



*DIY tips
from 93 folks
like you!*

SPECIAL READER-CREATED ISSUE!

This Old House

See
America's
BEST
REMODEL
inside

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35 Real-Life Redos

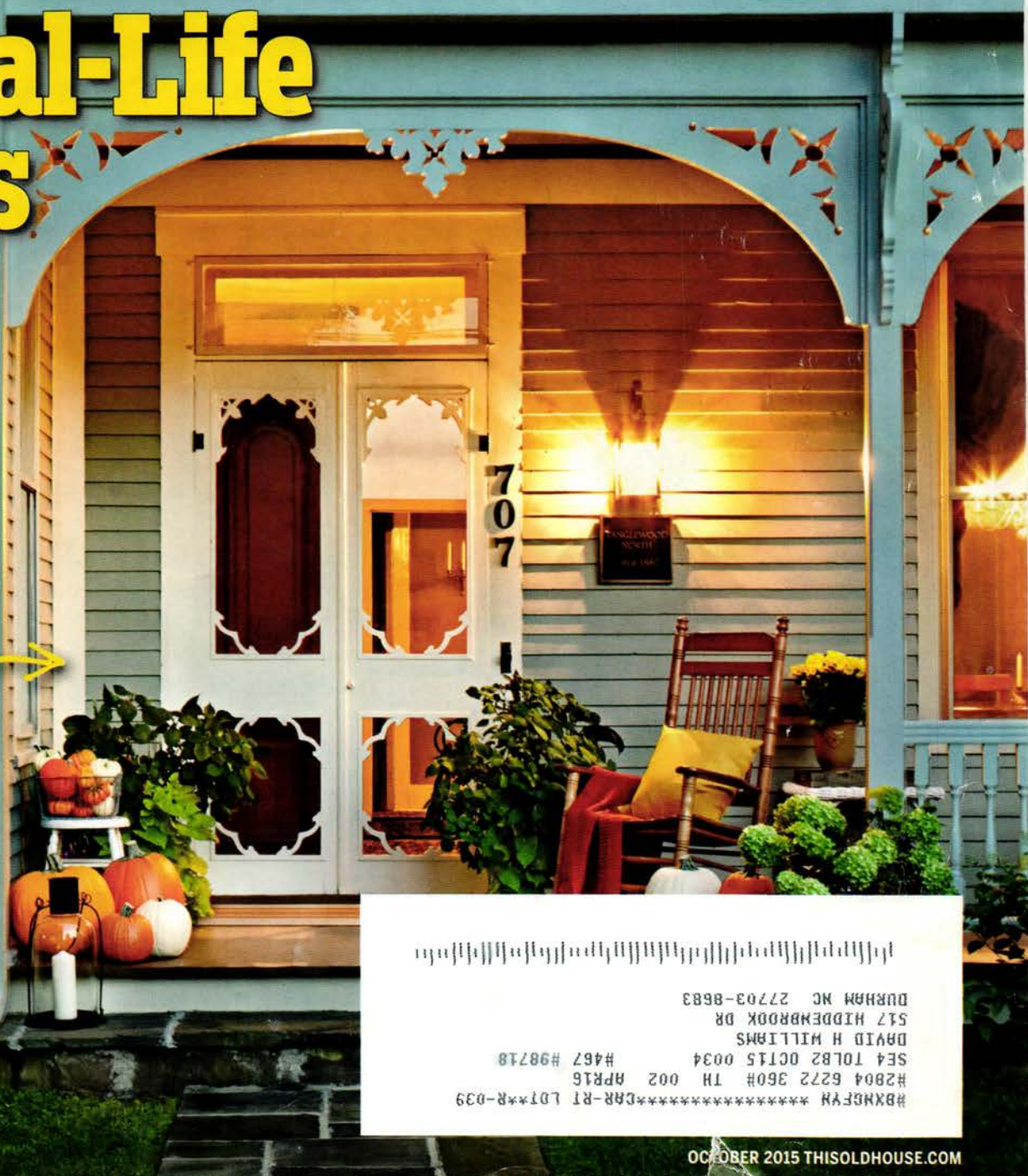
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READ THIS
BEFORE YOUR
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UPGRADE p. 55



|||||

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THIS OLD HOUSE OCTOBER 2015

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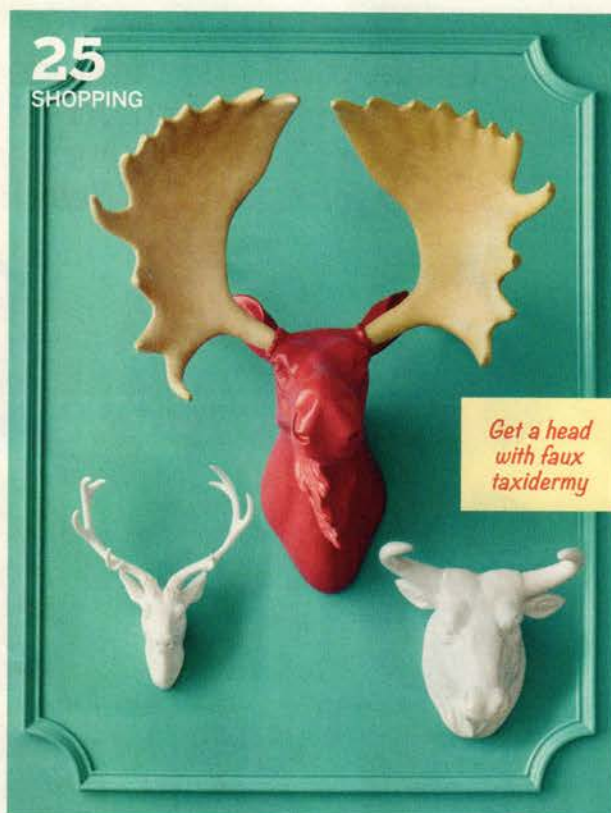
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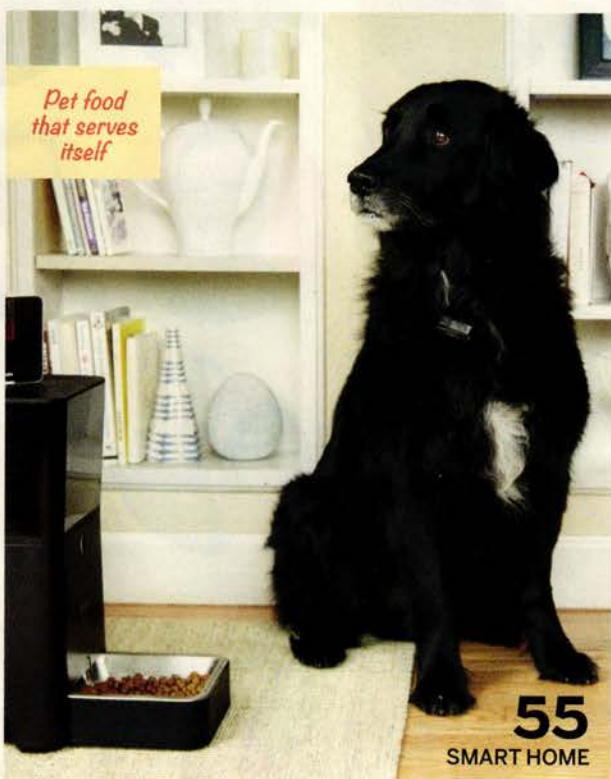
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WENDELL T. WEBBER
Styling by ANNA MOLVIK

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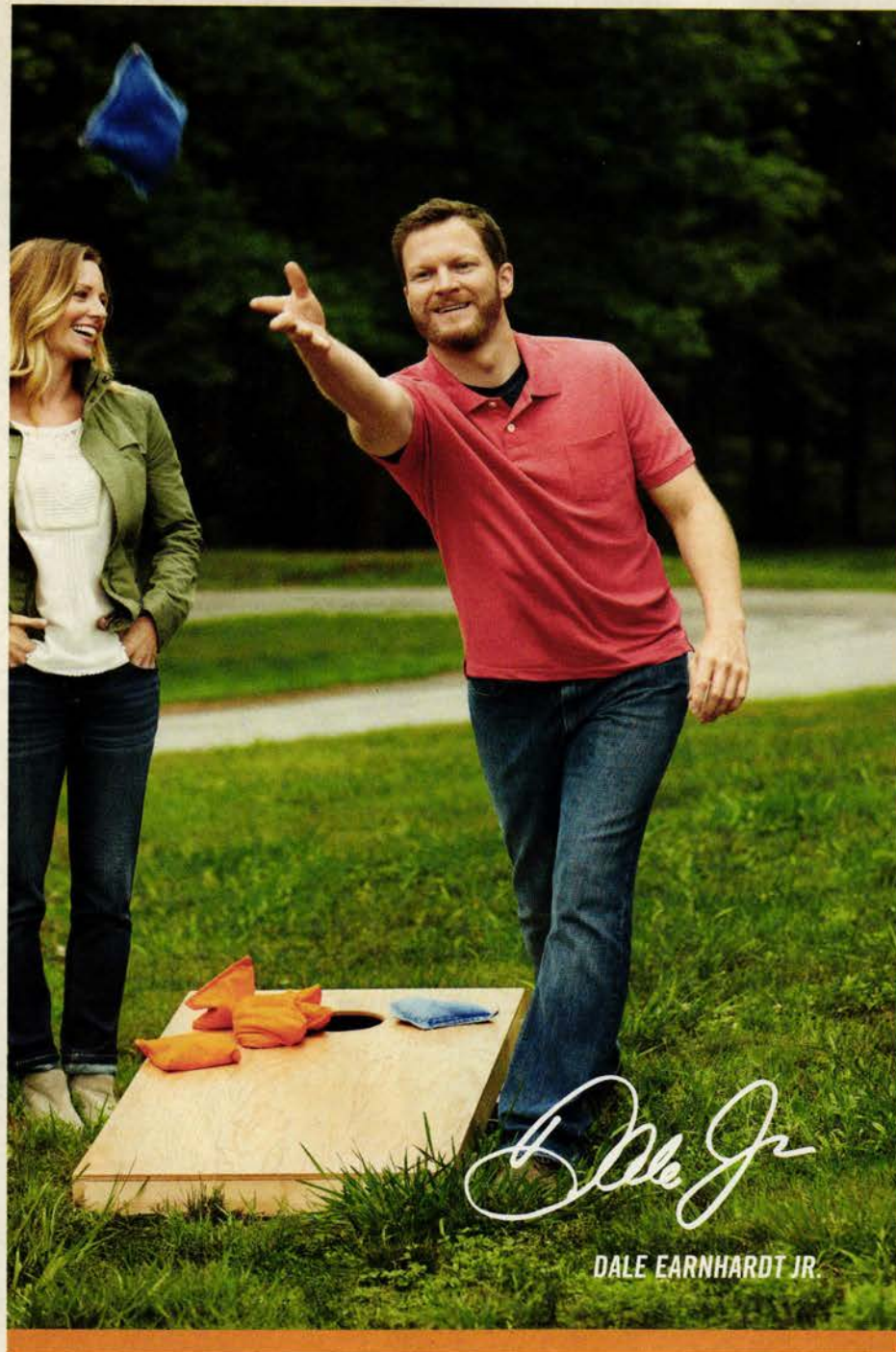
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Letter

FROM THIS OLD HOUSE

I gotta say, you people are nuts!

It's nice to know I'll have friends in the asylum.

Maybe not all of you will be there, but let's be honest: The level of crazy in the stories you sent in for this eighth annual Reader-Created Issue is as impressive as the home-improvement work you've done.

Sure, in my DIY pursuits I have fallen from a ladder, nearly electrocuted myself, shattered a wrist, lost the nail on my great toe, coughed sawdust out of my ears, and spent time in the lockup for an inappropriate relationship with a dumpster.

But you people have let the remodel disease creep into the gray matter in ways that impress even me.

Someone normal doesn't go and buy a vintage wooden cruising boat while on vacation because they know back home it'll make an excellent...bed. But Kevin and Mia Madtes did, and you'll see their handiwork on page 13. I mean this kindly, but you need a loose screw (3-inch, coarse-thread, drywall, perhaps) to do that.

And which is crazier: being afraid of heights or being afraid of heights but letting your husband strap you to a scissor lift so you can paint the top story of your house because you're "determined," as Dok Stevens-Dehring was? In another world, that's a plot point in a *CSI* episode. But I'll tell you what's even crazier: getting up in the dark before work, putting on a headlamp, and grabbing a shovel to plant shrubs. I'm looking at you, Drayton Green, and wondering, Who does that besides grave robbers?

To be honest, maybe the single sensible thing I heard from you guys was Kim Guthrie's genius idea of turning the demo on her place into a weight-loss regimen. Congrats on dropping 20, Kim! Otherwise, DIY dementia was epidemic this year, from those of you who were hospitalized (only to be back at the project days later) to the expectant moms who labored on their remodels till labor kicked in.

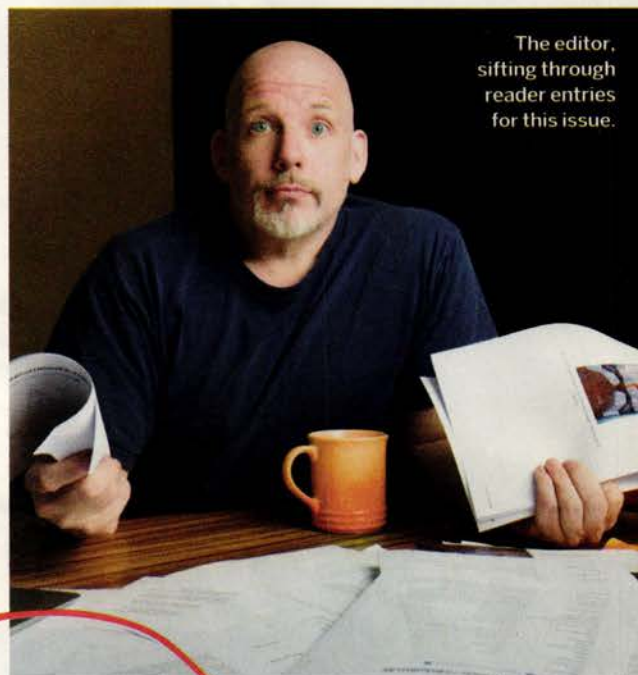
Can we agree that the lot of you are just not right in the head, and the place you call home and your family—and, because you've shared your stories with us, the larger family of *TOH* fans—are better for it? We can, and wouldn't want it any other way.

So thank you, and I'll see you in the padded room. I don't know what we'll do; there probably won't be any DIY, 'cause who's gonna let us have any sharp tools or even hammers? But we can trade stories. Or weave baskets. Yeah, weave baskets into suites of furniture and maybe even the house to go around it....

Until then, check out the whole-house winners of this year's Search for America's Best Remodel. They and the one-room awardees that follow are proof that getting your hands dirty—and, yes, being a little off-balance—can yield truly amazing results.

Scott Omelianuk

SCOTT OMELIANUK, EDITOR
scott@thisoldhouse.com



The editor, sifting through reader entries for this issue.



the Madteses' boat bed

 Got your own tale of crazy?

Pile on. Share your stories of extreme DIY with me on Twitter @scottomelianuk using #TellTOH.

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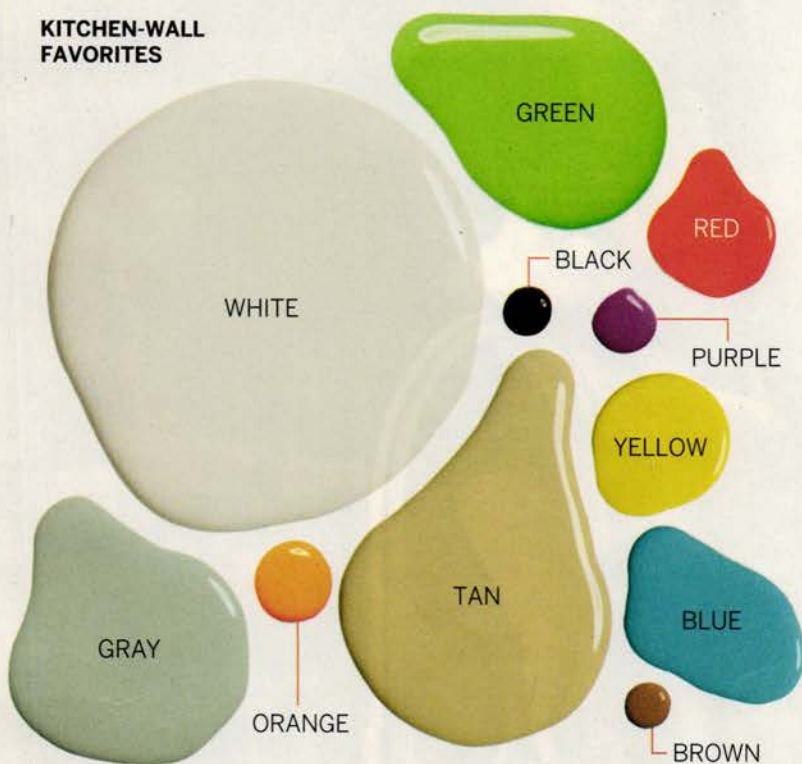


Your true colors

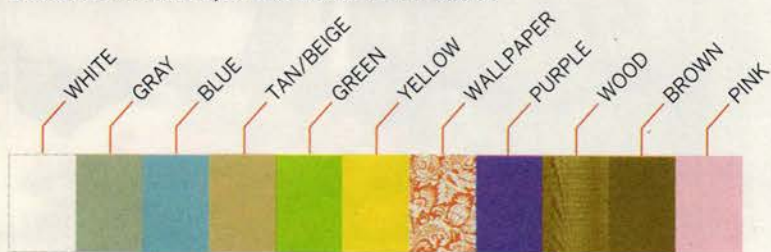
THIS OLD HOUSE OCTOBER 2015

Color was a big theme in our Search for America's Best Remodel. Here's a kaleidoscopic picture of how you made use of it

KITCHEN-WALL FAVORITES



BATHROOM WALLS, IN ORDER OF POPULARITY



FRONT-DOOR FINISHES



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Edited by Michelle Brunner

INSIDE

CREATIVE REUSE

HEALTHY HOME

FLOOR CARE

SALVAGE STYLE

MORE



They upcycled a factory cart

As soon as Emily Danforth and Erica Edsell of Providence, Rhode Island, saw this old mill cart, they knew it would make a perfect kitchen island for their 1900 Gothic Revival home. "Much of our renovation was inspired by our desire to repurpose funky vintage items," says Emily. "We love the cart's rustic, industrial look and striking green paint."

To get the lowdown on this and other "From this to that" reader transformations, turn the page. →

From this to that

FACTORY CART → KITCHEN ISLAND

"The same day we spied this old mill cart in a salvage shop, we found a slab of perfectly sized marble in a nearby antiques showroom. We knew it would make the perfect top! We cut down the handles to bring the cart to workstation height and laid salvaged floorboards across it to create a base to support the marble. Then we drilled through the marble and inserted dowels to reattach the handle, so it looks like the marble was always there. Now the island is the hub of our home."

Emily Danforth and Erica Edsell
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND



before

DOORS → DAYBED



"I had been searching high and low for a queen-size

daybed for the guest room

of my 1929 Tudor. Finally, I decided to build one myself. I got two solid-wood doors from the Habitat for Humanity ReStore and cut one to fit the windowed corner of the room. I attached 2x4s to the doors and screwed them to a metal bed frame. The finishing touch? A coat of bright-green paint."

Karen Cooper
DECATUR, GEORGIA

ORGAN PIPES → FEATURE WALL



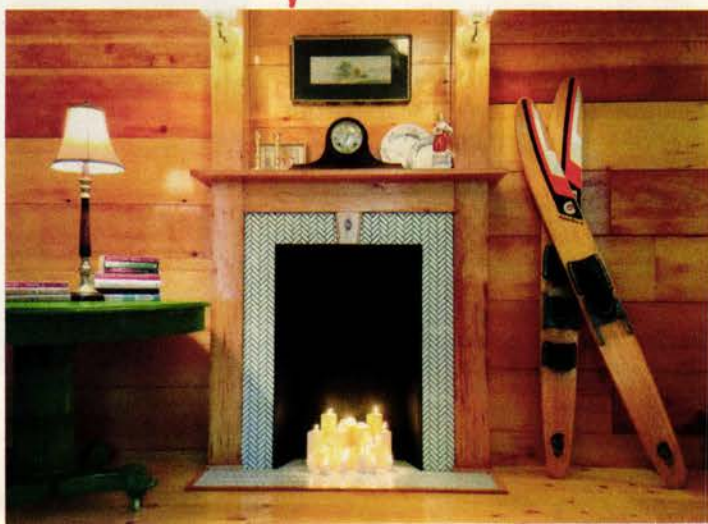
"When we found five truckloads of solid-pine church organ pipes destined for the burn pile at a local farm, we had to rescue them. After running a

bunch through the planer in our workshop, we used the honey-toned wood to create paneling for a lodge-inspired feature wall and a faux-fireplace mantel, accented with herringbone tile."

