

# Fall

# HOME IMPROVEMENT

A Norwich and Sidney Pennysavers Publication | November 2, 2021

## Issue Three

- How to design a fitness room at home
- Must-have kitchen remodel features
- What causes curled shingles?



# Winterize To Safeguard Your Home From Harsh Weather

Autumn is a beautiful time of year marked by welcoming cooler temperatures and the natural beauty of leaves changing colors. Autumn also has a tendency to fly by, as if the powerful weather of winter simply cannot wait to make its presence felt.

With such a seemingly short time between the end of summer and the dawn of winter, homeowners know they don't have too many weekends in between to prepare their homes for the potentially harsh months ahead. But such preparation, often referred to as "winterizing," can make a home more comfortable when the mercury dips below freezing, while saving homeowners substantial amounts of money along the way.

- Clean the gutters. Leaves falling in fall can be a beautiful sight to behold, but many of those leaves are likely finding their way into your gutters, where they can lodge and cause a host of problems down the road. If the leaves and additional debris, such as twigs and dirt, that pile up in your gutters are not cleared out before the first winter storm, the results can be costly and even catastrophic.

Winter rain and snowfall needs a place to go upon hitting your roof, and gutters facilitate the travel of such precipitation from your roof into street-level drainage systems. If gutters are backed up with leaves and other debris, then ice dams may form, forcing water to seep in through the roof. That damage can be costly and can even cause the roof to collapse inward in areas with heavy snowfall. Clean gutters throughout the fall, especially if your property has many trees, and be sure to check gutters one last time before the arrival of winter.

- Tend to your attic. Homeowners who have attics in their homes might want to add some extra insulation up there, especially those who recall feeling cold inside their homes last winter, which is often a telltale sign of improper insulation in a home. A good rule of thumb when determining if your attic needs more insulation is to look for the ceiling joists. If you can see the joists, then you need more insulation.

- Address leaky windows and doors. Sometimes attic insulation is not the

culprit when it comes to a cold home. Oftentimes, leaky windows and doors are the real bad guys in a drafty home. Fall is a great time to inspect for leaky windows and doors, as the wind outside can serve as your partner. When the wind outside is blowing, take a tour of your home's windows and doorways, standing next to them to determine if there any holes or leaks that are letting outdoor air inside. If you notice any leaks beneath exterior doors, install some door sweeps to keep outdoor air where it belongs. Leaks around windows can be snuffed out with caulk or weather stripping.

- Test the furnace. Homeowners typically do not devote much thought to their furnaces in spring, summer and fall. But with winter on the horizon, fall is the time to test the furnace to make sure it's ready for the months ahead. Expect a somewhat foul yet brief odor to appear when starting the furnace. That odor should dissipate shortly, but if it does not go away, then your furnace is likely in need of repair. But even if the smell does not stick around, you might want to have the furnace cleaned by a professional anyway. Such cleanings ensure the furnace works efficiently throughout the winter.

- Clean the garage. You might not mind parking in the driveway during the warmer months of the year, but why subject your vehicles to harsh winter weather if you don't have to? Clean the garage in the fall so you have an indoor parking spot throughout the winter season. Protecting your car from the elements can add years to its life and also saves you the trouble of digging your car out of the snow.

Fall is a time of year for homeowners to spend a weekend or two preparing their homes for the often harsh weather that awaits when winter arrives.

FH149472



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# Caring for kitchen countertops

Kitchen remodels are a popular home improvement project that help homeowners recoup large percentages of their initial investments at resale. A kitchen remodel can invigorate a home and make the most popular room in the house more functional.

According to HomeAdvisor, a home-improvement informational guide, homeowners spend an average of \$22,000 on kitchen remodels. However, lavish projects can cost more than \$50,000. Protecting such investments is important and requires that homeowners understand how to properly maintain kitchen features so they have the longest life possible. This includes the new countertops that make the kitchen look complete.

Countertops come in various materials, not all of which should be treated the same way. Quartz, granite, marble, laminate, and tile countertops require different types of maintenance.

