

How to add shade to a deck or patio

Homeowners eagerly await the arrival of the warm weather so they can cast off the remnants of cabin fever and bask in the sunshine. However, as summer nears its dog days, the same sun homeowners once coveted can contribute to uncomfortable conditions in outdoor entertaining spaces.

Meteorologists at WHAS11 in Kentucky took to their neighborhoods in July 2020 to test just how hot surfaces can get in the sun during peak daytime temperatures. Concrete sitting in the sun almost all day reached a temperature of 134.7 F, while the same concrete in the shade clocked in at just under 80 F. When air temperatures are around 90 F, unshaded concrete and asphalt can be 125 F and 140 F, respectively. While wood decking may not be as hot as asphalt and concrete, it still can get steamy underfoot.

Homeowners who want to be able to enjoy their outdoor spaces in an array of temperatures can think about investing in shade solutions. Sun-blocking ideas like awnings, shade trees and large umbrellas can help people enjoy their yards all day long.

- **Canopy:** A patio canopy is typically a freestanding unit that can be installed over a patio or a deck. Some people prefer to bolt it down so it will not be knocked over in windy conditions. The fabric on the canopy can be removed during the offseason, helping to improve its longevity.

- **Awning:** Awnings may be stationary or retractable. Many are installed directly onto a home and can cast shade on specific areas of outdoor entertaining spaces.

- **Shade sail:** Similar to an awning but a bit less structurally rigid, shade sails are large pieces of triangular fabric installed over areas of a patio, pool or landscape, according to The Family Handyman. Shade sails are light and airy and can be customized.

- **Trees:** A natural way to increase shade in a yard is to plant more shade trees. If sun glare is an issue all year long, and it's not just the heat of the sun that is troublesome, think about planting evergreen trees. Deciduous cousins will drop their leaves in fall and only be effective during the warm weather.

- **Patio umbrellas:** Many umbrellas start at around \$25. Umbrellas can be paired with patio tables, while stationary cantilever umbrellas sit out of the way on their own heavy-duty stands. A cantilever umbrella tends to provide more shade than patio table umbrellas.

- **Curtains:** Homeowners can block sunlight outdoors the way they do inside, offers MSN. Hang curtains from the sides of canopies or between posts on a deck to provide shade and cozy spaces.

Shade is in high demand when the sun is hot. Options abound for making outdoor areas more comfortable.

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Home buying during the COVID-19 outbreak

Homeowners know that the process of buying a home can be both exciting and nerve-racking. The anxiety associated with buying a home has hit new heights during the outbreak of the novel coronavirus COVID-19.

Historically low interest rates and limited inventory has made 2020 an especially unique time to buy a home. It's also a competitive and potentially expensive time to buy a home. While the economic consequences of COVID-19 have been severe, the Federal National Mortgage Association, also known as Fannie Mae, forecasted a significant increase in median home prices in March 2020. City dwellers have scrambled to buy homes outside of cities, where social distancing is more difficult and the risk of getting COVID-19 appears greater than it is in suburban or rural settings. That's led to a lot of competition among prospective buyers.

Prospective home buyers willing to enter the hectic fray and shop for a home during the COVID-19 outbreak may benefit from knowing what to expect as they search for their next home.

- **Get ready for virtual tours.** Buyers might once have scoffed at the notion of buying a home they'd only seen in videos, but virtual tours have become the new normal in the wake of the pandemic. An April survey from the National Association of Realtors® found that home tours had declined sharply. While 98 percent of realtors reported taking clients on home tours as recently as February, that number had declined to 63 percent by April. As many regions pause their reopening plans, prospective home buyers should ready themselves for virtual tours as opposed to in-person home tours.

- **Expect limited inventory.** While home prices are up, many people are holding onto their homes. The NAR reports that total housing inventory at the end of May 2020 was down nearly 19 percent from the end of May 2019. Buyers will have less inventory to choose from, so those intent on buying may need to prioritize what they need in a home and focus on finding properties that can fulfill those needs.

- **Expect to move quickly.** Realtors have seen homes sell within days of being listed, and that has put pressure on buyers to move quickly. It also highlights the importance of finding a home inspector before your search begins as well as a lender who can handle quick closings. Ask around for recommendations, but make sure you have these two important professionals lined up before beginning your search. Doing so will give you a better chance of buying in an unusual time.

