

When temperatures get high, keep your bills low *Why do painters wear white?*

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(StatePoint) Do higher temperatures have to mean higher energy bills? The answer is no. There are numerous ways to keep your home cool and bills low in summer. After a few months of disuse, it is vital to check that

your air conditioning system is still working in an efficient and optimal manner. If you have a central air conditioning system, for peace of mind, you might want to have your system checked by an HVACR professional.

In order to save, be sure to shop around for special deals, which are not difficult to find for seasonal preventive maintenance.

Understand however, that the proficiency of HVACR technicians varies greatly. When searching for the right HVACR technician for your home, one way to make certain that the job will be done properly and effectively is by hiring a professional certified by North American Technician Excellence (NATE), the nation's largest certification body for HVACR technicians. NATE-certified technicians are qualified to properly install and service equipment, which means maximum home comfort and energy savings.

Once a technician has inspected your system for efficiency, there are a number of things you can do to keep energy bills low:

- Clean your air filters. Check them every couple of

weeks and change them at least twice in the season, or as directed by the manufacturer.

- Don't obstruct airflow around air conditioner units -- keep them clear of plants and debris.

- Raise the thermostat about 5 degrees. Each degree you raise the thermostat will save you a percentage off your cooling energy bill.

- Compare energy bills from last year. If your costs have significantly increased, simply contact a qualified HVACR technician -- he or she can help determine the source of the problem.

Remember, having an energy-approved, eco-friendly, high-efficiency product does not mean automatic money and energy savings. Proper installation, service and maintenance are important, too. So, do yourself a favor and request the service of an HVAC contractor who employs NATE-certified technicians. To locate one, visit the Homeowners section of the NATE website at www.natex.org, then enter your zip code on the locator map.

By taking proactive measures, you can rest assured that this season you will be cool while saving money and energy.

The sight of professional painters decked out in white overalls is a familiar one to many people. Perhaps you've pondered just why painters wear white? The reasons behind painters' sartorial choices is not easily verifiable, but it's fun to explore nonetheless.

The actual name for a painting professional's wardrobe is "painter's whites." White canvas or denim pants, white t-shirt, overalls, and a white cap are often worn by painters. The idea of wearing white may date back to the 1700s, when there were not a variety of house colors available. As a result, white was the primary choice of paint at this time. If white paint were to be dripped on a white uniform, it wouldn't be readily noticed before laundering.

Painters also used to mix 50 pounds of "white lead powder" with a can of paint paste to make about two gallons of paint. The mixing process produced large amounts of white dust. To hide the dust, the painters wore white.

It is also believed that some painters crafted clothing from the white sails from ships.

Another theory behind painters' preference for white work gear traces its origins to 19th century union painters. Those in the union adopted the all-white uniform to differentiate themselves from non-union painters. Sometimes a black bow tie was added to

complete the professional presentation.

There are some practical reasons for painters to wear white. White clothing tends to be cooler when working outdoors or in sunny locations. Should painter's whites become dirty, they're easily bleachable without the color fading. Also, white is a pristine color that will present the appearance of cleanliness. Homeowners may readily invite and trust a clean worker into their homes to get the job done.

Painters often find that their business logo stands out sharply against the white of a uniform, which can be another practical reason to don some white overalls. White clothing also can be less expensive to replace.

Today, because there are many other paint hues available, painter's whites may not be so pristine. But those variously shaded specks and splatters may be indicative of a seasoned professional who has put in many hours on the job.

Painters have long worn white as their unofficial uniform. The theories as to why vary, but the tradition is likely here to stay. SH192651

A simple spring cleaning checklist



(StatePoint) It's the time of year to roll up your sleeves and do some spring cleaning. Experts point out that it's helpful to streamline the tools you use to do the job and the tasks you seek to accomplish.

"An all-purpose cleaner and a tough degreasing agent can be used in so many areas of the home," says Jeff Devlin, a licensed contractor who's appeared on several home improvement television shows. Devlin's first tip: look to reduce the number of products in your cleaning arsenal. "Along with high-quality sprays and cloths, I use one all-purpose cleaner that also contains degreasing ingredients."

Devlin, along with a line of heavy-duty, all-purpose cleaners offer these different strategies for critical areas of your home.

