floors, remove the quarter-round or shoe molding below the baseboards. There's often enough of a gap to fit the cable.

COST: \$14 for carpet-kicker rental.

SAVINGS: About **\$90** for a 3-hour custom cable installation.

BONUS: Use the kicker to tighten up any loose carpeting.

16 Install a shower timer that slows and then shuts off the flow of water after a preset time. Use this to cut your daily showering time from 20 minutes to 10.

COST

\$111 for the automatic timer at showermanager.com.

SAVINGS

\$75 or more a year off your water-heating bill, depending on the type of boiler.

BONUS

Shorter steamy showers mean less moisture-induced mold and mildew.



17 Prevent a clogged drain by replacing the sink's P-trap with a PermaFlow model. It's equipped with an interior paddle that you can turn via a knob mounted on the side of the trap to sweep away blockage.
COST: \$30 for the PermaFlow; pfwaterworks.net.
SAVINGS: About **\$100** for a plumber to unclog the drain.
BONUS: The trap is clear, so you can see and fish out dropped earrings or that diamond engagement ring.

**Save
up to
\$250**

18 Clean food stains in stone counters with a poultice made of flour and hydrogen peroxide. Mix to the consistency of peanut butter. Spread on the stain, cover with plastic, and let sit overnight. Gently scrape off in the morning.

COST	SAVINGS	BONUS
\$5 for poultice supplies, \$14 for Stone Spray-N-Seal to prevent future stains.	\$250 for a pro to do a light refinishing of a small section of countertop.	The poultice also works on stone tile and concrete floors.



19 Refresh the look of your range with new cooktop parts that'll also extend the life of the appliance and make it work better.
COST: About \$39 each for new burners and \$7 for chrome drip bowls on a typical GE electric range. Get parts directly from the manufacturer or online dealers, such as repairclinic.com.
SAVINGS: **\$216**, based on \$400 for a new GE 30-inch freestanding electric range in black at sears.com, minus the cost of the replacement parts.
BONUS: For \$5 more, you can hide scratches in the porcelain finish with heat-resistant Epoxy Touch-Up enamel; rustoleum.com.

20 Install solar inflector screens on windows to draw the sun's heat into the house in winter and block it out in summer. When seasons change, simply flip the screens.
COST: \$15 per square foot at solarizeinflectorwindows.com.
SAVINGS: About **\$170** a year in energy costs by boosting the performance of two single-pane, south-facing windows by 70 percent.
BONUS: Your too-hot sunroom might be bearable come summer.

21 Ventilate your roof to help cool your home in the summer and prevent ice dams in the winter. Do this by installing intake vents and a solar-powered fan (you may need two, depending on your roof size) that draw out warm air trapped in the attic.
COST: Systems start at \$250.
SAVINGS: In Texas, for instance, where the average annual cost to operate a central-air unit is \$668, fan makers claim you can save 30 percent on your operating costs, or **\$200** per year.
BONUS: You may be eligible for federal and/or state tax rebates to help cover the cost of your setup.

22 "Bundle" service calls. If you hire an electrician to fix a dead electrical outlet one week, then bring him in again the next to finally deal with that blinking kitchen light, you're paying for two visits that could have been handled in one.
COST: Just the extra time and parts required for the additional job.
SAVINGS: Up to **\$175** for the second service call you didn't have to pay for.
BONUS: Many pros will inspect your home for free to identify any trouble spots that might be brewing.

23 Score a free toilet. Commodes made today use a miserly 1.6 gallons of water per flush, compared with up to 7 gallons for some older models. In an effort to conserve water, many city and municipal governments will foot the bill to get rid of those guzzling geezers. Austin, Texas, for instance, covers the cost of replacing as many as three toilets that are original to homes built before 1966. Other cities, such as Seattle, give away low-flow toilets based on family income.
COST: \$0
SAVINGS: **\$225**, based on the cost and installation of one low-flow toilet.
BONUS: Lower water bills.

24 Build your own vintage-look medicine cabinet from a kit. Most are simple to assemble with a screwdriver and come paint- or stain-ready, so you can perfectly match the cabinet to your bathroom.
COST: \$160 for the Recessed Medicine Cabinet Kit in oak from vandykes.com.
SAVINGS: **\$235**, based on a similar, assembled cabinet from restorationhardware.com.
BONUS: You can usually customize a cabinet kit by switching the side the door opens from.



**Save
up to
\$500**

25 Boost fireplace efficiency

so that your furnace doesn't have to work as hard. A radiant grate lifts logs off the floor, allowing air to circulate around them for a better burn. A hearth reflector sits in the back of the fireplace and directs heat into the room rather than the masonry.

COST: From \$95 for the grate and \$139 for a steel reflector at gratewalloffire.com.

SAVINGS: About **\$240** a year in reduced heating fuel bills.

BONUS: Toastier fires to cozy up to.

26 Create your own security system

with battery-powered window and door alarms, and motion-detector exterior spotlights. DIY systems like the GE Control Center Starter Kit and

Maxxa's LED Motion-Detecting lights are battery powered, so no need for new wiring.

COST: \$30 for the basic GE setup at homedepot.com, plus \$52 for two lights at homesecuritystore.com.

SAVINGS: **\$278** in the first year alone, including the cost of the equipment. Security monitoring services often install systems for free or at low cost, then charge a monthly monitoring fee of about \$30.

BONUS: No more embarrassing mea culpa phone calls to the security company when you accidentally set off your own alarm.

27 Reface appliances rather than replace them. For the fridge, use a custom stainless-steel or acrylic frame-and-panel kit. Updating the look of a dishwasher or trash compactor can be as simple as flipping over its existing center panel. Many older models have reversible panels with white on one side and black or beige on the other.

28 Hook up sconces without an electrician. Using a low-voltage FlatWire system, you can plug a transformer into a standard wall outlet and simply connect paintable, paper-thin wiring to the sconces.



COST	SAVINGS	BONUS
From \$199 for a two-sconce kit at flatwirestore.com.	\$325 or more for a master electrician to do the work at about \$65 an hour.	No poking holes in walls or fishing electrical wires.

COST: \$439 for a frame-and-panel kit at frigodesign.com.