- **Make the best down payment you can afford.** A high down payment makes buyers look better no matter the state of the economy. An offer with a high down payment looks like a stronger offer, and that can make the difference between winning and losing a potential bidding war.

Buying a home during the COVID-19 outbreak presents some unique challenges to prospective buyers.

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How to prevent slips and falls in the bathroom

Bathrooms can serve as sanctuaries, providing a warm tub to soak in after a long, weary day or a private place to retire for a few minutes of peace and quiet. Bathrooms also can be dangerous places, as various groups warn that most slip and fall accidents that occur at home will happen in the bathroom.

The combination of hard surfaces and moisture from sinks and showers can create dangerous conditions. Furthermore, bathrooms tend to be small spaces, so should a fall occur, it's more likely a person will hit various surfaces on the way down.

The risk of falling in a bathroom increases with age. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, seniors over age 65 have a 25 percent chance of falling in the bathroom. Seniors generally have less flexibility and balance than younger people, meaning falls can be life-threatening. Bones easily can become fractured and internal bleeding may occur in serious cases. Bathrooms can be made more safe in a few simple ways.

- Keep the bathtub clean. Soap residue or other grime can contribute to slippery conditions in the shower and tub. Cleaning these surfaces frequently can improve traction.

- Declutter the space. Remove extraneous items from the bathroom that can pose as tripping hazards.

- Choose the right bath mat. Bath mats can contribute to slips and falls. For those who cannot live without them, choose a mat with slip-resistant backings and add double-faced tape for added security.

- Limit moisture. Use a weighted shower curtain or install shower doors to prevent water from getting on the floor. Mop up any water or additional condensation to help dry the bathroom. Install an exhaust fan to help vent moisture that can condense and accumulate on the floor and fixtures.

- Improve bathroom lighting. Make sure lighting in the bathroom illuminates all areas.

- Wear non-slip shoes. Wearing non-slip shoes when in the bathroom can reduce the chances of slipping on wet floors.

- Install a walk-in shower or bathtub. These lipless fixtures can assist those who have difficulty entering a standard tub or shower. Grab bars also can help with maneuvering in and out of the shower area.

- Use a raised toilet seat. A raised toilet, or one with a special seat that reduces the distance one has to go to reach a seated position, may help prevent falls.

Any individual with a health condition that causes vision disturbances or difficulties with balance should work with a doctor to find a resolution. These conditions may contribute to falls.

TF211631

Lawn watering and fertilizing techniques

A lush, green lawn is a sight to behold. Many variables are involved in growing and maintaining grass, and water and fertilizer are among the most important components.

Knowing how much water and fertilizer to apply and when to apply it can make a big difference in the appearance and health of a lawn. That's because a well-fed and watered lawn will develop a better root system, which makes the lawn less vulnerable to stressors like drought, mowing, foot traffic, and heat.

Fertilize

There is no magic formula governing when to fertilize a lawn. The type of grass and how well-established a lawn is must be considered. Experts suggest having the soil tested to determine its pH levels and if any nutrients are lacking. A fertilizing schedule can then be developed after testing.

Keep in mind that overfeeding a lawn will not make it grow any better and actually can damage the turf. Several small applications of fertilizer during the lawn's most active growing period may be helpful, advises the home improvement resource Tools Around the House. An annual application (late spring for warm-season grass or fall for cool-season grass) may be all that's needed.

Certain fertilizers need to be applied and watered in. Others may be combined with weed-control products and must be set on top of damp grass. Read packaging to determine the right application.

Water

The right watering schedule and techniques can help a lawn thrive. Adjusting for climate and nature can help grass to grow strongly. A lawn that has a grayish cast or appears dull green is telling an owner that it needs water. Another test is to step on the lawn. If footprints disappear quickly, the grass blades have enough moisture to spring back.

Water the lawn in the morning before 10 a.m. when it's cooler and the winds tend to be calm so that the water can soak in. For those who must water at night, do so in early evening so that the water can dry before nightfall and will not contribute to disease.

Water an established lawn until the top six to eight inches of soil is wet. Most lawns need one to 1.5 inches of water per week from rain or a hose to soak the soil that deeply.

Newly established lawns may require more water to keep the soil moist but not soggy.

Visit a lawn care center for more information on watering the type of lawn for your area.

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Eight steps for a successful evacuation plan

No one wants to envision a catastrophic event suddenly wreaking havoc on their home or business. While the thought may be unpleasant, it is vital that homeowners and business owners develop evacuation plans to ensure everyone gets out safely should disaster strike.

