

Get more bang for your buck with these spring home improvements

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Spring Home Improvement **7**



(StatePoint) The warmer weather means it's time to start thinking about home improvement projects. Whether you're getting your home in tip-top shape for your own enjoyment, or getting it ready to put on the market, not all home improvement projects are created equal when it comes to return on investment (ROI). Here are top areas on which to focus:

Interiors

The kitchen is the heart of the home and it's one of the best areas to renovate in terms of ROI, according to Remodeling magazine's annual Cost vs. Value Report, which puts the price tag of the average minor kitchen remodel at \$22,507, with 80.5 percent of the cost recouped upon resale.

To give the kitchen an updated appearance, replace the flooring, countertops, sink and faucet. A fresh coat of paint in a trendy shade, such as Living Coral, Pantone's

Color of the Year, can add a vibrant pop of color to energize any kitchen. Not looking to go that bold? Consider an accent wall, or stick to a classic palate of gray and white in terms of cabinets and countertops. White on white is also a popular new style for kitchens and bathrooms.

Other features home buyers are paying close attention to are laundry rooms and such energy-saving elements as Energy Star appliances and windows, according to the survey "What Home Buyers Want in 2019" by the National Association of Home Builders.

Curb Appeal

The popularity of outdoor projects remains strong and it's for a good reason. According to the Cost vs. Value Report, the biggest bang for your buck in 2019 will come from replacing a garage door. The report says the average price is \$3,611, and 97.5 percent of it is recouped when the house is sold.

Other outdoor projects with high ROI include adding manufactured stone veneer to the exterior (94.9 percent), adding a wood deck (75.6 percent) and replacing siding (75.6 percent). Looking for a simpler way to make an impact? Sprucing up the landscape by planting flowers or bushes or even just clearing the yard of debris will make a big statement.

No matter what updates you end up making, it's always a good idea to notify your insurance agent. "Certain upgrades may change the value of a house, so homeowners need to make sure they're properly covered," says Bob Buckel, vice president of product management, Erie Insurance. "There are a few things to look for. Ask your agent about guaranteed replacement cost policies that can cover the cost to rebuild a home in today's dollars following a covered loss."

Some upgrades may also

make you eligible for discounts, Buckel adds, especially if they make the home more secure. "For example, Erie Insurance offers certain safety discounts such as for installing smoke alarms or an automatic sprinkler system."

Now you have a checklist of DIY projects to focus on this spring. But before you start, take a moment to assess which ones are worth your time and money.

How to protect your yard from deer

With more than 60 different species of deer worldwide, there's a good chance individuals will have some sort of interaction with these majestic animals at one point during their lifetimes.

Deer, which live on all continents except Antarctica, can survive in everything from mountainous areas to wet rainforests to suburban neighborhoods. These herbivores are voracious eaters that will search far and wide for their meals. Home landscapes tend to be easy pickings for foraging deer.

Many people are excited to see deer in their neighborhoods and yards because they can be such graceful creatures to behold. However, once deer start to munch on ornamental trees, annuals and flowering shrubs, the novelty of these animals may wear off. Furthermore, deer also can be covered in ticks that spread illnesses like Lyme disease. Here are some tips to keep deer at bay.

- Avoid tasty morsels. Deer like English ivy, lettuces, impatiens, pansies, and hostas. Fruit trees also are targets. Choose other plants to grow, and wait until after early spring, when deer aren't as concerned with regaining weight lost during the winter, to get them in the ground.
- Use fishing line to deter deer. Put a few stakes in the ground and then run fishing line at a height of about three



feet. Deer can sense movement but do not have keen vision. As the deer approach your garden, they'll brush against the "invisible" fishing line and then get spooked off.

• Plant plants that produce strong aromas. The experts at Good Housekeeping suggest planting lavender and marigolds, which emit strong aromas. Deer will be reluctant to walk through because the smell can interfere with their ability to find food and assess their environment via their sense of smell.

• Stock up on soap. The tallow in soap helps keep deer away, according to the University of Vermont Extension Department of Plant and Soil Science. Scented soaps like Irish Spring may be especially good at warding off deer.

• Plant in levels. Raised beds and sunken gardens can discourage deer from coming into the yard because they aren't avid climbers, offers

the home and garden resource This Old House.

• Employ harmless scare tactics. Deer are skittish, and any unfamiliar movement or sound may scare them away. Cans hung from strings, sundials and lights can keep them at bay.

Deer will seek out an easy meal, but homeowners can take steps to safeguard their trees, flowers and shrubs. GT194817

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