

# Summer Home & Garden



# Join the LED Revolution

If you haven't switched your home light bulbs over to LEDs, there's no time like the present to start saving money and energy.

Ninety percent of the energy used by an incandescent light bulb is wasted heat and only 10 percent is used to deliver light, according to EnergyStar. The result, says EnergyStar, is "essentially lighting homes with small heaters."

There are now three more efficient bulbs that are widely available, according to EnergyStar: incandescent halogen, which is about 30 percent more efficient than incandescent; compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs), which are about 75 more efficient; and light emitting diode bulbs (LEDs), which are about 90 percent more efficient. For specialty products, traditional incandescent bulbs can still be found.

## LEDS: LEADING THE WAY

While LEDs had long been too pricey to be practical for many homeowners, they are now much more affordable and widely available. The result has been widespread adoption of these much more efficient alternatives to incandescent and fluorescent bulbs. Bulbs equivalent to 40- and 60-watt incandescent bulbs commonly used in homes cost about \$2 or less.

The first LEDs to hit store shelves back in 2007 were not ideal replacements for incandescent bulbs, with dim, cool blue light that disappointed consumers, according to EnergyStar. But today's bulbs come in brighter, warmer colors that are indistinguishable from incandescents when used



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in homes.

In a trend Goldman Sachs calls "one of the fastest technology shifts in human history," the global research firm expects LED bulb sales to jump from 1 percent of the market in 2010 to 95 percent by 2025. That number was estimated to hit 69 percent in 2020.

A Department of Energy report titled "Energy Savings Forecast of Solid-State Lighting in General Illumination Applications," was more

conservative, forecasting that by 2030, LED lighting will achieve a market share of 84 percent of the general illumination market. Even that scenario would save over \$26 billion at today's energy prices, the equivalent to the total energy consumption of nearly 24 million U.S. homes, according to the DOE.

## LOOK FOR REBATES

In order to spur consumers to adopt LED bulbs, utilities across the country

began offering rebates or subsidizing the cost of bulbs at local retailers. Check with your local utilities about the programs they offer to help offset the costs.

EnergyStar also urges consumers to think about the long-term savings they can achieve with LEDs. While a 60-watt EnergyStar-certified bulb might cost \$2 upfront, it can save \$6.15 in energy costs in one year of use, meaning it pays for itself in less than four months of use.

# Grow your Own Herbs

If fresh basil for pesto or cilantro for guacamole sounds like heaven, it might be time to plant your own herb garden.

It's no secret that cooking your own meals can save you money. According to Forbes Magazine, it's five times more expensive to order takeout and three times more expensive to use a meal kit service. So if you're already tying on an apron to save money, why not save a little more by growing your own herbs — not to mention kick up the flavor of your dishes?

That doesn't mean you have to dedicate a patch of ground to herb gardening and spend your days tilling, weeding and pruning. You can tend a small raised bed or grow your herbs in pots with other plants, and they're relatively easy to grow.

## THE GARDENING BASICS

As with any plant, you'll want to consider an herb's need for sunlight, soil and water. For this reason, The Spruce recommends planting herbs in pots or in flowerbeds with plants that need similar conditions.

Here are some tips from The Spruce for basic herb gardening:

- Aside from flowering herbs, most require basic soil without a lot of fertilizer or amendments;
- Most herbs prefer full sun — at least six hours a day;
- Water your herbs well, but be sure they have good drainage to prevent the roots rotting or becoming diseased; and

