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On-trend ideas for updating your home's exterior . . .

(StatePoint) If it's time to upgrade your home exterior, you may need some guidance, particularly if you want to make on-trend choices that will instantly boost your curb appeal.

Bear in mind that many younger, trend-setting homeowners are gravitating toward the natural, earthy look, and they are achieving this with manufactured stone. As you make your own upgrade, consider the following:

Prioritize Authenticity

Not all manufactured stone is of equal quality. Do a close inspection to ensure the products you select are molded and colored to look and feel like natural stone.

Select Your Cut

Choices abound when it comes to the cut of manufactured stone veneer. However, linear shapes that provide a sense of calm and order are very popular right now, making profiles such as the Chisel Cut offered by ProVia a smart move for staying on-trend. The natural texture complements the chiseled form, and looks great grouted or dry stacked.

Be Serene

Gray is in right now, and this is likely due to its low-key aesthetic. Likewise, any color



on the gray-scale will add instant appeal, including black and white.

Choose Your Grout

You can add a lot of design drama with the right choice of grout color. Here's a simple guide to help you choose:

- For an understated, elegant look, match the grout color with the dominant color shadings in the manufactured stone. This is a subtle-but-sophisticated choice.
- To bring bold drama to the home, choose a grout color that's the exact opposite of the stone color. With light stone, use dark grout, and with dark stone use light grout. The ef-

fect is eye-popping, and shows off the shapes and textures of the manufactured stone.

- Blend both approaches above to reflect an array of earthy colors. Choose a grout color that matches one of the shades found in the stone. It will naturally contrast with the other shades.

- For a pulled-together look, weave a matching color choice throughout the various home exterior elements – siding, garage door, front entry door, roofing, etc. – to reflect a designer aesthetic and provide instant curb appeal. Just like a well-coordinated suit, shirt and tie, this look projects confidence.

Visualize

The decisions you make regarding your home exterior are important, so do a bit of homework first before committing. Free online tools and resources can help you pick colors, cuts and other important features, by allowing you to get a better sense of how they will look on your home. Visit provia.com/grout-visualizer to access ProVia's Grout Visualizer, a handy tool that allows you to mix and match stone and styles with grout options.

The exterior of your home makes a statement. Make sure it's making the right one. Select elements that suit your personality while also staying on-trend.

How to update home lighting to be easy on the eyes

(StatePoint) If you ever experience eyestrain, tired itchy eyes, blurry vision or headaches, it may be time to give your home a lighting makeover.

Problems caused by bad lighting can be intensified by using it for longer, something most households should keep in mind, as 74 percent of Americans in a recent survey, commissioned by lighting manufacturer, Signify, say they spend eight hours or more a day under artificial light.

The World Health Organization predicts that 50 percent of people will be short sighted by 2050.

Unfortunately, there's a disconnect between people's concerns about eye health and the steps they are taking to support eye comfort at home. While 80 percent of U.S. consumers in the same Signify survey say they believe good lighting is beneficial for eye health, a 2017 Signify study found only 21 percent take that into account when purchasing light bulbs, and only 29 percent consider light quality.

For many consumers, the disconnect may stem from overwhelming choice when it comes to home lighting and from not having enough infor-



Improving the comfort of your eyes could be as simple as changing a light bulb.

mation to make an informed decision. Luckily, manufacturers are taking steps to improve lighting quality and help guide consumers in their search for comfortable light that's easy on the eyes.

For example, Signify has defined specific lighting quality parameters, which take into account factors such as flicker, strobe, glare and dimming effects that can affect one's eye comfort. Consumers can look for an EyeComfort label on product packaging to identify the Philips LED light bulbs that meet the standards for quality lighting that's easy on the eyes.

To further protect your eyes and avoid discomfort, try the following:

- If you are in front of screens (computers, smartphones, televisions) for extended periods of time, close your eyes for 20 seconds or more, every 20 minutes, to allow them to relax.
- If outdoors, wear sunglasses with 100 percent UV protection to help protect your eyes from the sun. It's helpful to keep a pair in your bag or car, so they are always nearby. Also consider spending a bit more time in natural light and less in artificial light.
- Exercise and strengthen

your eyes by incorporating simple, yet effective eye yoga exercises into your daily routine for a few minutes daily.

- Schedule regular check-ups with an eye specialist, who will be able to detect the first signs of any eye condition or disease.

While certain eye conditions are beyond one's control, why not do what's in your power to protect your family from eyestrain and related discomfort? The simple DIY project of upgrading your home lighting can mean happier, healthier eyes and better quality of life.

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Budgeting home improvement projects

Home improvements can add value and aesthetic appeal to a home. However, to reap the rewards of a remodeled room, home addition or any home improvement project, homeowners will have to invest both their money and their time. Establishing a project budget can be helpful and prevent overspending. According to Visually, a marketing information service, nearly half of the homeowners surveyed said the cost of their renovation projects did not exceed their budgets. However, more than one-third of those surveyed reported going over budget on their projects. To keep costs down, consider hiring a contractor. He or she will have industry contacts and may be able to get materials at a lower cost. While you will pay for labor, working with a contractor greatly reduces both the time spent on the project and the risk of costly mistakes being made. In addition, think about the way you finance the renovations. Industry experts have found that homeowners who finance their home improvement projects with lines of credit end up spending more money on average than those who use their savings to fund

projects. While it may be tempting to take out a line of credit for a home improvement project,

spending only money you already have may be the more responsible route to take.

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