John and Keri Karris
PLYMOUTH, INDIANA



before



GRAND PIANO → KITCHEN ISLAND



"When we downsized our home, we didn't have space for our out-of-commission 1834 square grand piano. Karen, a pianist, came up with the idea to make it into a kitchen island."

We pulled out the nonworking soundboard and harp and removed the keys (saved for a future project), then added a brace across one end to support the stone countertop."

Gary and Karen Thompson
FORT THOMAS, KENTUCKY



before



before



WOODEN BOAT → GUEST BED



"The idea of turning a boat into a bed came to us while driving home from our vacation house, in Old Forge, New York. We spotted a no-longer-seaworthy Penn Yan lapstrake for sale on the side of the road for \$500 and couldn't pass it up. We ripped out the engine and seats, cut off the back, and built a simple box frame for the mattress. As projects go, it wasn't easy, but now it's where all our guests want to sleep."

Kevin and Mia Madtes
SCHNECKSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

TRAMPOLINE PIT → OUTDOOR LOUNGE



"After struggling for 2 hours trying to extract the cinder-block walls from the outdated trampoline pit behind our new house, I had a better idea: Turn it into a cozy hangout space. First, I braced the walls with 2x4s, then I built out the benches. I pulled the weeds, laid gravel, and installed a fire pit. One thing's for sure: Our family has gone through a lot of marshmallows out there."

Douglas Larson
SALT LAKE CITY



before



Save here, splurge there

A little penny-pinching can pay off big. Just ask these savvy readers, who found a way to afford some bigger-ticket items in their remodel without breaking the bank. Read on to learn how they did it. —KATELIN HILL



SPLURGE Custom cabinetry COST \$11,581



HOW THEY SAVED

"We wanted custom cabinets to complement the look of our 1923 home. We knew that we were only going to do this once so we'd better do it right. We saved money by recruiting friends and family to install a support beam and remove old brickwork. In return for their labor, we helped them with their projects."

Michael and Carmelina Mattera
ST. LOUIS

SPLURGE Quartzite countertops COST \$5,670



HOW SHE SAVED

"Some design elements we can easily change out later—such as paint on the walls and cabinet pulls—but we knew that the countertop decision needed to last for a long time. We decided on quartzite. To save money, we kept our existing cabinetry and modified it to fit the new floor plan. We also bought floor models for the oven and range."

Margaret Stamatis
RIDGEFIELD, CONNECTICUT

SPLURGE Kitchen island COST \$7,059



HOW THEY SAVED

"To get the island of our dreams with a granite countertop, Jason did the kitchen

demo himself, which saved us thousands."

Jason and Shannon Perrone
WETHERSFIELD, CONNECTICUT

SPLURGE Handcrafted tiles COST \$3,200



HOW SHE SAVED

"We wanted tiles from Heath Ceramics for the bath in our Craftsman bungalow, but they

were over our budget, so we sidelined other projects in order to afford them."

Heidi Schubert
SALT LAKE CITY

SPLURGE Pro-style range COST \$5,699



HOW HE SAVED

"As a chef, I wanted a large pro range. I found the lowest price online and got a local store to match it, so I didn't have to pay for delivery. I'd ask contractor friends for advice, like how to hang drywall, then I'd do it myself and give them a recipe as thanks."

Dave Walters
DAYTON, NEW JERSEY

Dust-busting musts

When asked the hardest part of a renovation, *This Old House* readers often answer, "The dust!" Here, California cleaning pro Jeff Murray offers tips on how to breathe easier, post-construction.

WIPE DOWN SURFACES. Pick up as much dust as you can (and knock the rest to the floor) by using a microfiber window washer on walls and ceilings. For hard-to-clean places, like between the knobs of a pro range, use a dry soft-bristle paintbrush, which also works wonders along base molding.

VACUUM EVERYWHERE. Run a HEPA-filter vacuum with a soft-bristle brush attachment over all surfaces. If you don't have one, it's worth renting the backpack model to avoid dragging it around and dinging new floors.

FINISH WITH WATER. Wipe down every surface you can reach with a slightly damp reusable microfiber cloth, except for flat-finish walls and fabrics. If walls were recently painted, wait until the paint has cured (at least two weeks) before wiping with a damp cloth.





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She put the party on wheels!

Katrina Sullivan

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

"This cart is such a fun addition to our yard. We use it all the time."

TOH reader Katrina Sullivan loves to entertain as a family on the patio of their 1950s ranch. She also knows her way around a tool kit, as showcased on her blog at chiclittlehouse.com. So when she couldn't find an **outdoor serving cart** that was exactly what she wanted, she naturally decided to build one herself, using stock lumber and her handy pocket-hole jig. To make it mobile, she added casters on one side and tapered the legs of the other using a miter saw. She painted the base of the cart dark gray to complement her house exterior, topped it with stained cherry boards, and added an extra-long drawer pull on the side for a dish towel. (To find the full how-to, go to thisoldhouse.com/oct2015.) Now she's got a cart that easily does double duty as a beverage and food-prep station. "We wheel it out to serve drinks for birthday parties and use it as a buffet area for taco night," says Katrina. "It's a wonderful feeling to build something you use every day!"



TLC for painted wood floors

Ever since we showed how to paint a checkerboard pattern on a floor (thisoldhouse.com/oct2015), readers like Maria Frieboes of Seattle have been inspired to follow suit—that's her take, above. Here are a few dos and don'ts for keeping painted floors looking fresh. —HENDLEY BADCOCK

DON'T USE WATER Soaking a hardwood floor with a wet mop is a no-no, even if it's painted. Avoid steam mops too; the moisture and heat can damage the floorboards.

DO DUST Pros recommend using a vacuum cleaner with an attachment that doesn't have a beater bar. For everyday cleaning, use a microfiber sweeper. Push the sweeper in one continuous motion, not back and forth. Ground-in dust, dirt, and sand will wear down a floor's finish, so the more you dust, the better.

DON'T USE WAX Certain wax-based polishes can leave behind residue; wax-based cleaners can even strip your floor. Use a no-wax floor cleaner or a water-based polish instead.

DO TOUCH UP Spy a dull or discolored spot? Lightly sand it and retouch with paint. Finish with two coats of polyurethane that matches the sheen of the rest of the floor.

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They put a spin on tin

To appreciate the beauty of embossed metal tiles, you usually have to look up. Three clever readers show how these vintage ceiling squares can shine in other parts of the house. —H.B.



Bath artwork

"When I found one gleaming tin panel at a salvage yard, I decided to make it the focal point of my bath. I carefully hammered

brads through existing holes in the tin that lined up with the subway-tile grout line. It's not like just hanging a picture."

Corey Hicks

EFLAND, NORTH CAROLINA



Kitchen backsplash

"We love the pattern of these tiles that we found on eBay. To protect their patina, I coated them with a clear spray lacquer. We trimmed their edges so that they would lie flat and mounted them on plywood with black sheet-metal screws, then filled in around the tiles with wood trim."

Keith Szczygiel

BUFFALO, NEW YORK



Cabinet-door insets

"I swapped out the glass on my kitchen cabinet doors for vintage ceiling tiles from a ReStore. The tiles were cut so that the design is centered in the existing channels and attached from behind with retainer clips. I sanded them and finished the panels with dark wax. They hide clutter while preserving the rustic vibe of our dairy farm."

Shannon Kamm

NEW RICHMOND, WISCONSIN



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They made a farmhouse fresh

Items salvaged from old mills and barns become the floors, ceiling, and shelves in this couple's rustic kitchen

BY KATHRYN O'SHEA-EVANS • PHOTOGRAPHS BY HEIDI LONG



Jeremiah and Felesha McAfee

BIGFORK, MONTANA

"You can save thousands by doing it yourself!"

WHEN THE MCAFEEs BOUGHT their 1920s Montana farmhouse, they gutted every single surface down to the old, frayed wiring and redid things *their* way. "We sacrificed two years of a social life and ski seasons, but it was well worth it," Felesha says. The result? A laid-back getaway that epitomizes farmhouse style, and on a shoestring budget, too. Jeremiah volunteered at a salvage yard to get wood (and the corrugated steel for the ceiling) for free; Felesha hand-painted old-fashioned signs. These *TOH* readers also scoured thrift shops for colorful tableware for the open shelving Jeremiah made. "We even found that stainless-steel farmhouse sink at a garage sale for \$200!" To get their down-home look in your own kitchen, read on.

glass gourds

"I inherited my pumpkins from a beloved family friend; they're my favorite decor items," Felesha says. The hand-blown versions at right have instant-heirloom potential. \$13 and \$20; pier1.com

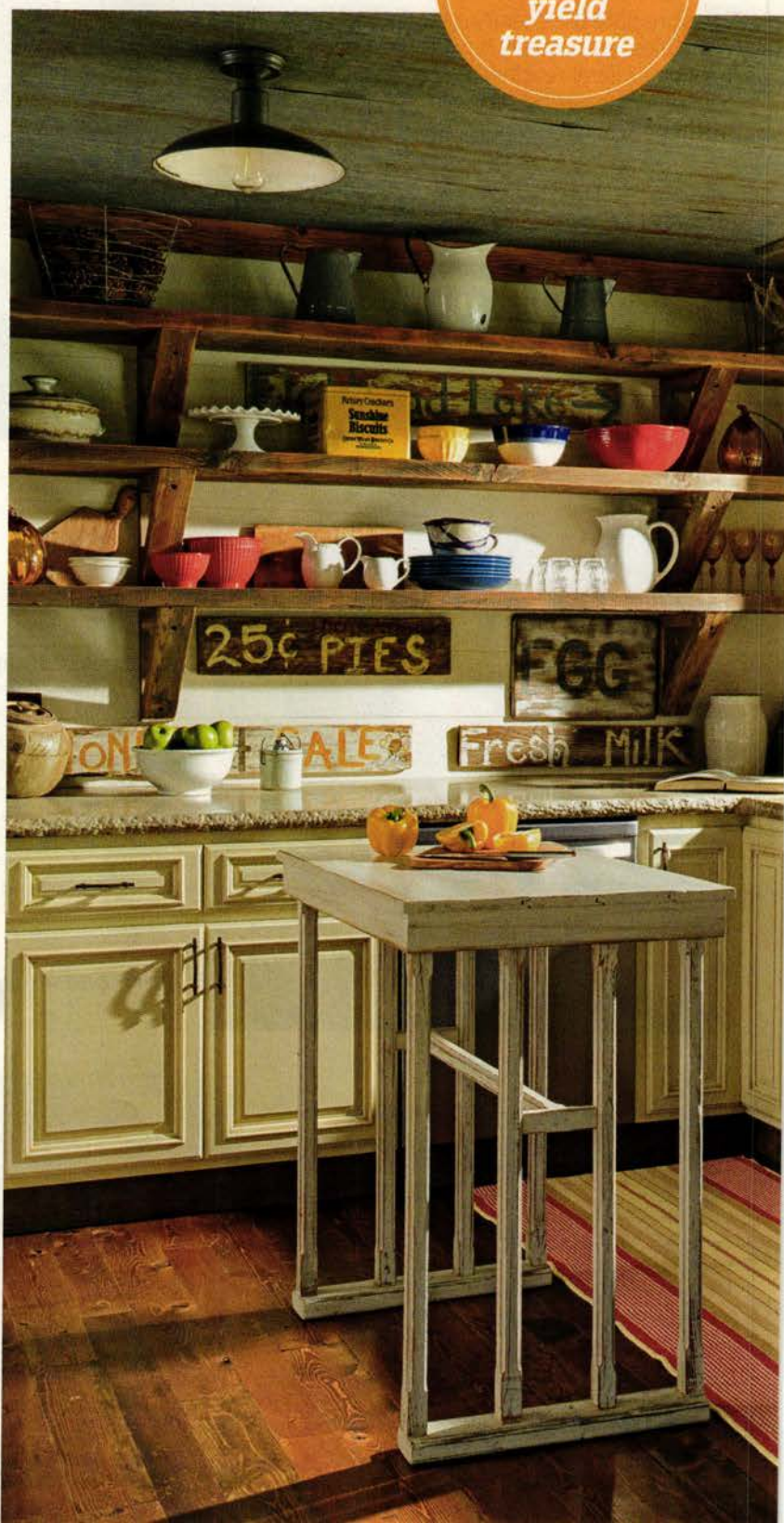


striped runner

A colorful cotton rug brightens up dark salvaged flooring and adds softness underfoot. 2½-by-8-foot rug, \$90; dashandalbert.annieselke.com



[reader tip]
even the
dump can
yield
treasure



get this look for less

whitewashed island

Felesha found their handmade worktable at a local antiques shop; this new one offers ample storage and a sturdy beech top. \$168; overstock.com



caged pendant light

Use an Edison bulb in this oil-rubbed-bronze fixture for a soft, old-timey glow; its metal cage protects the glass from any accidental damage. \$30; homedepot.com



shapely pitchers

These throwback silhouettes add vintage charm. Enamel pitcher, \$9.99; tin, \$19; amazon.com. Ceramic pitcher, \$13; homegoods.com for stores



vintage tin

A container from yesteryear nods to kitchen icons of the past—and it's a great place to stash coffee or tea. We bought this well-loved tin on Etsy for \$32.



homespun signs

We painted wood scraps to match Felesha's designs, sanded them down, and added antiquing wax here and there for a worn effect. Wax, \$15; missmustardseedsmilkpaint.com



colorful mixing bowls

Barn red is a classic farmhouse hue; on ceramic dishes, it perks up any home cook's task. \$3.99–\$7.99; homegoods.com for stores



high-arc faucet

Smartly designed in spot-resistant stainless steel, it has a pull-down head and an antimicrobial finish that keeps germs at bay. \$582; moen.com



DIY

reclaimed-wood shelving

To re-create Jeremiah's handmade open shelves, we started with a nice piece of 1½-inch-thick salvaged heart pine for the top. To fashion the simple bracket, we cut 1×3 pieces at 45° and 90° angles, then used wood glue and 2-inch-long wood screws to fasten it all together. Thoroughly sanded edges and a coat of stain give them aged patina. ■



PHOTOS: (RUNNER, GLASS GOURDS, ISLAND, PENDANT, PITCHERS, SIGNS, MIXING BOWLS, SHELVE) MARK LUND, STYLING: FELESHA MCAFEE

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They took a fresh tack

Bland white walls and a wallpaper-averse landlord inspire a young couple to harness their color and fiber-arts know-how

BY DEBORAH BALDWIN

[reader savvy]
**mixed media
spiffs up a
plain wall**

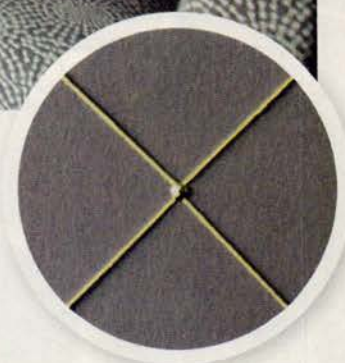


**Joe and
Mayra
Human**

NEW YORK CITY

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the wall's subtle
3-D quality."

WHEN YOUR HOME'S NOT YOUR OWN, there's only so much you can do to alter its look. Joe and Mayra Human, who live in a classic renter's-white apartment, were itching to put up wallpaper in their living room, but figured it'd be safer to opt for paint—with a twist. After sampling a few colors and zeroing in on moody gray-purple, Joe, an interior designer, noticed a ball of cotton yarn next to Mayra's knitting needles, its golden hue and pleasing texture suggesting a scheme. Soon he found himself measuring the wall to create a penciled grid of oversize diamonds. After pressing upholstery tacks partway in at each corner, he painted the wall and pushed the tacks in a bit more. Then, starting in the lower right corner, he wove the yarn left, then right, then left...until he'd worked his way across. "The first time, I ran out halfway through," he says. "So I took it all off, bought a new roll, and started again!" Joe complemented the purple hue by facing an IKEA cabinet with richly toned walnut slats. "If we ever move out, I hope the next tenant will want to keep it," he says of the accent wall. "If not," he notes, "the yarn can go into Mayra's next knitting project." ■



Textural touch: Joe wrapped cotton yarn around brass upholstery tacks to make the diamond pattern. Paint: Benjamin Moore's Vintage Charm

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trying
a recipe
that's
adventurous,
and a kitchen
where finding
the tools isn't

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Heads up!

Answer the call of the wild with these cheeky trophy mounts

BY MEGAN BAKER • PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK LUND



Joe Human
NEW YORK CITY

"I like the quirky element they add to the space."

IF YOU'RE GOING to make a statement, consider a loud one: a growl, a roar, or a trumpet, even. We like to think that's what's behind the tongue-in-cheek mounted animal heads we saw in this year's contest entries, like the cardboard fauna in reader Joe Human's living room (below). "I like the 3-D effect on my wall," Joe says. (You'll see more of that accent wall on page 23.) Taxidermy has been around for centuries, of course, enjoying its heyday in the oddities-obsessed Victorian era. Today, faux versions—ranging from abstract art to ultra-realistic replicas—offer looks both whimsical and beautiful. Here, nine beasts you're sure to go wild for.



[reader insight]
**faux
taxidermy
is definitely
more fun**



1> big red

GRANDIN ROAD

Made of: Resin

Size: 30"W x 22"D x 29"H

Highlights: The naturally goofy moose becomes a playful centerpiece in a vibrant tomato hue. \$249; grandinroad.com



3



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5



2> horns aplenty

HOME DECORATORS
COLLECTION

Made of: Painted resin

Size: 6"W x 9"D x 16"H

Highlights: An aged-bronze finish gives this dramatically antlered gazelle serious style. \$34; homedecorators.com

3> on safari

NEAR & DEER

Made of: Painted resin

Size: 9"W x 12"D x 15"H

Highlights: Savanna green highlights every fold on this picture-perfect grizzled rhino. \$120; nearanddeer.com

4> tall order

Z GALLERY

Made of: Resin

Size: 10"W x 15"D x 31¼"H

Highlights: With its long neck and docile demeanor, this giraffe will cast an elegant eye on your living space. \$130; zgallerie.com

5> stripes

DWELLSTUDIO

Made of: Papier-mâché

Size: 16"W x 13"D x 11"H

Highlights: A zebra head of molded newsprint springs to life thanks to bright teal painted details. \$40; wayfair.com



6



7



8



9

8> trunk show

HOME DECORATORS
COLLECTION

Made of: Resin

Size: 13"W x 4"D x 17"H

Highlights: An aged-brass color gives this elephant head an antique look. \$34; homedecorators.com

6> read all about it

CARIBBEAN CRAFT

Made of: Papier-mâché

Size: 14½"W x 17"D x 29"H

Highlights: This graceful springbok is handmade in Haiti from recycled paper. \$191; us.amara.com

9> small-time

Z GALLERY

Made of: Resin

Size: 15"W x 7½"D x 13¾"H

Highlights: This miniaturized moose head is fit for a smidgen of wall space—or for a grouped display. \$50; zgallerie.com

7> bold graphics

DWELLSTUDIO

Made of: Papier-mâché

Size: 12"W x 13"D x 13"H

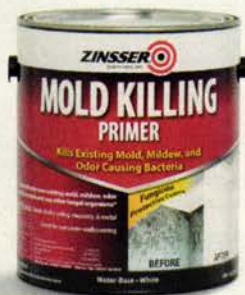
Highlights: An abstract giraffe's head gains definition from painted fur patterns. \$64; allmodern.com

SEE THE WHOLE MENAGERIE

Find the rest of our faux favorites at thisoldhouse.com/oct2015



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He's a backyard hero

While deployed 7,500 miles from home, this reader designed his dream backyard on paper, then spent months building it

BY SAL VAGLICA • PHOTOGRAPHS BY LISA ROMEREIN

[reader wisdom]

**outdoor
hangouts
keep a family
close**



Juan Zetino
CAMARILLO,
CALIFORNIA

"I'm away a lot—the yard makes it easy to reconnect when I'm home."

WHEN IT COMES TO TRANSFORMING a backyard, most DIYers do it over time—add some plants one year, follow up with hardscaping the next—until the space is complete. It's the rare homeowner who formulates a plan, then executes it like clockwork. But *This Old House* reader Juan Zetino did just that after spending about a year designing his ultimate yard.

Back in August 2009, Juan and his wife, Vicky, moved into their first house: a stucco ranch in Camarillo, California, about 15 miles from the naval base where he is stationed. The home's interior was move-in ready for the family of five, but the backyard wasn't as welcoming. "The yard was plain," he says. "No one went out there to hang out." As a Seabee, a member of the construction arm of the Navy engineering corps responsible for building military fortifications, Juan is skilled in carpentry and bridge engineering. He planned to redo the yard before a scheduled deployment to Guam that coming March, but a Christmas Day phone call changed things. Three weeks later he was in Afghanistan's northern Balkh province for the start of his first stint there. The backyard would have to wait.



before

BEFORE While it had grass, the plain backyard wasn't inviting.

