

YOUR HOME

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TIPS AND TRENDS FOR HOMEOWNERS, BUYERS AND SELLERS

GARDEN TRENDS

Home gardening has become more than a hobby for many Americans in recent years. These ideas from DiyYourself.com can provide some guidance on how to create or upgrade your own garden.

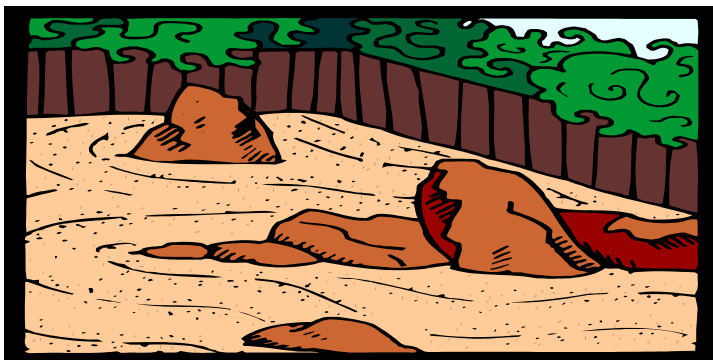
Edible gardens — According to the National Gardening Association, vegetable gardening rose 20 percent in 2010 from 2009. Salad-type vegetables, such as radishes, lettuce and spinach are common, but many gardeners also grow crop vegetables like potatoes, corn, beans and squash. These are easy to grow, they only need watering and some weeding before harvesting, and they can be stored and served in countless ways.

Go organic — Many gardeners use non-chemical fertilizers such as compost, compost teas and animal manure to help plants grow. Inexpensive and easy to use, compost can be created from yard refuse and home vegetable peelings. Compost teas are made by steeping compost to create a tea-like substance, and animal manure that's allowed to compost for a year provides nutrients.

"Feel good" gardens — For some, gardens are a place for calm, quiet reflection. Water gardens include a pond or fountain to create a calm, serene environment, while sand or "zen" gardens are small enough to place on a desk or table and include different types of plants, rocks and sticks to mimic the natural environment.

Vertical gardens — New planting systems make it possible to insert vegetation into outside walls. Succulent plants are ideally suited to growing vertically since they often dwell on cliffs in nature and don't need much root space. Fruits like grapes and kiwi can grow along walls and fences, and some vegetables like beans, peas and some squashes can be trained up a trellis.

Whether used to grow food or to enjoy nature, gardens have evolved to reflect the changing lifestyles of American families.



STAGE RIGHT

When selling your home, you want to present it in the best possible light, but that may not always be possible if it's vacant. With the help of some simple staging techniques, you can help buyers envision how they might live in your home, and that can entice them to make an offer.

Experts say vacant homes can benefit greatly with fairly minimal staging. By strategically placing greenery, furniture and accent pieces, buyers may not notice a home's imperfections, like cracks in the walls or scuff marks on the floor.



Staging also exhibits creative uses of space, especially for small or oddly shaped rooms. If a bedroom seems too small to hold a complete bedroom set, for example, staging it with furniture that fits can help buyers see the room's potential.

Whether distressed or non-distressed, many homes may need basic prep work or repairs. A professional cleaning crew can clean the home thoroughly, inside and out. If the hardwood floors need work, they can be refinished, while the carpet can be deep-cleaned or replaced.

Vacant homes can be dim and lifeless, but adding a few pieces of furniture, artwork, accent pieces and kitchen and bath accessories can help bring more life to the home. Of course, a fresh coat of paint throughout a home's interior goes a long way towards making the home look clean and inviting. And that might be just enough to convince a potential buyer that they can love the home as their own.

fast fact >> >> >>

In 2011, 176,000 U.S. men were stay-at-home dads.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



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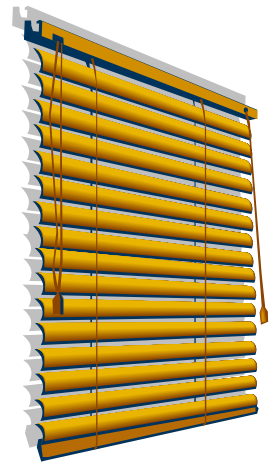
SPACE PLANNERS

A growing number of homeowners are focusing on using their home space more efficiently and personalizing it to suit their lifestyle, according to a recent survey by *Better Homes and Gardens*. More than one-third of homeowners (38 percent) surveyed say they are spending more time planning design changes for their home, up from 33 percent a year ago, while 42 percent say they shop around for more bargains before committing to a project, up from 40 percent who did so in 2011. They also are focused on value and tend to spend more time looking for the best deal for their money.

Social media sites such as Pinterest play a key role in the planning process for many homeowners who look to such sites for design inspirations, product reviews, creative ideas and solutions for using space. Consumers

say they prefer a home with median square footage of 1,791 square feet, down from 1,846 square feet a year ago. Bonus rooms and media rooms are no longer as popular unless they have a multifunctional purpose.

More than half of homeowners (55 percent) are focusing their next home improvement project on style upgrades for countertops, flooring, faucets and fixtures, up from 50 percent in 2010. Projects to expand storage space and remodel the bathroom and kitchen also rank high.



DID YOU KNOW?

Wipe down dusty window blinds with old dryer sheets to prevent dust build-up.

Source: *Styled, Staged and Sold* blog, *Verticals and Horizontals, Inc.*

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