

## SPRING HOME IMPROVEMENT

# Springtime is the Right Time to Redecorate

This spring, why not give your room a whole new look... from the bottom up! With so many beautiful and durable hard-surface flooring options to choose from, you can transform any room in your home from drab to delightful just by changing the floor.

In the kitchen, active families with little kids might consider vinyl flooring. Vinyl has long been a popular choice because of its soft, resilient nature and easy maintenance. Not at all like your grandmothers' vinyl, today's patterns are warm and stylish, and Mannington creates a wide range of looks, from wood to slate, leather, and even handpainted floor cloths. Not only that, but vinyl floors are more durable than ever, and Mannington

uses exclusive surface coating technologies like ScratchResist™, which helps keep them looking new longer.

Family rooms are made for living, and anyone with teenagers will tell you that they can put a lot of wear and tear on a floor. For superior durability, a laminate floor will stand up to whatever your family brings in. Whatever your family brings in, laminate, including the Revolutions™ collection, which has the most realistic slate and wood laminates on the market today. Adorn-die slate pattern has such realistic 3D texture and depth, you'll have to bend down and touch it to know it's not the real thing. And

the wood looks, like Heritage Cherry, have beveled edges and textured planks, just like real wood.

In the foyer, dining room, or living room, nothing says elegance like a real hardwood floor. And today's prefinished hardwood floors, like those from Mannington, will never need to be sanded and refinished, which really is the ultimate luxury. From exotic woods like bamboo and teak, to traditional oak and maple, there's something for everyone. Choose a gently distressed hickory for that lived-in look, dramatic Nottingham Maple for an elegant, rustic look, or sleek, contemporary Sapele. It's a dramatic way to change the look of any room.

For upscale custom layouts and a designer feel,

look to porcelain tile. Porcelain is harder and stronger than regular ceramic, and can be used both indoors and out. Companies like Mannington make porcelain tile that is designed to coordinate from floor, to counter, to wall and backsplash, and some can make the transition from inside living to outdoor space. Porcelain is also easier to maintain than real marble or travertine. It won't chip or stain, and only requires sweeping and occasional mopping to keep clean.

How can we maintain our homes well while protecting our environment? Experts say you can reduce toxic impact by taking a few simple steps.

Use simple, non-toxic solutions wherever possible, like vinegar and water for cleaning windows, floors and other surfaces; rubbing alcohol for removing sticky substances; or an adhesive low in volatile organic compounds (VOCs).



Hardwood flooring, like this Nottingham Maple from Mannington, adds rustic beauty to any home.

## How to Set a Home Improvement Budget

When it comes to projects addressing a home's interior, homeowners know full well the bottom line plays a big role. For the unprepared homeowner tackling a first do-it-yourself project, costs can quickly escalate out of control.

One way to successfully combat that is to make a budget prior to starting a project. When putting one together, consider the following guidelines:

Consult a professional: When initially sitting down to plan a budget, chances are you'll have no idea where to begin. Tools, materials, timeframe, etc., all contribute to how much you'll have to spend. To make your budget as realistic as possible, consult a professional about providing an estimate for the job, be it a bathroom renovation, home theater installation or refacing the kitchen cabinets. Explain the situation, get the contractor and ask for an estimate that doesn't include labor but does include the cost you'll need to pay for supplies (contractors often pay less for parts because of existing and ongoing relationships with suppliers).

The budget you receive will act as a guideline and let you know if the job you have in mind is the one you'll be able to afford financially.

Leave some leeway: Many a job has gone unfinished at the hands of a poor

ly set budget. When budgets are absolute at the onset of a project, dollars are often stretched too thin to handle the inevitable surprises that pop up on a project. For example, old pipes might stall a bathroom renovation, leaving the do-it-yourselfer with a less than fully functioning bathroom that will have to remain that way until more money can be saved. Plan for the surprises, as they will surely rear their ugly heads.

Be realistic: When determining your budget, don't fool yourself. If it becomes increasingly apparent you cannot afford the job, don't go ahead with it anyway. Because many people get loans through their bank for home projects, taking on too big a loan can be a genuine albatross if it's a loan you cannot afford. Keep in mind that other unexpected problems (i.e., a leaky roof, new appliances, etc.) will arise sometime, and you don't want to stretch your dollars too thin. If the budget, you've come to is simply beyond your reach, consider a less expensive project to continue saving and tackle the project down the road.

Consider the value: While it's nice to improve your home and not always beneficial. In fact, most renovations fail to recoup 100

percent of a homeowner's initial investment. The bigger the project does not necessarily equal the bigger return. In their 2008 Cost vs. Value Report, Remodeling magazine found that while costs of remodeling projects continue to climb, the recoup value of those projects at resale is declining. This is definitely something homeowners should consider before making any improvements. If the job you're about to sink a small fortune into won't yield you nearly as much money at resale, perhaps finding a new place to live that better suits your needs would be a better approach. When making your budget, compare the money you'll spend to the money you're likely to recoup at resale and go from there.

Include professional help in your budget: As previously mentioned, surprises always pop up during a project. One of the more common surprises is the realization that not all jobs can be accomplished alone. When your budget is just about established, think long and hard about hiring a professional to help with the more difficult portions of the project. Hiring a professional for these parts will ensure that the job gets done right, which will save you lots of money in the long run.

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## Home Improvement Quick Tip:

Insist on the total control of construction materials when building your dream home, experts say. There is choice, especially when it comes to environmental responsibility. For example, many more people are insisting on homes built with concrete walls, instead of wood. One popular choice is the Nudura building system. This innovative system provides double the insulation by constructing walls with pre-assembled concrete forms along with the use of ceiling and floor technology creating an entire building envelope. This innovation is said to make the job design-friendly, much faster, creates less construction waste, and provides defense against mold, which is so commonly a problem with traditional building methods. Money is saved because of durability and energy efficiency - and the resulting structure is reported to be up to 10 times stronger, provides far more fire protection, far more sound insulation, and can produce energy savings of up to 70 percent.