AFTER The paver patio, a grapevine-covered pergola, and an outdoor kitchen give Juan and his family reason to head outside.

In between laying out and building Army and Marine bases overseas, Juan spent his downtime with magazines like *This Old House*, looking for ideas to turn the yard into a space where he could catch up with his family stateside. Ten months later, he returned with “a 70 percent plan that, after I got back to the house and walked through the yard, became about a 90 percent plan,” he says, in military building terms. The design was short on lawn, because the kids spend their time on bikes and skateboards out front, but big on activity-specific zones that would make the most of the wide and shallow 75-by-30-foot yard.

His sketch began with an outdoor room with a kitchen, and a fire pit to take the chill out of the evening air, which averages about 60°F in their area. Defined by a 12-by-15-foot paver patio below and a redwood pergola above, the room is tucked into a corner with easy access to the family room. A gas fire pit ringed with Adirondack chairs is the perfect



2

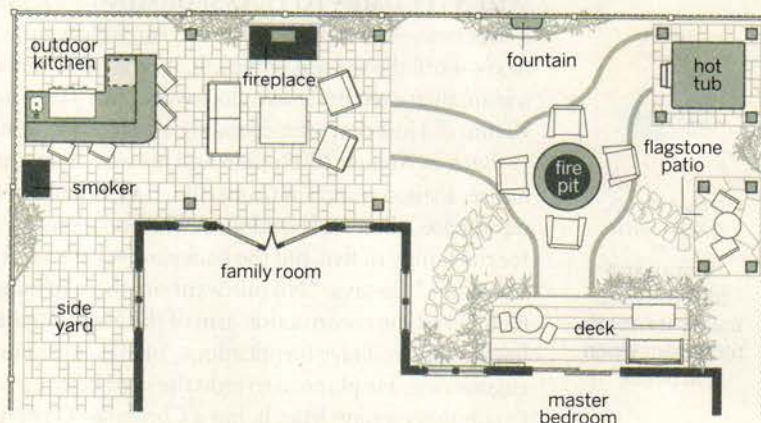
[1] Juan and his family use the patio space a few times a week. **[2]** A pathway leads from the house to the gas fire pit and covered hot tub, with stepping stones connecting to a flagstone patio. On family movie nights, they hang a portable projector screen from the patio's arbor.



1

the plan

Several outdoor rooms are scattered around the yard and are unified by a decomposed-granite path.





[3] Juan picked up the wine barrel this past spring while visiting a vineyard and found inspiration in *TOH*'s fold-down "Murphy bar" on thisoldhouse.com.

[4] For quick weekday dinners, the family uses the grill. But come weekends, the barbecue smoker, the newest addition to the yard, sees a lot of action. **[5]** For larger parties, the Zetinos open the French doors connecting the main patio with the family room inside.

SEE MORE OF THIS YARD
Find additional photos at thisoldhouse.com/oct2015



spot for post-meal marshmallow roasts year-round. Outside the master bedroom is a trifecta of relaxation that includes a small hardwood deck for morning coffee. The deck's wall-mounted folding bar instantly turns 5 P.M. into happy hour. Nearby is a hot tub to help ease workweek stress. A few steps away, a smaller flagstone patio with an arbor holds a café table and chairs, providing extra seating for entertaining.

Juan has plenty of building experience as a Seabee, from working with steel studs—like the ones he used to frame the outdoor kitchen—to finishing interiors. But for this job, he also called in some backup. After hiring contractors to install gas lines for the outdoor kitchen and lay the paver patio—work they finished in days—Juan and his older son, Jessie, built the redwood pergola. After that he started on the hot-tub area before moving to the flagstone fire pit.

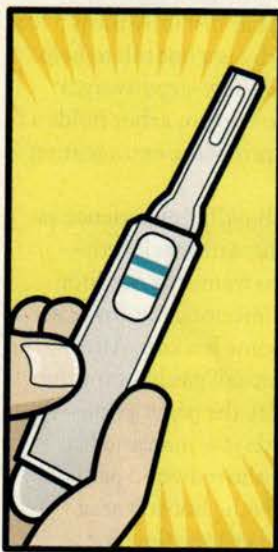
Over a dozen weekends and a few week-long vacations in the eight months that followed, Juan and his family finished room after room. His younger son, Carlos, helped stain the deck, the pergola, and the arbor, while Vicky kept an eye out for outdoor furniture within their budget. He and Alyssa, the couple's youngest child, planted the deck perimeter with canna lilies; then he searched garden centers for jasmine, plumeria, birds of paradise, and kangaroo paws to give the yard a tropical feel. Compared with the hundreds of pounds of stone and wood that he added, the plants often proved even more troublesome. He had to replant the cannas—he'd underestimated their mature size—and muscle the 20-foot-tall queen palm trees into the backyard on a dolly.

While the project came together in the end as planned, the Zetinos continue to improve upon it. This year they added a vegetable garden with eggplant, squash, tomatoes, and peppers. And Juan just upgraded the redwood pergola with Edison-style outdoor lights. What once was empty lawn is now a lively gathering place. "Since I'm overseas a lot and get homesick," Juan says, "I wanted a space, away from TVs and phones, where my family could catch up when I'm home. Now we're in the backyard all the time." ■

The real pregnancy test: remodeling

What better time to rip out the kitchen than when there's a bun in the oven?

Your guide to getting it all done. Sort of ILLUSTRATIONS BY PETER AND MARIA HOEY



IT'S NOT JUST THE THRILL of having a child—it's the uncontrollable urge to finally finish the attic. And swap in a new kitchen sink, with a better faucet and a prettier backsplash, and maybe a new range while you're at it.

For reasons known only to Mother Nature, nothing focuses attention on home improvements quite like the imminent arrival of offspring. Call it hardwiring, or perhaps it's the pressure of a truly immutable deadline. Every year, when you send us stories for this reader-remodel issue, we hear without fail from couples who somehow, by some twist of logic they wouldn't be able to explain themselves, decided to usher in a newborn by, say, stenciling miniature constellations on the nursery ceiling—in the middle of the night—or engaging in a frenzied gut redo of the master bath after initially thinking all it needed was new towels.

In the spirit of celebration, if not the frank recognition of a genuine syndrome, we offer this pregnancy planner for incipient parents.

First trimester

Weeks 1–4

- > Ah, life...so pleasant, so simple...
- > Whaaaaat? Two dark blue lines are positive, right? Oh my gosh! Exciting! Terrifying! Remodeling!
- > Text handyman: Need to convert closet to nursery, STAT!

Weeks 5–8

- > Call future grandparents with blessed news; ask if they can handle demolition.
- > With no closet, where to store the Bugaboo? Scratch that. Will carry kid. Can't afford stroller and remodel.
- > Empty house of all chemicals; commit to buying cleaning products derived only from expeller-pressed chrysanthemums.
- > Handyman MIA. Find that scrap of paper with password for Angie's List. What's with this desk? Home office may need redo.
- > Text photo of loose stair railing to GC from Angie's List: Can he come over right away?

Weeks 9–13

- > Hear peanut's heartbeat—this is

really happening!

- > Do GCs not text? And why are their home phones not listed? May need help with crib assembly, also with designing and building out new second-floor layout.

Second trimester

Weeks 14–17

- > Google "easy-install no-VOC wallpaper with animal themes and purple colorway."
- > Still no word from GC. Google "DIY building tips"—no, make that "especially reliable handypersons."
- > Start list of baby names. (Why does "Angie" keep popping up?)

Weeks 18–21

- > Hire "Miracle Mike" to convert closet and assemble crib. Be very specific about deadline.
- > Expose baby to color therapy by propping paint swatches on belly. One kick means "loves it" or "hates it"?
- > Ultrasound: It's a girl!

Weeks 22–24

- > Closet demo done on deadline! Let's name her Mike!

[reader insight]
a growing
bump is
a great
motivator



- > Buy Tums.
- > Ask boss re maternity leave. Buy bigger pants, also bigger wet/dry vac.

Weeks 25–26

- > Where's Mike? Nursery still needs drywall—and maybe a window.
- > Download crib assembly tips.
- > Would LOVELOVELOVE a glass of chardonnay. *Grrrrr.*
- > Ask friends how to baby-proof kitchen. May need to gut it.

Third trimester

Weeks 27–32

- > Mike not responding to REPEATED texts. Pay house call, assure him Medela belly band can be fashioned into a noose.
- > Confirm that doula is able to assemble crib.
- > Order knitted booties from Etsy, size 0. Also, Red Wing work boots from Amazon, size 7. No, make it 8—feet are swelling.
- > Help best friend plan baby shower. Hint that guests should dress for a painting party.

- > Fix bath faucet, which starts leaking whenever in there, which is now CONSTANTLY.

Weeks 33–36

- > Prepare punch list for closet-nursery conversion.
- > Track down name of the purple that lady at prenatal class wore—not quite Deep Caviar, not quite Eggplant Melody either.
- > Doula seems handy. Maybe she can help fix railing, too?
- > Bath faucet has gotta go. Vanity should, too. Check Pinterest for tile options.

Weeks 37–40

- > Crib not coming together. Buy dimensional lumber to craft one from scratch.
- > Stay up till 3 A.M. installing new faucet and medicine cabinet. Find grout samples under drop cloth inside new vanity—how'd they get there?

D-day

- > So far...nothing!
- > Finish nursery, fix handrail on own.
- > Use downtime to reorganize kitchen utensils and alphabetize spices.
- > Can finish crib later. Rehab dresser drawer for baby's welcome home.

Eight days past due date

- > Seems awfully warm these days. Will resting belly on sixth rung of ladder while installing ceiling fan bring on contractions?
- > Practice breathing.
- > Contemplate career switch; world needs fewer lawyers, more design-build experts.
- > Was that a shock or...uh-oh...down the ladder and to the hospital!
- > Don't forget: car seat, baby blanket, spouse, and fan deck—closet needs new paint color scheme. ■

Inspired by the stories of Andrea Faw and daughter Ava; Julie Turner and daughter Elisabeth; Rebecca Hatfield and twins Avery and Addison; Kasia Bulkowski and son Mikolai; Sara Colleary and daughter Maeve

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The things they saved

A stripped-down Queen Anne comes back to life with the help of original details, some refurbished and some found

BY KATHERINE BICER • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY TIEULI

[reader wisdom]
old things
connect you
to the past



Katherine Bicer and husband Murat

BELMONT, MASSACHUSETTS

"The first time we stepped through the door, it felt like we were home."

I HAVE A FASCINATION with the things people have lived with and loved. Our intent with this house, which we're thrilled is on the new season of *This Old House*, is to reuse as many old details as possible. Of course we're making changes—adding a porch and a mudroom, putting in a new kitchen, and redoing the bedrooms upstairs. But we love knowing that elements that have always been here will continue to be a part of the house, a part of our home.

Even though my husband, Murat, and I are from very different parts of the world—he grew up in an apartment building in Ankara, Turkey, and I grew up in a 1950s two-story in Norman, Oklahoma—we both treasure timeworn objects. We bought a pair of vintage stained-glass windows at an antiques shop 10 years ago,

HONORING HISTORY

This season, *This Old House* general contractor Tom Silva and the crew are renovating an 1895 Queen Anne in Belmont, Massachusetts (BEFORE). Homeowners Murat and Katherine Bicer wanted a historical home in which to raise their young son and daughter (ABOVE) and plan to restore as many of the original details as possible, including some brass sconces Katherine is shining up (TOP LEFT).

GOOD WOOD

RIGHT: Dan Buckley, of Silva Brothers Construction, connects a new sash cord to a restored divided-light window sash.

FAR RIGHT: Tom Silva works on an original door that he and *TOH* master carpenter Norm Abram disassembled, cut down, and rebuilt, reducing its width from 30 inches to 24 inches to fit the second-floor bathroom.



right after we were married. We had no real use for them, but we loved the design and the colors of the glass, so we hung them as decoration in the two condos we lived in.

We must have a thing about windows, because that's one of the reasons we bought this house. The first time we stepped in the door, we felt like we were home: The whole house was bathed in sunlight. There were so many windows, most of them original and with imperfect wavy glass, which just makes such gorgeous light. As we walked around the house, we saw detail after detail that we loved.

We lived in the house for six months before starting the renovation, and despite the winter drafts decided to keep those old windows, nearly 40 in all. Our architect, Mathew Cummings, and [*TOH* TV general contractor] Tom Silva supported our decision, and the cost would be comparable to replacements. We sent all the sashes out to Olde Bostonian, where they are being stripped,

repaired, reglazed, and repainted. Here at the house, the window wells are being scraped, and rot and damage fixed. The windows will get weatherstripping where there was none, but the big improvement will be the new triple-track storm windows, which have two storms and a screen built in, so we don't have to swap one for another with the seasons. Tom says a well-sealed single-pane window with a good quality storm is just as efficient as a new double-pane window. So our 1895 windows will get 2015 performance.

It's the best of both worlds, and we're trying to achieve that with other decisions as well. There were things that had been hidden or covered up or removed over the years, and we want to bring those elements back. There were old doors in place and also extras in the basement—doors with screens, doors with windows, wood-panel doors. We're going to be able to use original five-panel doors in almost every room, but there's such an assortment of hardware, we're still working out how to deal with that. We'd like to figure out how to



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Tune in to your local PBS station to catch the new season of *TOH* TV. To stream any episode from the past 12 years, go to thisoldhouse.com/watchTOH

organize the hardware by style—for example, one floor with all crystal doorknobs, another floor with all brass—instead of having to replace all the knobs. Consistency throughout the house doesn't matter to us as much as using the same pieces that people have used to open the doors over and over again for years.

We're also reusing simple brass sconces that were in various places around the house. When the wall was opened up around one sconce, you could see the history of lighting technology: gas line, knob and tube, copper wiring. We love that. Two of these sconces are going in the master suite.

Our suite will also get a refurbished claw-foot tub and a restored marble vanity top, both of which lived in a second-floor bath. The tub was so beat up, we weren't sure it could be saved, but it's going to add so much warmth and charm to the room.

All these original items mean so much to us. Murat says that if you live in a house that's been around longer than you have, it makes you feel part of the neighborhood, like you belong. It's so true. And saving things that belong in the house is part of what makes us feel that we belong here too. ■



SALVAGE FINDS

LEFT: This antique stained-glass window is one of a pair the Bicers purchased as newlyweds; it will go in the powder room.

BOTTOM: Katherine bought 36 vintage cast-iron bin pulls knowing they will add period charm to the kitchen.



OPPOSITE: The Bicers found this oak mantel in a salvage shop and snatched it up for the new fireplace in the living room.



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They took a page from us

Plenty of people are happy just flipping through *This Old House*, but these determined DIYers didn't stop there

BY MEGAN BAKER AND DEBORAH BALDWIN

HOMEOWNER TO-DO LISTS

tend to run from the annoying to the mundane. But some of you like to think big. Alongside “replace HEPA filter” and “buy lightbulbs” you might add “master woodworking skills” and “build a mantel.” While poring over the submissions to our reader-remodel contest, we were struck by the many projects that began with a how-to in *TOH*. You’ve astonished us with your skills and impressed us with the creative end runs you do around problems. And we’re grateful for the trust you place in us to guide you along the way. As Tom Rife (see his cabinets on the next page) wrote, “In doing all the work ourselves, as remodelers know, you build everything twice: in your mind and then physically constructing everything. Fear of the unknown always plays a part. But *TOH* alleviates those fears.” Hats off to all you dreamers—and to this sampling of your DIY derring-do.



rolled on a stair runner



Heather Thibodeau

IJAMSVILLE, MARYLAND

THE INSPIRATION “11 Ways to Give Your Home a Personal Stamp,” May 2013, and “Add a Runner Without Carpet or Nails,” May 2009

THE ADAPTATION While updating her family’s finished basement, devoted DIYer and blogger Heather (heatherednest.com) wanted to brighten the staircase. She and her husband, Dave, began by removing a wall to open up the area. After covering the linoleum on the corner-turn landing with utility-grade oak, Heather took a belt sander to the worn pine treads. Luckily, “there were no spindles, the risers were already painted, and because we were repainting, the wood didn’t have to be perfect.” The couple primed the steps and put down two base coats of white porch and patio floor paint. “We used FrogTape to create the effect of a runner, sealing the edges with the base color so the second color couldn’t bleed under.” It’s been two years, Heather notes, “and it’s held up very well.”





crafted oak cabinets



Tom Rife

NORTH CANTON, OHIO

THE INSPIRATION

"In Fine Detail,"

January/February 2008

THE ADAPTATION Professional baker and lifelong DIYer Tom and his wife, Sue, lived with their 1940s kitchen for 22 years before he was able to remodel it. Cabinets of richly grained quartersawn white oak, on full display in the January/February 2008 issue, were uppermost in the couple's minds. Armed with a compound miter saw, and aided by close friend and mentor Marc Sober, Tom made not only the boxes but also the face frames, door panels, rails, and stiles. Then he completed each door face by gluing on eight $\frac{7}{8}$ -inch-wide strips. "Including the panel, that's 13 pieces per face," he says, "and there are 29 doors. It's a simple construction, but so solid—people are amazed to think I made them."



dressed up the fireplace



Ashley and Bret Farris

CARROLLTON, TEXAS

THE INSPIRATION "Fireplace Face-Lift for Just \$87,"
January/February 2013

THE ADAPTATION The plain painted fireplace in their 1980s ranch bugged Ashley, who prefers the look of natural brick and traditional trim. After single-handedly stripping off the paint, she worked with Bret to re-create the mantel in the January/February 2013 Budget Redo. "We weren't strong DIYers before we bought our house, and we acquired tools slowly," she says. They used their new table saw to cut panels and a shelf out of MDF, shopped at a home center for MDF molding, then installed the assembly with glue, masonry screws, and a nail gun. All things considered, says Ashley, "I think we did a good job of making it look as if it has always been there." Agreed!

sculpted a garden



Jimm and Cynthia Carroll
MORRISTOWN, NEW JERSEY

THE INSPIRATION "Focus on Foliage," April 2009

THE ADAPTATION After digging out an article saved from the April 2009 issue featuring a leafy, curvaceous border garden, this period-house-proud couple revamped their backyard with foliage encircling two well-established trees like a graceful figure eight. "We had difficulty growing grass there," says Jimm, "so our choices were to stretch a hammock or create an environment that would invite meandering." The article got them thinking about shape, structure, and layers, as well as texture and color. "Before, the yard was a blank slate," Cynthia says. Today it boasts Japanese holly, rhododendron, liriopse, and flowering bulbs, and the foliage keeps it lush practically year-round.



set off a home office



Jason Austin
LIBERTY, NORTH CAROLINA

THE INSPIRATION "Build a Columned Room Divider," January/February 2013

THE ADAPTATION Jason "wanted to give something back" to his parents, Emma and Robert, so he camped out at his childhood home, in Danville, Virginia, long enough to carry out its first redo since 1975. His mom and dad's wish list included a defined office area with light flowing through, so he replaced a wall with our columned room divider. "I fell in love with the one in the magazine," he says of the January/February 2013 how-to, "and built it pretty much to the specs." His main departure: using a mix of painted and clear-coated wood. Shelves and an armchair on the side opposite the office serve as a new reading nook. Jason's parents were speechless when they saw it. "They've given me so much," he says. "I'm glad I could do something big for them." ■



You folks sure can pinch a penny!

We salute our 2015 champions of cheap—equal parts genius and thrifty—who refuse to accept the concept of full price ILLUSTRATIONS BY GREG CLARK

[reader savvy]
not paying
retail saved
a whopping
\$27,065



Barbie goes prime time



Katherine Meacham HEMET, CALIFORNIA
I took a big old TV that didn't work, gutted it with a butter knife and wire cutters, and made

a Barbie Dreamhouse for my daughter. Fifteen Barbies live there now.

What Katherine saved: \$174

Hey, you gonna keep that?



Suzanne Long

LOLETA, CALIFORNIA

While visiting a home show, we passed a beautiful, lighted composite deck on display. It looked like we could plop it right down in our front yard, so I asked the man who was

working there if it was for sale. He said it was—for half price. We got a U-Haul truck, and the men at the show broke down the deck and loaded it up for us.

What Suzanne saved: \$2,500

Pining for the perfect floor



Keri Karris

PLYMOUTH, INDIANA

When remodeling our 1950s lake cottage, we wanted wide-plank wood floors but could afford nothing we found at local retailers. In our search, we discovered 8-inch-wide, 3/4-inch-thick tongue-and-groove pine planks normally used as knotty-pine wall paneling. There's a

decorative V-notch on one side, but the back is perfectly flat. Sold! We laid the planks back-side up and face-nailed each board to prevent cupping. We sanded the installed floor with a rented circular sander, then applied two coats of high-build floor varnish. The total cost finished was about \$2.50 per square foot.

