

YOUR HOME

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TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

Safeguard Against Flooding



With springtime comes the potential for storms and heavy rain. While you can't control the weather, you can protect your home from flooding.

First, make sure gutters are free of leaves and dirt, and secure them tightly to your home. Poor roof drainage is the number one cause of basement leaks, and clogged gutters can create further problems by causing water to run off too close to the home's foundation where it can seep through the walls.

Check the downspouts, which should dump water at least three to four feet from your home's perimeter. If the downspouts are too close to the house, adding extensions can help drain the water properly. The general rule of thumb is to have one downspout for every 600 feet to 800 feet of roofing.

Watch the grading around your home. Beyond the first four feet of the home's perimeter, the ground should slope about six inches. To improve the grading, use clean fill dirt rather than top soil, which holds more water and can seep into the foundation.

Gardens also retain water, so if your garden is planted next to your home, allow some room for water to escape. Use rocks as a border and trim heavy growths of shrubbery to allow more sunlight to dry the ground more quickly. Also make sure the gutter doesn't run directly onto the garden.

Do-It-Yourself

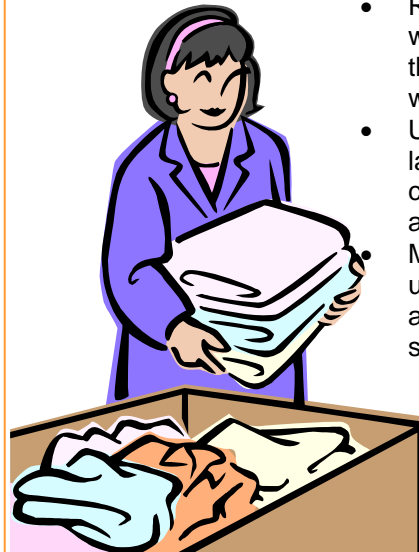
Spring Cleaning

Spring is here, which means it's time to organize, de-clutter, clean and toss out. Use these hints, courtesy of HGTV, to help jump start your spring cleaning.

Before the Scrubbing

- Remove any clutter around the house.
- Tackle the junk drawer. Throw out old pens and markers, broken rubber bands and paper clips, old candy, and any random scraps of paper.
- Donate books you don't wish to keep and clothes that you don't wear. Many churches, schools, libraries, shelters and hospitals accept such donations.
- Put everything that you can't quite part with in a box. After six months, throw away or donate any of the items you haven't used.
- Clean out your medicine cabinet, dumping any prescriptions, lotions, makeup or other products that have expired.
- Pitch old magazines. Keep a binder for your favorite articles or recipes.
- **Deep Down Clean**
Vacuum your mattress and wash your mattress pad in hot water.
- Rub shaving cream into dirty upholstery and vacuum once it's dry.
- Run drapes through the air-fluff cycle in the dryer, along with a wet cloth to attract dust, for 15 minutes.

- Rub screens on both sides with kerosene, then wash them clean with soap and water.
- Use a dry sponge to clean lamp shades, upholstery, computer screens, suede and leather.
Make sure to clean the coils underneath the refrigerator and the screen in your stove's exhaust hood.



Home-Grown Herbs

Cultivating your own herb garden is an easy and cost-effective way to have access to fresh herbs without a trip to the grocery store. Basil, parsley, chives, mint and sage are easy to grow and maintain.

Gardening experts at HGTV say the least expensive method is to start new plants from seeds, as opposed to transplanting store-bought or garden-grown herb plants.

First, fill a peat pot with a soilless potting mix, a mixture of peat moss, pine bark, sand and other organic materials. Place this pot in a small bowl filled with water. After the water has completely saturated the peat pot, bury seeds at the depth of three to four times their diameter; for small seeds, simply press them into the mixture with your finger. To ensure growth, place a few seeds in each pot. Finally, put a plastic bag over the pot, to simulate a greenhouse, and place it in a dry sunny spot.

After the seeds have germinated you can transplant them into a larger pot. Keep your herbs moist but not wet, and pinch or prune them as necessary.



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