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# SUMMER

## HOME & GARDEN

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# Set a Summer Table

In the same way we decorate the dinner table with a nice centerpiece, there are ways to make your patio table inviting for summer meals.

Whether you're having a simple family dinner on a weeknight or hosting guests, why not put a stylish touch on your outdoor dining table this season.

It can be as simple as a vase with fresh flowers or as involved as an all-weather runner with coordinating placemats, flower arrangements, glassware and linens.

## FROM THE GARDEN

Summer is a great time to use the bounty of the season in your centerpieces. Fill a tall vase with lemons or limes and add water, with matching fresh flowers on top. Slice the fruit for extra detail. A simple option is a cake stand or pedestal platter holding a selection of fresh, washed fruits.

## A NATURAL LOOK

Other ways to bring rustic, natural touches to your patio table are to use a simple jute or burlap runner, topped with a galvanized bucket planter filled with blooms. This pairs nicely with plain white tableware and simple glassware. Add plain white napkins tied with burlap string to com-



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plete the look.

Achieve a different natural-look centerpiece with a wood bottle carrier. Fill each compartment with a Mason jar or glass soda bottle filled with fresh flowers.

## GLAMOUR

For a glamorous look, place crystal bowls filled with fruit

down the length of the table.

Add crystal goblets and linens in jewel tones and crystal taper candle holders. Another chic look is a centerpiece made of a garland of lush greenery, accented with gold candle holders with white candles, glass goblets and matching green and white linens.

## KEEP IT SIMPLE

If you're just looking to punch up your meal a tad, buy jewel-toned glassware in an array of styles. Pair the glassware with simple white tableware and linens for a simple, colorful aesthetic. Another simple look is a plain glass vase with a few wide-stemmed flowers such as

white calla lily, paired with plain white tableware and linens.

If you do nothing else to spruce up your outdoor space, use a container you already have in your backyard — a galvanized watering can, a wood crate or a metal lantern — as a makeshift vase at the center of the table.

# Outdoor Storage Ideas



A plethora of multi-functional outdoor storage options have come on the market in the past few years, playing to consumers' need for pieces that make their outdoor spaces functional.

From pool accessories to garden supplies to outdoor dining necessities, an active outdoor lifestyle comes with a lot of gear. Keep it all tidy with a storage piece to suit your needs, or if you're handy, make your own.

## GARDEN SUPPLIES

An old hutch or a baby's changing table can be repurposed as a potting bench. If you have a garden shed, install a hanging canvas shoe rack on the door to store small garden tools and supplies, such as gloves and nippers. You can also install bathroom towel bars to the inside of the door to hold small tools by a hook.

## FOOD AND DRINK

A storage cabinet with a hutch can be converted into a bar and serving station. Use the lower drawers or shelves for storage, or remove a lower shelf to make room for a small refrigerator. Add a stemware rack in the top.

If you know some basic woodworking, HGTV offers a DIY tutorial for making a hanging bar from wood pallets at <https://bit.ly/2USxMtw>.

## POOL GEAR

Stand a wood pallet on its side to store tall pool supplies, such as pool noodles and skimmers. Add coat hooks to the front to hand wet towels and goggles. Use stackable, open plastic storage bins to round up small items, such as diving sticks and rings, floaties and small toys. To wrangle inflatable pool rings, install small flagpoles on the side of your house or shed. Keep clean pool towels at hand in wall-mounted bath towel holders.

## ADD STORAGE EVERYWHERE

When purchasing outdoor furniture items, look for storage features that can help the backyard tidy. Any existing outdoor piece can be turned into a place to store things, such as raised garden planters or beverage carts. Store extra patio furniture cushions under a coffee table. If you need extra outdoor seating, turn a sturdy solid wood bookcase on its side to make a storage bench, and add a cushion on the top.

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# Signs of Garden Pests

When all your care and hard work in the garden is bested by a pest, it can put a damper on your summer. It can also be challenging to spot the problem.



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If you think your plants are under siege, consider this list of common signs of pest problems to help find the culprit.