Ready.gov, an emergency preparedness site sponsored by the United States government, notes that there are many kinds of emergencies that can result in evacuation. Fires, storms and floods may require evacuation. Travelers Insurance notes it is essential to develop a plan to get out of a home or other structure on short notice, and that such plans must be in place and noted before individuals find themselves in emergency situations.

1. Learn which types of disasters are likely in the area where you live or work. Investigate community and local shelter plans for each disaster.
 2. Check with local officials to determine if shelters are currently available. COVID-19 may have altered community or city ordinances for shelter usage and other evacuation plans.
 3. Identify where everyone can go in the event of an evacuation. Have a few alternative lodging plans in place, including the homes of family and friends in another town or city, a hotel, or a shelter. Store the phone numbers for these locations in your phone or write them down in a readily accessible notebook with other important information.
 4. Designate a meeting spot outside of a home or business that is a safe distance from the building. Each family member or work associate should know to report to that meeting spot so everyone can reassess their options together.
 5. Pack "go bags" that include key materials pertinent to you. In addition, pack a first aid kit, bottled water, flashlights, cherished photos, identification/travel documents, wills/deeds, banking documents, and a laptop.
 6. The Insurance Information Institute advises taking a home inventory in the event that you need to apply for disaster aid or file an insurance claim. Store this inventory with other important paperwork, and make a digital copy to store on a cloud service.
 7. Check in with an out-of-area family member or contact so that others know your plan.
 8. Conduct a real time test to get out of the building. Aim for evacuating in just 10 minutes with family and belongings. Don't forget to include pets in evacuation tests.
- Evacuation plans may never be called into action, but they are an important component of disaster preparation.

TF211589

How to address mold after a flood

Floods can quickly turn lives upside down. According to the World Health Organization, more than two billion people were affected by floods between 1998 and 2017, and those people no doubt recognize just how unsettling floods can be.

The damage caused by flooding can linger long after water levels have subsided. Mold left in the wake of a flood poses a significant threat, and WebMD notes that mold can be especially dangerous for people with respiratory issues like allergies or asthma. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, one of the organization's chief concerns was to let those affected by the storm learn how to safely clean up mold.

Mold cleanup must be done with a sense of urgency, as WebMD indicates that mold can grow very quickly in damp environments. That said, it's vital that homeowners only reenter flooded properties when it's safe to do so. Reentering too quickly and before government officials say it's safe to do so can put residents in serious jeopardy.

Once it's safe to reenter a home, the CDC recommends the following approach to address mold after a flood.

- Wear personal protective equipment. Gloves, masks and goggles should be worn to protect the eyes, nose, mouth, and skin. While personal protective equipment can be highly effective, anyone with mold allergies or pre-existing respiratory conditions like asthma should leave mold cleanup to the professionals.
 - Discard certain items. Items that are wet with flood water but cannot be cleaned and completely dried within 24 to 48 hours should be discarded. People with flood insurance policies may need to take photos of items prior to discarding them if they hope to be reimbursed.
 - Open doors and windows. The Federal Emergency Management Agency notes that airing the home out by opening the doors and windows can inhibit mold growth when humidity levels are lower outside than inside.
 - Circulate air around the house. If it's safe to turn the electricity back on, circulate air inside the home with fans. In addition, use a dehumidifier to remove moisture from inside the home.
 - Do not mix cleaning products. The CDC notes the dangers associated with mixing cleaning products. For example, mixing bleach with ammonia can produce toxic vapors.
 - Scrub surfaces. Use clean water and detergent to remove all visible mold from surfaces around the house. Dry the surfaces immediately after cleaning them.
 - Avoid refurbishing until all mold has been removed. Mold can grow even if it's been painted or caulked over. The CDC urges anyone tasked with addressing flood-related mold to make sure surfaces are completely cleaned and dried prior to refurbishing rooms.
 - Dry the home as quickly as possible. Drying the home as quickly as possible, and ideally within 24 to 48 hours of the occurrence of flooding, can inhibit further mold growth. However, it's imperative that residents only reenter a home after getting the go-ahead from local authorities.
- A safe and quick response to flood-related mold growth can prevent illness and further damage to a home.