What Keri saved: \$4,500

It's all in the details



Jennifer Montague Clark

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

I couldn't justify spending money on a new front door, so in order to give the plain

SEEING IS BELIEVING

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flat-front door of my 1914 Craftsman new dimension and character, I decided to add a dentil detail. I went down to the lumber store and took a free sample of chair-rail molding. I nailed it to the front door, caulked and painted it, and—voilà!—free curb appeal!

What Jennifer saved: \$1,086

Concrete chic



Charis Holloway

MARSHFIELD,
WISCONSIN

We wanted to create a warm and cozy space in our unfinished basement for our college-student daughter to enjoy when she is at home. We didn't have the time or money for a full renovation, so we decided to attempt a loft-like atmosphere. We started by covering the poured-concrete walls with joint compound to create faux-brick walls. I used a level as a guide and drew the grout lines with my finger. After it dried, I painted the raised areas to resemble bricks. To finish the look, we painted the concrete floor to simulate wood planks. She loves it! All told, we bought seven buckets of joint compound (\$70), and 3 gallons and 4 quarts of paint (\$140).

What Charis saved: \$6,478

Lighting tricks



Diana Simpson

ALMA, MICHIGAN

When it came to lighting for our kitchen remodel, we had to get creative. I found supplies to make a couple of sconces from an online lighting-parts dealer, and my husband did the wiring. I spray-painted some of

the metal in dark iron, some in brushed nickel, and some we left in the original brass, for a mixed-metal look. It was quite an education since I didn't know a scone arm from a canopy before we began!

What Diana saved: \$372

Going to great lengths



Anita Cosgriff

SOUTH BELOIT, ILLINOIS

We found a family-owned outfit in

Wisconsin that could manufacture stones for our outdoor fireplace at \$4.75 a square foot versus the \$15.75 we'd been quoted by a local supplier. My husband, youngest son, and I took our truck and a flatbed trailer on a beautiful seven-hour round trip to pick up our bargain stone. On the drive back, we had dinner at an adorable family restaurant and shopped at an antiques store, where I found the coolest vintage sink—it's now a part of my laundry room.

What Anita saved: \$1,860

A money-saving resolution



Edwin Hills

LITTLETON, COLORADO

Right after New Year's, I went to our home

center to talk about options for my kitchen renovation. The employee I spoke with let me in on a little secret: Winter is a slow period for their subcontractors, because most folks are paying off holiday bills. To secure my business, they offered me a 25 percent discount off the total price to have granite counters installed and my cabinets refaced.

**What Edwin saved:
about \$10,000**

Harvesting house parts



Beverley Hancox

INTERLAKEN, NEW YORK

We needed a new handrail in our back entry. We had

recently cleared trees on our property, and there was a hophornbeam tree with a trunk the perfect diameter. My son cut it down to size, stripped the bark, and sanded the wood. No finish was applied, but it has a nice patina from "palm" oil. We now have a unique, interesting handrail, decorated with insect squiggles and holes, at no cost. I bought the sturdy brackets at a reuse store. Total cost: \$2, plus lunch for my son.

What Beverley saved: \$95.36



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You love this vintage touch

Taking a cue from reader remodels, we decided to retrofit a charming old bureau for a whole new purpose

BY PAUL HOPE • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY TIEULI

[reader tip]

convert a
dresser
into a bath
vanity



COST \$25, plus the dresser, sink, and top

TIME Two days

DIFFICULTY Moderate. Hire a pro to fabricate the top.



Caleb Kettler
WOODLAND
PARK,
COLORADO

"I didn't want
a vanity like
everyone else's."

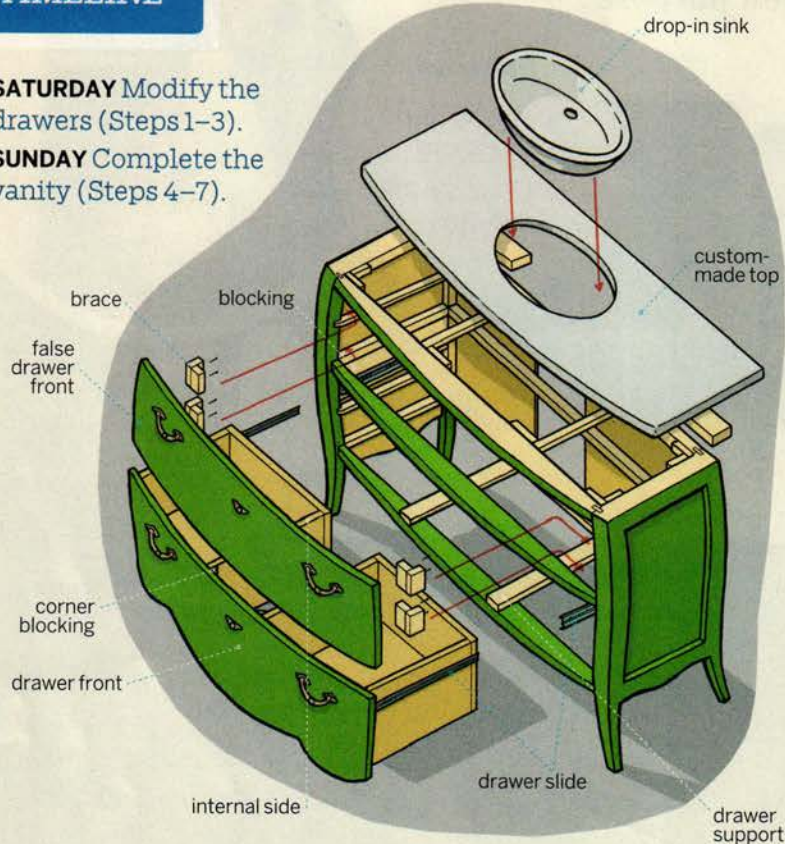
"I WAS LOOKING FOR ANTIQUE DRESSERS on Pinterest when I stumbled across people using them as vanities," says reader Caleb Kettler, who decided to make one himself. "The trickiest part is fitting in the plumbing." Indeed, to make way for the trap, you'll have to modify the drawers. Who better to demonstrate how to do that than *This Old House* master carpenter Norm Abram? Now, his version of the project is pretty involved; the dresser here is all curved openings, and it got a new top of marble with a drop-in sink, requiring more modifications. You can make an easier go of it by plopping a vessel sink right on top of a rectilinear piece. Either way, the approach is the same. See for yourself as Norm walks you through the steps to adding a truly original focal point to your bath, all while preserving a precious bit of drawer space.

Faucet: Rohl Viaggio
Country Bath
Collection, \$370;
rohlhome.com

DAY-TO-DAY TIMELINE

SATURDAY Modify the drawers (Steps 1–3).

SUNDAY Complete the vanity (Steps 4–7).



TOOLS

- > clamps
- > trim saw or mini circular saw
- > oscillating multitool with a flush-cutting blade, or a handheld flush-cutting saw
- > drill/driver and bits
- > tape measure
- > straightedge
- > pencil
- > rafter square
- > sliding T-bevel
- > miter saw
- > table saw
- > hammer and pry bar
- > pneumatic brad nailer
- > glue brush
- > stud finder
- > jigsaw

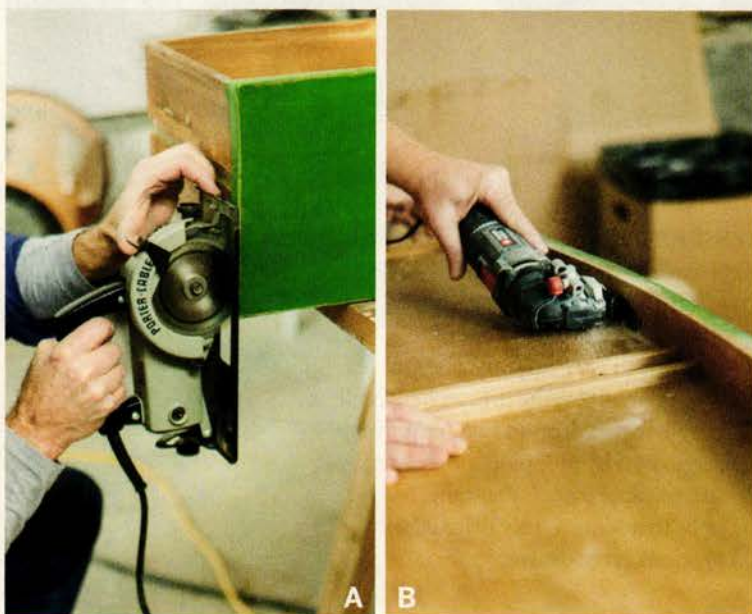
MATERIALS

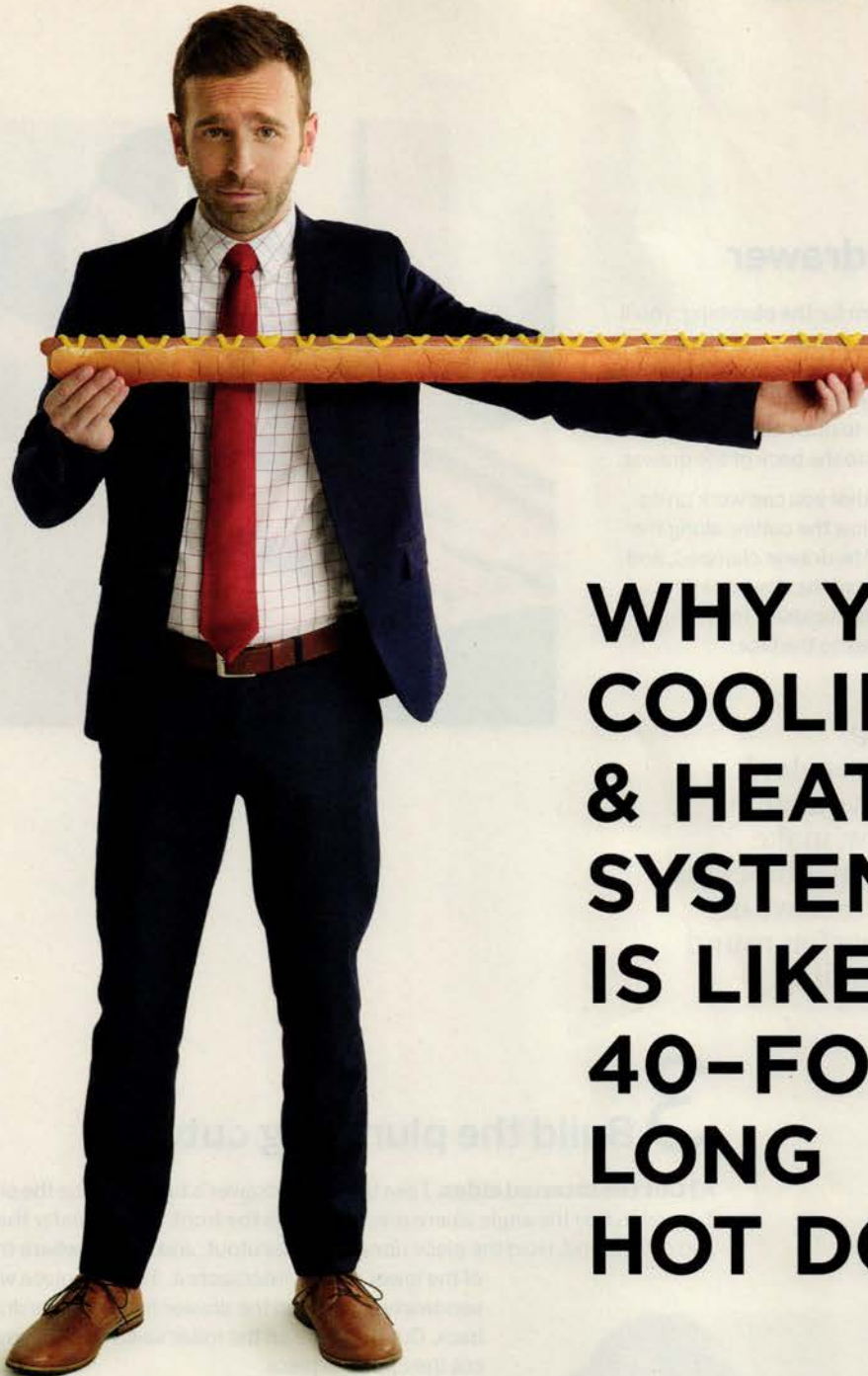
- > dresser
- > drop-in or vessel sink
- > optional drawer-slide hardware
Get one pair of 100-pound side-mount full-extension slides, sized to the depth of the drawers.
- > cove molding
Get a 2-foot length for blocking.
- > 1×4 pine
Get a 6-foot length for slide mounts and corner blocking.
- > 1×2 pine
Get a 2-foot length for the face braces.
- > 2×4 framing scrap
to secure the vanity to the wall
- > ½-inch wood screws
- > 3-inch wood screws
- > 1¼-inch wood screws
- > 1¼-inch 18-gauge brads
- > wood glue
- > silicone caulk

1 Separate the upper drawer face

A] Cut the drawer sides. On this dresser, the upper drawer must be removed to allow room for the drop-in sink. That means the drawer face has to come off and be reinstalled later to create a false front. Clamp the drawer to a work surface and use the trim saw or handsaw to cut along the sides of the drawer where they meet the face, as shown.

B] Cut the drawer bottom. Flip the drawer upside down and fit the oscillating multitool with a flush-cutting blade or grab a handheld flush-cutting saw. Cut along the back side of the drawer front, where the bottom meets it, keeping the blade snug against it. Set aside the drawer front as well as the parts of the drawer frame—you'll use them in Step 3 to modify the lower drawer. Use the drill/driver to unscrew the dresser top.





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2 Modify the lower drawer

A] Mark the lower drawer. To make room for the plumbing, you'll need to build a cutout into at least one of the drawers—in this case, the lower one. Rest the drawer upside down on your work surface, and measure and mark spots 4 inches to the right and left of the drawer's centerline. Use the straightedge, as shown, to draw cutlines on the bottom of the drawer. Transfer your marks to the back of the drawer.

B] Cut the drawer. Clamp the drawer so that you can work on its back. Using the rafter square as a guide, follow the cutline along the back of the drawer with the trim saw. Keep the drawer clamped, and continue following the cutline on the bottom of the drawer until you reach the face. Use either the multitool or the handsaw to finish the cut and separate the cutout where it attaches to the face.



TIP
If you don't have a table saw, make corner blocking from cove or quarter-round molding.



3 Build the plumbing cutout

A] Cut the internal sides. Take the upper drawer's back and use the sliding T-bevel to find the angle where one end meets the front, then transfer the angle and cut the end. Hold the piece upright in the cutout, and mark it where the back of the lower drawer intersects it. The new piece will be sandwiched between the drawer front and the drawer back. Cut the piece on the miter saw. Measure, mark, and cut the opposite piece.

B] Attach the internal sides. Dry-fit the newly cut pieces. One at a time, remove them and run a bead of wood glue along the edges where they attach; fit them in place, and secure them with the pneumatic nail gun and 1¼-inch 18-gauge brads, as shown. Wipe away any excess wood glue with a damp cloth.

C] Add the corner blocking. Rip angled blocking from 1× stock on the table saw. Brush the right-angle edges of the blocking with wood glue, position them between the drawer sides and face, and tack them in place.

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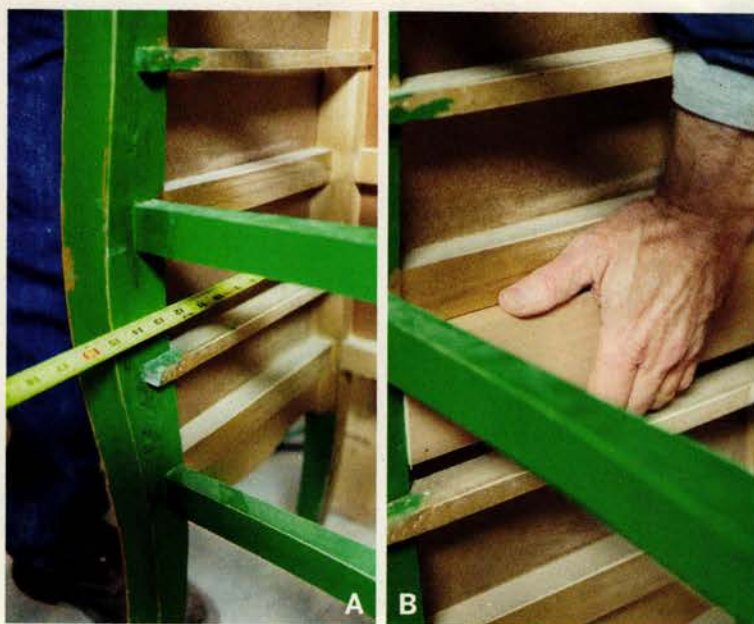
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4 Add the blocking

A] Cut the slide blocking. The grooved dresser drawers slid on wood guide rails. To update the dresser drawers with optional heavy-duty slides, install blocking flush between the leg framing. First, measure between the front and back of the dresser frame just above the wooden guide, as shown. Cut a 1×4 to that length. Make 1×4 blocking for the other side the same way.

B] Install the slide blocking. Add spacers to fill the gap between the blocking and the dresser, securing them with glue and brads. Wedge a cut 1×4 between the leg framing just above the wooden guide on each side, and toenail the ends into the framing. Use the hammer and pry bar to remove the old wooden drawer guides.

5 Attach the drawer slides

A] Set the drawer rail. Follow the slide's installation instructions to position the inner rail against the side of the drawer. Check that the hardware is square to the back of the drawer, and mark the prepunched holes on the blocking. Hold the rail in place, and secure it to the drawer with the included ½-inch wood screws. Repeat the process on the other drawer side.

B] Secure the slide to the dresser. Measure below the dresser's crosspiece according to the slide's installation instructions, and mark that spot on the blocking. Extend the slide rail from the track to access the screw holes, and hold the track in place, with its top edge at your mark. Fasten one side of the track to the support with an included screw. Square up the track before driving a second screw, then drive screws through the remaining holes. Install the slide on the other side in the same way.

C] Add the drawer supports. Use the hammer and pry bar to remove the center drawer guide from the bottom of the dresser frame. Measure and cut two pieces of ½-inch-thick scrap to connect the front and back of the dresser frame. The supports should rest on the back of the frame and be flush with the front edge of the dresser. Space them under the new drawer sides, glue down the supports, and tack them in place with 1¼-inch brads.



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6 Reattach the drawer face

A] Make the face braces. To attach the face of the upper drawer, make L-shaped braces. First, cut 3-inch pieces of 1×2 and glue them together, edge to face, in an L-shape, as shown. Tack the pieces together with 1¼-inch brads. Make four braces, two for each side of the drawer face.

B] Attach the face. Hold the face of the upper drawer in place on the dresser, and position a brace in the corner where it meets the dresser frame. Tack the brace to the frame and drill a pilot hole through the brace and into the face of the drawer. Secure the face with 1¼-inch wood screws. Screw the brace to the dresser frame and install the remaining braces. Slide the lower drawer in place.



7 Install the vanity

A] Secure the piece. Position your new vanity in the bathroom, its back edge about 3½ inches off the wall. Use the stud finder to locate mounting points and cut two pieces of 2×4 scrap. Align the scrap with those marks and screw through the back of the vanity into each 2×4 with a pair of 3-inch wood screws. Push the vanity against the wall and drill an angled pilot hole through each 2×4 and into a wall stud, and fasten it with a 3-inch wood screw.

B] Trim the sink hole. Once the marble countertop was cut for the drop-in sink, Norm had to make a curved cut in a cross support in the dresser frame. If your installation requires a similar cut, set a compass to the width of the sink rim and follow the opening, marking a curved cutline on the cross support. Follow along the line with a jigsaw.

C] Install the sink. Dry-fit the sink in the opening in the countertop. If it still hits the crosspiece, remove the sink and continue to trim the crosspiece until it fits. Once it does, run a bead of silicone caulk on the underside of the sink's perimeter and press the sink in place. Install the drain and faucet and make the plumbing connections. ■

TIP
To ease installation, attach your fixtures before dropping the sink in.



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HOME SMART HOME

[reader request]
how to get
your home
connected

Meet the Johnsons—Jason, Sue, and son Jake—and see how **app-controlled gadgets** are making **life at home easier** (even for their dog, Max) while cutting energy costs. What works for them can work for you, too. Turn the page to learn how



the Johnson family



HEY, BUDDY, HOW R U?

(1) Petcube's Interactive Wi-Fi Pet Camera (\$199) lets you watch from your smartphone as you talk to your pet or direct a laser to entertain it. "I've definitely been caught playing with Max during meetings," admits Jason (INSET, far left).

(2) Petnet's SmartFeeder (\$150) senses when there's still food in the bowl, so it won't dispense another serving that spills over. It will also ping you if you're low on food.