SAVINGS: **\$360** on the fridge, based on the cost of a new \$799 Whirlpool 25.1-cubic-foot side-by-side model in white at sears.com.

BONUS: Some panel kits include new matching handles.

29 Steam-clean dingy tiles.

High-pressure steam removes grime and mildew from ceramic tile and grout lines. Rent a heavy-duty steamer and use it on any tile surface in the house, including floors, showers, and counters.

COST: \$60 for a one-day rental.

SAVINGS: **\$872** over the cost of hiring a professional to retiling an 8-by-10-foot bathroom floor.

BONUS: Some steamers have attachments for cleaning drapes and furniture, too.

30 Replace aging washing-machine hoses with

heavy-duty ones from Floodchek with a 20-year warranty. Burst water lines are one of the most common causes of home water damage.

COST: \$43 for a pair of hoses at safehomeproducts.com.

SAVINGS: **\$500** just for the insurance deductible on \$5,308, the average cost of home flood remediation.

BONUS: With the washer pulled out, you can finally clean underneath it. ■

ALL ABOUT

Crown molding

Highlighting the transition between walls and ceiling, this decorative trim adds character to even the plainest rooms. The experts at This Old House show how to pick the right crown for your house style and budget

In the world of trim, crown is king. Lording high over casings, chair rails, and baseboards, it cuts an impressive profile with elegant curves and distinguished angles. It also elevates a room's stature, drawing the eye up to the ceiling and echoing design motifs seen in other moldings to create a cohesive and polished look for the space.

Crown's lineage reaches back to the ancient Greeks, who created the profiles and the rules of proportion that we still use some 2,500 years later. Only the materials have changed. Rather than the original heavy stone, 18th-century American craftsmen opted for more malleable and relatively lighter-weight plaster or wood crown. While these materials are still top choices for traditionalists, today's handy homeowner can also choose moldings made from foam and flexible polyurethane, which go up with greater ease than the Greeks, or even our grandfathers, could have ever imagined—no chisel, trowel, or nails required.

With new options, though, come more questions. On the following pages, *This Old House* provides the answers you need to pick the material, profile, and size that are right for your rooms. Plus, we show places other than ceilings where you can use crown to add a stylish touch. And with our help, you'll be one step closer to giving the trim in your house a classic, thoroughly royal treatment.

Anatomy of crown

At its essence, crown consists of an elongated S profile atop a cove. Adding trim beneath the cove, as shown, creates a cornice, though the entire assemblage is often referred to as crown.



VITALS

How much does it cost?

Stock primed pine crown molding starts at \$1.50 per linear foot, plaster at \$5, foam at \$3.75, and flexible polyurethane at \$1.

Stock or custom?

Stock profiles are the least expensive and most readily available. Custom work—matching an existing profile or creating a new design—can cost more than twice as much and take up to six weeks to produce.



DIY or hire a pro?

Installing a one-piece crown is a project most detail-minded homeowners can handle. But if a room has out-of-square or curved walls, or if the molding is made of heavy plaster or built-up wood profiles, hire a pro.

How much to buy?

Measure the perimeter of the room, then add 10 to 15 percent for waste; for rooms with lots of corners, add 20 percent.

White paint in a high-gloss sheen accentuates the carved detail in this wood crown and adds a classic touch to the entry foyer and living room. Similar to shown: Custom 9-inch-high cornice in wood, \$7.50 per linear foot; starkdoors.com



Pick your material

What a molding is made of determines how it's installed and how much it costs

1. Wood: Lightweight and relatively flexible, this DIY-friendly material comes in 8- to 12-foot lengths and is installed with finishing nails. Stock paint-grade crown runs \$1.50 to \$7 per linear foot; stain-grade woods range from \$1 to more than \$10. Shown: 7¼-inch-high B301 in walnut, \$14.32 per linear foot, plus \$65 custom fee; bairdbrothers.com

2. Plaster: Because it's made to order in 6-foot lengths, each hand-cast piece can be richly ornamented with crisp detail. Plaster is heavy and rigid, and usually requires a pro to install it using screws and construction adhesive. Joints are filled with plaster, then the surface must be painted. Prices range from \$5 to \$30 per linear foot. Shown: 4⅝-inch-high Georgian 2210, \$8.95 per linear foot; mcmcinc.com

3. Plaster-covered foam: The 8-foot lengths of extruded polystyrene are topped with fiberglass and a thin coat of acrylic plaster. It's light and flexible as wood, as seamless as solid plaster, and DIY-friendly; joint compound holds it in place and fills seams. Like plaster, it has to be painted. Stock profiles range from \$1.80 to \$7.75 per linear foot. Shown: 6-inch-high CTR-813, \$4.12 per linear foot; canamould.com (To see how it's installed, go to thisoldhouse.com/bonus.)

4. Polyurethane foam: Cast in 8- and 12-foot lengths, it looks like plaster but is lightweight and doesn't require professional installation. Construction adhesive holds it in place; joints are filled with caulk. Stock profiles cost \$3.75 to \$45 per linear foot. Shown: 4⅝-inch-high Carmichael Crown 11750, \$9.35 per linear foot; focalpointproducts.com

5. Flexible polyurethane: Cast in 8- to 12-foot lengths, it cuts like wood but is much heavier. Can fit a radius as small as 24 inches. Construction adhesive and finishing nails hold it in place. Choose a painted or stained-wood-look finish. Stock profiles range from \$1 to \$17 per foot. Shown: 4-inch-high paint-grade 126, \$12.65 per linear foot; flexibletrim.com

1



2



3



4



5



How to duplicate crown

When you can't find a matching profile at a lumberyard or home center, the easiest way to get a copy of your existing crown is to send a cutoff to a wood millwork shop or a maker

of foam or plaster moldings, such as Fypon or Hyde Park. But if a scrap isn't handy and your crown doesn't have details like dentils and leaves, make a template using a profile gauge (left). Press the comb-like device against the crown, then trace the shape onto cardboard, noting which edge is the crown's face. Shown: Stainless-steel tracing profile gauge, \$23.50; leevalley.com