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Renovation trends that figure to be popular in the year ahead

Home renovation trends are ever-changing. Renovations that might have been de rigueur 20 years ago may seem dated now. Recognizing the potentially popular trends of tomorrow is a great way for homeowners to give their homes a fresh new look and put themselves in position to capitalize on popular trends when they put their homes on the market. That's especially so after 2020, a year when millions of people spent more time at home than ever before. All that time working from home and relaxing at home gave millions of homeowners ideas about what they like about their homes and what they hope to change. The following are some renovation trends that various experts suspect could emerge in 2021.

- **Eco-friendly living:** Climate change, and how to combat it, was a hot button issue during the 2020 presidential election in the United States. So it should come as no surprise that urdesignmag.com, a web magazine that showcases creative trends in design, architecture, art, technology, and fashion, predicts that eco-friendly living solutions figure to be hot commodities in 2021. Eco-friendly appliances, furniture and designs can help to conserve energy and reduce waste, which environmentalists and government agencies like



the Environmental Protection Agency note are two critical components in the fight against climate change.

- **Large windows:** Large windows can provide stunning views of the outdoors and allow ample natural light into a home. It may not be a coincidence if large windows prove to be a hot trend in 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic that dominated much of 2020 forced many people to spend considerably more time at home. Darker homes without much natural light can adversely affect mood, especially when people are spending more time at home. HGTV predicts that homeowners will seek ways to bring more natural light into their homes in 2021, and large windows naturally brighten homes while making rooms appear bigger, helping people feel less cramped. That's an especially beneficial characteristic when spending more time indoors at home.

- **Minimalism:** The anticipated popularity of minimalism in 2021 may also be connected to the pandemic. As professionals were forced to work from home and many families spent more time together inside their homes than ever before, they may have recognized a need to cut back on clutter, including extra furniture. A minimalist approach is both simple and clean, which can make homes feel less claustrophobic.

- **Multi-functional spaces:** Homeowners asked a lot of their homes in 2020, as rooms were transformed into multi-functional spaces seemingly overnight. HGTV notes that spending more time at home showed homeowners that it may not make sense to dedicate entire rooms of a home to a single purpose. Renovations that can help homeowners transform rooms into multi-functional spaces figure to be hot commodities in the years ahead.

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Signs your gutters are in need of repair

Spring is a great time to tackle projects around the house. The weather each spring allows homeowners to make improvements to their homes' exteriors without worrying about extreme heat or cold, while interior projects like painting are made easier because homeowners can open the windows to allow for proper ventilation.

Spring also marks a great time to prepare for upcoming projects that can make summer work that much easier. For example, spring is a great time to take stock of your gutters so you can address any issues. Compromised gutters can contribute to water issues in basements and adversely affect a home's foundation if not addressed immediately, so it behooves homeowners to learn the signs that gutters are in need of repair or replacement.

• Gutter hanging off the home: Gutters were once installed predominantly with spikes.



However, many industry professionals now install gutters with hanger brackets. Why the change? Spikes loosen over time, leading to the gutters hanging off the home. That can contribute to serious issues if left untreated. Gutters hanging off the home need not necessarily be replaced, but rather secured to the home, ideally with hanger brackets instead of spikes. Brackets hook into the front of the gutter and are then screwed into the fascia of a home. A professional who specializes in gutter repair can perform this task relatively quickly, and it's an inexpensive yet highly effective solution.

• Gutter separation: Gutters that are no longer fastened together can leak and contribute to issues that affect the home's foundation, siding and appearance. Clogs and the accumulation of debris can cause gutters to separate because they are not designed to hold too much weight. Replacement of separated gutters may or may not be necessary

depending on how big the problem is and the condition of the existing gutters. If replacement is not necessary, separated gutters may be remedied by securing the joints, another relatively simple and inexpensive fix.

• Peeling exterior paint: Paint that appears to be peeling off of your home may indicate that water is seeping over the edge of the gutter closest to your home. When that happens, water is coming down the side of the house, causing the paint to peel. In such instances, replacing the gutters is often necessary.

• Basement flooding: Not all signs of deteriorating gutters are outside a home. Many a homeowner has been flummoxed by flooding in their basements, and such flooding can be caused by aging, ineffective gutters. That's because deteriorating gutters sometimes allow water to leak near the foundation of a home, contributing to basement flooding.

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The average timelines for popular renovation projects

Home renovation projects are significant undertakings. Working with skilled and experienced contractors can ensure projects go smoothly and are completed promptly. Timing is a big consideration for homeowners as they begin renovating their homes, and the home improvement experts at HomeAdvisor note that the following are some general timelines for popular renovation projects.