## LARGE HOLES IN LEAVES

Large holes in the foliage of a plant is a sure sign something has been helping itself to a taste. A common culprit is grasshoppers, which unfortunately travel in packs. They like to munch on grasses, lettuce, carrots, beans, corn and onion, according to TheSpruce.com. The website recommends introducing natural predators to grasshoppers, which include swallows, praying

mantis insects, small snakes and toads. Another natural solution is a garlic solution made by blending two cups of garlic with 10 cups of water, then boiling and letting the mixture sit overnight. Mix one part solution with three parts water, and use a spray bottle to wet plant leaves. This method works not just for grasshoppers but for other feeding insects, as well.

## SMALL HOLES IN LEAVES

Small holes in the middle of leaves can be a sign of a Japanese beetle infestation. The beetles chew a telltale lace-like pattern in leaves, and left

unchecked, they can do great harm to a plant. Adult beetles attack more than 300 kinds of plants, including roses, beans, grapes and raspberries, and are known to be hard to control. The most effective way to rid your garden of the beetles is to pick them by hand, according to the Old Farmer's Almanac. Traps can be effective but might attract beetles from your neighbors. Another strategy is attracting parasitic wasps and flies — natural predators of Japanese beetles — to your garden to attack the larvae, though this alone may not be enough to control the population.

## LEAVES THAT CURL UP AND FALL OFF

When leaves curl and fall off, aphids are often to blame. Aphids suck the moisture out of leaves, causing them to die. Home improvement pro Bob Vila offers a solution: a homemade insecticidal soap that controls the bugs without harming plants. To make it, mix a few teaspoons of liquid dish soap into one quart of water, then spray or wipe the solution onto the leaves, stems, and buds of the plant. An early warning sign of aphids can be frequent sightings of ladybugs, which love to feast on aphids.

# Conserve During Summer

There's no better time than summer to think about ways to conserve resources. Air conditioners get a workout and we're constantly watering our gardens and lawns, making it a great time to take stock of our habits and improve them.

Here's list of ways to make your home a bit greener this season.

**1. Install a rain barrel.** A rain barrel attaches to your home's gutters to collect runoff water from your roof, and repurpose the water that would otherwise be lost, for use in your garden, landscaping or even indoor plants. This can save thousands of gallons of water each year and reduce the amount of stormwater runoff that hits lakes and rivers, and reduce peak water demand. Some local governments make rain barrels available at an affordable price to help homeowners conserve. Check with your local forest preserve or other local government bodies, or buy a rain barrel commercially.

**2. Check for leaks in hoses.** Water hoses that leak simply waste water. The repairs can be inexpensive and save valuable water.

**3. Water wisely.** According to



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Iowa State University's extension service, the best time to water your lawn or garden is between 5 a.m. and 9 a.m. This allows the water to dry quickly, preventing fungal diseases, while avoiding rapid evaporation that happens when you water later in the day. Watering at night is not a good idea because the water will likely sit on the plant longer, leading to disease.

**4. Control indoor temperatures.** Keeping blinds and curtains drawn during the hottest part of the day can help keep your home cooler and reduce the workload on your air conditioner. Ditto for using ceiling fans, but be sure they are rotating counterclockwise.

**5. Lower your water heater temperature.** Heating water accounts for 18% of energy used in a home, according to

the Department of Energy. Reducing the temperature to the "warm" setting, (120 degrees Fahrenheit) can prevent burns and save energy.

**6. Tune up your AC.** At an average cost of \$100 to \$200, an air conditioner tune-up might seem like an expense you'd like to avoid. If your AC isn't running in its top form, however, you could be paying higher electric bills all summer.

Having it done once a year can also help you avoid costly repairs, which can reach into hundreds of dollars.

**7. Lighten up your bedding.** It might seem like common sense, but don't use the same bedding year-round. Opt for lighter blankets and sheets made of natural materials to keep you cooler in the summer and reduce the demand on your AC.

# Late Summer Exterior Jobs

When the weather is warm, consider catching up on outdoor maintenance projects. Late summer is a good time to tackle many of these jobs and be sure your home is ready to weather the winter.

**1. Check driveways, walkways and paths for cracks, loose pavers and settling.** Heat and humidity can be hard on them during summer months. Fill small cracks yourself, but contact a local pro to help remedy any bigger issues you notice.

**2. Check your trees, shrubs and plants for any issues.** Remove dead limbs and pull out dead shrubs. Address any brown patches in the lawn.

**3. Check windows for missing caulk and leaks.** Open all windows and inspect the frames and seals. Wash windows and screens.

**4. Late summer is a good time to prepare your pool gear for storage in the fall and winter.** Deflate inflatable toys, wash out face masks and be sure everything is put away dry.

