

Three unexpected upgrades to add beauty and comfort to your home



should you choose to plant herbs.

- Add a breeze: Whether you live in an old house where central air is non-existent or you just want to add some ventilation to your space with a low-key upgrade, there's no need to call in an HVAC team. Adding a ceiling fan to the landing of your staircase, for example, can help pull and circulate cool air into the upstairs space. Or, consider transforming the traditionally neglected laundry room into a space that's comfortable for getting chores done. The addition of a ceiling fan can create a breeze and alleviate the heat created by the dryer. Low-profile versions like the Cranbrook from Hunter Fan Company, are a good fit for the small square footage of a laundry room.

For more design or upgrade tips, follow Hunter Fan Company on Instagram at @Hunterfanco or visit itsaHunter.com.

Thinking outside the box when updating your space can go a long way toward adding beauty and comfort to your home.

Considering an energy audit? Get informed

Overconsumption of energy is a problem that plagues many homeowners. Wasting energy can hurt homeowners' bottom lines and the planet. But many homeowners aren't aware just how much energy their homes are consuming and even wasting. That's why a home energy audit can be so important.

A home energy audit or assessment investigates just how much energy a home consumes so homeowners can make their homes more energy efficient. Audits identify where energy is being wasted and can offer suggestions to fix the problem.

The U.S. Department of Energy advises that the average U.S. household consumes around 90 million BTUs in a year. Of the energy used in homes, nearly 50 percent goes to heating and cooling. Water heating, appliances, electronics, and lighting account for the remaining consumption. Consumers can save between 5 and 30 percent on home energy bills by getting a home energy audit and making the adjustments advised by auditors.

There are two types of energy audits: professional and do-it-yourself. Professional auditors will go room-to-room to assess a home's energy use. Typical testing includes thermographic scans and infrared cameras to determine air leakage and insulation; a blower



door test, which depressurizes the home and simulates the effect of a 20 mph wind to find air leaks; and watt meter measurements to test energy usage by various devices throughout the house.

Before an auditor comes to the house, homeowners can make a list of any problems or concerns they want to discuss with the auditor. The auditor also may interview the homeowner to learn about how the home normally runs and can analyze energy bills to determine typical energy consumption. Windows, doors, HVAC systems, insulation, fireplaces, and lighting fixtures all may be assessed during a professional audit.

Even though a professional audit is usually the best way to determine where a home is losing energy, homeowners can conduct their own audits to detect and fix problems. Locating and sealing air leaks, addressing inadequate ventilation, checking that insulation levels and vapor barriers are at recommended levels, and inspecting HVAC systems should be part of any DIY audit. If a heating/cooling unit is more than 15 years old, the DOE suggests having it replaced with a newer, energy-efficient unit.

An energy audit can identify areas around a home where improvements can be made to reduce energy consumption and waste. Upgrading to new appliances, replacing light bulbs, sealing drafts, improving insulation, and addressing moisture and water leaks can be good for the environment and help homeowners save money.

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