- Stove and range hoods: While you should be cleaning these areas regularly after food preparation, take this opportunity to conduct a more thorough cleaning. Spray

cleaner directly on the mess for up to two minutes. Wipe clean with a sponge or cloth. Then rinse thoroughly with clean water.

- Sinks and countertops: Sinks and countertops can be a trap for food, grease, grime and soap scum. Generously spray non-porous surfaces with your cleaner then rinse with clean water.

- Stove exhaust filter: The grease buildup that collects on the stove's exhaust filter can be a tough nut to crack. In a sink basin, mix eight ounces of a concentrated multi-surface cleaner and one gallon of hot water and submerge the filter. Place the filter in a sink or dishpan and pour in concentrated cleaner to cover. Allow the filter to soak for 30 minutes. Drain the dishpan and rinse thoroughly with hot water.

- Floors: Give your floors a mopping. Mix four ounces of cleaning solution with one gallon of warm water. Apply with mop or sponge.

- Garbage cans and diaper

pails: Bags often leak nastiness into the bottom of the garbage can, which can easily be missed when quickly replacing the bag. Turn your cleanser's nozzle to spray and generously cover the can. Wipe or brush any areas that have any residue. Rinse thoroughly with clean water.

- Showers, tubs and tile: Use your cleaning agent at full strength and generously spray surfaces directly. Allow it to penetrate the soap scum for up to two minutes. Do not allow to dry. Wipe away with a coarse sponge or cloth. Rinse thoroughly with clean water.

- Toilets: Let's face it. This isn't anyone's favorite job but it has to be done. Turn that nozzle to spray and generously spray the outside of the toilet. Wipe clean with a paper towel, then give a quick rinse.

- Patio: For patios, outdoor furniture, concrete, vinyl fences and siding, use the same cleaner outdoors: simply spray, then wipe clean with a cloth or sponge and rinse surfaces with clean water. While you're at it, consider removing grease and grime from tools, engine parts, tires, sports gear and lawn equipment.

For efficiency, consider cleaning solutions that don't require pre-cleaning. More tips for getting your spring todos completed can be found at meangreendegreaser.com.

"Make spring cleaning simple and effective by using smart strategies on every surface of your home," said Devlin.

Simple ways to prevent dog-related lawn damage

Dogs love spending time outdoors. Dog owners with yards know that dogs benefit greatly from some exercise in the backyard. While that time might be great for dogs, it can take its toll on lawns.

Dog urine and feces can adversely affect the look and health of a lush green lawn. Nitrogen is essential to healthy soil, but only at certain levels. When those levels are exceeded, the result can be lawn damage. According to The Spruce Pets, an advisory site that offers practical tips and training advices to pet owners, this is what happens when pets frequently urinate on grass. Urine is naturally high in nitrogen, so when pets urinate on lawns, the grass might turn yellow or brown due to the excess nitrogen content. Nitrogen also is present in lawn fertilizers, further exacerbating the problem for pet owners who fertilize their lawns.

In addition to urine damage, dogs can trample frosted grass, contributing to problems that may not become evident until spring, and get into areas like gardens where they wreak additional havoc.

Pet owners who want to let their dogs run free in the yard but don't want damaged grass may be tempted to put their pooches in diapers or confine them to crates when

letting them outside. But such an approach isn't necessary. In fact, some simple strategies can be highly effective at preventing dog-related lawn damage.

- Speak with a landscaper about planting new grass. Certain types of grass, such as Bermuda grass, can withstand dog damage better than others. Local climate will dictate which types of grass are likely to thrive in a given area, so speak with a professional landscaper about the viability of planting new grass.

- Install fencing. Pet owners with expansive yards can install fencing that allows dogs to spend time exercising outdoors without granting them access to the entire property. Large dogs will need more room than small ones, but try to build fenced-in areas that allow dogs to run freely and get the exercise they need to stay healthy.

- Work with a dog trainer. Dog trainers might be able to work with dogs so they only urinate in certain areas of the yard, greatly reducing the damage they can cause to a lawn. Trainers also might help curb digging and clawing behaviors that can damage lawns as well as gardens.

- Consider hardscaping. Hardscaping might be most effective for pet owners with small properties. Hardscap-

ing does not include grass and can add visual appeal to a property while saving pet owners the headaches of dealing with dog-related lawn damage.

Dogs need time outdoors, and homeowners can take various steps to protect their lawns from dog-related damage. GT194810

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