- **Home addition:** Short of a full-scale demolition and rebuild, home additions are the most time-consuming projects homeowners can undertake. HomeAdvisor notes that its survey of customers who recently completed home addition projects reported that the average time from start to finish was between three and four months. Certain variables, including the scale of the project and the local permits process, can extend the time it takes to complete a home addition.
- **Kitchen remodel:** Scale is a big factor to consider when estimating the time it takes to complete various home improvement projects, and kitchen remodels are no exception. Some HomeAdvisor users reported projects taking as long as four months, though the average time reported was roughly six weeks. Projects that require major overhauls like rearranging the plumbing and moving walls will likely take longer than more cosmetic projects that are limited to replacing cabinets and countertops.
- **Bathroom remodel:** More than 1,000 homeowners surveyed by HomeAdvisor reported that bathroom remodels took about 4.5 weeks from start to finish. Small-scale remodels that focus on painting the walls a fresh color and replacing existing tiles can be completed in less than two weeks. But like with kitchen remodels, bathroom remodels that involve replacing plumbing fixtures and removing walls figure to take much longer than that.
- **Siding installation:** HomeAdvisor users report that new siding projects take roughly two weeks from start to finish. That estimate is the same regardless of which materials homeowners are replacing and installing.
- **Replacement windows:** Homeowners who want to replace all the windows in their home can expect such a project to take roughly three weeks. HomeAdvisor notes that such a timeline need not concern homeowners worried that they will be forced to brave the elements during the length of the project. Much of a contractor's time during a window replacement project will be spent on upfront measuring and then ensuring a tight fit once the windows have been installed.

SH212667



Common causes of house fires

According to the Consumer Products Safety Commission, roughly 25,000 home fires causing more than 300 deaths occur in the United States each year. Homeowners can keep themselves and their families safe by being aware of the dangers around a home that can contribute to house fires and the preventive measures that can reduce the risk for such fires. According to the National Fire Protection Association, the following are the most common factors that can lead to fires around the house.

- **Cooking accidents:** It can take mere seconds for grease splatters or an overheated pan or pot to cause a fire. Stay in the kitchen at all times when cooking.
- **Heaters:** Have furnaces and other heating appliances regularly inspected. Keep portable heaters away from anything that can burn, including curtains and furniture. Do not leave portable heaters running while you are sleeping or out of the home.
- **Smoking:** Smoking inside a home can lead to fires. Some people forget to extinguish the smoke or embers may fall, while butts may smoulder for hours before causing flames to form.
- **Washers and dryers:** Between 2010 and 2014, American fire departments responded to an estimated 15,970 home fires involving clothes dryers or washing machines each year. Mechanical or electrical failure or malfunction was involved in the vast majority of home fires involving washing machines. Failure to clean dryers also can cause fires to ignite.
- **Candles:** Candles can add ambiance to a room and are commonly used in decorations, but they also can be a fire hazard. Candles easily can be knocked over by children, pets and others. Do not leave candles lit and unattended.

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Six signs that it's time for a new roof

BY TAMI YOUNG
YOUNG CONSTRUCTION

A well-maintained roof is an essential part of your home in Iowa. It protects the structure, keeps your family safe, and also plays a role in the overall appearance of your home. Over time, even the toughest roofing systems deteriorate and at this point, the services of the best residential roofing contractors become necessary for roof replacement.

Making the decision to replace a roof is not easy and you have to be sure it is the right call. The following signs are enough to tell you it's time for a new roof. Take a look:

Algae and Mold Growth

Algae and mold are warning signs that your roof needs fast replacement to continue performing. It is indicative of a big problem underneath and, if not quickly remedied, can lead to roof collapse. The best Iowa roofing contractors have prerequisite tools to carry out a roof inspection and determine the extent damage.

Visible Sagging

A saggy roof is a disaster waiting to happen and you have to work fast to avert such danger. The underlying problems, in this case, could be a moisture leak, deterioration due to aging, structural damage, or even rot.

Leaky Ceilings

If you notice persistent leaks in your ceiling despite numerous roof repairs, it is time to upgrade your roof. Owens Corning roofing systems are among the top preferred replacement options for older roofs.

Buckling, Curling or Missing Shingles

Exposure to the elements affects the performance of the roofing system when shingles fall off, curl or buckle. Replacing damaged and missing shingles early, will save you huge repairs in the future.