**5. Inspect siding and other coverings for any needed repairs.** If you plan to repaint, tackle any prep work, such as repairs and sanding, before adding a new coat of paint.

**6. Check your deck or patio**



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**for any needed repairs.** If your deck needs to be resealed, now is the time. It will be better prepared for harsh winter conditions. Give the porch a good cleaning with a water hose.

**7. Inspect your roof to be sure it is in shape to face the winter.**

**8. Check rain gutters.** Late summer storms can put them to the test, so the time is now to be sure they are in good

shape.

**10. Have your chimney inspected to be sure it's operating properly.** This will give you time to complete any needed repairs before the weather turns cold and you

need it to be functional.

**11. Clean the grill.** If you've given your grill a workout during the summer months, it's a good idea to wash the grates and clean out the pit. Wipe down the outside.

# Choosing a Room AC Unit

If your home doesn't have central air conditioning, a room unit can help cool things off.

There are many available models to meet various needs, so you'll need to do some research to pick the right unit.

## NEW FEATURES

An EnergyStar-certified room air conditioner can cost less than \$75 per year to operate, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, with new variable speed technology saving more energy than in the past. EnergyStar-certified units include more sealing material around the opening than other models, to better keep cold air in. There are even models available with smart home-type features that allow the user to turn them on and off remotely, set temperature schedules and get information about how efficiently the unit is operating. Many units also are capable of "smart grid" features, allowing them to be cycled on and off by the power company to provide savings to the customer and conserve energy during peak demand.

## SIZING

The cooling capacity of



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room air conditioners is measured using British Thermal Units. Depending on the size of your room, your unit will need a minimum BTU rating. For example, a 200-square-foot room will require a unit with a minimum 6,000 BTU rating, while a 500-square-foot room will need 12,000 BTUs. Additional factors to consider in the calculations include whether the room

tends to be sunny or shaded, as well as how many people typically use the room and how the room is used. View the EPA's sizing guide at <https://bit.ly/2V10BUA> for tips on measuring the room and to calculate which size unit you need.

## DUCTLESS SYSTEMS

A ductless air conditioning unit is a wall-mounted unit

that uses an outdoor compressor. They are very efficient and less prone to air leakage, according to HGTV.com, and buying an EnergyStar-certified model can save 30% on cooling costs. Some models also can provide heat, as well.

Ductless AC units are, however, considerably more expensive than window units, making them a long-term investment for which you'll

have to wait to see a return in the form of lower energy bills. They also require monthly filter maintenance.

Ductless units are recommended for small new additions to a house or for adding AC to a house where none exists. This is because even with the added cost for the units, it still can be less expensive than running ductwork.

# Rent Out Your Home in Summer

If you tend to travel a lot during the summer, it might make sense to rent out your home to vacationers, particularly if you live in an area that attracts lots of summer tourists.

Doing so, however, is no small task, and there is a lot of legwork to do before making a decision to become a landlord.

## THE LAW

In many localities, zoning laws might prohibit you from renting out your home at all. This is the first thing you should check when weighing the renting option. It's also possible that your homeowner's or condo association rules prohibit offering the property for rent. Consult a real estate attorney about what's allowed and how to address any hurdles.

## THE MONEY

Renting out your home might sound lucrative when you look at the local competition's nightly rates. But there is a lot to consider to get the full financial picture. If you rent out the property for more than 14 days during the year, the Internal Revenue Service considers you to be a landlord and you will need to claim the income on your taxes. You also



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will likely have expenses that you haven't considered, such as paying a property management company or online listing service such as airbnb, advertising the property, keeping up on maintenance and making repairs. You also likely will not have a 100% occupancy rate, so check into the local market to find out how much

income to expect.

You'll also need to be sure your homeowner's insurance protects you from loss while renting, and if not, purchase additional coverage.

## THE PREP WORK

Renting out your home will likely require prep work, such as making any needed repairs

before listing, as well as buying necessities such as guest linens and cookware. You also will likely need to have professional photos taken. You also will want to find a reputable property management company to handle matters such as conducting background checks on renters and working up a good rental agreement

that protects you in case there is damage or fraud.

There is no way to foresee everything that could go wrong when converting your home to a part-time rental. Do your homework and make an informed decision about whether you are willing to take on risk for the potential reward of profit.