

HOME & GARDEN

Fall 2013



Commercial Kitchens

The rise in popularity of television cooking shows is not due solely to the food, but also the contemporary-looking kitchens, stainless appliances and the “I want that” gadgets.

Many Americans are replicating what they see on TV, which means big business for contractors, builders and designers.

Consulting with professionals is definitely recommended, especially considering the amount of research, design expertise and regulatory codes that need to be followed when installing professional-style equipment and appliances.

Larger stoves require more comprehensive ventilation systems, while the combination of an all-new suite of high-powered appliances may require a little more power from your home’s electrical infrastructure.

THE LOOK

Spacious and usually shining with stainless accents, a well-executed commercial-style kitchen is a thing of beauty.

The professional equipment within them provide near-restaurant-level power that helps execute large meals for get-togethers.

Built in refrigerators have also become trendy, as many kitchen masters prefer the extra floor space that this affords them.

STAINLESS STEEL

Stainless appliances,



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sinks and counters have found their way into many of our kitchens, and for good reason. Their sleek appearance and simple elegance help “commercialize” any kitchen atmosphere and can quickly transform blah to brilliant.

Not all stainless appliances

are created equally, though, so try to match similar shines and finishes across all of your kitchen pieces for strong cohesion.

COST

A commercial-style kitchen remodel can cost in between

\$6,000 and \$15,000 — or even more — depending on your equipment grades, flooring, appliances and finishing touches.

Costs can add up in a hurry, but the up-front investment usually ends up paying off in the end.

According to realtor.org, a

major kitchen remodel can net a nearly 60-percent return on investment. That is of course, if you ever plan on selling your home.

For most people, the addition of a commercial kitchen is not just for resale purposes, but to provide a daily dose of cooking excellence.

Deck Care Advice

Installing a deck is hard, tedious work. Just ask your lower back after 10 hours of driving nails and lining up boards.

That's why it is important to protect your sweat equity investment by taking proper care of your labor of love. Rain and sunshine are your deck's natural enemies, as it doesn't take long for your perfectly stained masterpiece to suffer from weathering and fading. Of course, this can be avoided by some simple methods and deck care strategies.

THE RIGHT TOOLS

Experts strongly urge the use of fiberglass or plastic brushes and shovels to remove foreign objects from your deck.

Trying to push snow, dirt and leaves off your deck with a metal shovel can scrape your sealant away and compromise your deck's longevity.

For standing water, use push brooms or water sweepers to gently dry your deck. Letting water stand and potentially cause mildew or wood rot can be as equally as damaging as using the wrong tool.

GET SCRUBBING

Now that you know what tool to use, your deck needs a thorough scrubbing with a specialized cleaner at least once a year.

These cleaners will remove that dirt, grime and dust that can build up quickly. If any parts of your deck are stained, there are cleaners to take care of that, too. The right cleaning solution and a little bit of elbow grease are reasonable investments that can make all the difference in maintaining your deck's health.

CLEAN THE CREVICES

Wood rot is not always obvious to the naked eye. It can fester in between your deck boards in the form of damp leaves or rainwater.

Several products are available for you to reach these tough-to-clean spaces, including hand scrapers that will not damage your wood's sealant.

If you're looking for less tedious way to clean these spaces, a pressure washer can work wonders.

Save Money on Landscaping

Depending on your geographical location, the fall season may be the best time of year to plant trees, shrubs and perennial plants.

If so, you may be in luck. Many of the best deals can be found during this time of year thanks to local nurseries and even big-box stores simply being overloaded with extra inventory.

Many of these businesses are sometimes reluctant to advertise such steals, so it's up to you to seek them out and capitalize on them. Your yard will thank you.

NURSERY DEALS

They are some of the best-kept secrets that many gardeners and landscapers overlook on an annual basis – nursery deals.

Many nurseries offer substantial discounts on overstocked inventory that can include high-end trees, unique plants and useful tools. The deals can be downright delightful, with some businesses offering more than half off for their extra products.

Perks like reduced delivery fees, buy-one-get-one or free consultations may also be available, as many nurseries use the fall season to promote themselves to new customers with the hopes of retaining a bigger client base when the springtime rolls around.

Check with your local businesses to see what deals they



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have planned for the fall. It never hurts to ask.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

If you use professionals for your landscaping or mowing needs, the fall season can often be the best time negotiate a new contract.

Landscapers and lawn

companies can find it difficult to secure new clients this time of year, and they are likely to come down on their price to retain your business for another season.

Be careful not to low-ball them, though. Remember that this is their profession and trying to slash your costs by too much may insult them and leave you with an un-mowed lawn.

PLANT PERENNIALS

Buying new flowers for your yard can be expensive, not to mention time-intensive as you ready the ground and plant them year after year.

That's where planting perennials can come in handy.

Perennials, including day-lilies, hostas and irises, are the no-fuss, resurgent flowery plants that keep coming back.

They grow and bloom over the spring and summer, die every autumn and winter, and then make their glorious, fully foliated return. And they do all of this for a one-time cost of an inexpensive bag of bulbs.

Mower Maintenance

For some people – especially those with large yards – putting the lawnmower away for the winter is accompanied with feelings of relief and accomplishment.

Another mowing season in the books. Another long winter break from trimming, clipping and cutting.

But before you store your mower in the shed, there are some simple steps to take to make sure your equipment will be ready to go when the spring-time season makes its rounds again.

DRAIN THE TANK

Leaving your mower's tank full over the winter can lead to bad gas that can slow down your performance or even harm your engine when it's time to mow again.

Luckily, draining your tank is one of the simplest forms of preventive maintenance you can perform. Syphoning or funneling gas out of a mower can be awkward and messy.