Rising Energy Bills

A damaged roof doesn't fully insulate against heat and cold leading to a spike in

energy bills. If you notice this, it is time to consider a roof replacement.

Significant Weather Event

Your home's roof is the first line of defense for your home against adverse weather. When there's a storm, hurricane, hailstorm or other such significant weather events, your roof can suffer damage necessitating repairs. A licensed roof contractor will carry out a thorough roof inspection and give a detailed report recommending repairs or replacement. After such extensive roof damage, it is advisable to replace the entire roof and upgrade to a more durable roofing system.

During a roof replacement project, you should consider durable, stylish, and energy efficient systems such as Decra stone coated metal roofing or any other roofing option your contractor recommends.

Home improvement and the pandemic

The pandemic has helped our company—Young Construction—learn, grow, and optimize this past year. We have noticed a spike in homeowners wanting to repair and enhance their homes. When people were locked down for weeks on end—they started to understand the value in investing in their home. Home improvement spending has been on a steady rise and that creates a demand in our industry. Stimulus checks have fostered the ability to afford much needed roof repairs, new roofs, insulating, and more.

High material cost paired with low shingle inventory has caused a headache across the nation. Our company has been proactive prior to and during the pandemic to ensure our customers get the best priced material possible with quick delivery times. As an Owens Corning Platinum Preferred Contractor and Malarkey Emerald Pro Contractor, we are a trusted, reliable contractor.

Because of this proactive approach, when the Derecho went through Iowa we were ready to help our Cedar Rapids market at the blink of an eye. This storm happening in the middle of a pandemic was less than ideal. People are focusing on their family, their homes, and their well-being.

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Shade trees that can make yards more comfortable

Various factors motivate the decisions homeowners make when designing their landscapes. Some may be motivated by the ways additions will affect the resale value of their homes, while others may be guided by a love for a particular type of plant. Comfort is yet another motivator, and shade trees can make yards more comfortable as the mercury rises. According to the Arbor Day Foundation, the following are some popular shade trees that can add beauty to a landscape and make it more comfortable come the dog days of summer.

- **Quaking aspen:** The quaking aspen has the widest natural range of any tree in North America, spanning 47 degrees of latitude, 110 degrees of longitude (nine time zones) and elevations from sea level to timberline. That impressive range is no doubt why the United States Forest Service notes that the quaking aspen can grow in greatly diverse regions, environments and communities.

- **Northern catalpa:** The Arbor Day Foundation notes that the northern catalpa is easily identifiable thanks to its heart-shaped leaves and twisting trunks and branches. Nature enthusiasts, and particularly those who enjoy birdwatching, may be happy to learn that the flowers of the catalpa are frequently visited by hummingbirds.

- **Red sunset maple:** Its name alone makes many people think of lazy summer days spent lounging in the yard. The red sunset maple provides ample shade and comes with the added benefit of producing an awe-inspiring blend of red and orange leaves come the fall. Red sunset maples can survive in a range of habitats and their adaptable roots means they can thrive in various soil types.

- **Northern red oak:** The state tree of New Jersey, the northern red oak is, according to the Arbor Day Foundation, both beloved for its aesthetic appeal and valued for its adaptability and usefulness. Northern red oaks can tolerate urban conditions, but they do not do well in hot climates.

- **Sawtooth oak:** Another tree that produces some awe-inspiring color, the sawtooth oak is a durable, adaptable shade tree. Golden yellow leaves in the spring will give way to dark green in summer, only to turn yellow and golden brown in the fall. The Tree Center Plant Supply Co. notes that the sawtooth oak can thrive in warmer climates where shade trees that can coexist with high temperatures can be hard to find.

Shade trees can add beauty to a property and make a yard more comfortable. Homeowners are urged to discuss shade trees with a local lawn and garden professional prior to planting.

GT214823

Prevent pet-related damage to the house

The benefits of having a pet are innumerable. Pets can be companions, protectors, service animals, and even help produce products that can be sold, such as eggs from chickens. While there are many positive attributes to pets, one potential concern is the impact they have on the home.

Pet-related damage can occur when pets are angry or happy. Boisterous animals may scratch or claw at furniture and floors. Some animals may climb or chew. Woodwork and furniture can be damaged by pet paws and teeth, but that's not where it ends. The following are some potential pet-damage problems and how to avoid them.