BY LAURA FRASER • PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEN GUTMAKER

Jason Johnson was

at work one day when an app on his smartphone alerted him that his garage door was open. He knew that his wife wasn't home and anyone could easily grab their bikes or even try to break into the house. So he tapped a button within the app, and the garage door—several miles away—closed and locked. He switched apps and checked the live feeds from three different video cameras for intruders in his modest 1907 Edwardian home, switched apps again and made sure the front door was locked. Satisfied, he peeked at another feed to see if his dog was at his food bowl. Too bad: If Max had been there, Jason could have played a remote game of laser tag with him.

Like any decent San Francisco-based tech entrepreneur, Jason owns a smartphone crammed with apps, but 25 of them are dedicated solely to the 1,500-square-foot smart home he shares with his wife, Sue, and young son, Jake.



COME ON IN

LEFT: As Sue Johnson comes within range of the front door, the (3) **August Smart Lock** (\$250) authenticates her smartphone via Bluetooth, and an app returns a command to retract the dead bolt—letting her enter without reaching for a key (or her phone, for that matter).

(4) **Lutron's Caséta Wireless Plug-In Lamp Dimmer** (\$60) lets you control two lamps from the included remote or, if connected to Lutron's **Smart Bridge** (\$120), from your phone.



(5) Insteon's new Hub Pro (\$150) uses your home's existing wiring as a backup to a radio-frequency signal to control lighting throughout the house as well as the Nest thermostat. Operability with Insteon's existing sensors and other devices will come later.



“When I see a light on, water flowing, or heat coming on—to me, that’s money. It’s in my DNA not to waste anything.”

Thanks to the apps and the Internet-connected devices they talk to, he can—from anywhere with cell service—control pretty much every system in the house, including locks, lighting, heat, music, motion and smoke detection, plant irrigation, video surveillance, and, yes, canine feeding. Jason is a poster child for the smart-home revolution, and his involvement in tech and zest for tinkering have given him a decade’s head start on the rest of us—*analog* homeowners left to grapple with questions like, *Do I really need to control my Crock-Pot with my smartphone?* Think of him as a friend from the immediate future. For starters, he can tell us what works and what doesn’t.

“He can’t resist,” says Sue. She’s looking at him, not without admiration, across their L-shaped kitchen. “As soon as a device shows up, he opens the box and he’s working on it.”

He shrugs, pressing a button to make a cup of coffee from a machine he plumbed so that it never needs refilling with water. “First and foremost, it’s about convenience,” he says. “But then there’s whimsy and magic. It’s just cool when you come up to your door and it opens for you without a key.” Easy for him to say: This is a guy who, when he couldn’t find a hands-free dead bolt he liked for his front door, started a company called August that makes smart locks.

But aside from whimsy, Jason says he installed most of the smart home electronics to save energy—and money (and you can do the same). Lights that automatically switch off, a thermostat that ramps down when no one is home, and water sensors that monitor plant irrigation are all conservation measures that hark back to Jason’s frugal childhood. “When I see a light on, water flowing, or heat coming on, to me, that’s money,” he says. “It’s in my DNA not to waste anything.”

Johnson has been tinkering with electronics since he was a

JUMP & SHOUT

(6) Canary’s full-HD security camera (\$249 on pre-order) can stream a live video feed to your smartphone, sound a piercing alarm, and send you alerts triggered by any of its many sensors—like a sudden shift in temperature that could indicate a fire. If you want to review the video later, you’ll need to fork over a monthly fee for cloud storage.

(7) Beep (\$99), a Wi-Fi audio player, controls in-wall speakers that Jason installed in the living room walls behind the couch, and allows him to play music directly from his smartphone.



COMFY COZY

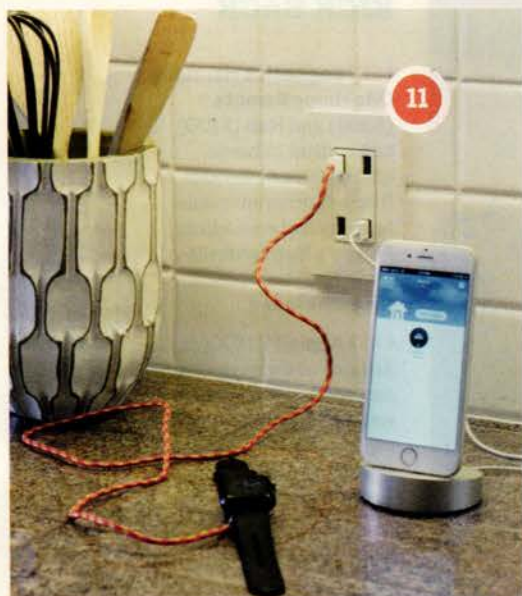
(8) Nest's Learning Thermostat (\$249) automatically reduces heating or cooling while you're away by sensing motion and logging when you override the temperature, saving on energy costs. It also synchs with the August app, which prompts you to toggle the thermostat's status—HOME or AWAY—when the door is unlocked or locked.

child, growing up in Portland, Oregon, with a single mother in a house where if broken things weren't fixed, there was no money to replace them. Repairing and jury-rigging things brought some order and enchantment to a hardscrabble childhood. He says, "I was fortunate to have the grandfather every little boy should have, with a basement crowded with treasures: soldering irons, motors, half-broken things, and millions of tools."

When he and Sue moved in, 10 years ago, Jason immediately set about replacing the 1980s track lighting and installing in-wall speakers, climbing into the attic with a friend to run the wires. "They'd come down covered in black soot, like they'd been crawling in the fireplace," Sue says. Jason figures a coal stove exploded up there at some point.

Though his smart-home journey began with automated lighting, it has branched out to more vital aspects of family life. Like security. Using door locks, an HD video doorbell, and HD cameras all wirelessly connected to the Internet, he and Sue can monitor the house more readily than via a monitored alarm system, while avoiding a monthly fee. They can, for instance, interact with the UPS guy when he rings the





REST, RECHARGE, REDUCE

(9) Radio Shack's long-discontinued X10 Clock Radio talks directly to Insteon light switches to turn them off at bedtime. The Johnsons prefer the dated gadget to having screens in the bedroom—phones, tablets, and televisions.

(10) Amazon's Echo (\$180) can answer questions about the weather forecast and ship you more smoothie straws, thanks to well-engineered sound-processing software.

(11) Leviton's 4-Port USB Charger (\$30) replaces the dual outlets in a conventional receptacle, creating a handy and uncluttered charging station for a connected family.

(12) Edyn's Garden Sensor (\$100) monitors key factors to plant health—light, moisture, humidity, soil nutrition, and temperature—and sends timely guidance to your smartphone. "We're trying to reduce our water usage in the California drought," says Jason.

doorbell, unlock the front door, watch him set the package inside—thank him—and lock the door after he closes it. "I don't feel particularly at risk in San Francisco, and we don't have any valuable jewelry or fancy art in the house," Jason says. "All I care about is keeping my family safe when I'm not here. I can check that the door is locked from my hotel room, and that gives me peace of mind."

Until now, to get such functionality, a homeowner would need to hire a pro to install a proprietary system known mostly to the gated-community set, or sign a contract with a security company or cable provider for a subscription-based monitored system. But thanks in part to companies in the mold of August, homeowners can choose à la carte from a marketplace of ever cooler devices, some of which talk to each other (and some of which don't).

Jason created the August Smart Lock when he realized that, between several housekeepers and the contractors renovating the basement, there were lots of keys floating around. With his creation, he or Sue can use their phones to e-mail an electronic key to anyone and also delete it—if, say, their housekeeper ever stops working for them.

One night, despite all the locks and cameras and sensors, the Johnsons did have intruders. Sue heard a ruckus in the kitchen and tiptoed in, her heart pounding—to find four raccoons eyeing the dog's dish like Mafia dons. They'd come in through the dog door, which, she and Jason now observed, was wide enough for a person to crawl through. After anxiously ushering them out with a broom, Jason set about finding a better solution. He installed a kick-proof door that slides up and down with a whoosh, via a sensor in Max's collar, whenever he approaches. Since then, says



KICK BACK

(13) Logitech's Harmony One Home Remote (\$350) and **Hub** (\$100) can control 15 home-entertainment devices through programmable buttons and also adjust Philips's Hue lightbulbs and a Nest thermostat to set the mood.

(14) Apple TV (\$70) is just one of three streaming devices Jason uses to watch programming. The others include Roku 3 (\$90) and Amazon's Fire TV (unavailable).

(15) Channel Master's DVR+ (\$399) records free digital programming to a 1-terabyte hard drive while you watch another program—which you can locate on an integrated programming guide.



Sue, "Letting Max out is just one less thing we have to worry about." And if there were ever a fire, they'd know he wouldn't be trapped.

Despite Jason's curiosity to try new gadgets, they keep only those that simplify their lives. That burbling water fountain for the dog, which leaked, damaged the floor, and got moldy inside? Banished to the basement, alongside a collection of other smart-home flops. The gadgets that remain must be intuitive to operate. "It's important that anybody who comes into the house can still use the lock, the lights, and the appliances without having special knowledge or training," Jason says. The light switches and thermostat work like normal ones—they just do more. A visitor can twirl the thermostat up or down without knowing it's on a schedule, monitoring whether anyone's home.

The one aspect of the household that seems to be immune

to the smart-home promise is the media room. The Johnsons' TV console bristles with every kind of over-the-top streaming device, from Apple TV to Roku, yet they still pay good money every month for cable. "It's a source of frustration," Sue says about the array of content sources. Particularly when Jake wants to watch *How to Train Your Dragon* and nobody can remember how to access it.

"A 6-year-old wants to watch it *now*," says Jason.

"There's always the laptop," says Sue, sighing.

Jason nods and offers up a radical alternative: "Just grab a book."

He's only half joking. In his role, Jason is acutely aware that whatever the lure of the smart home, if the gadgets don't work, people will be perfectly happy to go on living their lives as they did before. You remember: back when the only thing connected to the Internet was the computer.

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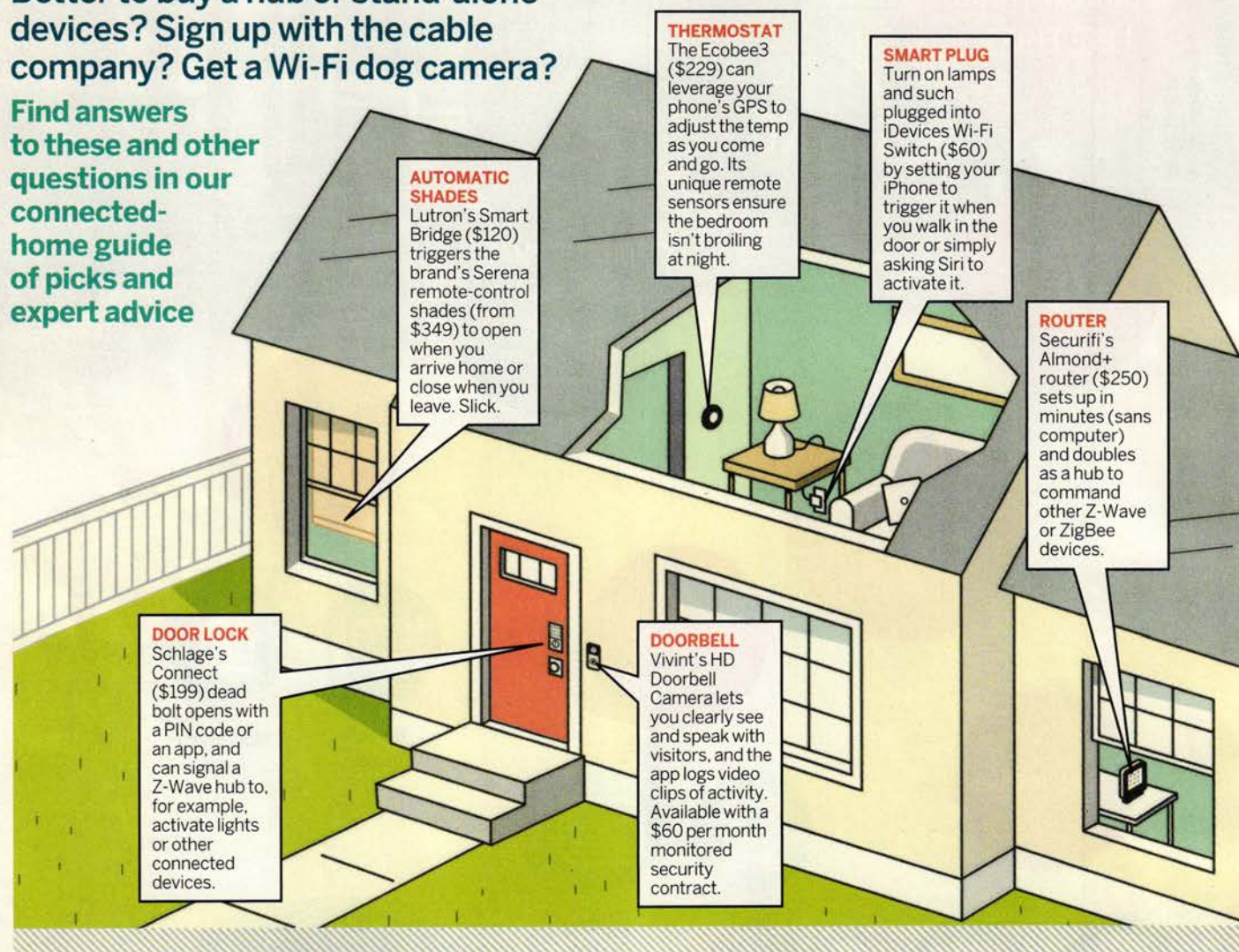
CEA
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HOW TO SMARTIFY YOUR HOME

EDITED BY ERIC HAGERMAN

Better to buy a hub or stand-alone devices? Sign up with the cable company? Get a Wi-Fi dog camera?

Find answers to these and other questions in our connected-home guide of picks and expert advice



GEEK SPEAK

From Apple HomeKit to Z-Wave, common smart-home jargon demystified

APPLE HOMEKIT *n*: a technology built into iOS that enables users to easily add certified devices to a home network, control them securely, and command them simultaneously for the purpose of orchestrating a "scene"; allows voice control through Siri; not an app

BLUETOOTH LE *n*: a wireless communication frequency with low energy requirements that enables devices such as smart door locks to run for years on one set of batteries

DUMB *adj*: any device not connected to the Internet, even if it's otherwise a perfectly clever machine

HUB *n*: an Internet access point that allows smart-home devices connected to

it via wireless radio signals to be controlled remotely

IFTTT acronym: If This, Then That: a Web-based service that scripts conditional triggers, or "recipes," between smart devices and online events; e.g., "if this" phone Googles "cocktail recipes" at midnight, "then that" connected coffee maker had better not brew before 9:30 A.M.

INTERNET OF THINGS *n*: a.k.a. IoT; an evolved state of the Internet in which machines transfer data over a network without requiring human interaction

IP CAMERA *n*: a video camera that sends footage over the Internet

MESH NETWORK *n*: a web of radio-powered devices that relay information by talking to one another rather than through a central hub

SCENE *n*: an atmosphere created when smart devices are triggered to adjust to predetermined settings all at once; e.g., Hue lights dim, Sonos cues Barry White, Crock-Pot bubbles to life—"romantic dinner"

ZIGBEE *n*: a communications protocol based on low-power wireless radio signals that allows devices to talk to one another in a mesh network

Z-WAVE *n*: another home-automation protocol; see ZigBee



The hub to consider

The **Insteon Hub Pro** is the first and only smart-home hub to integrate HomeKit compatibility, which makes for easy pairing of new devices. And, though this new version doesn't yet control Insteon's full library of hundreds of devices, you can use Siri to command lighting, thermostats, and any other HomeKit devices. Or you can rule them all from one app, combining them together in scenes. Early reviews were bruising, but the company claims firmware updates have resolved the issues. \$150; insteon.com



THE SPEAKER THAT LISTENS

Alexa, the voice of Amazon's cloud-based service embodied in the **Echo**, is not always the smartest gal in the room—she may occasionally flub a simple request, like reading your horoscope—but she has acute hearing and terrific pipes. Ask her to play your favorite Pandora station or any track you've ever ordered from Amazon, and she'll hear your request even against a noisy background. She can also order you new socks, or entertain you with a joke: "What did zero say to 8? Nice belt!" \$180; amazon.com

A WORD ABOUT PASSWORDS

How to remember those long strings of mixed-case letters and symbols recommended by security experts? The best bet is to try a digital password vault, such as **1Password**. It generates and stores separate usernames and passwords for all your online accounts, granting you access via a single password—one that you'll want to remember. free; agilebits.com



THE CAMERA THAT KNOWS YOU

Facial-recognition software allows the **Netatmo Welcome** IP video camera to learn to spot up to 16 different people in a household, then issue notifications ("Honey is home"). It records clips of comings and goings day or night to an onboard micro SD card, keeping your business off the cloud and sparing you the paranoia, not to mention the monthly storage fees. \$199; netatmo.com







How to hack-proof your smart home

"Anything that's always connected, always sending data—that's something a nearby attacker can latch on to," says Craig Young, senior security researcher at the risk management firm Tripwire. Here are his tips for protecting your router and Wi-Fi devices:

- > **Replace an old router.** If it's five or more years old, spring for a new one; it'll be more secure.
- > **Set the security level.** Select WPA2 in Wi-Fi settings (and avoid WPS at all costs).
- > **Separate traffic.** If your router supports a guest network, use it for devices that don't need to talk to others.
- > **Update firmware.** Enable auto-updates, which often patch discovered security holes, on all devices.
- > **Use a separate e-mail.** Set up an account solely for connected devices, to limit the personal info exposed in a hack.
- > **Set a strong password.** Use at least 20 characters of mixed cases and symbols and avoid any word in the dictionary. And this bears repeating: Change any and all default passwords.

POINT OF ENTRY

If you've never known life without keys, well, it's a wonderful thing. Indeed, these four **smart-home door locks** are all about convenience

PRODUCT	MODE OF ENTRY	KEY MANAGEMENT	NEAT TRICK	SECURITY	PRICE
August Smart Lock 	With Bluetooth on and Auto-Unlock enabled in app, approach door and then marvel as dead bolt automatically retracts. Retrofits to existing bolt, replacing interior thumb turn.	Use app to send "key" to unlimited number of guests, get notifications when key holders come and go, log activity, and revoke keys. Gain remote access via Wi-Fi remote-access bridge (\$50).	Easily revoke lost phone's access by downloading app on another phone and logging in with owner password.	Same as existing dead bolt	\$250 august.com
Kwikset SmartCode 916 Touchscreen Electronic Deadbolt 	Punch in PIN code to retract tapered dead bolt, or add lock to Z-Wave or ZigBee network and use smartphone app to lock or unlock it from anywhere.	Issue up to 30 access codes, and use app to revoke them.	Randomized numbers that appear before you can enter PIN ensure even wear marks on keypad to thwart thieves.	Grade 2	\$249 kwikset.com
Schlage Sense 	Oh, the choices! Punch in PIN code on keypad, beckon Siri to unlock door via Bluetooth as you approach, or (if lock connects to Apple TV) use app from anywhere.	Use app to create/delete up to 30 guest PIN codes and schedule when they're valid. Grant trusted guests app access (allowing them to control any HomeKit device in house).	Only smart lock to take commands from Siri, thanks to Apple HomeKit integration.	Grade 1	\$229 schlage.com
Yale Real Living Key Free Touchscreen Deadbolt 	Punch in PIN code to retract tapered dead bolt, or add lock to Z-Wave network and use smartphone app to lock or unlock door from anywhere.	Grant up to 25 individual access codes and manage with app.	No key at all! Impossible to pick! Even more impossible to lose your keys! (Tip: Change weak batteries promptly.)	Grade 2	\$275 yale2you.com



Open sesame

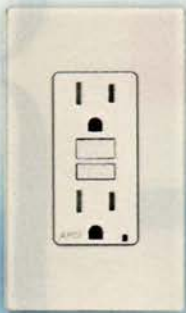
Time to find something else to obsess over besides whether you left the garage door open. Once you install the **Chamberlain MyQ Garage kit**—the Wi-Fi hub learns your existing opener's remote signal—you can use the app to open or close the door or check its position from anywhere. Set it to ping you if the door opens, or use it to let the delivery guy drop off a package. \$130; chamberlain.com ■

GET CONNECTED

Join our Google+ Hangout this month for a live broadcast with experts from TOH and the Consumer Electronics Association. Ask your smart-home questions and get answers from the pros! For details, go to thisoldhouse.com/oct2015



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The Search for **America's Best Remodel** 2015

HOME

At Last

What does it take to win big in our reader-remodel contest? Try **moving a whole house** over land—and sea—then practically rebuilding it on its new site. **Kudos to the Stone family!**

By **Fiona Stone** Photographs by **Alex Hayden**
Produced by **Tisha Leung** Styling by **Rachel Grunig**



LEFT: Edward Stone in 2009, with the century-old house on cribbing. MIDDLE: During its move from the mainland to Orcas Island, near Seattle, the house had to roll under power lines. RIGHT: The house set on its new site and new foundation, which allowed for a walk-out basement. A work in progress, the house's original front porch awaits paint as part of a forthcoming exterior redo.



