



Spring  
**HOME &  
GARDEN**  
GUIDE

# Adding a Shed

Even the largest of homes needs an effective outdoor storage space. With today's engineering advancements and focus on functional usage, outdoor sheds have advanced beyond storing tools and garden gadgets.

They are multi-purpose units that can even have water and electric for livable use.

## WHY ADD A SHED?

Storage is the number one reason most people consider adding a storage shed to their property. As many homeowners with growing families understand, space is always at a premium. And the more land you own, the more storage space you need for all the equipment required to maintain it.

Sheds are easy to build and even easier to install if you use the services of a small building manufacturer. These types of companies have enjoyed recent spikes in popularity because of the options for customization by their customers. From the building materials to the interior design, you can sit down with a small building consultant to construct the perfect unit for your needs.

## MULTI-PURPOSE

Maybe you're using your shed building for more than just tool and mower storage. Other options include a home office, hobby workshop or even a kids' play-



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house.

Whatever purpose you plan on employing, it is important to ensure usage of the appropriate materials and construction techniques. Remember that if people are going to go in and out of the

shed often, you will want to comply with the same safety and living standards you use in your home.

## KNOW THE RULES

Many towns and cities

have specific size limits on sheds and other outdoor units. You may, in fact, need a permit to being building one, even if you own the land.

If you live in a subdivision, you may be required to

check with the homeowners association, as there may be bylaw requiring prior approval. Once you pass through all the red tape, you will be on your way to building a fully functional unit to enjoy for years to come.

# Trim Your Trees Safely

**A**fter a cold winter of windy conditions and heavy snowfall, your trees could probably use a little TLC this spring.

But before you gas up the saw or sharpen the pruners, remember that trimming trees can be one of the most dangerous jobs around the yard.

According to a report on OSHA.gov, the three most common types of serious tree trimming accidents are:

## **ELECTROCUTION**

This usually involves a person working too closely to electric lines. Always be vigilant of where your power lines are and keep a safe distance away from them.

## **FALLING FROM TREES**

You can be seriously injured or killed if you fall from a tree, no matter the height. It is important to use the utmost caution when in a tree because you're dealing with many dangerous circumstances, including the saw you're trimming with and the potential for falling.

## **BEING STRUCK BY BRANCHES OR LIMBS**

Before trimming your trees, take a visual check of the branches and limbs above you. There may be some that



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are no longer attached to the tree but hanging within the branches.

If jostled too much, these falling branches and limbs can cause serious head injuries or cause you to fall from the tree.

## **HOW TO STAY SAFE**

To prevent tree-trimming accidents, take responsibility for your own safety.

Read and follow directions that come with all climbing,

cutting and safety equipment. Doing so will ensure your safety while operating tools such as chainsaws, pruners and climbing gear.

Concentrate on the job at hand, even if the task seems mundane.

You may be tempted to take shortcuts or work quickly if you have a lot of yard work to complete that day.

Take your time to fully protect yourself and others around you from danger.

# Clean Air in Your Home

**A**s the American population has been made more aware of the dangers of greenhouse gases, one area that doesn't get as much attention is poor indoor air quality.

The quality of air can be two to five times more polluted than the worst outside air. This is because of the many indoor pollutants floating around our homes from sources such as gas, oil, kerosene, building materials and chemical products.

## PLANTS TO THE RESCUE

In the 1980s, NASA and the Associated Landscape Contractors of America carried out an in-depth study on which house plants were the most effective in purifying the air in space. Several of the tested plants were proven to filter out common volatile organic compounds that can negatively impact our health and well-being.

Here are three of the most effective house plants for cleaning your air:

**Aloe:** The study found that aloe helps clear both formaldehyde and benzene, which are generally byproducts of chemical-based cleaners.

**Spider Plants:** Also safe for the pets in your home, spider plants are quick to battle benzene, formaldehyde and carbon monoxide. Their unique stringy foliage makes them perfect for hanging baskets.

**Azaleas:** These budding beauties are best grown in cooler temperatures, making them perfect for improving an indoor area such as a basement.

## DIRTY SOCK SYNDROME

Even though it may not have a very scientific-sounding name, dirty sock syndrome can have a serious impact on the overall smell of your home. The problem most commonly occurs when bacteria that has built up from the moisture in your air ducts and system during cooling season are dried up and killed when you begin using heat.

This can result in a "dirty sock" smell being emitted from your ducts that is both annoying and overwhelming. Call your local heating and cooling professional, who for a fee can resolve the issue by spraying an antibacterial solution on your unit's coils. Hopefully you'll be back to odorless air in no time.



# Breakfast Nook

**W**e all need that jolt of caffeine or punch of protein in the mornings. But too many times we find ourselves inhaling our breakfast, coffee or juice before rushing out the door.

Incorporating a breakfast nook into your kitchen area may persuade you to slow things down in the morning. And by adding some elegant, contemporary design elements, you may even find yourself starting your breakfast earlier and earlier in the morning just so you can enjoy this new part of your kitchen.

## PLANNING YOUR NOOK

An effective coffee nook is both functional and fashionable. You want to be able to soak in all of its aesthetically pleasing nuances without being inconvenienced to scuttle back and forth to the kitchen for food, linens and silverware.

Storage is key to achieving this, as a few cabinets will allow you to hide away coffee grinders, forks, spoons and serving trays.

Generally, a nook is not a space for entertaining a large number of guests. A small café-style gives an ample amount of seating, depending on how you plan to use the nook. If you choose to add a higher-style serving shelf in the nook, you can find stools or high-rise chairs for your seating options.