Marking

Many animals use scent markers to establish their territory and communicate with other animals. As a result, both male and female pets may spray urine in certain areas of the house. While it may not eliminate the problem immediately, making sure to neuter or spay cats and dogs can reduce the likelihood that they'll mark indoors or attempt to seek out and mate with feral animals they smell canvassing the property.

Accidents

In addition to marking, pets that have not been properly trained or were trained and are experiencing a behavioral or medical issue may begin soiling in improper areas, such as outside of the litter box or in the home. Obedience training can head off some issues, but if a medical condition is suspected, consult with a veterinarian promptly.

Dirt, fur and more

An investment in regular grooming can help keep certain damage at bay, states Home Advisor. Regularly brushing and trimming coats, keeping nails clipped and bathing will keep a home fresh and minimize damage. Other pets may not be groomed but require cleaning of cages or other habitats. Bird droppings and feathers can get on surfaces. Cleaning daily or very frequently can help keep a home tidy.

Provide toys and scratching posts

Pets need an outlet to tame anxiety and energy. If they don't have suitable outlets, pets may cause damage to a home. Cats will take to furniture to stretch their paws if they don't have scratching posts or special mats. Dogs, particularly puppies, can be orally fixated. When the urge to chew sets in, unless there are appropriate chew toys, furniture, moldings and other items around the house may become fair game.

It is important to note that declawing a cat to prevent damage should not be a consideration. It is a surgery that can cause ongoing health problems. Nail caps can be used as a safe alternative.

Escape artists

In some cases, pets may chew or scratch their way through doors and window screens. Others may dig under fencing or climb, leaving damage in their wake. Boredom, anxiety or lack of training may be behind these behaviors, according to Pets Weekly. However, the urge to roam also may be tied to pets not being fixed. Work with the vet or a trainer to help stop these issues.

Pets can cause damage around the house. But certain strategies can help decrease the likelihood that pets cause damage around the house.

PE20B437

DID YOU KNOW?

Dog owners often find that having a fenced-in space gives pets an opportunity to run around off-leash and enjoy time outdoors and can make it easier for pets to go out on bathroom breaks. Still, pet owners must recognize that inquisitive dogs can get into trouble even in seemingly safe yards. One potential danger is ingestion of potentially toxic mushrooms. It is essential for homeowners to check their yards for mushrooms all year long, but especially during wet springs and in the fall. Mushrooms can pop up overnight. Depending on the type of mushroom and the size of the dog, ingesting even a small amount can result in gastrointestinal distress or more dire circumstances, like liver failure. Certain mushrooms give off a fishy smell and they may entice dogs who are prone to indiscriminate eating. According to the animal care resource Preventative Vet, signs of mushroom toxicity include vomiting, salivating, yellowing of the skin and "whites of eyes," coma, seizures, and loss of balance. Other dogs may experience diarrhea or refuse to eat. Any pet owner who has suspected a dog has eaten wild mushrooms should consult a veterinarian. Early treatment can help and prevent more serious organ damage or death. Pet owners who cannot trust their dogs unattended in the yard should bring their pups out on leashes or keep careful watch on them while they're outdoors.

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Don't miss a beat during a power outage

Short-term power outages can be a minor inconvenience. A long-term power outage can cause a major disruption to daily life.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration's Annual Electric Power Industry Report says interruptions in electric service vary by frequency and duration across the many electric distribution systems that serve the country. In 2016, the most recent year for data, customers experienced an average of 1.3 interruptions and went without power for around four hours.

When a storm strikes or an accident knocks out electric power lines or other infrastructure, it may take much longer for power to be restored. During Superstorm Sandy in 2012, more than eight million people lost power and outages lasted for days in some major cities. Outlying areas were without power for weeks, according to National Geographic. It's important to know how to handle a power outage to keep everyone safe and comfortable until power can be restored.

Invest in a generator

If you live in an area that is affected by frequent power outages, a power generator may prove a worthwhile investment. Generators come in two basic types. A portable generator can be rolled into place and uses gasoline as fuel. Plug in a set number of household items, depending on the amount of power the appliance can accommodate. A whole-house generator can be hard-wired to a home's electrical system and automatically engage should a power outage occur.

Prepare in advance

In anticipation of a power outage, stock up on battery-powered devices like flashlights, lanterns and radios. Charge mobile phones and other devices so they're at 100 percent power.