Choose your style

Take cues from your home's age to find the right crown. Here are a handful of American house styles with an example of a profile that fits each one



colonial

The earliest crown was planed by hand from the New World's plentiful supply of wood. Simple profiles predominated, owing to the high cost of adding complicated carved details. Inset: 2½-inch-high B304 in ash, \$1.15 per linear foot, plus \$65 custom fee; bairdbrothers.com

contemporary

The use of crown waned in the 1940s, but simple strips are a handsome upgrade to more modern ranches and split-levels, as long as they are in proportion to the ceiling height. Inset: 7½-inch-high MLD253-16 in polyurethane foam, \$11.50 per linear foot; fypon.com



victorian

In the late 19th century, Americans favored crown that was big, bold, and often encrusted with classical details, such as dentils and acanthus leaves. Inset: 8-inch-high CM230 in plaster, \$22.60 per linear foot; hyde-park.com



arts and crafts

This early-20th-century style supplanted Victorian-era excess with clean lines and no-fuss shapes. Crown could be painted or, if milled from quality wood, such as oak, stained to highlight its beauty. Inset: 4½-inch-high Craftsman Cove in poplar, \$4.25 per linear foot; brenthull.com

Style options

Nearly any profile and embellishment can be incorporated into crown molding. Here are some standout choices

1 distinguished dentils

This crown is paired with crisply milled dentil molding and beaded baseboard. Shown: 6¼-inch-high B209, B009, and B303 in red oak, \$6.64 per linear foot; bairdbrothers.com

2 classical casting In the tradition of ancient Greek and Roman crown, this molding has both acanthus leaves and egg-and-dart detailing. Shown: 7½-inch-high CM391 in plaster, \$22.90 per linear foot; hyde-park.com

3 bead and curve In place of the typical cove, there's a bead beneath the elongated S curve. This crown is solid, making it a good choice in locations that don't touch the ceiling, such as cabinets and casings. Shown: 2¾-inch-high SC234 in primed pine, \$1.64 per linear foot; gardenstatelumber.com

4 leafy look Delicate acanthus leaves are commonly seen on trim used in Classical Revival-style homes. Shown: 6¼-inch-high MLD493-12 in polyurethane foam, \$12.67 per linear foot; fypon.com

5 double bead A one-piece crown with bead detail sits atop a beaded baseboard. Shown: 4½-inch-high B211, B309 in stain-grade cherry, \$6.38 per linear foot; bairdbrothers.com

6 ornamental ovolo This flexible, paint-grade polyurethane crown is topped with a large bulbous curve, called an ovolo, that creates a clean shadow line. Shown: 4¼-inch-high 175, \$19.38 per linear foot; flexibletrim.com

7 stair steps Overlaid strips of solid stock form a crown that would complement 1920s Art Deco or even contemporary interiors. Shown: 7½-inch-high custom profile in maple, \$7.71 per linear foot; bairdbrothers.com



8

8 graceful garland A scene-stealing frieze with a flowering vine motif tucks neatly beneath a rippled crown. Shown: 6½-inch-high FM311 in plaster, \$14.50 per linear foot; hyde-park.com

9

9 strong and simple This ancient crown profile is simply a graceful S curve set above a concave-shaped cove. Shown: 3½-inch-high B302 in hickory, \$3.22 per linear foot; bairdbrothers.com

10

10 deco facets An angular profile and gem-like geometric pattern recall flapper-era glamour. Shown: 8½-inch-high 2235 in plaster, \$9.30 per linear foot; mcmcinc.com

11

11 understated elegance Clean, simple profiles are often the best choice for a home's more private rooms. Shown: 3⅝-inch-high CTR 514 in plaster-covered foam, \$2.37 per linear foot; canamould.com

12

12 rope border To get intricate details like ropes or beads in a wood crown, these components are often machined separately and then inserted into a groove cut into the crown. Shown: 3½-inch-high B311 in cherry, \$3.71 per linear foot; bairdbrothers.com

13 greek key This impressive one-piece cornice has a meandering Greek key design of interlocking geometric shapes. Shown: 7⅝-inch-high Governor's Palace Fretwork Crown in polyurethane, \$15.60 per linear foot; focalpointproducts.com

13

14 beads and curls A dough-like mixture of sawdust and resin forms the decorative beading and the "lamb's tongue" motif on this paint-grade crown. Shown: 5¼-inch-high CM8856 in poplar with composite details, \$11.71 per linear foot; whiteriver.com

14

What size should it be?

Keep these rules of thumb in mind when selecting crown for your house

Consider the room's purpose. Traditionally, crown was incorporated into impressive cornices in public rooms, such as entry foyers, dining rooms, and parlors. The size would remain consistent from one first-floor entertaining space to the next. By contrast, smaller, less elaborate crown was generally used for private spaces—a powder room or bedroom.

Play off the existing trim. Look to your baseboards and door and window casing to determine the right scale. An appropriately sized cornice is either the same height as, or slightly smaller than, the baseboard.

Measure the ceiling height. Ceiling height is the ultimate arbiter of size, according to architect Richard Sammons, coauthor of *Get Your House Right*. For standard 8-foot-high ceilings, the crown/cornice height should be 2½ to 6 inches; for 9-foot ceilings, 3 to 7½ inches, and for 10-foot ceilings, 3½ to 8 inches.



how to install crown

See Tom Silva demonstrate the basics of hanging handsome crown molding at thisoldhouse.com/bonus



pro advice

TOM SILVA,
TOH GENERAL CONTRACTOR

To minimize your view of the joints in wood crown, make sure the copes and bevel joints point away from the room's main entry, where you might otherwise see shadow lines between sections.

How to handle corners

Crown molding is usually installed so that it appears to run seamlessly around a room. It's easier to do that with foam and plaster trim because their joints are filled; they don't need to be perfect. With wood crown, filling isn't an option—cuts have to be precise so that joints are virtually invisible. That's a challenge in the real world, where corners are never exactly 90 degrees and wood fibers are constantly swelling and shrinking. Here are two ways to keep joints tight.

Coping: This technique, used only with wood crown on inside corners, involves cutting along the profile of one strip so that it fits over the face of the adjoining one. It takes skill and time to make this cut, but it's much better than an inside miter at hiding a joint, and it's forgiving of out-of-square corners. To learn how to cut copes, go to thisoldhouse.com/bonus.