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## SPRING HOME IMPROVEMENT

# Go Lean and Green With Multipurpose, High Performing, Earth Friendly Products

Most of us are overstocked with stuff to keep our homes looking good and operating efficiently. An inventory of most garages or basements would reveal an amazing number of cans of leftover materials like adhesive, paint, cleaners and repair materials that have expired and are ready to be recycled.

Choose products that are multipurpose and can be used successfully in many situations and on many materials.

If you aren't sure how to properly dispose of unused containers, contact the manufacturer or local disposal company.

Choose products that have minimal packaging - and check to see that it is recyclable.

Choose products that can be used successfully in many situations and on many materials.

This reduces the number of products needed for the same basic job - like cleaning surfaces. They are surface cleaners specifically designed for each of these materials: granite, ceramic, stainless steel, plastic, glass, rubber, and so on. It's easy to end up with six or seven different surface cleaning products cluttering your supply cabinets.

Adhesives also tend to be marketed for specific applications. There's a glue just for PVC pipe or another one just for paper. A quick survey of your home will probably reveal at least six different adhesives from white glue to "super" glue to adhesives designed for specific materials (wood, ceramic, plastic, etc.) Many are sold and overpackaged with non-recyclable materials.



Look for companies like EcoGlu™ Products, Inc., who have developed a glue for people who want an adhesive that is able to bond with industrial strength to almost any material indoors and out. Amazing EcoGlu™ manages to outperform even the popular urethane glues that foam when applied, yet it is environmentally safe (less than 1 percent volatile organic compounds) for you and your family. It is a water-based adhesive with virtually no hazardous air pollutants and no animal derivatives. Even the bottle and packaging are 100 percent recyclable.

Amazing EcoGlu™ is simple to use and requires no mixing or special tools. It dries to a tough film with exceptional water resistance. Use it on most anything with confidence. It performs with excellence on almost any material, including wood, stone, ceramic, glass, cloth, Styrofoam and more. It also works particularly well on projects or repairs involving wood. This is an earth-friendly adhesive that can keep the whole house in shape.

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## Easy Basement Waterproofing • Quick and Easy DIY Jobs

Spring may be good for the flowers, but it's bad for basements. Excessive moisture in basements and foundation walls can result in structural rot and decay, as well as high humidity levels throughout the home. And, even a small amount of moisture can create the perfect conditions for mold and mildew growth. That's why it's important to take care of water problems before they start.

It's easy to waterproof your concrete basement walls if you follow a few tips from the pros. Here's some advice from the waterproofing experts at Zinsser.

Prepare the surface: Clean the surface of dirt, grease and other contaminants. Kill any mold and mildew with a solution of household bleach

and water. Remove efflorescence (a powdery white deposit found on many concrete surfaces) with a concrete etching solution like WaterTite® Rich and Clean. Finally, patch any holes and cracks with WaterTite® Hydraulic Cement, especially those that show signs of active water leaks.

Apply two coats of waterproofing paint: Fortunately, it's easy to take water out - and keep mold and mildew away - by using a water-proofer that contains mold and mildew protection, like WaterTite® Mold & Mildew-Proof™ Waterproofing Paint. Available in either an oil-base or the new latex-base formula, these superior performance products are guaranteed to stop water, and offer a 5-year mold and mildew-proof paint film guarantee. Both are low odor and easy to use.

To apply WaterTite, use a thick synthetic brush or large nap roller to apply the first coat to a small section of the masonry. Use a brush to work the coating into the pores of the concrete to produce a continuous pinhole-free film. Apply a second coat with a brush or roller.

Enjoy your basement: WaterTite dries to a very smooth, beautiful finish that can be applied white, or can be tinted to a wide range of off-white, pastel and medium-tone colors to help you transform a damp leaky basement into a beautiful living space.

For more information about WaterTite, and for more helpful home improvement tips, visit [www.zinsser.com](http://www.zinsser.com).

Whether you're looking to sell your home or simply make improvements, chances are finances are a big consideration before you can go forward with any project. However, certain DIY projects around the house can do wonders to makeover a home while not breaking the bank, either.

Kitchen cabinets: Upgrading the kitchen cabinets is a major improvement. While it's rare to recoup the cost of refacing or replacing kitchen cabinets, painting them can add some new life to the kitchen, a room that is known to leave a very lasting impression on prospective buyers. While painting isn't a great long-term solution (so it's not the best option for those who aren't

looking to sell, it can be a great short term solution, perfect for sellers.

The foyer: The foyer is the first room any guests or buyers will see when entering your home, so it can be a great way to make a good first impression. If your foyer is currently linoleum, consider installing tile instead. Professionals often suggest removing linoleum because it's less appealing than a tile floor. Natural stone tile, for example, is a popular choice, but also more expensive. Porcelain is a cheaper alternative that can look very similar to natural stone tiles.

The dining room: Homeowners can give the dining room a subtle new look without spending any money on a new dining room set. A new overhead fixture in the dining room can drastically change how the room is seen. In general, keep the new fixture in line with the rest of the home. For example, while you might have dreamt about having a large chandelier in your dining room, if the rest of the home has more of a log cabin feel, the wrong-match and will appear out of place. Keep the same theme in the rest of the home.

The bathroom: Rather than a complete bathroom renovation, you can save money by making minor adjustments. Consider replacing the shower curtain with glass doors. A glass door kit can be purchased at a nearby home improvement store, and its installation takes much time to install.

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