Take a few more passes around your yard until your mower runs out of gas, then store your mower away for the winter.

OTHER DIY TIPS

Mower maintenance does not have to be complicated. There are many simple steps you can take to keep your machine running long and strong.

With your engine off, use a plastic scraper to remove all of the grass clippings and matted grass from underneath your mower's deck and blades.

Changing your spark plugs yearly is also a simple, quick way to ensure optimum performance. Also requiring annual care is your engine's oil, which should be changed at either the end or beginning of every mowing season.

Consult your mower's product



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guidelines for any steps that may be specific to your make and model.

TAKE IT TO THE SHOP

Not all of us are comfortable with taking on maintenance projects with-

out the help of professionals, preferring to seek out the advice of local experts.

Many people take their mowers to repair shops during the spring when the lines are longer and the rates are

higher.

By visiting your local shop during the fall or winter, you can save some time and money from professionals who are usually willing to offer an off-season deal on their services.

Organic Gardening

Going “green” and opting for organic approaches are not just trends anymore. They have integrated themselves into the fiber of American living.



That’s especially true when it comes to what we put into our bodies. More and more gardeners are vigilant about what is used to treat their fruits and vegetables for pests and other barriers to gardening success.

BEAT IT, BUGS

If you can’t beat pests, bug them back.

Simply giving in to the critters that crave your fruits and vegetables is not the way to go. Home improvement stores and nurseries have many solutions for eradicating bugs, many of which avoid the spraying of potentially dangerous pesticides.

One such product is a light, white porous fabric that acts as an insect barrier without blocking critical nutrients from water and the sun.

Rolls of this fabric also come in heavier options, but the lighter ones are recommended for summertime use because they won’t overheat your plants.

NATURAL WEED CONTROL

There are many products on the market that claim to naturally prevent weed growth, but one of the best tools at your disposal is organic mulch.

A combination of compost, dried grass clippings, shredded leaves and other biodegradable materials is an effective way to keep sunlight from reaching weed seeds and also nourishes the soil as it decomposes.

A two- to three-inch layer of organic mulch applied in between plant rows is an optimum solution to a weed takeover.

SAVE THE RAIN

Water is obviously vital to a garden’s success, and there are specific ways you can play a part in helping sustain our most precious natural resource.

Attach a rain barrel to your downspout to gather and save water for use in your garden and flowerbeds. This strategy can particularly come in handy if your garden is located far away from your house and closer to a storage shed or barn.

By attaching a barrel to these exterior buildings, you can have a close water source, saving your legs from carrying buckets or hoses to your garden.

Basic Plumbing Tips

For the beginning DIY-er, plumbing can seem like a monumental skill to acquire. But fixing leaky fixtures and slow-running toilets requires only the proper tools and basic knowledge of how plumbing works.

The most important course of action you can take regarding your home's plumbing is to continually pay attention to its performance and systems.

The quicker you are able to identify a leak or drain issue, the more likely you are to avoid major damage to your home and wallet.

By understanding the common plumbing issues that all homeowners deal with at one time or another, you will be able to take on basic challenges before they become full-blown emergencies.

COMMON ISSUES

Faucets leak, toilets clog and pipes break. Any homeowner can tell you that. It is what you choose to do about these problems that can mean the difference between a quick fix or a pricey call to the plumber.

Educate yourself on your home's basic plumbing systems – both the water service and the drain. Know where your shut-off valves are for your main service, washer, sinks, toilets and icemakers for quick access during emergency situations.

THE RIGHT TOOLS

If you're spending more time lately tending to your home's plumbing needs, then you have probably become quite familiar with the pipe wrench.

This tool is vital in your ability to loosen and tighten pipes of all sizes, and troubleshoot issues. Plumbers' putty also comes in handy when replacing sink fixtures and drain coverings, as does Teflon tape for effectively wrapping threads of shower heads and pipes.

PLUMBING EMERGENCIES

Of course, some homeowners will unfortunately experience major plumbing emergencies that require professional help.

Always have the number of a reputable, certified plumber handy in case of such a situation.

Be prepared to pay a pretty penny for comprehensive repairs, but also take comfort in the fact that the job will be correctly executed and often guaranteed for the life of any new parts.



Home Storage Ideas

Clutter is a confounding problem facing many of us. Why do we continue to let stuff pile up? Is it our inability to let go of the past? Our emotional connection to even the smallest of items?

No matter your excuse, there are plenty of ways you can de-clutter your life even if you refuse to let go.

It might take more than a weekend, but simple steps can make a big difference on the overall space that is being taken up by unnecessary items or clothing.

USE THE WALLS

If you have a room with a full floor and bare walls, consider a transformation. Certain items – especially guitars and children’s artwork – can serve as great-looking additions to any blank wall as well as a major space saver.

Install and fill up some basic shelving units on your wall, and watch your floor clean up in a hurry. Shelves are perfect for laundry rooms, workshops, bathrooms, bedrooms, and garages.

SWAP OUT YOUR CLOTHING

As the weather cools, free up some closet and dresser space by swapping out your tank tops for flannels.

Sort through your items to determine what can stay through the fall and winter months and what can be neatly tucked into totes.

Also consider donating your closet of extra clothing to a good cause like a local charity, thrift shop or ministerial alliance.

GO DIGITAL

Are bulky VHS tapes and CDs taking



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too much space in your living room or entertainment den? It might be time for you to go digital.

There are many converters available on the market to transfer VHS files

into DVD format, which will help rid you of those space-eating VHS tapes.

Download all of your CDs onto your computer and save them into easy-to-navigate folders for stream-

lined storage.

Transfer your songs over to your MP3 player, and just like that you have solved one of your storage dilemmas.