Corner blocks: These factory-made pieces, placed at outside and inside corners (shown), eliminate the need for coping or miter cuts; the crown ends just butt up against the blocks' sides. A slight bevel in the back of the crown ensures tight joints in out-of-square corners. Corner blocks come in different styles and can be used with any material. They do simplify joinery, but because they project slightly beyond the profile, they can interrupt a crown's continuity.



More ways to use crown

Ceilings and walls are not the only places where molding can add style. Here are some ways crown can boost the decorative detail of existing elements in your home



↑ on cabinets

In a kitchen, crown molding adds dimension to upper cabinets, making them, and the room, feel taller.

Similar to shown: 4 $\frac{7}{8}$ -inch-high F45260 in poplar, \$6 per linear foot; forestermoulding.com

← as a shelf

Capped with a 1x board, the crown above this window serves as a handsome shelf for displaying baskets in a pantry. Similar to shown: 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-high KB350 in finger-jointed primed pine, \$2.32 per linear foot; kuikenbrothers.com



↑ on a mantel

Crown is a fitting way to finish the top of a fireplace mantel. The outside corners show off the molding's shapely profile to full advantage. Similar to shown: 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-high TM3175 in white oak, \$7.55 per linear foot; tmmill.com

→ above an entry

Capping the head casing with crown gives heft and classical stature to any door or passageway. Similar to shown: 10 $\frac{1}{16}$ -inch-high MLD555-12 in polyurethane, \$12.82 per linear foot; fypon.com





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Q Why are there so many types of wire brushes?

—CRISTELLE LAPRADE,
JERSEY CITY, N.J.

A As you can see from the wheel-style wire brushes on this brush-and-blade “tree,” they do come in a variety of diameters and widths—with fine, coarse, straight, crimped, or twisted bristles made of regular steel, stainless steel, bronze, and brass—each one suited to a particular metal-cleaning task. For example, to remove rust from steel, a 4-inch wire wheel that fits in a drill and has aggressive, crimped-steel bristles is a good all-around choice. (Brushes 6 inches or more in diameter are intended for bench grinders.) But on aluminum, stainless-steel bristles are better because they won’t leave black carbon deposits. Softer brass or bronze brushes won’t spark or scratch steel. If you aren’t sure which brush to pick, a good rule of thumb is to start coarse and go finer as the job demands it. —THE EDITORS



PHOTOGRAPH
BY TED MORRISON

→ Our cast of veteran experts



TOM SILVA
General Contractor



NORM ABRAM
Master Carpenter



RICHARD TRETHEWEY
Plumbing and Heating Expert



ROGER COOK
Landscape Contractor



KEVIN O'CONNOR
Host

Q

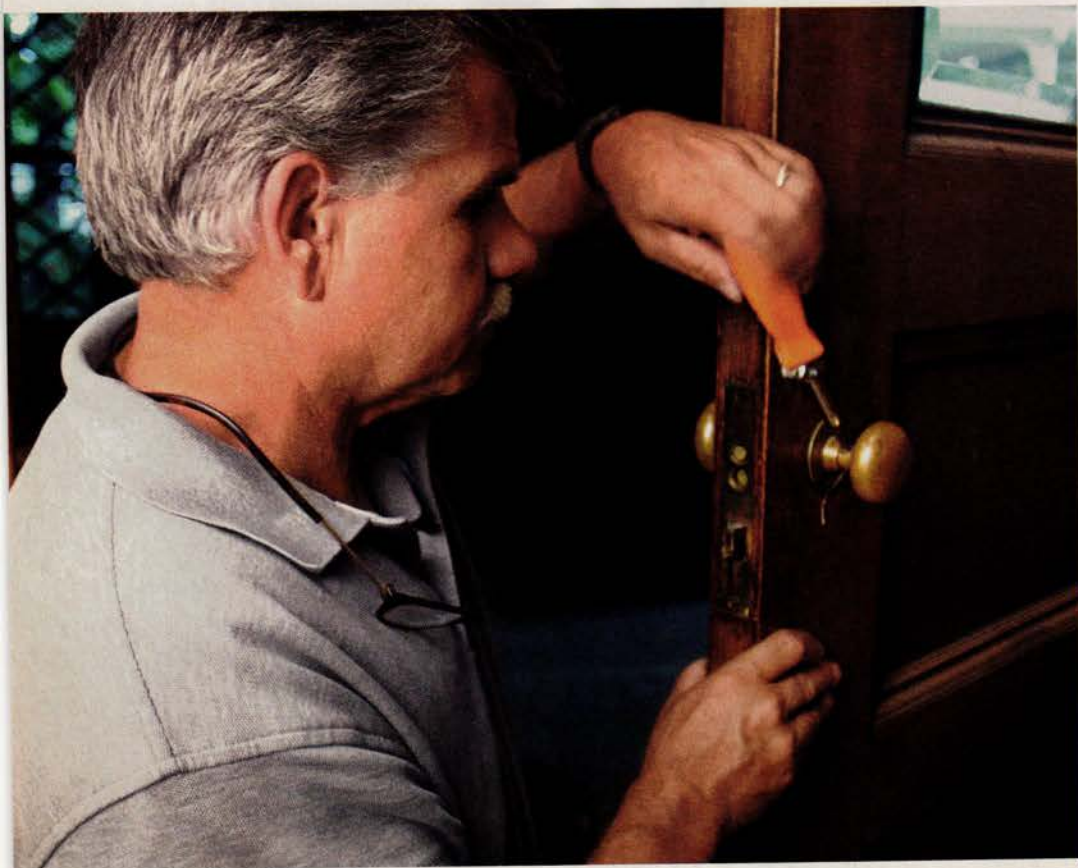
I would like to replace my old, worn doorknobs. But it seems wasteful to replace the existing latch mechanisms too, because they work just fine. Can I put new knobs on old door hardware?

—MARK STECKY, CHICAGO

Tom Silva replies: With a bit of luck, you might be able to find new knobs that fit onto your existing spindles, the square metal bars that connect the knobs on both sides of the door, but you'll probably have an easier time finding knob sets, pairs of knobs that are already attached to spindles. Architectural salvage yards are a good place to track down vintage knobs; just be sure to take one of your existing knobs and its spindle with you to make sure the new ones will fit. With knob sets, you can widen your search to online sources because you just need to match the length and width of your existing spindle.