## Quartz

Engineered quartz countertops are popular. Quartz countertops are nearly maintenance-free and resistant to stains, scratches and even heat. Quartz will not need to be sealed like natural stone and can be cleaned using just a damp cloth with a mild, nonabrasive soap.

## Granite

Polished or honed granite countertops offer a high-end look that adds instant value to a kitchen. Natural variations in granite give each kitchen a custom look. To keep granite countertops clean, avoid abrasive cleansers that can scratch, and opt for warm, soapy water instead. Stains are possible, but can

be remedied with a baking soda paste left to sit for a couple of hours, advises Angie's List. Wipe up oils, acids and soda promptly to avoid stains, and follow advised sealing routines.

## Marble

Marble is a natural stone that is porous and will need to be resealed periodically. Because marble has high levels of the mineral calcite, it can be reactive when acids come in contact with it, and etch marks may appear. Promptly wipe away tomato juice, lemon juice, perfume, or toothpaste. Marble is softer than granite and will wear at a faster rate. Avoid scratching and exercise caution when using knives or sharp objects around marble.

## Laminate

One of the more budget-friendly materials, laminate countertops can be fabricated to mimic the look of natural stone, wood or even quartz. Laminate is less resistant to damage than other materials and will need a gentle touch. Formica® says to never use abrasive cleansers, scouring pads or steel wool when cleaning laminate countertops. For tough stains, an all-purpose cleaner should suffice when applied with a nylon-bristled brush. Test any cleanser in a discreet area first.

## Tile

Cleaning tile countertops requires getting into crevices along the grout lines. A toothbrush and a mildew-fighting cleaner or bleach diluted with water is advised. Also, unglazed tiles need to be sealed yearly. Some soap may leave residue, which can be removed with a solution of vinegar and water. Check with the manufacturer or installer of the countertops to learn more about the ways to clean and maintain new counters. FH188186



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# How to design a fitness room at home

People exercise for many different reasons. Exercise can improve one's appearance, reduce the risk for illness, alleviate stress or anxiety, and even help pass some time. Exercise is often a social activity, but in the wake of social distancing guidelines issue in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, many people have found themselves looking for ways to exercise at home.

**A home gym space will likely not be as expansive as the space inside a traditional fitness center.**

Building a home fitness room has never been a more timely project, and such a project can continue to provide rewards even when life returns to some semblance of normalcy. Here's how to successfully stock a home gym.

- Find a dedicated space. A home gym will be limited by the amount of

space that can be devoted to workouts. Possible fitness room locations include a spare bedroom, a garage, a basement, or an enclosed patio. Measure the space so you can pick and choose equipment that will fit. Leave some floor space empty for movement exercises or mat activities.

- Keep the space bright. Darkness can sap energy levels, so invest in mirrors and adequate overhead lighting to make the space inviting. Natural light can make the exercise area more enjoyable.
- Consider the flooring. New flooring can protect against damage and make an area more conducive to working out. Rubber mats can offset

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echoes and reduce the noise of running on a treadmill or setting down heavy weights.

- Use space-saving equipment. A home gym space will likely not be as expansive as the space inside a traditional fitness center. Thankfully, many activities do not require a lot of space or equipment. Classic exercises like squats, lunges, push ups, and sit ups require little gear but still produce results. Figure out which equipment you like the most and invest in two or three key pieces. Dumbbells of various weights, a medicine ball and a yoga mat can be all you need to create a versatile, effective workout. A TRX system and a door-mounted pull-up bar also are great space-saving options.

- Have a TV hookup. A home gym may benefit from a smart TV that you can use to stream workout videos or catch up on the latest news while running the treadmill or using the stationary bike.

A home gym is beneficial year-round, and can be especially valuable when social distancing guidelines are put in place. TF207075



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# Must-have kitchen remodel features

Homeowners looking to renovate often see room for improvement in their kitchens and bathrooms. The National Association of Home Builder's Remodeling Market Index Survey, which measures conditions in the remodeling market, indicates that, in 2015, the two most common remodeling jobs were bathroom remodels (81 percent) and kitchen remodels (79 percent). According to HGTV and Statistics Brain, a new kitchen remodel for a kitchen measuring 12 by 12 feet may cost homeowners anywhere from \$17,000 to \$37,000.