Keep a cache of nonperishable food available and plan to use any perishable items that are in the refrigerator first. A refrigerator can keep food cold for about four hours after power has ceased, states Ready.gov, while a freezer can keep the temperature for about 48



hours if full. Packing these appliances with ice or frozen bottles of water can help.

Purchase books, board games and puzzles to have activities to pass the time until power resumes.

During a power outage

Report the power outage to the power company if it seems localized; otherwise, wait for updates to see who is affected.

Try to remain cool or warm if the HVAC system is not functioning. Pool resources by having everyone in the family gather in one room of the house. Older adults and children are especially vulnerable to extreme temperatures.

Maintain food supplies that do not require refrigeration, including two gallons of bottled water per individual. People who take refrigerated medications should only ingest drugs that have been at room temperature until a new supply is available, advises the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Power outages routinely occur and require planning and safety precautions until power is restored.

TF211600

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DID YOU KNOW?

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, nearly 400 people are electrocuted in the United States each year. Many of those electrocutions occur in people's own homes. In fact, the Electrical Safety Foundation International notes that wiring hazards, including damaged or exposed wiring and household wiring, accounted for roughly 14 percent of all electrocution deaths. Such figures underscore the importance that homeowners must place on electrical safety in and around their homes. Emphasizing electrical safety could greatly reduce the risk of injury and accidents, including home fires. The ESFI notes that electrical malfunctions are the leading cause of the largest fires reported to United States fire departments. Properly maintaining home electrical systems and taking steps to reduce accidents around the house can help homeowners feel more secure in their homes.

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Stay safe when working in the yard this spring and summer

A day spent working in the yard is an ideal way to pass the time on spring and summer afternoons. A pristine landscape can add value to a property and instill pride in homeowners who put a lot of thought and effort into their lawns and gardens.

A sun-soaked day can make it easy to overlook potential threats when working in a lawn or garden. But safety precautions are of the utmost necessity when working in the yard, where the risk for serious injury is considerable. For example, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons reports that, in 2016, more than 90,000 patients, including nearly 5,000 children, were treated in hospital emergency rooms for lawn mower-related injuries.

Lawn- and garden-related injuries can be prevented without going to great lengths.

- Know your terrain before mowing. Knowing the terrain in your own yard can reduce the risk for accident or injury. This can be especially important when mowing the lawn with a riding mower. Adhere to manufacturers' recommendations regarding inclines to reduce tip-over accidents that can pin riders beneath the mower. Study hilly areas of the yard prior to mowing so you know which areas are safe to mow with a riding mower and which areas are best mowed with a walk-behind mower. For greater control when using a walk-behind mower on an incline, mow parallel to the slope.

- Apply and reapply sunscreen. Sunburns may not require trips to the emergency room, but they can still be serious. In fact, the Skin Cancer Foundation notes that sunburn is a leading cause in the majority of cases of basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma, which is the deadliest form of skin cancer. The SCF recommends applying sunscreen 30 minutes before going outside to allow the sunscreen to bond to your skin. Reapply sunscreen at least every two hours, and more often if you're sweating excessively. The SCF recommends broad spectrum sunscreens, which protect the skin from both UVA and UVB rays. Though a product with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 is acceptable when walking the dog or driving to work, the SCF advises using a product with an SPF of 30 or higher when engaging in extended outdoor activities like gardening or mowing.

- Employ the buddy system. Use the buddy system when pruning tall trees or performing any tasks that require a ladder. The Orthopedic Institute of Pennsylvania reports that more than 164,000 people are injured each year falling off a ladder. Ask a significant other or neighbor to hold the ladder in place while you climb up to reduce your risk of falling. If cutting large branches, cut them piecemeal to reduce the risk of



being injured by heavy falling branches.

- Inspect the property for insect hives. The OIP notes that the most common insect stings in spring come from bees, wasps and hornets. Homeowners who are not careful can inadvertently come across hives when doing spring cleanup, making them vulnerable to bites and stings. That can be very dangerous for anyone, and especially so for people with a history of allergic reactions to insect bites or stings. Inspect areas where you'll be working to make sure insects haven't put down roots in your property. If you discover any hives and are hesitant to remove them on your own, contact a local landscaping firm.

Lawn and garden accidents and injuries can be serious. Thankfully, accidents and injuries are easily prevented when homeowners take a few simple safety precautions while tending to their lawns and gardens.

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