During the kitchen remodel, the Stones installed windows salvaged from a nearby house, DIY upper cabinets to match base ones found on Craigslist, and a vintage sink donated by Edward's parents. The family's English lab, Hunter, guards the back door. Faucet: Locke Plumbing. Pendant: Amora Lighting. Refrigerator: Jenn-Air. Paint: Benjamin Moore's Natural Wicker (walls)



ABOVE: Built-ins with leaded-glass fronts survived the voyage. The table was made with lumber harvested and milled out back. Chairs: Overstock.com. Pendant and flush-mount fixtures: Lowe's

RIGHT: The beadboard-lined mudroom has bins for mail and a bench made from a stair tread supported by cleats and finished with decorative iron straps. Hooks: Lowe's. Straps: Amazon.com. Paint: Benjamin Moore's Grasslands (walls). Floor tile: Lowe's

HEY, SLIPUPS HAPPEN. One time a house fell right into Puget Sound. It was like a slow-motion disaster movie: One minute, the proud owners of a two-story Victorian were barging it to a new location; the next, they were practically homeless.

We were pretty determined not to let that happen. For one thing, it had taken time and luck to get our hands on our house—a sturdy, century-old Craftsman that perfectly fit the period-house yearnings of my husband, Eddie, and me. For another, we had no Plan B.

When I first saw the house, it had been pried off a valuable lot in Seattle to make way for a bigger replacement. When it went to someone else, I was really bummed. That was the one I wanted, darn it!

I should explain why we were looking to move a house in the first place. We were living in Bellingham, north of Seattle, when our daughter, Molina, was born, and soon we knew where we wanted to be: back on Orcas Island, where we both grew up. It's a beautiful place, a few hours northwest of





Seattle by car and ferry, with a state park where you can ride bikes and horses and swim and boat—just perfect for kids. Eddie still has family there, along with 20 acres in Olga originally owned by his great-grandfather. Building on the island costs a fortune, which we don't have, so one day, after I spotted a house on a flatbed while I was driving on the freeway, I did some research. I found a company, Nickel Brothers, that moves houses in the Seattle and Vancouver areas and even has a guy on staff, Jeff McCord, who finds new homes for

Fiona and Edward Stone and their daughter, Molina, 9, kick back in their refurbished living room.

MORE MAKEOVERS

To view a gallery of whole-house finalists, go to thisoldhouse.com/reader2015

unwanted old houses. It's a win-win proposition, since demolition is costly and moving a house can save a third of the cost of building from scratch. The house is typically free, even if moving it is not.

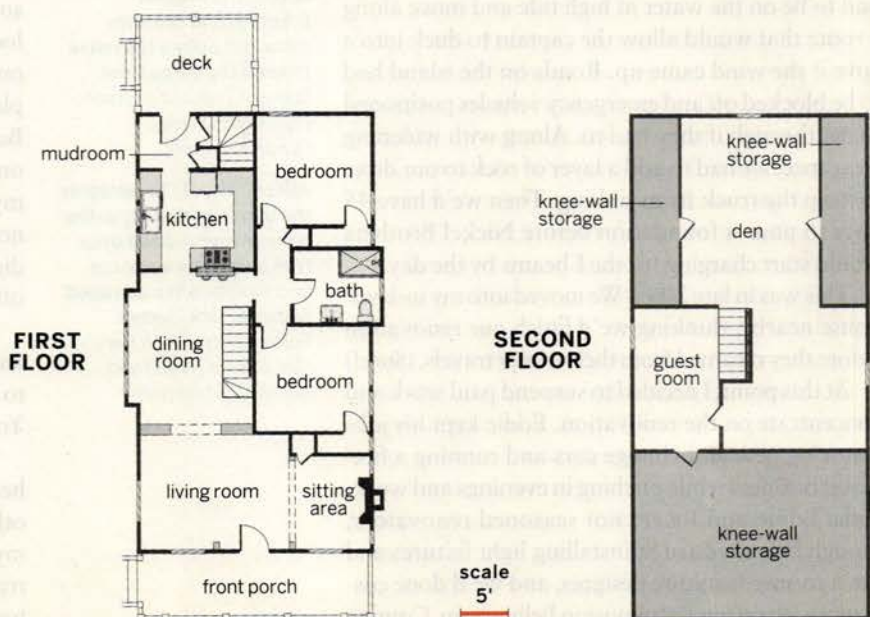
Jeff's the one who told us about the Craftsman. When it initially went to another taker, we got discouraged and began looking at prefab construction. We found a model we liked okay and began working out the details. Permits take forever because each new house has an environmental impact. So you need a drainage plan and you have to bring in water, power, and phone lines, which cross other people's property, and the whole island is rock. We even had a tree problem: To make way for the flatbed, we would have to clear out Doug firs lining our drive.

Then the recession hit. It was like a game of dominoes: The woman who originally acquired the Craftsman couldn't sell her old place, so she walked away, leaving the house sitting on cribbing in the port of Everett, roughly 50 miles from our property. Jeff called to say the house could be ours after all, just as our own deal fell through—the prefab company suddenly went out of business. So in the end we got the house we really wanted for the cost of moving, restoring, and hooking it up.

Amazingly, the Craftsman had almost exactly the

FLOOR PLANS

The two-bedroom, one-bath Craftsman originally measured just 1,000 square feet. The homeowners set it on a new foundation, adding a 1,000-square-foot walk-out basement and a deck off the rear entry. They finished the 500-square-foot attic, adding windows and walls and a guest bed. A workshop, a chicken coop, and a farm stand were also added to the property.





same footprint as the prefab, so a new permit fell into place. I was working for the electric utility at the time, and they quickly agreed to clear lines along the five or so miles from Obstruction Pass, where the boat would dock, to our place in Olga. Everything had to be tightly organized and timed. The house had to be on the water at high tide and move along a route that would allow the captain to duck into a cove if the wind came up. Roads on the island had to be blocked off and emergency vehicles positioned to get through if they had to. Along with widening clearance, we had to add a layer of rock to our drive to keep the truck from sinking. Then we'd have 45 days to pour a foundation before Nickel Brothers would start charging for the I-beams by the day.

This was in late 2009. We moved into my in-laws' house nearby, thinking we'd finish our renovation before they returned from their winter travels. (Sure!)

At this point, I decided to suspend paid work and concentrate on the renovation. Eddie kept his jobs restoring new and vintage cars and running a fire-wood business while pitching in evenings and weekends. Eddie and I were not seasoned renovators, though he's a wizard at installing light fixtures and I'm a former furniture designer, and we'd done cosmetic work on our farmhouse in Bellingham. Coming

ABOVE LEFT: The new fireplace is faced with fieldstone plucked from the property back when Edward's great-grandfather was clearing the land for sheep and cattle. The original fireplace and chimney came out before the move to keep the barge from listing. Chair and ottoman: Bradington Young. Pendant: Lowe's

ABOVE RIGHT: To reinforce the bath's period style, the homeowners added thick trim above the wainscot and swapped in a salvaged pedestal sink. Sconce: Pottery Barn. Paint: Behr's Flint Smoke (walls) and Absolute White (trim)

to our aid were two good friends, Joanne Price, who helped gut the main floor, and her partner, Dan Watters, who helped excavate so we could pour a slab for a walk-out basement.

You think demolition is going to be fairly straightforward: Just start ripping and tearing. But soon we were wrestling with cast-iron pipes, scary-looking knob-and-tube wiring, and drywall tacked on top of horsehair plaster and lath. The main fireplace and chimney had been taken out for the move. But that didn't stop brickwork from raining down on us when we took a crowbar to the ceiling. I poked my head up into the attic and found a second chimney, apparently once belonging to a cookstove. We didn't know it was there because it had been shaved off at the roofline.

So you get a dump truck. You have all these tarps and you drag them out to the truck, and when you get to the last two loads, you think, *What have we done?* You have so far to go, and you're just exhausted.

Eddie is always there when it's time to do the heavy lifting, and I like to think of myself as handy—other women get clothes and jewelry for Christmas; my husband always gives me power tools—but we realized we couldn't proceed without more help. We had arranged to have a sub pour the foundation and



Molina huddles with her pet rabbit. She helped design her own bedroom, with floral decals planted in wainscoting crafted by her mom. Bedding: Garnet Hill. Lamp: Target. Paint: Benjamin Moore's Pink Cadillac (walls). Chandelier: The Home Depot





help frame the basement. We decided to hire Dan's father, Chuck, a do-it-all carpenter who could help us rebuild and refinish while preserving as much as we could. He became my mentor.

Chuck helped us appreciate all the great touches, from the hand-sawn beams and joists to the wavy-glass windowpanes. He had a structural engineer take a look before we started redoing the house, top to bottom. We repaired and replaced rafters to take a bow out of the roof, and sistered floor joists to support extra weight in the attic. We brought in pros to bring plumbing and wiring up to date, add spray-foam insulation, and reshingle the roof.

We also wanted a deck in back, and between one thing and another the estimate for all the wood was close to \$20,000. This we could not afford. So two years in, Eddie and Dan decided, what the heck, we have plenty of trees right on the property, let's partner up and buy a Mobile Dimension sawmill! The house had a ton of trim inside, which I took off and planed down and matched when I had to.

Chuck added back the main fireplace and chimney, using a gaping hole where they once stood as a guide; built stairs down to the new basement; and helped refinish the worn-out kitchen and spiff up the bath. The kitchen windows couldn't be saved, but I found a raft of salvaged windows that worked just fine. To finish the attic, we added windows

OPPOSITE: Fiona lifts a repurposed door that closes off the attic space when the family wants to conserve heat.

ABOVE LEFT: Pickled-pine tongue-and-groove planks line the ceiling in the newly finished space, which holds toys and a TV at one end, office space and a small guest room at the other. Flooring: Pergo.

ABOVE RIGHT: Edward revived the linen closet off the master bedroom by stripping the door and drawer pulls, then painting the pulls black. Throughout the house, pale paint colors balance dark wood tones. Paint: Benjamin Moore's Daphne (bedroom walls)

SHOP THIS STYLE

To find furnishings similar to those used in this house, go to wayfair.com/thisoldhouse



under the gables, lined the sloped ceiling with pine, and put in a floating floor. Chuck was more than a little skeptical when I suggested using an old door, reclaimed by Eddie from his childhood home, as a hatch cover. But he came around. By then, after working together for 18 months—a bit longer than planned—we had really become friends.

With much of the remodel behind us, I am back to my customary patchwork of paid jobs. This summer I ran a boat-rental service and an ice-cream parlor while also raising horses. Eddie has been busy landscaping our property and getting ready to mill siding in order to redo the exterior. Molina runs the chicken coop; on weekends she sells eggs at a farm stand we built at the end of the drive.

Of course, we're still making improvements: If all goes as planned, we'll soon have a new basement master suite, and one day a wood-burning furnace. After six long years, though, the end is finally in sight. It's a rustic life—and exactly the one we wanted when we set out for Orcas, salvaging a wonderful old house along the way. ■

The Search for America's Best Remodel 2015 **ONE-ROOM** Wonders

Some folks put so much into perfecting a single space—**design sense, DIY chops, cost-cutting savvy, meticulous attention to detail**—that we decided to highlight their winning efforts, too. Out of countless reader entries in this year's contest, here are the **five most marvelous makeovers**. Congrats!



ABOVE: The Faws enjoy their new open dining area against the backdrop of a striking chevron wall. Andrea painted it in one day with leftover paint after spotting the idea online. From left: Ellie, 11; Sophie, 8; Andrea; Maddie, 4; and Jacob, holding Ava, 18 months





{BEST REDO}

KITCHEN

Andrea and Jacob Faw

PEORIA HEIGHTS, ILLINOIS

WHAT THEY DID: Rebuilt their kitchen, complete with DIY cabinetry, for less than \$10,000—all while working full-time, homeschooling two kids, and expecting a baby

THEIR STORY: When we bought our 1926 farmhouse, in October 2000, Jacob and I knew that restoring it would be a challenge. It had been converted to a duplex, and years of renters had taken a toll, especially on the kitchen. We dove right in, tearing up the vinyl tile floor only to discover it had been installed over a layer of purple carpet. That's right: tile over carpet! Purple carpet! After that unpleasant surprise, we decided to wait awhile before doing any more work. We eventually knocked down a wall to a bedroom to create a larger, more open plan, but the big renovation was still on hold.

Fast-forward to 2013: We had three young girls and I'd just discovered that I was pregnant with daughter number four. I didn't want



during

LEFT: The Faws painted the cabinets white but opted for birch butcher-block countertops and a maple island for added warmth. Jacob built the cabinetry himself—with a little help from his deputy carpenters (DURING).

RIGHT: Deep island drawers and a floor-to-ceiling pantry offer plenty of storage. **BELOW:** Andrea wanted the upper cabinets on each side of the stove to be equal in size, but there was an extra 7 inches on the right. The fix: custom cookbook shelves made from leftover butcher block.



construction going on with a baby in the house, so we had to get serious.

We wanted a kitchen that felt true to the era of the house, and a big part of that was honoring the look of the original cabinets, which had to be replaced because of water damage on the lower units. Jake had long dreamed of making his own cabinetry, and although he'd never done a carpentry project of that magnitude, he was game. We worked as a team: I sketched and he built. Over the next six months, he crafted cabinets in our garage on evenings and weekends. He also made a storage pantry and a prep island with easily accessible, kid-friendly drawers for sippy cups and the like. I had my heart set on marble for its top, but I worried it was too high-maintenance with little ones. I opted for a beautiful slab of quartzite I found at a Chicago-area stone yard and drove it home while eight months pregnant.

By the time we tiled the backsplash, I was nine months along. In fact, I was grouting just two days before I gave birth to my youngest daughter. It's funny: I took a picture mid-renovation, when the floor and cabinets were ripped out and we were heating frozen meals in the microwave, to remind myself what it was like—just in case we ever got the urge to renovate again. I knew I would look at our beautiful kitchen and forget what the labor was like. I guess it's kinda like childbirth that way!

RIGHT: Andrea added plenty of mom-designed, mom-approved touches, like this pull-out utensil bin, right next to the stove. "It's a more efficient use of a corner cabinet than a lazy Susan," she says.



{BEST REDO}

BATH

Tom Lobley

HARLEYSVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

WHAT HE DID: Rebuilt a plain powder room in original vintage style

HIS STORY: My wife, Nicole, and kids went away one weekend so that I could give the bath a little update. Well, it turned into a big update. I ripped out the vanity, the walls, the toilet, and the floor—and that's when I realized that the subfloor was rotting around the toilet. By the time my family returned, the room was gutted. Nicole just shook her head, but she had faith.

It was slow going because I did all the work myself, nights and weekends. I started by replacing the subfloor, wiring, and drywall, then I installed electric radiant floor heating. The whole time, I had a vision of what I wanted: something that would fit with the simple elegance of the rest of the house.

The vanity, which I built around two large storage baskets we already had, definitely pushed my skill set; I'd made lots of doors over the years, as a self-taught DIYer, but never drawers. For the mirror, I used old barn wood I'd pulled from a contractor's dumpster years ago. The coffered ceiling may have been the trickiest. I built bracework for the box beams with leftover plywood, then placed beadboard before tacking on crown molding. Then I realized the crown was not very impressive. Instead of taking it down, I just added the taller crown right over it—you'd never know!

The whole thing took nine months, but it's one of the first projects I've ever taken on where I'm completely satisfied.

After adding insulation and heated floors to the cold half bath (BEFORE), Tom built a custom rough-hewn vanity to complement the room's existing brick walls, now painted dark gray. He built a coffered ceiling to top off the period look.



before



before

{BEST REDO}

CURB APPEAL

*Katie Brashear-Nihart
and David Nihart*

MILL HALL, PENNSYLVANIA

WHAT THEY DID: Meticulously re-created the original wraparound porch on their circa-1874 Folk Victorian

THEIR STORY: A couple of months before we got married, I fell in love... with this house. My now-husband, Dave, just kept mumbling "It's a lot of work" over and over, but I came to believe it was my purpose in life to love and maintain this home. So I told him, "I'm buying this house with or without you." Poor Dave! Eventually he came around, and we restored it inside and out together, as newlyweds.

We're only the third family to own it. The previous folks made a lot of changes, including ripping off much of the original porch rather than repairing the rot. But they gave us a picture of a painting of the exterior as it looked in 1950, and we were inspired.

We spent six months renovating the facade to nearly match that image, all the way down to the

tongue-and-groove hemlock flooring. It took Dave and my stepdad 12 hours to dig holes for the porch columns because the ground is more rock than soil. We hired an Amish man to hand-build our railing, which I painted. A local pastor painted the rest of the exterior himself during the week as his side job—it took him six weeks!

Although it was hard for Dave to see my vision at first, we now agree that it's beautiful. I love it so much that sometimes I even hug the columns! Random strangers tell us the place looks great. One guy riding by on his bike shouted, "That house should be in a magazine!" I hope we see him again someday, just so we can show him this.



{BEST REDO}

LIVING SPACE

Bill and Melissa Forrest

ST. LOUIS



The unfinished space (BEFORE) allowed plenty of room to create entertainment areas as well as a private guest suite. BELOW: Melissa handled the decor, while Bill built out the space.

WHAT THEY DID: Turned a bare-bones basement into a guest suite and entertainment space with a mid-century-modern vibe

THEIR STORY: Melissa and I love to entertain, so after we bought our place, in 2011, all we could think about was finishing the wide-open basement. We knew it needed a bar, along with a couch and TV. We also wanted a kitchenette, to prep for grilling on the patio, just outside the sliding doors. Most important was the guest suite, to bribe our parents to visit and help take care of our kids once we start a family.

We hired a contractor to rough in the bathroom and run gas to the fireplace. I'd done some summer construction work, so I was pretty



ABOVE: The porch was rebuilt from the footings to the roof shingles to match the original, after previous owners had removed it (BEFORE). LEFT: Katie's stepdad used a jigsaw to replicate the intricate cuts in the gingerbread trim.

THE BEST OF THE REST

To view galleries of the finalists in all these contest categories, go to thisoldhouse.com/reader2015

{ONE-ROOM} Wonders

comfortable finishing the rest. Even before we started building, Melissa was scouring the Web looking for decorating ideas to fit in with the mid-century-modern theme we used throughout the rest of the house.

We saved by leaving the staircase and just replacing the treads—with cedar, after I saw the beautiful cedar bar a mill shop made for us. It's soft wood, but the treads are holding up fine under a few coats of polyurethane.

It took eight months and a lot of late nights to finish. One evening around 7, we were cutting tile on a rented wet saw and I was ready to knock off. "Oh, no," Melissa said. "I'm going to get a case of beer and we're going to finish this tonight." And we did—at 2 the next morning. It turned out to be a great story to tell around our new bar.



ABOVE: Bill turned the metal support column into a functional detail by boxing it in with 1×4 pine boards, making it a dividing wall that holds a TV on one side and lighting on the other. BELOW: Neutral wall colors, open-riser stairs, and a white exposed ceiling keep the walk-out basement feeling bright.

BELOW: The couple stocks the Jack and Jill bathroom like a hotel, with a hair dryer, toothpaste, extra toothbrushes, and a sewing kit. The floating vanity makes it a breeze to get underneath to clean the dark vinyl flooring.



{BEST REDO}

YARD

Matthew Grubaugh

ELKHART, INDIANA

WHAT HE DID: Salvaged windows, a door, and—literally—the kitchen sink to build a charming potting shed

HIS STORY: Gardening was something I did with my mom as a kid. We started seeds in the house, then planted the vegetables and ornamental flowers in the yard. As an adult, I didn't pay much attention to the benefits of growing your own food until after my daughter, Hazel, was born. She spent her first week in intensive care with pneumonia, and barely survived. Since then, my wife, Rachel, and I have done our best to avoid toxins in our food, especially for Hazel and her brother, Greyson.

That's why I built the potting shed. About midway through the renovation of our 1923 Dutch Colonial, we discovered lead paint. We hired an abatement pro and the house is now 99 percent lead-free, but Rachel is still more comfortable starting seeds outdoors.

I designed the 10-by-14-foot shed using CAD software—I'm an engineering product manager—then asked a friend who once worked as a carpenter for some help. We stripped the lead paint from windows salvaged from the house's den and used them to line the shed's southern exposure and front wall. The entry door was originally the side door to the house, and the kitchen sink became the potting basin.

Hazel has been right with me in the garden from day one. We start seeds in the shed under grow lights, then transplant them outside. We try to take something from our garden to include in every meal, and we talk about when we planted it, how we cared for it, how incredible it tastes, and how healthy it is for us. ■



during

TOP: A bevy of plants, including raspberry bee balm, delphinium, and 'Goldfinch' Shasta daisy, greet the family as they enter the shed. **RIGHT:** Matthew and his daughter, Hazel, often spend time potting plants at the former kitchen sink. Matthew designed the shed, then framed it out with the help of a friend (**DURING**).