Before investing so much into their remodeling projects, homeowners should think carefully about the features that will improve their time spent at home. When planning a kitchen renovation, homeowners may want to consider the following upgrades to make the room more enjoyable while improving its functionality.

### Oversized sink

Although high-efficiency dishwashers are popular, deep sinks to soak soup pots or woks are still useful. Deep sinks may be preferable to double sinks, especially for homeowners who use lots of kitchen tools when preparing meals.

### Soft-closing hinges

When replacing cabinets (or just the hardware), consider installing soft-closing hinges and slides on doors and drawers. These devices eliminate slamming and caught fingers, reducing noise and injuries in the kitchen.

### Foot-pedal water operation

When outfitting a sink, think about foot controls, which are popular in doctors' offices and hospitals. Turning on the water with the tap of a foot can

reduce the transfer of pathogens to faucets from hands during food preparation. These pedals also free up hands for other tasks.

### Bottom's up

People likely spend more time raiding the refrigerator than the freezer on any given day. Rather than having to bend down to seek out that favorite flavor of Greek yogurt, choose a model with the fridge on top and freezer on the bottom, especially if anyone in the household has mobility issues. When shopping for refrigerators, French-door style units may offer even more access, making it easy for homeowners to slide fruit trays, sheet cakes and other large items into the fridge.



### Extra lighting

A kitchen should be a balance of form and function. A combination of overhead lighting, decorative lighting and task lighting can illuminate all areas of the space effectively.

### Appliance garages

Architectural and design resource Houzz says that appliance garages are popular kitchen additions, too. Set at countertop level, these cabinets allow people to keep small appliances plugged in but tucked neatly behind closed doors.

Kitchen remodels are a sizable investment, and renovations can be customized to make the kitchen more hospitable for all in residence. FH178195

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# What is sweating a pipe?

Copper plumbing long has been a standard in home construction. Anyone who has a home with copper pipes should have an understanding of how to make repairs in the case of a leak or if modifications need to be made. “Sweating pipes” is one term homeowners may hear when maintaining their

**The acid in the flux attracts the solder into the seam between the two copper pieces and fills the gap while creating a semi-permanent bond between the pieces.**

- Clean the end of the copper pipe with a cleaning brush until the surface is bright all around. In addition, clean the inside of all fittings.
- Brush plumbing flux on the brushed surfaces and assemble the joint. The how-to resource Hunker says flux is an acidic paste applied to all of the

pipes.

Sweating a pipe refers to soldering a pipe or the joint. Sweating seals a new joint or mends a fault. When sweating a pipe, it is important to do the job correctly so that a soldered pipe can last for years and years. PlanItDIY, a source for how-to advice, says that sweating pipes involves some key steps.

- Cut the pipes to the right length using a copper tube cutter or hacksaw.
- Use a file or wire brush to remove burrs and smooth down the ends.



pieces of copper that you want to connect together. The flux paste will draw in the solder after the pipe is heated using a blow torch. The acid in the flux attracts the solder into the seam between the two copper pieces and fills the gap while creating a semi-permanent bond between the pieces.

- To create the seal, move the flame around the joint to heat it evenly. The copper will get shiny, and the flux will melt. When the pipe begins to dull and the flux sizzles and smokes, it is time to apply solder. Touch lead-free plumbing solder to the joint and apply more heat.
- The sweating process is finished when the solder bubbles out of the end of the seam. Let cool and the joint should now be water-tight.

Sweating pipes gets easier with practice. DIYers who are nervous about plumbing projects that involve sweating can be reassured there are connection products available that are used in lieu of flux and solder. These push-to-connect fittings seal joints as well.

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# What to do when a project stalls

Upon embarking on a home improvement project, homeowners who have never before lived through such undertakings are often told to expect their projects to take more time than initial estimates suggested. Unforeseen complications can compromise project timelines, and some homeowners may find their projects stuck in neutral.

Stalled projects can make life at home difficult, and homeowners may feel helpless with regard to getting a project back on course. But there are ways for homeowners to get stalled projects back on course.

