

Repair bare spots in the lawn

Caring for a lawn to keep it lush and green can require equal measures of patience and hard work. Various invaders can attack grass or contribute to its demise. One problem many homeowners face is bare spots.

Bare spots can occur for various reasons. Heavy foot traffic, grubs or other pests, fungi, pet urine, or too much or too little water can contribute to bare spots. The how-to resource The Spruce says that correcting the source of bare spots can prevent new issues, particularly if grubs or other pests are damaging the grass. Then homeowners can address existing bare areas.

It is unlikely that bare spots will just fill back in on their own. Reseeding spots or using sod to fill in bare areas can help lawns look lush.

- Begin by raking and removing any dead grass and other debris from the lawn. Check to make sure that grubs or insects are not attacking the lawn. If they are, use targeted treatment options for those pests.

- Break up and aerate any soil that is compacted in the bare spot.



- Amend the soil in the bare area with loamy soil or compost to improve on the nutritional makeup and texture so that it is amenable to grass-growing. If you notice that the entire lawn is looking a little sparse, top-dressing the rest of the lawn at this point also can help improve its vitality.

- Sprinkle seeds in the bare spot (disperse seeds over the rest of the lawn if you want to over-seed and improve the thickness of the lawn). If you prefer sod, cut a portion of the sod to fit the bare area and place on the amended soil.

- The Scotts company says to lightly water newly seeded or sodded areas daily for at least two

weeks to keep the top inch of soil consistently moist but not soggy. Gradually water more as the seedlings develop and the grass begins to fill in. Deep water at least once or twice a week after the new grass reaches mowing height.

- The grass should grow slightly longer than the rest of the lawn, and wait until the color of the patched area begins to blend in with the rest of the lawn before mowing. This could take a few weeks, and the area should be avoided until then.

Eventually, and with treatment, bare spots can be remedied and become indistinguishable from other areas of the lawn.

How to establish a home renovation budget

Homeowners know that the next home renovation project is always right around the corner. And that means finding ways to finance such undertakings.

When planning for renovations, the average homeowner underestimates their project cost by approximately 22 percent, according to the 2026 Remodeling Impact Report. Establishing a pre-project budget can help avoid such surprises.

Don't over-improve

A common mistake homeowners make is over-improving a home beyond the neighborhood value. A good rule of thumb is to employ the average percentage-of-home-value approach in an effort to stay within range of what's acceptable. Budget a kitchen renovation or finished basement at 10 to 15 percent of the home value. A master bedroom will come in at 5 to 10 percent of home value, while a small bedroom or office falls between 1 and 3 percent of home value. These benchmarks are supported by the National Association of the Remodeling Industry and the National Association of Realtors. Historically, a functional, modern kitchen is the top driver of home value, says Remodeling Magazine.

Learn the breakdown

Homeowners should understand that materials, fixtures, appliances, and flooring, otherwise known as "hard costs," will eat up

50 to 60 percent of their renovation budgets. Labor, permits and design fees will comprise the next largest chunk, typically coming in between 25 and 35 percent. Homeowners also should factor about 15 to 20 percent of a budget to a safety net to cover unforeseen expenses, like mold remediation or structural issues.

Get three quotes

It's important for homeowners to get several estimates before establishing a budget. Experts advise working with contractors that offer fixed-price contracts rather than those that list time and materials; otherwise, there may be a mid-project price hike that comes out of the blue. A person also can ask contractors for a line-item bid so it's possible to see where money can be trimmed through different material choices. With a list of desired items in hand, and acceptable substitutions if the cost comes in too high, homeowners can create a budget that works.

Saving versus splurging

It's important for home-

owners to be realistic about their renovations. They can splurge on items that are seen or touched every day, like door handles, cabinet pulls and faucets. Other items, like lighting fixtures or backsplashes, can be replaced down the road. It may be better to direct funds to structural elements or those "invisible renovations" like upgrading insulation or smart systems that save on energy costs and improve efficiency.

Keep a 20 percent cushion

Homeowners can determine the affordability if a proposed project ends up costing 20 percent more or takes a few months longer. If the answer is no, homeowners should scale back the project budget until they have that financial safety net. Alliant Credit Union says experts strongly recommend adding a 20 percent contingency cushion to a remodeling budget.

A home remodeling project is a big commitment of time and money. Budgeting correctly ensures that there are few, if any, surprises along the way.



The TurfMutt Foundation Shares Six Tips for Boosting Curb Appeal This Spring

As the ground thaws and the real estate market heats up, the TurfMutt Foundation, which advocates for the care and use of backyards, public parks, school yards and other green spaces, urges homeowners to "green up" their property to maximize resale value. First impressions are everything, and that starts at the curb.

"Your yard is no longer just a pretty face. It's meaningful," says Kris Kiser, President & CEO of the TurfMutt Foundation. "Home buyers are looking for a well-maintained outdoor space that's purposeful whether that's for kids' play space, entertaining or other uses. Your landscape significantly impacts a buyer's perception of the entire property and neighborhood."

The financial incentive is clear. Recent real estate data shows that high curb appeal can increase a home's value by an average of seven percent, while sophisticated landscaping can boost that premium to as much as 15 to 20 percent. In some markets, sellers see more than a 200 percent return on investment just due to basic lawn maintenance, making it one of the most cost-effective ways to drive up a final sale price.

To help homeowners win over buyers, the TurfMutt Foundation shares these important tips:

- Think Like a Buyer: Step across the street and look at your home with fresh eyes. Do you see an inviting yard, or one that comes with a big "to-do" list? Be honest with yourself, make a list of things that need attention, then make a plan and get to work.

- Clean Up Winter Debris: Don't underestimate the value of a simple yard clean-up. Removing dead limbs and clearing out matted leaves is the fastest way to show potential buyers that your home has been well-maintained.

- Care for the Yard: A freshly mowed lawn, neatly trimmed edges and pruned bushes act as a frame for your home, making the entire property look more inviting to potential buyers.

- Add Fresh Mulch: A fresh layer of mulch around trees and in flower beds is a low-cost face lift for your yard. It suppresses weeds and provides a finish that pops in listing photos.

- Create a Vision: Show buyers how they can use the outdoor space to enhance their lifestyle. Set an outdoor dining table, string lights under a shade tree, or set up chairs around a clean firepit.

- Plant with Purpose: Plant colorful flowers (using the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map to decide which ones are best for your microclimate) to add visual impact that also feed pollinators. If it's too soon to add flowers to your beds, use containers to create a "move-in-ready" vibe.

"And always bear nature in mind," adds Kiser. "Know your climate zone and make sure your landscape choices are appropriate for where you live. Remember your yard is a habitat. Plant for pollinators and wildlife."

For more tips about creating purposeful living landscapes and the many benefits of the green space around us, visit TurfMutt.com.

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