## PEST CONTROL

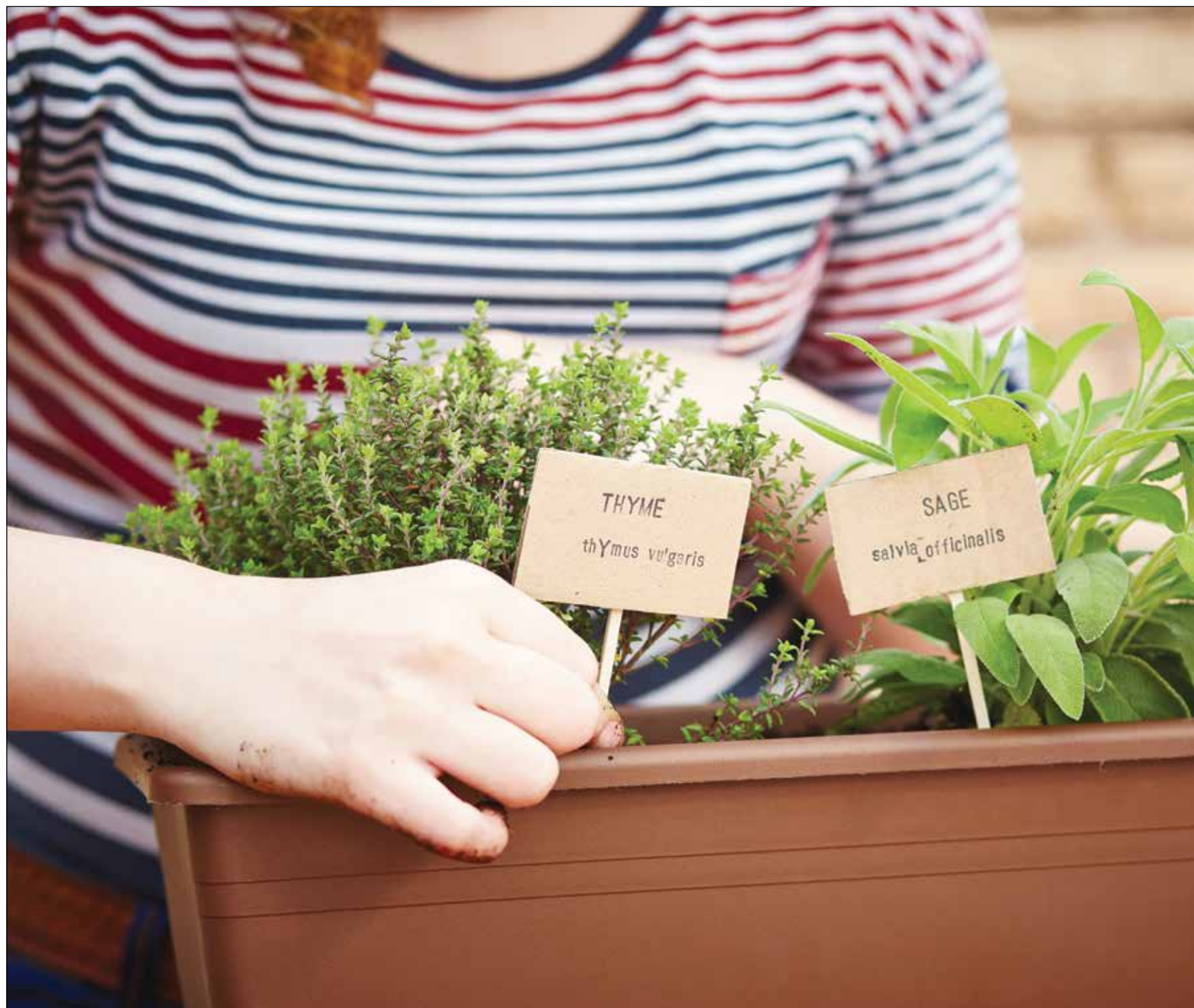
The scent herbs produce helps keep

them relatively safe from pests. Some herbs, in fact, can attract beneficial insects. For example, fennel, anise and dill attract lady bugs, dragonflies, lacewings and spiders. These predators kill garden pests such as mosquitoes, aphids, mites and mealybugs, according to the blog Redeem Your Ground.

## HARVESTING

Herbs should be harvested just before their flowers begin to unfurl, and an ideal time is in the morning, when their essential oils are most concentrated, according to Redeem Your Ground. The blog recommends, for most herbs, cutting up to one-

third of a stem at a spot just above where two leaves are growing. This also serves to prune the plant and encourage growth. If you find that you aren't cutting your herbs often to use them, be sure to prune them occasionally to encourage growth, The Spruce.



# Trend Alert: Dark Paint

Barely-there gray had its moment, but the newest thing in interior paint color is dramatic, dark tones that are anything but neutral.

## MOODY HUES

“Moody’ might not be what you want to hear when it comes to weather forecasts and the stock market, but when it comes to picking a paint color, the moodier the better!” proclaimed Better Homes & Gardens when it surveyed paint manufacturers’ 2019 color forecasts. “Rich, dark, and complex colors like chestnut brown, deep burgundy, and charcoal blue are considered moody because of their velvety appearance and complex undertones, which provide layers of rich depth that we don’t always see with traditional colors.”

Indeed these darker shades are all over design magazines and social media. This trend, however, is not a beginner-level endeavor. There is some nuance to getting it right.

## WINNING COMBINATIONS

A popular way to use darker paint tones is to combine them in ways that create an entirely new vibe in a room. Deep emerald green paired with deep mahogany furniture can create a forest feeling. Real Simple magazine featured a living room that blended multiple shades of black paired with



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plush furniture and rugs, as well as a jewel-toned room with sapphire walls and gold-trimmed accents. Bold paint makes for bold rooms, so be ready to make a statement.