- Start off on solid financial footing. It's important that homeowners who want to upgrade their homes enter the home improvement process with a realistic grasp of their finances. Many home improvement projects stall when homeowners run out of money. Homeowners can avoid such unfortunate situations by only beginning a project they know they can afford. Whether funding a project with a loan or savings or a combination of both, homeowners should make an honest assessment of what they can afford to commit to a given project. If the amount of money available does not add up to the estimated cost of the project, delay the project now or you might be facing a stalled project down the road.

- Honestly assess whether or not you can finish the job. Do-it-yourselfers may have the abilities to complete a project, but they should not let their pride get in the way of their ultimate goal, which is the completion of the project. In addition to money, time or lack thereof, is often the culprit behind stalled projects. Homeowners with full-time jobs, families or both may not be able to find the time to complete a job in a timely fashion. If the project has been stuck in neutral and no sudden windfall of free time is on the horizon, start contacting contractors to finish the job for you.

- Ask for help.

There's no shame in asking for help to complete a project. Some homeowners may underestimate the scope of a project until it's too late. Asking family, friends or neighbors for help might be the only way to get a stalled project back on track. Certain home improvement projects may not require advanced skills, and even friends or family with little or no home improvement experience can pitch in to complete such projects. When more advanced projects stall, homeowners may want to hire contractors to complete the work. If budgets have not left much room for hiring a contractor, homeowners can perform some of the labor on their own.

- Be mindful of permits. Some home improvement projects require permits, and these permits often have expiration dates. Homeowners must keep permits in mind when projects start to stall, recognizing that they may need to reapply for permits if projects go unfinished for especially long periods of time.

Stalled home improvement projects can be a nightmare. But homeowners can address such delays in various ways to get projects back on track. FH178262



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# What causes curled shingles?

No homeowner wants to look at the exterior of his or her home and see roof damage. Such damage may lead homeowners to think they need a new roof, a potentially costly expense that can quickly throw household budgets into a state of disarray.

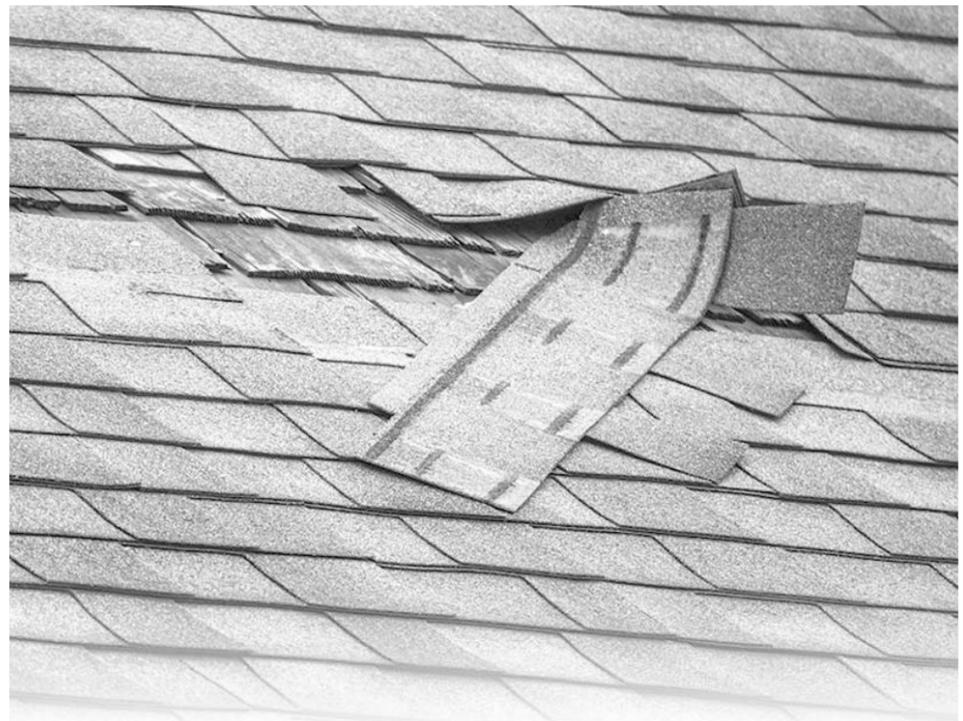
**Homeowners with attics in their home may see curled shingles on their roofs because moisture is building up in their poorly ventilated attics.**

