

YOUR HOME

JULY 2007

TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING



Outdoor Furniture Fixes

As the days get longer and the weather heats up, you'll want to take advantage of the season by entertaining outside as much as possible. Tables and chairs that have been exposed to the elements all winter will probably need a good cleaning and perhaps a few repairs. Here's advice for maintaining different types of outdoor furniture.

Good wood. Wood furniture should be kept under waterproof covers when not in use. To keep it in good shape, start off the season with a sealant such as teak oil for hardwood. If possible, don't stand wood legs directly on grass because the moisture from the ground can rot untreated wood. For ongoing maintenance, wipe down tables and chairs every two weeks or so with a cloth that's been wrung out from a solution of soapy wood cleaner.

Plastic fantastic. For resin furniture, guard against fading and brittleness from excessive heat and abrasive cleaners by washing with a mild all-purpose cleaner. When white plastic ages, it can yellow. If your furniture gets to this stage, you can use a mildly abrasive cleaner, which helps prevent black grime from getting embedded in the rough edges of the plastic. Soaking such a stain in a strong bleach solution — 2 1/2 tablespoons bleach to one gallon of water — also helps whiten it, but you may not get uniform results. If you can, position the chair so the bleach solution covers an even area. Rinse the solution off after 30 minutes.

Heavy metal. Metal furniture generally has a protective finish, so all you need to do is wash it with a cloth dipped in soapy water. However, if the coating has started to wear away, you can paint it again with a clear metal varnish. Most cast- or wrought-iron outdoor furniture will already have a clear varnish, but it can wear over time. To repair it, sand the damaged areas carefully before reapplying paint or varnish. Then, throughout the season, wipe down with a soapy cloth and dry very thoroughly. (Source: *Cleaning & Stain Removal for Dummies*)

The Nose Knows

Can the way your home smells have an impact on how it sells? You bet. A poll by Canadian real estate company Royal LePage shows that the odor of a home has a huge impact on buyers' decisions about whether to buy a home. According to the poll, 53 percent of buyers said strong odors such as pet and cigarette smells had a stronger impact on their impression of a home than overall tidiness and cleanliness, strong wall colors or an outdated facade and landscaping.

Here are some tips for making sure your home has good scents:

- Don't mask smells with candles or pot-pourri. Buyers will wonder what odor you are trying to hide.
- Keep the exotic spices and fish to a minimum when cooking the night before a showing. Work toward achieving a "clean" smell.
- Remove animals and litter boxes from the property.

Getting rid of repellent scents is the first step, but some staging experts also advise using "homey" smells to entice buyers. After all, who doesn't love the aroma of freshly baked cookies or pie?



fast fact >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

Thinking about replacing your air-conditioning unit? Today's units can save an average of \$26 per year in energy costs compared with those made in 1980.

(Source: The Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers)

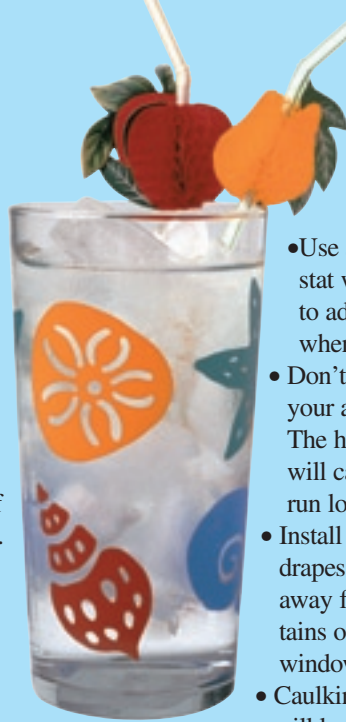


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Chill Out

Want to keep your electric bills from going through the roof this summer? Here are a few environmentally friendly steps you can take to keep things cool.

- Open windows and use portable or ceiling fans instead of operating your air conditioner. Even mild air movement can make you feel three or four degrees cooler.
- Use a fan with your window air conditioner to spread the cool air through your home.
- Without blocking air flow, shade your outside compressor. Change air filters monthly during the summer.



- Use a programmable thermostat with your air conditioner to adjust the setting at night or when no one is home.
- Don't place lamps or TVs near your air conditioning thermostat. The heat from these appliances will cause the air conditioner to run longer.
- Install white window shades, drapes or blinds to reflect heat away from the house. Close curtains on south- and west-facing windows during the day.
- Caulking and weather stripping will keep cool air in during the summer.
- Turn off your computer and monitor when not in use.

Counter Intelligence

Granite is so 2006. Concrete, glass and stone are gaining ground as popular materials for countertops. Concrete's biggest advantage is that it can take any shape, and it's not as pricey as some other natural stone materials. Because it is cast in molds, it can include subtle texturing and decorative objects such as pieces of metal, fossils or glass. If you are using concrete in the kitchen, consider placing raised strips of metal cast into countertops to support pots and pans near the sink and cooking area.

For those who crave ultra-modern design, another option is glass, which comes in nearly limitless colors, shapes, thicknesses and textures. And because it is nonporous, it is stain-proof and hygienic and can handle hot pots without cracking. Since it's translucent, it can be combined with other design elements, such as glass over aluminum or decorative tile embedded into the slab. Installing lighting under the counter creates added drama and elegance.

Finally, consider engineered stone, which is slightly cheaper than granite. It's made from quartz crystals and polymer resin, so it's nearly maintenance-free. Plus, it's heat- and cold-resistant, mildew-free, stain-resistant and harder than most things you put on it, so it won't scratch. Finally, it comes in dozens of colors — some mimic the real thing while others are made to match a designer's palette. The cost ranges from \$70 to \$120 per square foot with installation.

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