Then again, maybe you don't have to replace the knobs at all. A buffing wheel and a bit of multipurpose metal polish, like Flitz (flitz.com), may be all it takes to have your old brass and bronze knobs glowing like new. Or if that seems like too much work, consider turning the knobs over to a local hardware restorer. One option for you would be Al Bar Wilmette in Wilmette, Illinois (albarwilmette.com).

To remove a doorknob, simply loosen the set screw on the back of the knob that holds it tight to the spindle, then slide off or unscrew the knob from the spindle.



PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) ANTHONY TIEULI (4); KOLIN SMITH; RUSSELL KAYE

Q OUT-OF-LEVEL TUB

The upstairs bathtub is about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch lower on the wall side than on the open side, leaving an uneven gap between the wall tile and the tub's edge. I think the gap might be the source of a slight leak affecting the ceiling in the room below. Is it possible to level a tub that's been in place for 40 years?

—JOAN MIDDLETON, WARRINGTON, PA.

Richard Trethewey replies: If your tub were lower on the open side than the wall side, then it might be possible to shim it up and make it level. But there's no way to shim up a tub that's lower on the wall side.

The only way to level your tub is to remove it, fix whatever is causing it to tilt—sagging joists, a rotting subfloor, a poor installation many years ago, or all of the above—and reinstall it. It's going to be a lot of work, and will require the services of a plumber to disconnect and reconnect the tub's water-supply and drain lines, but at least you'll have the chance to inspect the floor and framing.

Or simply cover the gap with 6-inch-long strips of ceramic bead molding, installed and grouted with a tub-and-tile adhesive caulk. If that doesn't stop the leak, I suspect that your tub-drain assembly needs to be fixed, which will involve cutting into the ceiling below.

Q BLUE SPRUCE, BROWN NEEDLES

About 20 years ago, I planted two rows of Colorado blue spruce trees to create a privacy hedge and wind break. I waited too long to thin them out, so the remaining trees have ugly brown lower branches. Will they green up now that they're getting more light?

—JOHN POMARES, CHESTER, N.Y.

WHAT IS IT?



A → Caulk-tube punch

B → Rebar spacer

C → Flooring wedge

D → Or...



FOR THE ANSWER, SEE PAGE 94



The branches on these blue spruce died back because of overcrowding. The only solution is to plant dense shrubs or another tree to hide the dead areas from view.

Roger Cook replies: Unfortunately, spruce trees won't regrow new needles on brown branches. They may throw out a few green branches from the trunk, but the brown branches are dead and will never fill out. To avoid this, I usually dig up some of the trees when they start to get crowded and transplant them to other parts of the yard. But at this point, all you can do is fill in the spots where trees have been removed.

First, prune off all the totally brown branches. Any branch that still has some green needles might be okay. Then put in some large shrubs that grow fairly fast. A plant like *Viburnum burkwoodii* or *Viburnum nudum* 'Winterthur' will grow fairly quickly and flower, too. Their dense mass of branches would help cover the dead areas even in winter after they drop their leaves. An evergreen alternative would be *Rhododendron catawbiense* 'Album' or 'English Roseum.' Either one would fill the hole fairly quickly and provide flowers and year-round greenery.

Q REMOVE A GARAGE SUPPORT POST

We have a two-car garage with a lally column roughly in the middle, right where it interferes with getting in and out of a parked vehicle. Is there any way we can remove this column?

—ELIZABETH CARLSON, CLEVELAND, TENN.

Tom Silva replies: Sure, but getting rid of the post entirely will be expensive. That post is holding up the middle of a beam, so if you take the post away, the beam will have to be replaced with one that is significantly stiffer and heavier. And that new beam would probably require beefing up the walls under each of its ends and possibly the footings under each of those walls. This is not a DIY project; you'll need a design approved by a structural engineer, and a contractor to do the work.

You could save a lot of money if you left the beam alone and just moved the post slightly one way or the other to give you enough clearance

to open a car door. But if the post has to be moved more than a few inches, you may have to install another support column. Either way, bring in an engineer to confirm whether it's safe to relocate or add a post.

Q STAIR-TREAD SURPRISE

After we removed the carpet from our stairs, we discovered that every oak tread has two pieces of quarter-round molding nailed to the front edge to form a half-round nosing. Ugly, very ugly. Can we replace them with oak half-rounds, milled to fit?

—DENNIS KLAVANS, MEDIA, PA.

Norm Abram replies: You could, but you don't need to. I suspect that your treads were probably square-edged originally, and those quarter-round moldings were added to make it easier for the carpet to roll over the front of the treads. That would also explain why whoever installed the moldings wasn't too concerned about how they looked.

If these were my stairs, I'd simply remove the molding pieces, fill the nail holes with putty that matches the wood color as closely as possible, then sand the top edges slightly so that they won't splinter when people step on them.



D➔ HINGE-PIN REMOVER

The Roberts Bang-It allows you to knock out hinge pins without damaging the door or the hinge. And it has two holes to hold the pins until it's time to put them back. \$16; amazon.com

QUESTION OF THE MONTH



Q I'd like to put one of those beautiful round wood inlays in my wood floor. How do I go about it? —MARK TURNER, LEESBURG, VA.

Charles Peterson of CP Wood Floors replies:

What you're talking about is a floor medallion, a type of ornamental flooring designed to give a room a dramatic decorative focal point. They're made to order using colorful pieces of precisely cut hardwoods mounted to a plywood backing. In the best ones, these pieces are

at least $\frac{3}{16}$ inch thick and can be sanded multiple times.

Installation requires cutting into your floor with a router and then bedding the medallion in adhesive spread on the subfloor. The process is painstaking but, thanks to the router template supplied by the factory, takes only a few hours.

Make sure to do these steps in one go. If you wait more than a few hours after routing the floor, your cutout may change shape or size slightly, forcing you to rout it again.

Cost: \$500 to \$3,100 for an unfinished 36-inch medallion

Time: 3 hours

Difficulty: Moderate. Requires making a precise cut with a router.

Charles Peterson sets a 36-inch compass-rose medallion, made of Brazilian cherry, walnut, maple, red oak, and wenge, into a bed of adhesive.

