

5 ways to give your home and lawn the spring refresh they need



With winter finally a distant memory, it's time to get ready for spring. Prepare your home and lawn for guests and barbecues to come with a few simple DIY tips for inside and outside the house.

When it comes to weed control, driveway repairs, home maintenance projects and more, these tips can help you accomplish more around your home so you'll have plenty of time to enjoy the results all summer long.

- * **Weed control:** The first green plants to pop up in your yard always seem to be weeds, and they constantly find their way between the cracks in patios and pathways. Instead of eliminating weeds with harsh chemicals, which could be harmful to children or pets, or bending down to pull them by hand, you can burn away pesky weeds using a BernzOmatic JT850 Lawn and Garden Torch. It is specially designed for outdoor use with a 36-inch extended-reach handle. The flame instantly destroys unwanted weeds, and the handle helps keep you from bending or crouching. Be sure to sweep the area before using the torch to remove any loose materials that might catch fire.
- * **Garage maintenance:** Not only is spring a time to reorganize and clean out the garage, but the garage itself deserves a deep clean. After housing your car all winter long, oil spots and stains on the garage floor have likely formed. Use oven cleaner for old stains, or sprinkle a heavy layer of cat litter on the stains, and use your foot to press in, leaving on until the stain disappears. With spring rains and humidity high, keep rust out of your toolbox and off your tools with charcoal. A few bricks in your toolbox will soak in any moisture, keeping things dry and ready to use all season long.
- * **Prep your driveway:** Cold temperatures, ice and snow do a number on blacktop asphalt driveways during the winter. Improve your home's curb appeal by repairing minor or semi-deep cracks. Fill the cracks with rubberized sealant and melt the sealant with the Lawn and Garden Torch. Holding the torch just a few inches away liquefies the sealant to make a waterproof repair.
- * **Paint stripping:** Sometimes winter weather can leave your home looking a bit haggard, especially if exterior paint is peeling away. Try the BernzOmatic TS4000 Trigger-Start Torch to strip old paint off outside surfaces such as gutters. The torch features a trigger on/off switch for easy lighting and better control. Before you get started, make sure the paint is not lead based and that surrounding material, such as old wood, isn't flammable. Use the torch to heat the paint until it begins to bubble. Once cooled, take a scraper and peel off the paint. Wear a protective mask when conducting this job on the outside of your house.
- * **Furniture refresh:** Spring is all about rejuvenation. Give your weather-worn picnic table or wooden patio furniture a makeover using a torch to give new life to old wood. The Trigger Start Torch can be used to burn out the wood grain, adding rustic charm and character to your wooden patio furniture. Sand the wood first to remove all traces of stain. Then run the flame of the torch over the wood. It burns the wood and brings out the grain in a dramatic way that will give your patio a delightful style for the summer season.

For more information about BernzOmatic products, visit www.BernzOmatic.com.

(BPT)

Winter's coldest days make you appreciate spring and summer, as well as the warm afternoons spent outdoors enjoying these seasons. And when the time comes, there's no better place to relax than in your own backyard. If your space isn't all it could be, though, this is the perfect time for a little outdoor upgrade.

Here are five projects you can tackle on your own to reinvent your backyard and turn it into the space you always knew it could be.

5 ways to redefine your outdoor space



- * **Landscape for the year.** Landscaping provides a focal point in your yard, but don't just landscape with the warmer months in mind - include plants for each season. Showcase blooming flowers and hostas in the warmer months, and pair them with evergreen conifers for a look that's inviting all year long.
- * **One-of-a-kind planter boxes.** Showcase your most beautiful blooms or delicious herbs in planter boxes made from Western Red Cedar. Western Red Cedar is ideal for planter boxes because it is naturally rot, decay and insect resistant. Plus, building the box is easy. You can learn how to build planter boxes of your own at Realcedar.com.
- * **Sitting beside the fire.** A fire pit is a great way to extend your backyard use into the evening hours, and giving the pit a professional look is easier than you think. Start by measuring the pit area and then build your wall of pavers. Surround the pit itself with gravel, additional pavers or another non-flammable substance, then add some comfy chairs and prepare to enjoy.
- * **The all-in-one pergola.** Whether you're looking for a little shade, a centerpiece for the yard or the perfect spot to entertain, a pergola delivers. Building the pergola out of a lighter wood like Western Red Cedar will make the material easier to handle for any DIYer, and the appearance and smell of Western Red Cedar ensures your pergola will blend in naturally with the rest of your yard. You can find instructions for building your own pergola at Realcedar.com.
- * **Let there be light.** Enjoy your backyard any time of day with just a little lighting. Solar-powered path lights are a low-maintenance way to showcase your new landscaping, and hanging track lighting can bring an evening glow to your pergola. Finally, don't forget tiki torches. Adding a couple will give your backyard a rustic feel and keep the mosquitos away at the same time. What could be better than that?

Your backyard is what you make of it, so why not make it great? Any of these projects will noticeably enhance your backyard. For more amazing backyard projects, visit Realcedar.com.

(BPT)

Spring cleaning is time to de-clutter your life



Spring always inspires a fresh start, but in today's busy, connected lives it can sometimes be difficult to find the time to re-organize and recharge. These spring cleaning hacks will help you de-clutter and greet spring refreshed and ready to go:

1. **Follow the 80/20 rule.**
The 80/20 rule suggests people only actually use about 20 percent of the stuff they own. When deciding what to keep and what to toss, ask yourself what items you would replace right away if they were ever lost or stolen - this will help you discover your 20 percent.
2. **Donate - and schedule a pickup.**
Everyone knows that part of purging involves the "donate" pile, but many people never get these items out of their home. Schedule a pickup online to make sure the donating part gets done.

3. Use vinegar on practically everything.

Once you've taken stock of your belongings and are ready to get cleaning, vinegar is a wonderful all-purpose cleanser. One easy hack is to tie a bag of vinegar around your showerhead and let it sit over night to easily clean up grime and gunk. You'll find doing this also improves the water pressure too.

4. Coffee filters and cola make great cleaners, too.

Coffee filters can be used to dust off television screens in a pinch. Cola? You can actually use that to clean the toilet - pour in the bowl, let sit for an hour, flush and you're done.

5. Do a digital purge as well as a physical one.

From your desktop to the photos on your phone, your digital clutter could probably use a good scrub. Take an hour or so to get rid of duplicates and any files you don't need - then empty that recycle bin.

6. Cut your contract.

Your physical space may be in order, but what if your digital world is still an absolute mess?

One way to get rid of digital clutter is by cutting your long-term mobile contract. Consider a wireless provider like Net10 Wireless, offering LTE plans starting at just \$40 per month, with no airtime contract. Net10 Wireless allows you to pay for what you do need and nothing else, so you won't waste any data or money.

7. Update your passwords.

Secure your accounts with new passwords that include upper and lower case letters and numbers. Have trouble remembering them all? Consider a password manager that stores them in an encrypted database for you.

These tips and tricks should make your annual spring cleaning a little bit easier without taking up too much time - leaving you ready to tackle whatever the rest of the year will bring. Want more easy lifestyle and spring cleaning hacks? Visit the Net10 Tumblr page, net10collegehacks.tumblr.com, where you can also enter for a chance to win a new smartphone.

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