

YOUR **HOME** MAY 2012

TIPS AND TRENDS FOR HOMEOWNERS, BUYERS AND SELLERS

Kitchen Aid

Pantries come in all shapes and sizes, from walk-in pantries to slide-out drawers under your counters. Some homes feature a built-in pantry, but for those that don't, creating one can be easier than you think.

For a makeshift pantry, consider converting a kitchen closet or cabinet into a pantry by adding shelves throughout the space. If you have an empty wall in or just outside the kitchen, consider hiring professionals to break through the wall and install shelves and a door.

Once you've figured out where the new pantry will go, organization is the key to making it useful and efficient. Start by thinking about your cooking habits, and place frequently used items on an eye-level shelf for easy access. Always making cookies? Put flour, sugar and mixing equipment on this shelf. If you entertain often, consider installing a wine rack on a side of the pantry with party necessities, such as a cork-screw, bottle stopper and rows of wine glasses.

Store dry items, such as rice, noodles or cereal, in labeled glass jars to keep them dry and easily visible. Other goods, such as flour or sugar, can go into large tubs with lids that can be stored either on the floor or on a shelf. For snacks, such as chips or popcorn, consider hanging a shoe rack on the outside of the pantry door and putting the bags in the holders. Keep food from spoiling and avoid having to throw food away by keeping new items in the back of the pantry and moving older items to the front so they get used quickly. To keep your pantry well stocked, start a running grocery list to update when family members grab the last of its kind from the pantry.



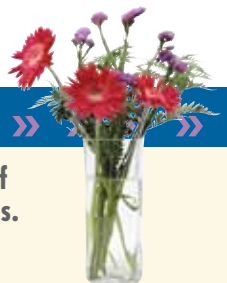
Inside Out

Four walls and a roof don't necessarily make a home. The new trend is for homeowners to take advantage of the great outdoors — building an outdoor living space was No. 4 among the top remodeling trends last year, according to the National Association of the Remodeling Industry. Extensive work might be best left to the professionals, but you can create a scenic outdoor setting in your own backyard with a do-it-yourself mentality and tips from *Better Homes & Gardens*.

First, identify what function you want the new outdoor space to serve. Do you want a kitchen, a living room or an extra dining room? Once the room has a label, narrow down the necessary features the room needs. For instance, if you're looking for an outdoor living room, weather-resistant couches, coffee tables and perhaps a fire pit are good starting points. Need a tranquil place to get away from the hustle and bustle? Serene add-ons such as a fountain or hanging plants that offer seclusion from the street might be on your short list.

Don't forget about roofing options for your outdoor space. Weather-resistant fabric canopies or composite roof structures provide shade and shelter from the elements while maintaining an outdoorsy feel.

After completing a basic structure of the "room," add decorative touches, just like you would indoors. Experts suggest potted plants that are easy to maintain, framed artwork and coffee table books.



fast fact » » » » » » » » » »

California is the primary source for more than half of all fresh cut flowers grown in the United States.

Source: California Cut Flowers Commission



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The Price Is Right

Although a REALTOR® will work with you to determine a listing price when you decide to put your home on the market, it helps to understand the process agents use to reach that figure. Although methods vary, there

are a few common steps. First, REALTORS® complete a CMA (Comparative Market Analysis), which compares your home to similar homes in your area that recently sold, homes that are currently on the market, and homes that didn't sell. Generally, an agent will formulate a base price from this data and factor in additional positives or negatives (for instance, if your home has a deck or a finished garage, the base price — your home's initial value — would rise).

Next, the REALTOR® considers the market conditions. In a buyer's market, your price might need to be a little lower than the base CMA price in order to reduce its time on the market and have a higher probability of selling. In a seller's market, the listing price can be a little higher.

Another strategy is to consider how sales of comparable homes are faring — for instance, if the prices in your area are dropping X percent each month, consider settling on a lower asking price to boost your chances of selling quickly.

Be sure to ask your REALTOR® how he or she has arrived at the recommended listing price. A good agent will be able to walk you through the numbers and explain the strategy behind settling on a given listing price.

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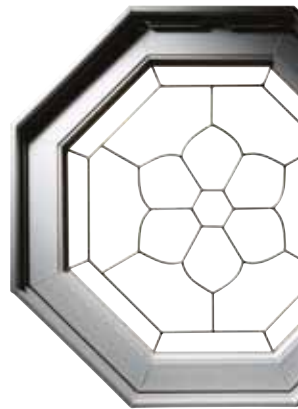
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DID YOU KNOW?

Homeowners pay most attention to **windows** (72 percent) and **blinds or curtains** (67 percent) during annual spring cleaning, according to the American Cleaning Institute.



Do you know someone who is thinking about buying or selling a home? Please mention my name.

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