## THE CHALLENGES

Dark paint colors are not

without their challenges. A dark room can feel smaller, and dark paint can be unforgiving, showing every stroke of the paintbrush or roller. Country Living offers the following tips to pull off this trend with ease.

- Start with small rooms to try out darker colors.

- If you’re concerned about a room seeming too small because of dark paint, use lighter furnishings and accents to balance it out.

- Paint the trim the same color as the walls, giving the appearance of added height. Add a mirror for the appear-

ance of more depth.

If you’re on the fence about committing to a dark color, HGTV recommends a large-scale trial. “Paint big sheets of cardboard and prop them up in the room in question. This gives you a better idea of what it’s going to look like.”

# Exterior Maintenance

With warmer temperatures comes the opportunity to get outdoors and do some home maintenance. With so much to do, it's easy to lose track of everything that needs attention.

Here are some reminders of your home's major components that might need a little attention at this time of year to be sure they are up to the job of keeping you safe and comfortable all year long.

## AIR CONDITIONING SERVICE

No one wants to be stuck with a broken air conditioner when it matters the most. Consider having a local heating and air company check out your system and provide service, if needed.

## CHIMNEY SERVICE

After a long winter of faithful service, your chimney might need some TLC. Annual inspection is recommended to prevent fire caused by creosote buildup. Depending on how often you use your fireplace, you might not need a sweep each year, but an inspection is crucial. Having it done during the off-season will mean the pros will be less busy.



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## CLEAN THE GRILL

If you like to fire up the backyard grill on a regular basis, it's probably in need of some attention. Empty charcoal grills of all debris. Use a spray grill cleaner, which will help dissolve any grease on the outside that can't be handled with soap and water.

For gas grills, Insurance Hub recommends turning the

heat on high for about a half hour, then using a brush to clean the grates. Clean drip trays.

## SMOKE DETECTORS

The U.S. Fire Administration recommends testing smoke detectors at least once a month and changing the batteries at least once or twice a year.

## WINDOWS AND SCREENS

Use hot, soapy water and a brush to remove debris from window screens. Give them a rinse and put them in the sun to dry before moving on to windows. FreshHome.com recommends a solution of one part hot water and one part vinegar applied with a sponge or squeegee, then drying with a rag.

## PORCH AND DECK

Sweep and mop the porch. Hammer any loose deck nails and check for rotting or areas that need resealing. Fortune Builders recommends spraying the deck with water and checking for areas that stay dark, meaning they've retained water. It's also a good time to pressure wash the deck to remove staining.

# Get a Green Clean

When it comes to getting our homes clean, Americans are increasingly going green.

According to the 2017 ShopperScape survey by Kantar Retail, 4.7 million consumers had purchased green products for only one year or less and 56 percent of U.S. primary household shoppers purchased natural and organic products in at least one category.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, when traditional chemical cleaning products are released into the environment during normal use, they can affect water quality and endanger aquatic species, affect indoor air quality and cause skin and eye irritation.

## FIND GREEN PRODUCTS

Both cleaning products manufacturers and the U.S. government have responded to demand for people looking for more natural ways to clean their homes. The United States Department of Agriculture's BioPreferred program certifies a wide range of products that are safer for the environment than traditional ones. Visit [www.biopreferred.gov](http://www.biopreferred.gov) for the list of household cleaning

products, including oven cleaners, sponges, dish soaps, laundry detergents, personal care and toiletries, products for babies and children — and much, more, including building materials, construction supplies, pet products, sporting goods and office supplies.

While it was once the case that one might need to find a specialty or health foods store or even an individual sales consultant to track down green cleaning supplies, they are now widely available at many local supermarkets. So there's a good chance that you can find a BioPreferred product or a comparable alternative available for purchase locally.

## DO IT YOURSELF

The great thing about going green with your cleaning is that it's incredibly affordable and easy to do DIY. We all appreciate a pre-made cleaner, but if you are willing to put in some minimal prep work, you can set yourself up for cleaning your home naturally in no time at all. Here are some formulations for basic cleaners, from Delaware Healthy Homes, that are up to the task of getting your home sparkling clean.

**All-purpose cleaner:** Mix 4 tablespoons of baking soda with 1 quart warm water.

**Disinfectant:** Mix 1/2 cup borax into 1

gallon of hot water.

**To clear clogs:** Pour 1/2 cup baking soda down drain, add 1/2 cup white vinegar, and cover the drain. The resulting chemical reaction can break fatty acids down into soap and glycerine, allowing the clog to wash down the drain. (Do not use this method after trying a commercial drain opener—the vinegar can react with the drain opener to create dangerous fumes.)