According to the HomeAdvisor, the average homeowner spends a little more than \$7,600 installing a new roof. Various factors, including the size of a home and the type of roof homeowners prefer, will affect the cost of a roof replacement. In addition, homeowners who see roof damage can rest assured that not all roof problems

will necessarily require a replacement roof to be installed.

Curled shingles are a problem many homeowners have encountered. This particular problem is not always indicative that a roof is on its way out. In fact, the home improvement resource This Old House notes that, as asphalt shingles age, their corners often begin to curl downward or upward. Homeowners who notice this early enough can glue down the curled section of each shingle that's beginning to curl.

Some shingles may be curling because they're defective. Fortified Roofing, a



New Jersey-based roofing company that specializes in the repairing and replacing of various roofing configurations, advises homeowners to contact a local roofing professional to diagnose the cause of the curling. Doing so quickly can prevent curled shingles from contributing to more widespread damage.

Moisture and poor ventilation may be contributing to curled shingles as well. Homeowners with attics in their home may see curled shingles on their roofs because moisture is building up in their poorly ventilated attics. In addition to causing damage such as curled shingles, a poorly ventilated attic allows moisture to build up, potentially contributing to mold growth. Mold presents a host of additional problems, including some that can adversely affect the health of a home's inhabitants.

Improper roof installation also may be the culprit behind curled shingles. When a roof is not installed correctly, shingles may not be aligned or nailed down in the right way. This might be what's causing shingles to curl on recently installed roofs.

Curled shingles are unsightly and can pose a significant threat to a home if not addressed promptly. Homeowners can protect themselves and their roofs by working with skilled roofing professionals, who can diagnose issues like curled shingles and offer the right solutions. FH198134



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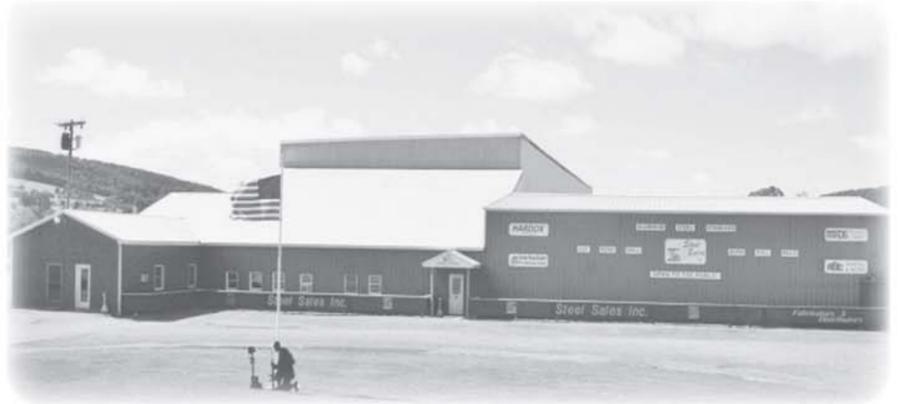
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# Things to consider before warming up next to your first fire this winter

A warm fire can make even the coldest winter day more enjoyable. Fireplaces may not get much use in spring or summer, but come late fall and throughout the winter, the fireplace can be a great place for families to gather.

Before fireplace season hits full swing, homeowners might want to brush up on a few fireplace facts so they can safely enjoy nights spent sitting by the crackling flames.

The Chimney Safety Institute of America advises homeowners with fireplaces to hire a CSIA-certified chimney sweep to clean their fireplaces. After a lengthy period of non-use, various issues could be affecting the chimney, many of which might not be noticeable to an untrained eye. Professional, certified chimney sweeps have extensive knowledge of fireplaces, making them valuable resources who can let homeowners know if any safety issues developed since fireplaces were last used. The National Protection Agency recommends that chimneys be swept at least once per year.

