

Spring cleaning projects you don't want to forget

Spring cleaning is an annual tradition in many households. After a winter spent cooped up indoors, spring cleaning can rejuvenate a household and provide a great chance to rid a home of a season's worth of clutter.

Donating old clothes and cleaning out the garage are popular spring cleaning projects, but there are a host of additional tasks homeowners can tackle to freshen up their homes this spring.

Floors

Simply vacuuming or sweeping the floors might not be enough to banish some of winter's most uninvited guests. Dust has a way of settling into a home over the course of a typical winter, and it's easy for a home's inhabitants to track dirt and debris inside as well. After vacuuming or sweeping floors, go over them with a mop. Doing so can remove any lingering dust,

dirt, debris, and allergens the vacuum or broom failed to pick up. Apply wood cleaner and polish to wood floors to make them look even cleaner.

Baseboards

Though baseboards might not seem all that dirty, upon closer inspection homeowners might notice substantial accumulations of dirt and dust. Such dirt and dust many not be removed so easily, so homeowners might

need to use hot water and a sponge to remove any debris that is clinging.

Curains

Curains also may have absorbed substantial amounts of dust, dirt and debris over the winter. This might be more visible near the end of winter when more sunlight begins to shine through. Clean the curains in adherence to the manufacturer instructions before you open windows for the season so any wind that blows in does not spread debris onto nearby furniture. Once the curains have been washed, opening windows may help them dry more quickly.

Bathrooms

Bathrooms also tend to bear the brunt of winter weather, as mold and grime can accumulate throughout a season in which it's too cold to open bathroom windows to let fresh air in after bathing. Inspect ceilings, tubs, shower stalls, and floors for any signs of mold growth or grime. Mold growth in a home can lead to respiratory problems and exacerbate existing conditions such as asthma, so it's best to inspect bathrooms for any signs of

mold growth throughout winter. If you have let that slip, prioritize such inspections come spring cleaning time.

Furniture

It's easy to overlook furniture when tackling spring cleaning, but dust and dirt can quickly accumulate on couches and chairs over the course of winter. When possible, vacuum furniture to

remove any debris that might have accumulated while windows and doors were kept shut, and shampoo any cushions or seat covers that don't pass the smell test.

Spring cleaning encompasses a host of tasks, and homeowners who want a truly clean house should not overlook smaller tasks that can produce big results.

Houseplants can clean indoor air

Gardening is a rewarding hobby that can pay a host of dividends, both for the planet and the people doing the gardening. Healthy plant life can help clean the air by absorbing carbon dioxide and various air pollutants, while the act of gardening can help gardeners combat stress.

Published in 2011 in the Journal of Health Psychology, a study from researchers in the

Netherlands found that gardening promotes relief from acute stress. In the study, two groups of participants were asked to complete a stressful task and then instructed to either read indoors or garden outdoors for 30 minutes. After 30 minutes, the latter group had lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol and even reported being in a better mood than the group instructed to read indoors.

But gardening does more than just provide gardeners with a reason to spend some time relaxing outdoors in an effort to relieve stress. Gardeners who raise certain plants may be able to bring those benefits with them when going inside as well. According to an article published in the journal Environmental Health Perspectives in October 2011, houseplants can work wonders when it comes to improving overall health, removing toxins from air, soil and water by metabolizing some toxic chemicals and releasing harmless byproducts while sequestering such toxins by incorporating them into plant tissues.

Clean indoor air is important for everyone, but especially so for those people who suffer from respiratory ailments like asthma. In fact, the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology considers indoor air filtration an essential part of any strategy to improve respiratory health. But filtration systems and air purifiers are often not enough, and those who want the air in their homes to be as clean as possible may benefit from introducing certain houseplants into their homes. The following are a handful of plants that can help to improve indoor air quality.

- Aloe vera: Aloe vera might be most often associated with hand creams and hand soaps, but the aloe vera plant, a succulent that even novice gardeners should have no problem growing, can clear indoor air of formaldehyde and benzene, two common byproducts of chemical-based cleaners many people use in their homes.

- Spider plant: Spider plants are resilient, and that makes them great houseplants for busy men and women who tend to be forgetful when caring for their plants. In addition, spider plants are pet-friendly and can be used to combat benzene, carbon dioxide, formaldehyde and xylene.

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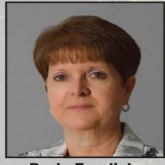
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