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201. APPLIANCES

1. CLIMATEMASTER ClimateMaster cuts heating and cooling costs up to 80% using a geothermal heat pump. Federal tax credits save you an additional 30% on total installation.

2. GE APPLIANCES & LIGHTING GE Appliances and Lighting makes it easy for consumers to refresh the look of their home with innovative and energy-efficient appliances and lighting products.

202. AUTOMOTIVE

3. FORD F-150 The next F-150 has arrived and from a frame that's twice as strong to revolutionary interiors—it's the toughest F-150 ever.

4. GMC SIERRA Home improvers need Professional Grade support. GMC Sierras are that and more. Whether you're putting up paneling or adding a new suite of rooms, GMC Sierra will make the task easier.

5. TOYOTA AVALON Introducing the latest in fine travel. Ample space, reclining rear seats and an incredibly smooth ride. The New Toyota Avalon. Comfort is back.

203. BUILDING PRODUCTS

6. DIY NETWORK DIY Network is an on-air, on-line network that provides in-depth project instructions, demonstrations and product tips for home and hobby enthusiasts.

7. GREAT STUFF™ INSULATING FOAM SEALANT GREAT STUFF™ Insulating Foam Sealants are designed to fill and insulate gaps, cracks, window/door, electrical wiring and other areas where unwanted penetrations occur.

8. JAMES HARDIE SIDING Engineered for Climate™ stands up to the elements, regardless of location or harshness of the weather. Now that's peace of mind.

9. KIDDE Kidde is the leading manufacturer of residential smoke and CO alarms and fire extinguishers. You'll find our products nationwide at The Home Depot and other retailers.

10. QUIKRETE® With over 200 products, QUIKRETE® has what you need for all types of affordable home improvement projects. For ideas and instruction, visit our website.

204. FINANCIAL SERVICES/REAL ESTATE

11. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® Looking for resources you can use to maintain and enhance your home's value? Visit HouseLogic, brought to you by the National Association of REALTORS®.

12. STATE FARM No one understands your insurance and financial needs like your neighborhood State Farm Agent. We live where you live.®

205. FLOORING

13. ARMSTRONG LAMINATE FLOORS Look so real, it's unreal. True to life designs, dramatic beauty and sophisticated styles make up our collection. Learn more at our website.

14. LUMBER LIQUIDATORS Lumber Liquidators is the leading retailer of quality hardwood flooring at the lowest prices. They offer a variety of brands including Bellawood.

15. SHAW From carpet and hardwoods, to laminate, tile and stone, Shaw Floors offers the flooring to fit your style and budget. Visit our website to learn more.

207. KITCHEN

CROWN POINT Family owned and operated, Crown Point Cabinetry has been handcrafting the finest quality, all-wood custom cabinetry for over 25 years. Available nationwide.

16. THE HOME DEPOT The Home Depot is more than a store. It's where you'll find the know-how to get your home improvement projects done right.

208. LAWN/GARDEN, POOL/SPA/PATIO

CUB CADET Cub Cadet is the leader in premium outdoor power equipment with innovative products including walk-behinds, riding tractors, zero turn mowers and chore equipment.

17. TREX® Trex® is introducing the revolutionary new Trex Transcend™ decking and railing system. Transcend outperforms wood, composite and PVC.

210. PAINT/STAIN

BEHR PAINTS A paint and primer in one, BEHR Premium Plus Ultra™ Interior is the latest innovation from BEHR Paints.

18. DAP Protect your home with DAP® 3.0™. With Kwik Dry® Technology, it's ready for water exposure in 3 hours, versus the 24 hours some brands require. Dap 3.0™ is all you need to know.

19. MINWAX At Minwax, we're always working on new ideas, formulating innovative products and looking for better ways to beautify, protect and restore wood. Visit our website today.

20. UGL Protect your home with Drylok® Masonry Water-proofer. Guaranteed to stop water—above and below grade. For additional information or a dealer near you, visit our website.

212. PLUMBING FIXTURES/HVAC/BATH

21. DELTA At Delta®, our faucets are more than just faucets—because we pair smart features with beautiful design. Visit our website for more information.

22. KOHLER Order a complete set of full-color product catalogs covering baths and whirlpools, showers, lavatories, toilets and bidets, kitchen and entertainment sinks, faucets and accessories. (\$15)

23. MOEN Moen delivers beautiful, reliable and innovative faucets, showerheads and accessories designed for your life. Free literature is available.

24. TRANE You always know when it's a Trane home, because Trane not only heats and cools, it also removes up to 99.98 percent of airborne allergens.

25. UPONOR Uponor is a leading manufacturer and supplier of PEX-a plumbing and radiant heating systems for residential and commercial building markets across North America and Europe.

26. YORK York's Premium Air Conditioners, Heat Pumps and Furnaces are sleek, quiet and efficient. Homeowners have a choice of multiple home comfort systems including multi-stage cooling and modulating furnaces.

213. SPECIALTY ITEMS & SERVICES

27. NKBA The National Kitchen & Bath Association is dedicated exclusively to the kitchen and bath industry. To get the NKBA's free consumer workbook, visit our website.

214. TOOLS & EQUIPMENT

28. ARROW Introducing R.E.D.™ from Arrow Fastener. These professional tools are designed built to be Reliable, Ergonomic and Durable. Building tools that work when you work.

29. GENERAC Generac is the #1 name in automatic home standby generators, offering a full line of gaseous-fueled models with outputs ranging from 7—150 kilowatts.

30. SCOTCH® TOUGH TAPE Scotch® Tough Duct Tape delivers strength and versatility for many applications. When conditions are harsh, and projects are tough, Scotch® Tough Duct Tape is tougher!

31. STANLEY FATMAX TAPE RULES Stanley FatMax Tape Rules deliver 11 feet of stand-out. Durable Blade Armor protects the first six inches of the blade, and a Mylar film protects all markings.

216. WINDOWS, DOORS, ETC.

32. MARVIN WINDOWS & DOORS Get new window and door ideas for your home. Start building your vision with this informative free brochure from Marvin Windows and Doors.