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## STOCKING YOUR NOOK

Depending on your caffeine-fueled pleasure, you can stock your nook full of your favorite grounds, single-serving cups or fresh beans. And don't forget the

coffee cups. Your nook can be an all-inclusive spot that doesn't require you to make several trips back and forth to the kitchen.

Many nook lovers also stock their areas with cereals, fruits, bowls and silverware to add to the convenience factor.

## DESIGNING YOUR NOOK

Your nook does not need to be a direct extension of your kitchen. In fact, choosing a color or wallpaper that is in stark contrast to your kitchen will help in creating a unique,

distinct area.

If you're seeking to convey a cozy, country feel, find antique frames made from old barn wood to display your artwork. A more contemporary look may involve accentuating the area with stainless steel pieces and clean, modern lines.

# Flower Spotlight: Petunia

**A** look around your neighborhood in the spring will likely reveal a plethora of petunias brightly blooming. Get a little closer and experience one of the flower's most definitive characteristics — refreshingly vivid fragrance.

Petunias are also wildly popular for their ease planting and maintenance, which means you'll get to enjoy a season of bright, beautiful flowers without having to break your back.

## CHOOSING YOUR VARIETY

There are more than 100 varieties of petunias, and even more considering options for hybrid plants. Grandiflora and Multiflora are two of the most popular types of petunias, despite their distinct differences.

The Grandiflora produces large flowers that are perfect for hanging baskets and window boxes. The Multiflora is more compact and produces smaller flowers. Typically, they are bunched together to produce vibrant pops of color in a landscaped area or flower garden.

## WHAT PETUNIAS NEED

So you need petunias to punctuate one of your outdoor areas with rich, striking colors. Here's what it needs from you, according to the University of Minnesota Extension:

- Location with plenty of light — five to six hours of good sunlight per day
- Decently draining soil conditioned with organic matter, such as peat moss or leaf compost
- Thorough watering once per week — enough to soak the soil to a depth of about 6 inches

## PLANTING TIPS

Here are some tried and true planting tips from the University of Minnesota Extension:

- Wait until the soil warms to about 60 degrees and the danger of frost is gone.
- Follow the spacing instructions on your flowers' packaging. Most require to be spaced about 4 to 12 inches apart.
- Plan to provide some protection from the mid-day sun for the first few days after planting.



# Painting Your Subfloor

**M**aybe you aren't quite ready to decide on a floor type or perhaps you're looking for a quick fix to rejuvenate a living space. Painting your subfloor is a simple project that can transform your room.

The steps are simple, and the entire project shouldn't take you more than a Saturday afternoon.

## REMOVE YOUR CARPET

This is actually a multi-step process because removing carpet isn't as simple as rolling it up and taking it to the dump. You also have to remove the carpet strips around the perimeter of the room. A pry bar and hammer work best for this. And don't forget the staples holding down the carpet pad. Survey the floor closely and remove the staples with a pair of needle-nose pliers.

## PREP THE SURFACE

Like any other surface you plan on painting, it is important to make sure it is clean and dry.

Sweep and clean the floor with a wood-safe product. Then use wood filler to fill in the cracks between the sheets of plywood or particle board that make up your subfloor.

## PAINT THE FLOOR

A regular interior paint is not recommended for painting your subfloor, as it will have to hold up to foot traffic. Use an exterior paint that is made to take on tough weather conditions. This will be a stronger, more durable option. You also can use a polyurethane coat to seal in the paint. If you choose to do so, be sure you are working in a ventilated area and try to find an environmentally friendly version of the sealant.

## GET CREATIVE

Many online instructional videos will walk you through the simple process of patterning your floor. Map out the pattern you would like to see on your floor and use a simple stencil cutout with your favorite shapes or elegant patterns. You can even design faux wood panels, tiles or other surfaces that help tie your room together.



# Organizing Your Instruments

**S**o you're in a band — or wish you were. Depending on which instruments you play, you know that storing your equipment can be a challenge.

There are the drums, the guitars, the amplifiers and all those cords. It's time to take charge of your music space and put this equipment in its place.

Even if you don't have an extra room to devote to your musical hobby, there are many space-saving tips that can keep you rocking without blocking your walking space.

## GUITAR MOUNTS

Where are your guitars currently stored? On a rack taking up valuable floor space? Leaned against the wall and serving as an eyesore or tripping hazard?

A quick fix is a \$10 wall mount designed to hold your guitar at the headstock, or top of the instrument. Not only will mounting your guitar save you space, but it can add a unique accent design piece to any room.

## DRUM STORAGE

Drums are obviously one of the biggest space-eaters when it comes to a room, taking up as much as 25 square feet by themselves. If your room is on the small side, this won't leave you very much wiggle room for furniture or living accessories.

The best place for your drums is in the corner of a room. This is true whether or not you have them set up. If you keep them in carrying cases for performances or practices, you can stack them up conveniently in the corner. Just make sure the room is climate controlled to prevent warping or dangerous humidity levels.

## MICS & AMPS

Microphones are obviously not very large by themselves. But add the cord, the awkwardly shaped stand and whatever you're plugging it into and it can take up space in a hurry. Opt for collapsible microphone stands and carrying bags to cut down on the clutter.

Amplifiers are generally OK to be stacked on top of each other as long as they don't pose the threat of falling over. Check the manufacturer's instructions to be sure. Stacking amplifiers can help save serious floor space.