A full inspection of the chimney might be in order as well. Chimney service technicians will conduct thorough examinations of readily accessible portions of the chimney exterior and interior and accessible portions of the appliance and the chimney connection. The CSIA recommends that homeowners who plan to use their chimneys as they have in the past request a Level 1 inspection, which will examine the soundness of the chimney structure and flue as well as the basic appliance installation and connections. Technicians also will verify if the chimney is free of obstruction and combustible deposits.

Homeowners also should inspect their chimney dampers before lighting their first fires of the season. Dampers should open and close smoothly. If

not, a service technician can help fix or replace the damper.

Firewood is another thing homeowners must consider before lighting their first fires of the season. The CSIA says that well-seasoned firewood works best, noting that wood that is not well-seasoned will produce more smoke than heat. In addition, the home improvement resource This Old House recommends using dense wood that's been split and stored in a high and dry place for at least six months. Oak is an example of dense wood that, when stored properly, can



make for an enjoyable fireplace experience. Avoid softwoods like pine. Pine can produce a lot of creosote, which is a byproduct of wood combustion. Creosote is highly flammable, and as it builds up in a chimney, the risk for a chimney fire increases. Choosing the right wood, making sure it's well-seasoned and having a chimney professionally cleaned can reduce the risk of a creosote-related chimney fire. A Level 1 inspection should determine if there are potentially dangerous levels of creosote deposits in the chimney. Before nestling up to a fireplace this winter, homeowners should consider a host of factors and safety measures to ensure their fireplaces are safe and ready for the season ahead. TF199248

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# Improve entertaining spaces

Some homes are seemingly built for entertaining, while others may need a little help to make them more fit for hosting dinner, holiday gatherings or an evening with friends.

Overall, one-quarter of people entertain guests in their home either daily or weekly across the globe. One-third entertain monthly, according to findings from GFK Insights.

People who open their homes to loved ones may want to make some modifications to their spaces to improve the experience for all involved.

- Tame the clutter. Look for ways to reduce clutter in rooms where entertaining takes place. Built-ins with bookshelves and cabinets can hide electronics and wayward toys or collectibles. Focus attention on the entryway, hanging hooks for collecting coats, keys and shoes, so they do not overrun the foyer. Remove any knickknacks or other breakable items from shelves or on coffee tables to free up more space.

- Improve conversation seating. Arrange tables and chairs to create conversation nooks for guests who want to talk and get to know one another better. Consider moving out big and bulky sofas in favor of love seats or comfortable chairs that will take up less room and improve flow in entertaining areas.

- Find the pieces you like. Think about how you tend to entertain and then cater your space to those preferences. For example, a large dining table with fold-out extensions or leaves is ideal for someone who regularly hosts formal dinner parties. Renovate a room to include a



small bar and club chairs for a lounge feel if cocktail parties are typical.

- Improve lighting. Work with an electrician and/or designer who can offer ideas for lighting that can set the mood for entertaining. Rooms that are dull and dim can benefit from overhead lighting fixtures if there are none already available. Task lighting in the kitchen under cabinets can make it easy to prepare food for guests. Wall sconces or focused lighting on artwork can establish a dramatic effect.

- Do major construction. Consider working with a builder to make some changes if you simply don't have the space to entertain. Taking down a wall can open kitchens to living spaces, while adding a deck or three-season room off the kitchen or dining room can provide more space for guests to congregate.

- Install a guest bath. Update or add a bathroom near the main entertaining areas. This allows guests to discretely use the bathroom and keeps them from roaming in areas of the house you would prefer they avoid. DE18B418

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  - #2 – milky color plastic jugs & bottles = #2 HDPE Natural
  - #5 – tubs = #5 PP
  - all metal food & drink cans = Tin Cans
  - clear glass food & drink containers = Clear Glass
  - most wine bottles = Green Glass
  - most beer/yeast bottles = Brown Glass
  - junk mail/magazines/paper = Junk Mail
  - newspaper/pennysaver = Newsprint
  - cardboard boxes / kraft paper = Cardboard\*

\* *Waxy or plastic coated cardboard is garbage.*

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