{ Readers' } TIPS

You people never cease to amaze. Every year, we ask you to share your proudest **time-saving tricks, inventive problem-solvers, and downright ingenious discoveries.** And once again, you came through. On behalf of DIYers everywhere, we salute you—and can't wait to steal these excellent ideas.



Safe wallpaper remover

"Scraping off the top layer of our painted-

over wallpaper was a snap, but its backing layer didn't budge from the plaster. So I sprayed the backing with a 50-50 solution of white vinegar and water. After soaking a few minutes, the old backing and paste came off easily with a putty knife. Then I wiped the plaster clean using a sponge soaked in the same vinegar solution. Problem solved, without chemicals."

Kirsten Grigor
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

Bag on wheels

"Here's an easy way to move a paper yard-waste bag: Put it in one of those folding carts meant for carrying groceries. No more torn bags from dragging them on the ground, and no more sore back from carrying them!"

Maury Potter
ROYAL OAK, MICHIGAN

Filters for clean ducts

"The filters on most heating-and-cooling systems don't stop dust from getting into the return ducts. So I mount a filter—one of those cheap black ones for window air

conditioners—behind the grille that covers each return. They're easily cut to fit and make the furnace filter last much longer. I inspect each return filter regularly and replace it when dirty. The insides of my ducts still look brand-new."

Ray Lucarelli
DERBY, CONNECTICUT

Static stopper

"When my vertical window blinds cling together due to static, I rub a fabric-softener sheet over the slats so that they will hang freely."

Karen Spector
SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA



Easy paint cleanup

"An old nylon dish-scrubbing pad my

wife was about to throw away turned out to be a great tool for cleaning latex paint residue off my hands and other surfaces."

Roger Ward
GRAYSON, GEORGIA



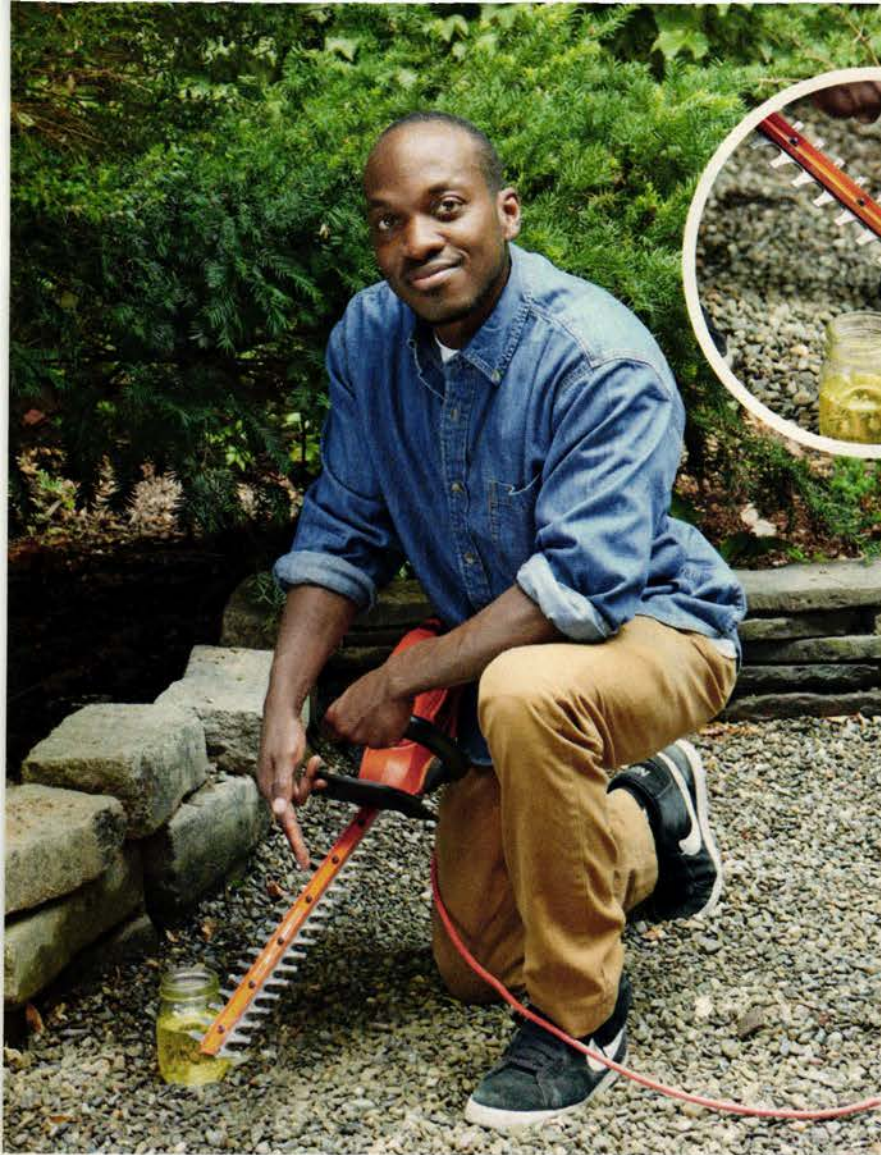
Trinidad Peña

SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY

Long-lasting cut flowers

“Hydrangeas, poppies, and dahlias have a gooey sap that skins over when their stems are cut, preventing the flowers from taking up water. To break that skin, hold a lighter or candle flame on the cut for 30 seconds, then stick the stem right away into a vase of water.”





Cliff Gabriel

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

Hedge-trimmer trick

"As a landscaper down in Florida, my dad taught me a good trick for keeping an electric hedge trimmer in top working order: Just dribble a little leftover cooking oil on the blades. It keeps them lubricated and free of sap, and unlike petroleum-based oils, it doesn't harm the plants. I'm convinced that it actually speeds up the work!"



Best brush for painting edges

"Whenever I paint along an edge, I get

the best results from a round-tipped brush. After loading it with paint, I twist the handle as I move it along; that keeps a consistent amount of paint coming off the bristles and makes it easy to stay on line. Round-tipped brushes cost a little more than flat brushes, but they work great!"

Marty Amble

DENVER

Longer life for wet/dry vac filters

"When my vac's filter gets plugged with dust, I fit a dryer-vent brush on my cordless drill and slowly rotate

the brush against the filter as I hold it over a garbage can. The brush's long, coarse bristles reach in and clean between the filter's folds. It's amazing how well this works."

Jack Sliak

WILLIAMSVILLE, NEW YORK

Posthole trick

"Raised on a farm, I dug my full share of postholes using common scissor-style posthole diggers. And I figured out how to dig a straight-sided 6- to 8-inch-diameter hole down to about 30 inches. Normally in a hole that narrow, the digger's handles hit the hole's sides after you get about a foot down, and the digger's jaws can't grab any soil. But when you pour a little water into the hole to

moisten the soil, the jaws can hold on to a mouthful even with only 3 inches of separation at the top of the handles."

Gary Klein

OKMULGEE, OKLAHOMA



Spindle sander

"It would have taken me forever to hand-sand the bare

antique spindles I'd removed from our wraparound porch. So I looped an inside-out sanding belt around each spindle and mounted it on a lathe. Then, while wearing leather work gloves, I put tension on the belt as the lathe turned and quickly smoothed all the spindles' round sections. A stationary belt sander took care of the square top and bottom portions."

Susan Gifford

EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN

Snaking sash cords

"One of the hardest parts of replacing a broken sash cord is fishing it over the pulley and down into the weight pocket. So I make a messenger line by knotting one end of a length of light twine and sliding four or five small nuts against the knot. Then I tie the twine's other end to the new sash

cord and feed the nuts over the pulley. When they get down to the access panel on the jamb, I grab the twine, pull down the cord, and tie it on the sash weights. Simple."

Joseph Fergen

MENDOTA HEIGHTS, MINNESOTA



Birdbath protector

"My fiancé, Doug Burden, is a genius.

Even better, he's a frugal genius! Rather than risk a hernia carrying our behemoth birdbath into the garage, he winterized it by covering it with a heavy-duty plastic garbage-can lid. It's a perfect fit and works great during our long, snowy winters."

Gretchen Swanson

BEULAH, MICHIGAN

No-slip toilet seat

"Here's how to permanently stop a toilet seat from shifting around. Fit a rubber garden-hose washer under the head of each seat bolt, then thread a short length of rubber tubing—as long as the toilet's porcelain flange is thick—over the bolt's threads. When the bolts are tightened, there won't be any slop between the rubber collar and the porcelain."

Lou Archambault

HELENA, MONTANA

Floor-gap filler

"The seams in my wide-plank pine floors had grown big and unsightly, so I borrowed a technique from my boatbuilding family and filled the gaps with fat strips of caulking cotton. I rolled the cotton into a twist and pounded it tightly into the gap with a broad chisel. Then I covered the cotton with a brown sealant. After I restained the floors, they looked great."

Connie Painter

ROCKLAND, MAINE

Fastener organizer

"When disassembling anything, I use an ice-cube tray to store the screws in sequence for easy reassembly. It not only keeps me from losing the parts, it also helps me identify which screws go where and rebuild in the correct order."

Stuart Leinoff

QUEENSBURY, NEW YORK

Wiring advice

"Most people know to wrap solid wire clockwise around an electrical terminal before tightening the screw. But most don't know that stranded wires should be given a counterclockwise twist before wrapping them clockwise around

the screw. Doing this pulls the strands into the terminal rather than pushing them out, giving you a better connection. It comes in handy when replacing the plug on an extension cord, for example."

Joseph Borruso

KUNKLETOWN, PENNSYLVANIA



No more loose handles

"If the screw-in handle on my push broom gets loose, I wrap some white pipe-thread tape around the threads on the handle. That locks it in place." ■

Lyndon Ray

MERRILL, IOWA

Robert Delwood

HOUSTON

Easy-to-fill lawn bags

"To stop shrub waste from tearing up my plastic yard bags, I punch the bottom out of a small cardboard box to form a cylinder that fits inside the mouth of the bag. If the box is too big, I'll tear off one side and resize it. And when I'm done, I just jiggle the cardboard out."



{MOXIE Awards}

Now *here's* an **enterprising bunch**: You did everything from ridding your house of bee colonies, rats, and scorpions to building a log cabin (inside the garage!). Call it chutzpah, pluck, or outright bullheadedness, but **there's no doubt you've got what it takes—and with that, our respect**

By Kathryn O'Shea-Evans



The "Painkiller" Award

Ken Vander Waal
MOSINEE, WISCONSIN



When Ken spied thirty rough-cut, 20-foot-long cedar beams for less than

\$200 at an Amish auction, he had to buy them—even with no project in mind. After consulting with his wife, who loves the woodsy look, he did something we'd never have imagined: He turned his garage

into a cabin-like dining room. Using a \$10 garage-sale electric chain saw, he milled the 300-pound beams and clad the walls with planks. "First I had to lift them with a fulcrum I made out of conduit and wheels off my lawn mower," Ken says. The hardest part, though, was handling the pain; Ken has peripheral neuropathy, a condition that causes him to feel pins and needles in his left foot 100 percent of the time. His solace? "These projects are my chocolate," he says.



The "Dig Deep" Award

Robert Edwards
OMAHA



Robert wanted more space in his 1,266-square-foot 1902 foursquare, but an addition

was too costly. He had a solution. "I went down"—as in, to the unfinished basement—with a pickax, jackhammer, and shovels, on weekends and also evenings after work. "I broke up the concrete and carried it up the stairs and out, two 5-gallon buckets at a time," he says. All for 5 extra inches of headroom. Still, that netted 600 square feet of new space, now home to a full bath, an exercise room, a TV room, storage, and some very toned muscles.

"I lifted 2,200 pounds of rock, 600 pounds of stepping stones, and 720 pounds of retaining wall to build my outdoor room. Not too shabby!"

Shannon Detjen
FORT WORTH, TEXAS



The “Family First” Award

Jeff and Liz Beaudry

LAKEVILLE, MINNESOTA



Before they could move into Liz’s grandfather’s lake house, the Beaudrys had to gut the entire place, redo the electrical and the wood floors, and build a new garage. That all sounds normal—except that Jeff did the work during the graveyard shift. “For a year, he drove over an hour to the house at 1 A.M. to work overnight on the renovation so that he could be back home by noon to pick up our sons,” Liz says. Now *that’s* what we call a family man.



The “Gut It Out” Award

Danny and Cat Gomes

CHESTER, NEW JERSEY



The Gomes family was just starting work on their new house when Superstorm Sandy hit. “A total of 87 trees fell on our 2½-acre property, piercing through the master bedroom and barricading the driveway,” Cat says. While Danny was clearing the grounds, part of a hickory tree snapped into his chest. He spent a week in the ICU, with nine cracked ribs. Danny took a three-week break and, because he couldn’t wait to finish, kept right on working.



The “Preservationist” Award

Jon and Doreen Thomson

LENOIR, NORTH CAROLINA



These rookie homeowners bought their 1913 Craftsman and decided—sure!—it would be fun to restore the 39 diamond-pane windows, lead paint and all. They could use the detached garage as a workshop—you know, the one with no electricity. So far, they’ve scraped away the putty on 545 individual panes and rebuilt, reglazed, and repainted the sashes. Another project: using a wet saw to slice 700 bricks from the old chimney into ¾-inch veneers for the new one. “We feel good knowing that our house will last another century,” Jon says. Here’s hoping they finish by then.

“I put so much sweat equity into deconstruction on our house, I lost 20 pounds in three months!”

Kim Guthrie VERONA, WISCONSIN



The “Creature Feature” Award

Corey and Pamela McLellan

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA



Little did they know that the circa-1883 orphanage on Texas’s Quintana island they had bought as their dream home was already inhabited. Bees had moved in behind the siding, rats were nesting beneath a tub (feeding on the honey), and fleas were living between the floorboards (hosting on the rats). A rattlesnake sunned itself near the porch. Scorpions roamed inside. “Plus,” Pamela says, “the mosquitoes were right out of a horror movie—in size and number. The guy who mowed our lawn would wear a full beekeeper’s outfit to protect himself.” ■





Norm Abram
TOH master carpenter

“
**We love it when
homeowners
look to the
past for
inspiration.**
”

Watch as TOH rebuilds
a wraparound porch
and restores original
windows, a claw-foot tub,
and a marble vanity in
an 1895 Victorian.



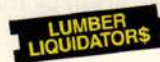
PHOTOGRAPH: CARL TREMBLAY

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THIS OLD HOUSE

INSIDE

POTTED HYDRANGEAS / REMOVE A TUB
/ SAGGING DOOR / EDGE A DRIVEWAY / MORE

Q Routers scare me. Is there another way for me to make grooves in boards?

Jeremy Powers
PORTLAND, OREG.

A Long before there were motorized routers, craftsmen who needed to cut grooves reached for a plough plane, like my maple-bodied beauty here. Its two large wooden screws adjust a fence, which controls where the blade makes its cut. This tool was made in the early 1800s by Casey & Co. of Auburn, New York. Grasping its finely sculpted handle feels like shaking the hand of an old friend.

Bob Flynn
GREENFIELD CENTER, N.Y.



[reader advice]
**this issue,
you provide
the answers**



PHOTOGRAPH
BY VICTOR SCHRAGER

*Our cast
of reader
experts*



Gerry Pomanti
Master plumber
with G4 Mechanical
Services, Thunder
Bay, Ont.
Years in the trade: 30+



Susan Cohan
Landscape designer,
owner of Susan
Cohan Gardens,
Chatham, N.J.
Years in the trade: 10+



Michael Bond
General contractor,
owner of MLB
Construction,
Needham Heights, Mass.
Years in the trade: 15+



Maurice Turgeon
Master electrician,
owner of The Semi-
Retired Electrician,
Wilsonville, Ala.
Years in the trade: 50+

In keeping with the spirit of this issue, we recruited a group of pros from our online community to field your home-improvement questions this month. Our veteran experts from TOH TV—Tom Silva, Norm Abram, Richard Trethewey, Roger Cook, and Kevin O'Connor—will be back next issue. If you need help before then, pay a visit to TOH's online discussion boards at advice.thisoldhouse.com or facebook.com/thisoldhouse

We have a hydrangea that we moved from the ground to a container. Can we leave it outside all winter, or would it do better inside a garage?

—DON STEWART, WADSWORTH, OHIO

A hydrangea can survive the winter if you take steps to insulate the soil from the freeze-thaw cycles that destroy pots and kill the roots.



Susan Cohan REPLIES: In the ground, many types of hydrangeas can survive your USDA Zone 6 winters. But in a pot exposed on all sides, the roots will suffer more frequent freeze-thaw cycles and need to be given extra protection.

The safest approach is to move the container into an unheated garage and water the soil periodically during the winter. Put it back outside in early spring when the danger of a deep freeze is past.

But if you'd rather leave the pot outside, place it in a spot sheltered from the wind and out of the sun. There's no need to cover the plant, but you can insulate the soil from temperature swings by piling leaf mulch around the outside of the container and holding the mulch in place with burlap. Snow also provides good insulation if the pot is buried in it.

Whether the container spends the winter in a garage or outside, make sure it can survive freezing temperatures. Fiberglass, concrete, stone, metal, and wood are generally frost-proof; ceramic, including terra-cotta, is not.

Also, raise the pot off the ground to prevent ice from plugging the drain hole and turning the soil into a frozen-solid block. If your hydrangea is a reblooming big-leaf variety, like *H. macrophylla* 'Endless Summer,' cut the stems back to about 6 to 8 inches from the top of the pot in late fall. That will encourage the growth of new stems and more blooms next spring.

Q When the tub has to go

What's the easiest way to remove the tub in our master bathroom? We want to replace it with a tiled shower stall.

—JULIE KISSELL, SANDWICH, MASS.



What is it?

"We came across this old tool at a flea market. Can you guess what it's for?"

Michele and Ron Busen NASHVILLE



A
Scribes trim when cutting lead flashing

B
Clamps boards against top of workbench

C
Sets spacing between clapboards

D
Crank bows floorboards into place

FOR THE ANSWER, SEE PAGE 92

Michael Bond REPLIES: It depends on what your tub is made of. If it's fiberglass or acrylic, cut away about 2 to 3 inches of the wall around the perimeter of the tub's surround, then pull the nails that secure the surround to the studs. Take off the shower valve's trim and handle, and use a reciprocating saw with a metal-cutting blade to cut the tub into pieces that can be easily removed. When the drain is exposed, unscrew it or cut through it with the same blade.

For a cast-iron tub, break out the wall tile next to the tub with a hammer and disconnect the drain and the overflow. Now take a large sledgehammer and whack the tub across the middle to break it into manageable sections, which are easier to carry out than an intact 300- to 400-pound piece. Before you start swinging, however, protect yourself from flying, razor-sharp cast-iron shards by donning safety glasses, long pants, a long-sleeve shirt, work gloves, and—

very important—ear plugs.

Once the tub is gone, but before you start rebuilding, take down any drywall next to the tub and check for mold and damage to the framing.

Q Bad smell from the main drain

After the laundry tub in the basement overflowed a few years ago, a camera inspection revealed a sagging main sewage pipe under the basement slab. Now we smell sewage. I fear the sag has caused a break in the main drain. What now?

—WILLIAM DOLS, ROCKVILLE, MD.

Gerry Pomanti REPLIES: If there were a break in the line, it would have developed a blockage pretty quickly. Since a blockage has not reoccurred, the most likely suspect for a sewage smell would be a dry P-trap in a floor drain.

A P-trap is meant to hold a slug

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Nathan Stamos
Nathan Stamos, Publisher, This Old House Ventures Inc.

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What is it?

C CLAPBOARD GAUGE

The Stanley No. 89 clapboard gauge, patented in 1888, helped carpenters maintain consistent spacing during installation. When the handle is flipped down to one side, the tool pierces the clapboard's bottom edge, holding itself in position while the next board is set in place.



of water that blocks the noxious gases in a sewer system or septic tank from getting into the house. In frequently used traps, like the ones connected to sinks, the water is constantly replenished. But floor drains rarely have water draining into them, so the slug evaporates and lets in the smelly gases. Try pouring some water into the drain to replenish the trap seal. The smell should go away.

Adding water periodically is the simplest way to keep a trap in working order. I know that some people drizzle mineral oil into the drain to slow down evaporation, but I think a trap-seal plug like SureSeal (rectorseal.com) would be a better solution. It lets water through but keeps the gases from escaping. You fit it into the drain outlet and forget it.

Q Stop roof sag

Our roofline is sagging, along with one side of the roof. Who should I call to take a look at it and fix it?

—THOMAS REDDINGER, YORK SPRINGS, PA.

Michael Bond REPLIES: A sagging ridge can be a serious structural issue, so you should call a contractor and have him bring a structural engineer. They should both be on-site at the same time to determine what's going on.

You may find that your roof needs only minor fixes with additional structural support. Or it may require major work,

such as replacing structural members and jacking up the roof.