RESOURCES

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Dust-free sanding

33. ATLANTIS RAIL Stainless steel deck railings

34. BARN LIGHT ELECTRIC The original barn light

35. FROGTAPE FrogTape with PaintBlock technology

36. GORILLA GLUE Bonds wood, stone, metal, more

37. GREEN DEMOLITIONS
Recycled luxury kitchens, estates and surplus

38. HOUSE OF ANTIQUE HARDWARE
Reproductions true to original

39. HYDRO-SIL Room-by-room heating system

40. THE IRON SHOP Leading manufacturer of spiral stair kits

KAYNE & SON CUSTOM HARDWARE Custom forged interior and exterior hardware

41. MONARCH COVERS Custom radiator covers

42. NU-WAL Restoration products

43. ONEIDA Cyclonic wood dust collection systems

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47. SALTER INDUSTRIES Spiral stair kits

48. SHUTTER BLINDS Authentic period wooden blinds and shutters

49. SMART-BIT PRO PLUG SYSTEM For decks, flooring and woodworking

50. SURFACING SOLUTION White styrene tin styled panels

51. TEMPUR-PEDIC Pressure-relieving Swedish mattresses

52. VIXEN HILL Cedar outdoor products

directory {December.10}



Cover: For more information, see the listing for "Get This Look."

Before + After Kitchen:

Practicality meets period style

(pp. 25–28) **Kitchen designer and custom cabinets:** Rebekah Zaveloff, KitchenLab LLC, Chicago, IL; 773-495-4383; kitchenlab-chicago.com. **Pendant lighting:** Schoolhouse Electric; schoolhouseelectric.com. **Breakfast nook pendant light, and wall-hung fixtures:** Circa Lighting; 877-762-2323; circalighting.com. **Refrigerator:** GE Profile PSB42YGXSV, GE; ge.com. **Stone mosaic tile:** Bishop 4-inch border in Linen, Emperador Dark, and Nero Pure Black, Ann Sacks; 800-278-8453; annsacks.com. **Subway tile:** Stellar in

Vanilla, Sonoma Tilemakers, Windsor, CA; 707-837-8177; sonomatilemakers.com.

Backsplash border tile: Ivory and Burgundy (LR92-36), Burgundy (KJP-6HRS), and Ivory and Burgundy (LR46-16), K.J. Patterson Inc.; 626-472-7157 (for distributors). **Range:** TTN331-7W, Five Star; fivestarrange.com. **Hood:** DAH1836, Vent-A-Hood; 800-331-2492; ventahood.com. **Cabinet knobs and pulls:** Restoration Hardware; 800-910-9836; restorationhardware.com.

Budget Redo: A transformed half bath for just \$172 (p. 31) **Paint:** Green Tea ICC-56, Behr; 877-237-6158; behr.com.

Shopping: Wall-mount mailboxes (pp. 33–35) **Thanks to** Nancy Pope, historian and curator, Smithsonian National Postal Museum; postalmuseum.si.edu.

Paint Ideas: Create a curvy Moroccan-star design (pp. 36–37) **Decorative painter:** Brian Carter, Atlanta, GA; 678-642-3409; bcarterartanddesign.com.

Get This Look: Craftsman-style holiday entry (pp. 38–39) **Wreath:** Christmas in the Woods, The Magnolia Company; themagnoliacompany.com. **Faux berries:** Light Red Frost Berry Pick, Jamali Garden; jamaligarden.com. **Ribbon:** 2½-inch Copper Taffeta, Jamali Garden. **Doormat:** Doormat Collection in Berry #22839, Garnet Hill; garnethill.com. **Sconce:** Bandon in Antique Copper with Brown & Caramel art glass, Rejuvenation; rejuvenation.com. **Planter:** "Malaga 45" 17¾-inch square terra-cotta-look planter, Jamali Garden. **Bench:** Weathered Outdoor #32069, Grandin Road; grandinroad.com. **Pillow:** Thorny Rose in Burgundy from Ford Craftsman Studios, Oak Park Home & Hardware; 708-445-3606; oakparkhome-hardware.com. **House numbers:** Cast Copper Arts & Crafts, Oak Park Home & Hardware. **Firewood bucket:** Large Copper Log Bucket, Plow & Hearth; plowhearth.com.

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Price Wise: Bow-back Windsor side chairs (p. 45) **High End:** The Windsor Chair Shop, Clarksville, MO; 573-242-3700; thewindsorchairshop.net. **Budget:** Pottery Barn; potterybarn.com.

TOH TV: Front and center (pp. 47–49) **Architect:** Harriet Christina "Chris" Chu, AIA, West Newton, MA; 617-965-8094; chrischuarchitect.com.

Home Center Project: Make a trestle table (pp. 51–54) All materials available at Lowe's; 800-445-6937; lowes.com.

Making a Vintage Cottage Her Own: (pp. 70–75) **General contractor:** Jonathan Rogers, Impact LLC, Little Rock, AR; 501-690-7575; littlerockpaintingand



remodeling.com. **Designer:** Blake Jackson, Little Rock, AR; 501-416-7550. **Foyer:** **Garland:** Hobby Lobby; 800-888-0321; hobbylobby.com. **Dining room:** **Rug:** Courtesy of Joseph Saab, Oriental Rug Co.; 501-663-1444. **Coconut cake:** Courtesy of Mary Shermer, York Family Catering, Russellville, AR; 479-968-5258; yorkfamilycatering.com. **Table, linen runner, napkins, and hurricanes:** Pottery Barn; potterybarn.com. **Living room:** **Rug:** Courtesy of Joseph Saab, Oriental Rug Co. **Red leather chair:** Courtesy of David

Handbacon, Hambuchen Home Furniture, Conway, AR; 501-327-6523. **Green throw:** Steinmart; 888-783-4662; www.steinmart.com. **Painting on mantel:** By Lange Cheek, Courtesy of Cantrell Gallery, Little Rock, AR; 501-224-1335; cantrellgallery.com. **Master bath:** **Glazing and painted stripes:** Gina Lowery, Faux Fabulous; 501-247-3113. **Master bedroom:** **Photographs:** By Andrew Kilgore, Courtesy of Cantrell Gallery.