**Floor cleaner/polish:** Use a few drops of vinegar in cleaning water to remove soap traces. For vinyl or linoleum, add a capful of baby oil to the water to preserve and polish. For wood floors, apply a thin coat of oil and vinegar (in a one-to-one solution) and rub in well. For painted wooden floors, mix 1 teaspoon of washing soda into 1 gallon of hot water. For brick and stone tiles, use 1 cup white vinegar in 1 gallon of water and rinse with clear water.

**Bathroom tub and tile cleaner:** Rub in baking soda with a damp sponge and rinse or wipe with vinegar and follow with baking soda as a scouring powder.

**Window and glass cleaner:** Use a vinegar-and-water solution, cornstarch-vinegar-and-water solution, or lemon juice and water. Wipe with newspaper unless you are sensitive to the inks in newsprint. To avoid streaks, don't wash windows when the sun is shining.

# The Newest Smart Technology

In 2014, research firm Gartner predicted that a typical family home would contain more than 500 smart devices by 2022. It would seem we are well on our way.

Our doorbells, thermostats and vacuums have gotten smarter in the past decade. What's next on the list of home devices that will become smarter via the Internet of Things?

## APPLIANCES

Get ready to start preheating your oven in the car on the way home from the grocery store. Samsung is hooting for an entire line of IoT-ready appliances by 2020, and Sony, LG and others followed suite, according to Flux Magazine. Other possibilities include getting a text message when your laundry is done in the dryer or an alert that your refrigerator filter is due for a change.

## COMFORT

Imagine coming home from work and having your home pamper you. It might not be far from reality. Flux Magazine envisions programmable furniture that adjusts to your support preferences with the touch of a smartphone button. And according to the Daily Mail, patrons of a German bar are already being served by Carl the bartender — complete with small talk. It stands to reason that a robot could be serving us up drinks and listening to our problems at home in the foreseeable future.

## LIGHTENING THE LOAD

Pushing a mower around your lawn in the summer heat is no one's favorite



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chore. Enter Husqvarna's Automower. It's as if your robotic vacuum cleaner married your lawnmower, and Husqvarna promises "a carpet-like lawn by maintaining your grass rather than mowing it. Automower cuts just a

little grass at a time, naturally fertilizing the soil with minuscule clippings. As a result, your turf always looks neat, green and healthy." The mower can reportedly tackle multiple terrain, even in less-than-ideal weather, is safe

around kids and pets and has a built-in anti-theft alarm. It's controlled by a smartphone app and can be integrated with smart home systems. It comes in multiple sizes with capabilities of maintaining lawns from .4 to 1.24 acres.

# Exterior Design Trends

When updating your home's exterior, a classic aesthetic is always a winner. If you're looking for something a little more on-trend however, there are ways to achieve a modern look, from the paint to the siding to the accessories.

Here's a roundup of what's in when it comes to outside your home.

## DARK PAINT COLORS

Just as with indoor paint colors, exterior paint is going darker. Popular shades include deep-sea blues, deep burgundy, dark gray or even black on black. Black also is having a moment as an accent color on home exteriors, and not just for the shutters and front door but for larger sections of siding and trim. Bonus: A 2018 study by Zillow found that homes with black or charcoal front doors sold for about \$6,271 more than expected.

While a dark exterior is modern and dramatic, there are some drawbacks. Dark paint can show the inevitable dirt and stains a home will develop more easily, and the increased sun absorption could increase your cooling bills in the summer. Keep these drawbacks in mind when choosing these paint colors.

## SIDING SHAKEUP

While vinyl remains a popular siding choice, homeowners are increasingly choosing to mix up various types of siding on their homes. This includes stone, brick, steel, aluminum, wood, vinyl and fiber cement. It's not uncommon to see homes covered mostly with



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vinyl siding, with accents of shake or stone, often near the entrance. This allows these more expensive materials to have a big impact.

## BRINGING THE INDOORS OUT

When it comes to decorating your small patch of outdoors, what could be more comfortable than the same fur-

niture that's comfortable indoors? Sofas, loveseats and recliners are just the thing to set a comfortable scene on your patio. The trick, according to the San Antonio Express-News, is solution-dyed acrylic fabric. "This means the threads used to make the cushions are dyed throughout so they won't fade in the sun," explains the Express-News, noting that popular brands

include Sunbrella and Outdura, among others.

Another popular trend is to extend your interior color palette and decorating style to your home's exterior, making the space seem to flow seamlessly from indoors to out. For more indoor-outdoor blur, use fabrics such as curtains in outdoor spaces like patios and beneath pergolas.