This is not something to put off—have it looked at now, before it gets worse.

Q Convert a 220-volt circuit to 110

Can I use the 220-volt wiring from an abandoned electric baseboard heater in a 110-volt outlet?

—DARREL ROBINSON, LYDEN, WASH.

Maurice Turgeon REPLIES: Yes, you can easily convert a 220- or 240-volt circuit to 110 or 120 volts—as long as the baseboard heater is the only load on the circuit.

Start the conversion by hiring a licensed electrician to replace the two-pole circuit breaker in the main electrical panel with a single-pole 20-amp breaker that also functions as an arc-fault circuit interrupter (AFCI). This type of combination breaker offers the best protection against fires caused by arcing wires, and it is required by the National Electrical Code (NEC).

You can take care of installing the receptacle at the other end of the circuit. It should be rated for 120 volts and 20 amps, to match the new breaker, and be tamper resistant (TR). The NEC also mandates TR receptacles.

The cable that went to the baseboard heater probably has thick, very stiff



More saving.
More doing.

PROJECT OF THE WEEK

HOW TO BUILD A FIRE PIT



Photo: Kolin Smith

Looking for a cozy place to gather family and friends on a cool night? In just a few days you can build your own stone fire pit.

To make building stone walls easier, you can use blocks made from cast concrete and molded to look like real stone (available at your local home center). They're flat on the top and bottom so they stack neatly, with some interlock for added strength. Glue them together with masonry adhesive. The optimal size for a fire pit is between 36 and 44 inches inside diameter. That will create enough room for a healthy fire but still keep gatherers close enough to chat.

You'll find all the tools and supplies necessary for this—and any—home project at The Home Depot nearest you.

For step-by-step instructions, go to thisoldhouse.com/project

10-gauge wires. To make the job of attaching them to the receptacle easier, install a two-gang box, which has more room to work in than a single-gang box. Feed the cable into the box, and use wire nuts to connect the thick wires to short lengths of flexible, stranded 12-gauge copper jumper wires. Keep the wire colors consistent: Use a black jumper on the cable's black wire, a white jumper on the white wire, and a green jumper on the ground wire.

Here's another advantage to using a two-gang box: You can install a second receptacle in it. Just twist an extra jumper onto each 10-gauge wire, as above, and connect each jumper to the appropriate receptacle terminal.

Fix for a crooked steel door

How do I fix a steel entry door that no longer hangs square in its opening? I'd rather not replace it.

—GLEN STIMSON, MARLBOROUGH, MASS.

Michael Bond REPLIES: Have you checked the hinge screws? Maybe they're loose and need to be retightened. If they're stripped and can't be tightened, back them out, glue a matchstick-size sliver of wood in each hole, and drive the screws back into place.

If the door still sags, and it's mounted on wood jambs, then the door's weight has probably pulled the hinge-side jamb out of plumb. The solution is simple: Install longer screws that go through the jamb and bite into the hinge-side studs.

To do that, open the door wide enough for you to back out a screw from the top hinge—the screw closest to the centerline of the jamb. Then take a 4-inch flathead screw with a head the same diameter as the hinge-leaf holes and drive it through the jamb and into the stud. Tighten or loosen this screw until the gap across the top of the door is even. It won't hurt to do the

same thing to the other hinges.

But if the door jambs are steel, they'll need to be resquared. To do that, back out the two screws at the bottom of the hinge-side jamb—one on the inside face, one on the outside—and use a pry bar to push the jamb up until the gap across the top of the door is even. Put a hardwood shim under that jamb and anchor it in place with two new screws, 1 inch longer than the originals, driven through the jamb's existing screw holes and into the framing.

Driveway edge treatment

I am getting ready to put in a gravel driveway. What should I use along the edge to keep the gravel in and the grass out?

—GREG LANDRUM, RUSSIAVILLE, IND.

Susan Cohan REPLIES: My favorite way to contain gravel is with two rows of pavers, one set upright on edge or on end and the other lying flat like a ribbon between the gravel and the upright row. The upright row should be anchored in mortar so that the pavers won't move. The ribbon pieces can be set in sand or stone dust, their faces even with the top of the gravel.

Belgian blocks are a fantastic material for this application. They're granite, and therefore incredibly durable, and they look great next to gravel. Brick or concrete pavers are less expensive options that perform nearly as well.

Ask THIS OLD HOUSE

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Include a complete address and daytime phone number. Published questions will be edited for clarity and length and may be used in other media. We regret that, because of the volume of mail received, we're unable to reply to unpublished questions.

Q Swing for a porch

I don't know where to hang the porch swing our kids bought us, because vinyl panels cover the porch ceiling. A stud finder proved useless. How do I find something sturdy enough to hang the swing on without removing the panels?

—KEITH SVENDSEN, XENIA, OHIO

Michael Bond REPLIES: Unfortunately, you can't. At least one panel will have to come off temporarily so that you can locate the ceiling joists and see whether they'll support the swing.

To remove a panel, you'll need a pry bar and a vinyl-siding-removal tool, like the SideSwiper II (malcopproducts.com). Use the removal tool to separate the panel's interlocking edges and the pry bar to pull out the nails that support the panel.

Once you free a panel near where you

want to hang the swing and peer into the space beneath the porch-roof rafters, you'll probably find a grid of 1x3s nailed to the underside of ceiling joists. If those joists are 2x6s or bigger, you're in luck: Drill 3/8-inch pilot holes through the vinyl and into the bottom edge of a joist or pair of joists, depending on how the swing is oriented. To beef up 2x4 joists, glue and screw a 2x6 of the same length to the 2x4's face, and anchor both of them to the house with a double joist hanger. Drill the pilot holes into the 2x6's edge.

Twist a 6-inch-long, 1/2-inch-diameter galvanized eye screw into each pilot hole until the eye is just below the ceiling. Nail the panel back into place—make sure it can slide freely from end to end—and use the removal tool to hook it back onto the other panels. Hang your swing securely from the screws and enjoy! ■



A friendly porch swing requires sturdy support: a 2x6 or larger ceiling joist and a hefty pair of 1/2-inch-diameter galvanized eye screws. To learn how to hang a swing, go to thisoldhouse.com/oct2015.

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Directory

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COVER: See the listing for "One-Room Wonders."

GET THIS LOOK FOR LESS:

They made a farmhouse fresh (pp. 20-21) **Glass gourds:** Amber Crackle Glass Pumpkin-Tall; pier1.com. **Striped runner:** Framboise

Woven Cotton Rug; dashandalbert.annieselke.com.

Whitewashed island: Kitchen Island with Solid Americana Hardwood Top; overstock.com.

Shapely pitchers: CWI Gifts Enamel Pitcher and Craft Outlet Tin Pitcher, 11-Inch; amazon.com.

Caged pendant light: 1-Light Oil Rubbed Bronze Vintage Hanging Caged Pendant with Black Cord; homedepot.com. **Homespun signs:** Antiquing wax; missmustardseedsmilkpaint.com.

SHOPPING: Heads up! (pp. 25-27) **Big red:** Red Moose Head; grandinroad.com. **Horns aplenty:** Gazelle Head Wall Sculpture; homedecorators.com. **On safari:** Sage Green Rhino Head Wall

Mount; nearanddeer.com. **Tall order:** Giraffe Head; zgallerie.com. **Stripes:** DwellStudio Zebra Sky Papier-Mâché Head Wall Décor; wayfair.com. **Read all about it:** Caribbean Craft Paper Mache White Springbok; us.amara.com. **Bold graphics:** DwellStudio Giraffe Natural Papier-Mâché Head Wall Décor; allmodern.com. **Trunk show:** Elephant Head Wall Sculpture; homedecorators.com. **Small-time:** Moose Head, 13.75"H; zgallerie.com.

LANDSCAPING: He's a backyard hero

(pp. 29-31) **Mugs:** crateandbarrel.com. **Green pillows and green cachepots:** homedepot.com. **Dish towels:** homegoods.com and potterybarn.com. **Cutting board:** bedbathandbeyond.com. **Ball jars:** michaels.com.

TOH TV: The things they saved (pp. 35-37)

Architect: Mathew Cummings, Cummings Architects, Ipswich, MA; cummingsarchitects.com. **Window restoration:** Olde Bostonian, Boston, MA; 617-282-9300; oldbostonian.com. **Bathtub refinishing (body):** Chris Beeler, The Tub Doctors, New Bedford, MA; 617-504-6955; thetubdoctors.com. **Bathtub refinishing (feet):**

Peter Lemonias, Whitman Company, Whitman, MA; 781-447-2422; whitman-company.com.

Marble vanity refurbishing: Roberto Martinez, MAC Contractors, Melrose, MA; 508-250-2472.

WEEKEND REMODEL: You love this vintage touch (pp. 45-52) **Designer:** Robin Gannon Interiors, Lexington, MA; 781-862-0466; robingannoninteriors.com.

HOME AT LAST (pp. 66-73) House movers:

Nickel Bros, Everett, WA; 425-257-2067; nickelbros.com.



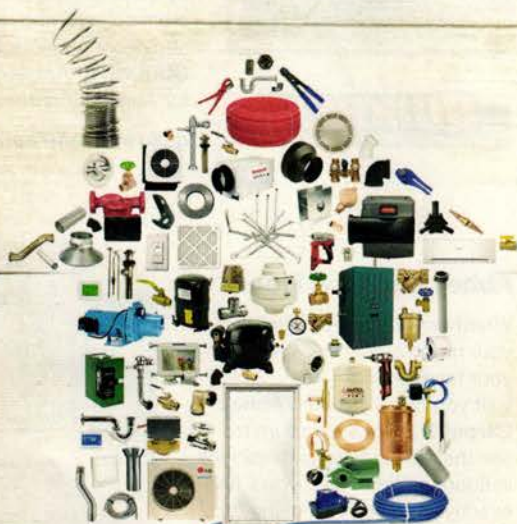
ONE-ROOM WONDERS (pp. 74-81) Kitchen:

Pendants: Home Decorators Collection; homedepot.com. **Backsplash:** American Olean; lowes.com. **Range:** nxrstoves.com. **Floor and island stain:** myoldmasters.com. **Paint:** PM-19 White Dove (cabinets); benjaminmoore.com. **Bath:** **Sink:** kohler.com. **Faucet:** jadousa.com. **Bin pulls:** lowes.com. **Floors:** Handscraped Chestnut Hickory; na.pergo.com. **Window hardware:** rejuvenation.com. **Lighting:** potterybarn.com. **Paint:** SW 7048 Urbane Bronze (brick) and SW 7016 Mindful Gray (walls); sherwin-williams.com. **Curb appeal:** **Paint:** HC-107 Gettysburg Gray (siding), HC-174 Lancaster Whitewash (trim and porch railings), HC-45 Shaker Beige (window sashes), and PM-15 Cottage Red (doors and accent moldings); benjaminmoore.com. **Pumpkins:** store.funkins.com. **White side table:** overstock.com. **Rug:** dashandalbert.annieselke.com. **Living space:** **Blue bar stools:** overstock.com. **Table:** cb2.com. **Chandelier:** Leitmotiv; amazon.com. **White stools:** Zuo; amazon.com. ■

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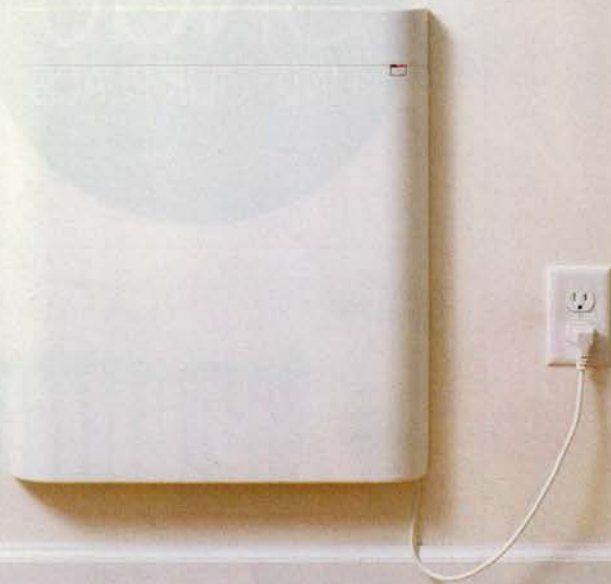
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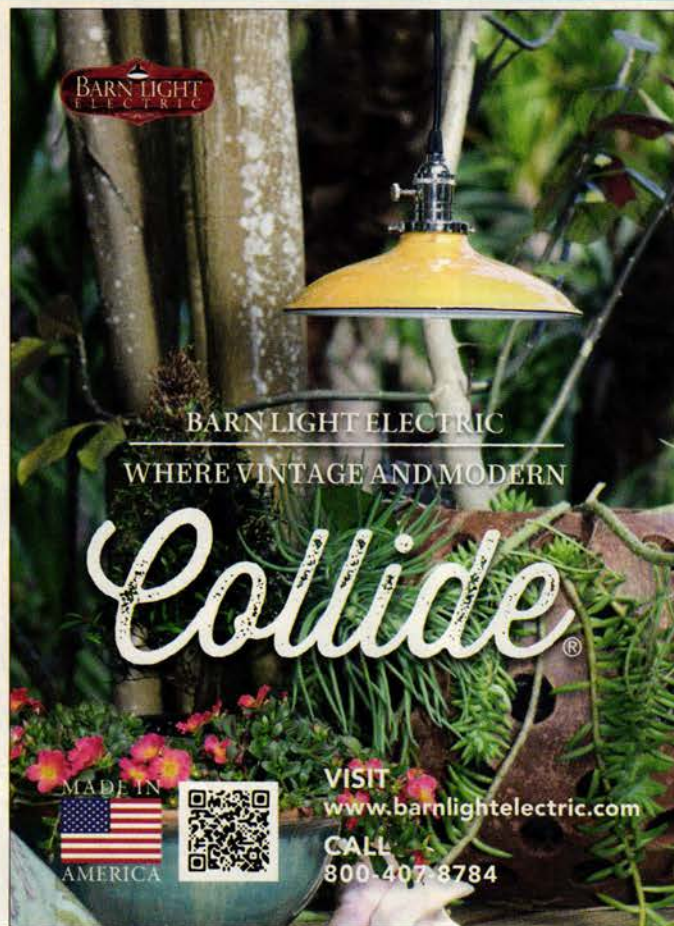
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Save THIS OLD HOUSE

PRICE \$45,000

LOCATION Rising Sun, Indiana

CONTACT Jarrad Holbrook,
812-926-0983



Dear This Old House,

It's rare to find a house that's been suspended in time. As

a preservationist—I work at Indiana Landmarks—that's what I love so much about this Gothic Revival cottage, which was built in 1867 and has undergone few changes since. What's even more special: From 1901 until the 1980s, it was owned by a single family. After the last remaining member passed away, in the 1990s, it sat vacant until our preservation group bought it, in 2012.

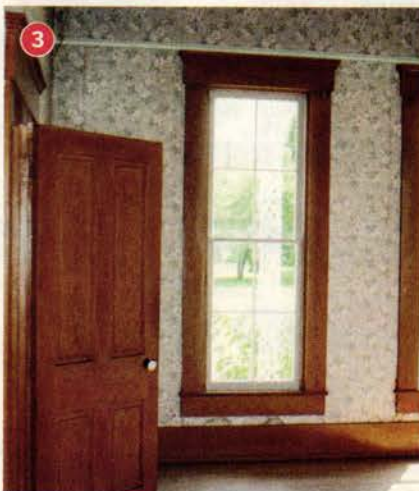
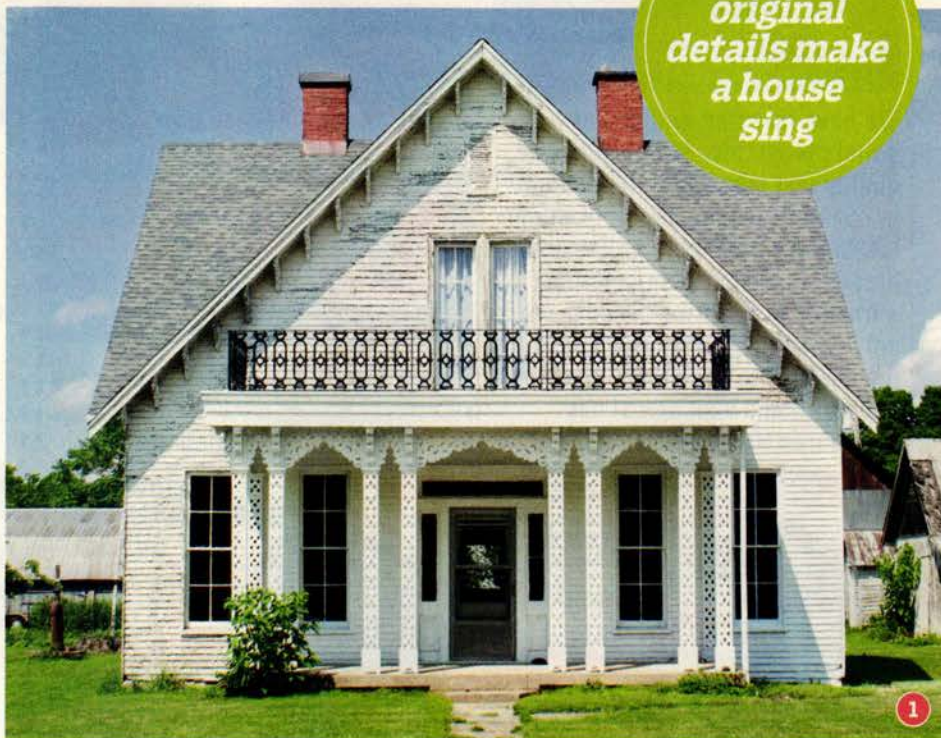
This little house has all the charms of a classic Carpenter Gothic, with storybook details like a steeply pitched center-gabled roof, decorative cornice brackets under the eaves, and intricate gingerbread cutouts on the porch. Inside, wide pine casing on the windows complements tall baseboards and simple but refined mantels.

Amazingly, this home has never been updated, other than a basic electrical installation in the 1960s, so you'll have to add plumbing, HVAC, and full electrical. A couple of small rooms upstairs could be converted to baths. The walls need repairs, but the floors, woodwork, and windows are all in great shape, and the house is undergoing an exterior paint job, too. Rising Sun is best known for the local casino, but it's a small town, founded in 1814 and less than an hour from Cincinnati, that retains plenty of vintage charm. This old house is no exception—and I'd love to see it brought into this century by someone with an appreciation for its history.

Sincerely,

Jarrad Holbrook

[reader wisdom]
*original
details make
a house
sing*



1. The house sits on a quarter-acre lot, which includes two outbuildings.
2. One of the two fireplaces still has an original stained-pine mantel.
3. Windows have been reglazed and are trimmed with 6-inch pine casing. Many of the doors are original as well.
4. The property still features two old water pumps—and an outhouse.



GOT A HOUSE?

If you know of an old house that should be saved and is for sale, write to savethisoldhouse@timeinc.com or This Old House, 135 West 50th Street, New York, NY 10020.

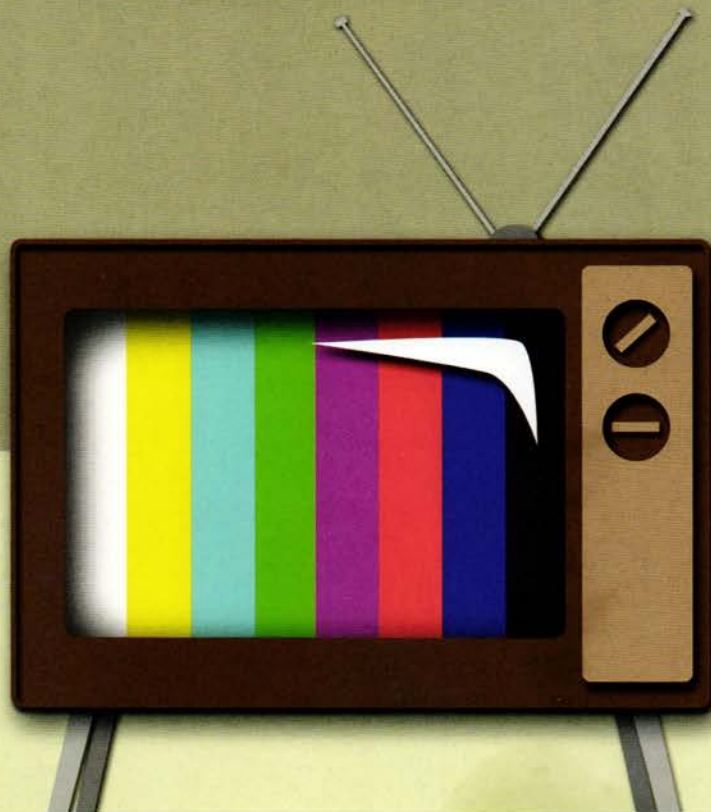
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