All About: Crown Molding (pp. 82-89) *Thanks to* Brent Hull, hullhistorical.com. Richard Sammons, Fairfax & Sammons Architects, New York, NY; fairfaxandsammons.com. *For additional information about crown molding, read* Get Your House Right: Architectural Elements to Use & Avoid, by Marianne Cusato & Ben Pentreath with Richard Sammons & Leon Krier, Sterling Publishing.

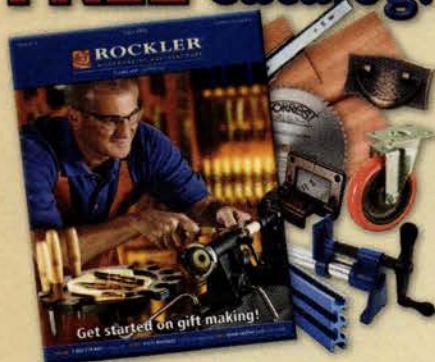
Ask This Old House (pp. 91-98) **Cracked Corian sink:** Back to Perfection; Solana Beach, CA; 888-595-2357; backto-perfection.com. **Question of the Month:** **Urethane wood-flooring adhesive:** Bostik's Best; bostik-us.com. **Adhesive remover:** Bostik's Ultimate. *Thanks to* Charles Peterson, CP Wood Floors, Gales Ferry, CT; 860-464-5001; cpwoodfloors.com. **Tool test:** **3/4-inch spade bit:** Irwin Speedbor #88812; irwin.com. **3-inch lag screws:** fastenerconnection.com. ■

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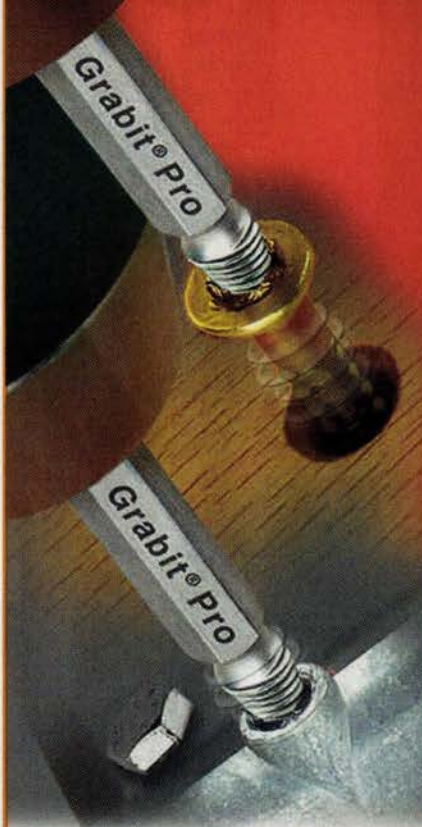
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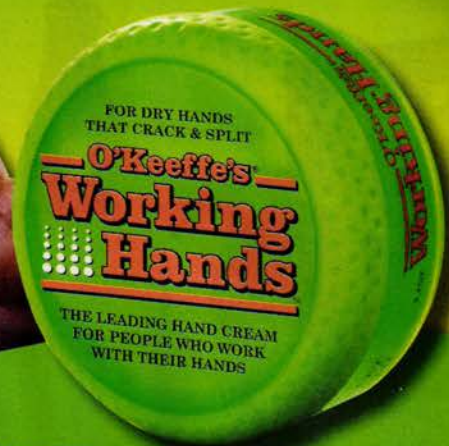
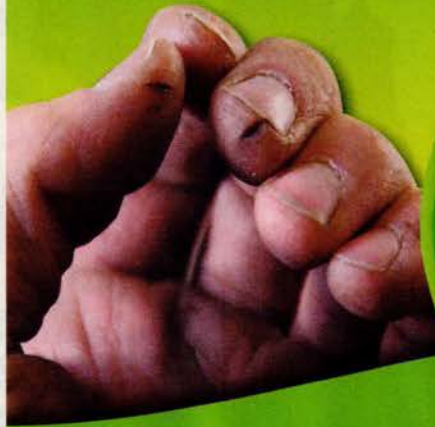
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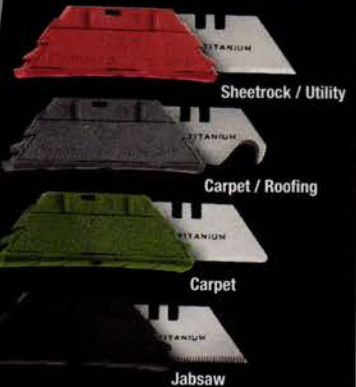
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The history: After the Civil War, it didn't take long for the people of Selma, Alabama, to dust themselves off and start rebuilding. Among the first new residences to rise from the rubble was this Gothic Revival designed by the firm of Richard Upjohn (the same guys who did New York City's famed Trinity Church). It was built in 1868 by an affluent Confederate Army lieutenant named William Weaver. William was the father of acclaimed artist Clara Weaver Parrish, who, along with wowing critics in New York and Paris with her paintings, worked for Louis Comfort Tiffany designing stained-glass windows all over the country. The house is known locally as "Weaver Castle," since it was modeled after castles built along Germany's Rhine River.

Why save it? The house still has many of its regal details, including stained-glass windows, a ballroom, and millwork made from walnut trees felled right on the property.

What it needs:

Abandoned for over 25 years, it'll require all new systems and a ton of cosmetic work to bring this castle-in-the-rough up to snuff.

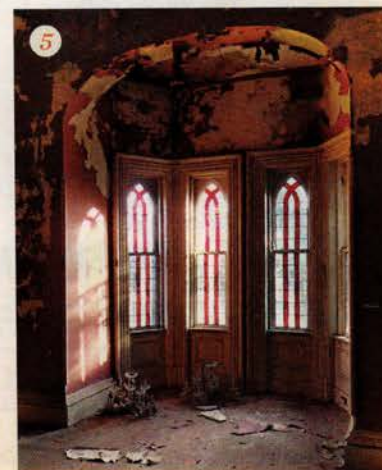
—KEITH PANDOLFI



1. The 3,925-square-foot house is located in a National Historic District.
2. The ballroom features walnut columns and millwork.
3. This staircase replaced a damaged original in the late 1800s.
4. A parquet floor in the ballroom.
5. These stained-glass windows might have inspired Clara Weaver Parrish's Tiffany creations.

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