

# Get Outside

## IT'S SPRINGTIME

SPECIAL EDITION | TUESDAY, APRIL 30, 2024



## Tips to Revitalize a Garden This Spring

Gardening is a rewarding hobby that pays a host of significant dividends. Many people love gardening because it allows them to spend time outdoors, and that simple pleasure is indeed a notable benefit of working in a garden. But the National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture notes that gardening provides a host of additional benefits, including helping people get sufficient levels of exercise, reduce stress and improve mood.

With so much to gain from gardening, it's no wonder people look forward to getting their hands dirty in the garden each spring. As the weather warms up, consider these tips to help bring a garden back to life.

**Discard the dead weight.** Winter can take its toll on a garden, even in regions where the weather between December and early spring is not especially harsh. Discard dead plants that have lingered into spring and prune any perennials that need it. Branches that fell during winter

storms also should be removed at this point if they have not previously been discarded.

**Test the soil.** Soil testing kits can be purchased at local garden centers and home improvement retailers. Such tests are inexpensive and can reveal if the soil needs to be amended to help plants thrive in the months to come.

**Mulch garden beds.** Mulching benefits a garden by helping soil retain moisture and preventing the growth of weeds. Various garden experts note that mulching in spring can prevent weed seeds from germinating over the course of spring and summer. That means plants won't have to fight with weeds for water when the temperature warms up. It also means gardeners won't have to spend time pulling weeds this summer.

**Inspect your irrigation system.** Homeowners with in-ground irrigation systems or above-

ground systems that utilize a drip or soaker function can inspect the systems before plants begin to bloom. Damaged sprinkler heads or torn lines can deprive plants of water they will need to bloom and ultimately thrive once the weather warms up.

**Tune up your tools.** Gardening tools have likely been sitting around gathering dust since fall. Serious gardeners know that tools can be expensive, so it pays to protect that investment by maintaining the tools. Sharpened pruners help make plants less vulnerable to infestation and infection. Well-maintained tools like shovels and hoes also make more demanding gardening jobs a little bit easier, so don't forget to tune up your tools before the weather warms up.

It's almost gardening season, which means gardeners can start on the necessary prep work to ensure their gardens grow in strong and beautiful this spring.

## FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN BUYING FURNITURE

Buying furniture can be an exciting prospect. The opportunity to breathe new life into a home with the addition of different furnishings inspires many people. However, at the same time, searching for furniture can be a tad overwhelming, especially when homeowners do not know where to begin.

Statistics Canada reports that Canadians spend an average of \$934 on furniture each year. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that, in 2017, Americans spent an average of \$2,484 on furniture. While furniture may not be the most costly investment, it's also not the cheapest, which is why getting it right is important.

### Determine Your Needs

The first step in purchasing new furniture is to decide what is needed. Assess current furniture and think about what works for certain pieces and what doesn't. Then you can gear purchases around desired features. For example, if

you've determined chenille fabric holds on to too much pet fur, the next couch may be leather or microfiber.

### Measure More Than Once

Measure your room multiple times and create a mock floor plan. This will help when figuring out if certain pieces can fit into the space. Some retailers even offer floor plan software on their websites so that you can upload the dimensions of your room and see how certain items will fit in your spaces. In addition, be sure to measure the width of doors to ensure that it's easy to get the furniture into the home when delivered.

### Determine Your Style

Figure out which style best fits your personality and lifestyle. This may be traditional, transitional or modern. Incorporate pieces accordingly, or mix and match to create a look that is completely unique.

### Confirm Materials

Consider your budget when choosing the construction materials for the furniture. Solid wood tends to be more expensive, but often more durable than engineered products. In addition, check to see how items are built. Pull out drawers and check hinges to ensure the quality is there.

### Save Money On Sales

Furniture can be expensive, but there is room for savings. Shop when retailers offer seasonal sales. Consider warehouse retailers, which often sell select items at a discount.

### Read Reviews

Before taking the plunge, be sure to read reviews of items and retailers. While items may appear perfect, reviews can shed light on how pieces stand up to wear and tear.

Shopping for furniture means taking steps to measure, match style, read reviews, and find pieces that fit homeowners' lifestyles.

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## Fun Ways to Celebrate The Arrival of Spring

Spring is a season of rebirth in more ways than one. Spring is when certain animals emerge from hibernation, while many species lay eggs or give birth this time of year. Flowers and trees also bloom in spring, providing spectacular foliage and awe-inspiring color.

People also may feel like they have a new lease on life as they shake away the doldrums of winter and embrace longer hours of sunlight and warmer temperatures. The arrival of spring is worthy of celebration, and these activities and ideas can be enjoyable ways to spend the first day of spring.

▲ **Spend time outdoors.** One is never too old for a picnic in a park or a bike ride along the trails. Spending time outdoors is beneficial because it exposes people to sunlight, which is a precursor to the development of vitamin D. Vitamin D affects muscles, joints

and tissues. It also can affect mood.

▲ **Plant a tree.** Honor the first day of spring, and Earth Day shortly thereafter, by planting trees. Trees provide habitats for wildlife, create shade, reduce air pollution by filtering the air, and produce oxygen. A sapling is a manageable tree to plant and something children can do as well.

▲ **Enjoy spring crafts.** Grab an inexpensive canvas and paint a landscape that is in full bloom. Use quick-set plaster to create stepping stones embedded with mosaic glass pieces for color that can be added to the backyard.

▲ **Host a spring potluck.** Put fresh spring vegetables and fruits on display. Options include artichokes, apricots, asparagus, carrots, dandelion greens, and

radishes. Put together a pasta primavera, which essentially is a spring pasta dish laden with fresh vegetables.

▲ **Decorate with flowers.** Bring fresh flowers indoors and put them on display in vases or table centerpieces. Cut stems on a 45-degree angle underwater to help flowers last longer. In addition, choose floral themed curtains and throw pillows to add some spring decor.

▲ **Create a water feature.** The sound and sights of cascading water can be both relaxing and picturesque. A water feature can be something as simple as a small fountain or more elaborate like a koi pond.

Spring is a time of year when people can enjoy seasonal activities that make the most of the warmer weather and blooming landscape.

## Decor Ideas to Give Homes A Fresh Look This Spring

Spring is a season of rejuvenation, and that spirit of renewal can take hold inside a home.

Warm weather and longer hours of daylight make spring a perfect time to imagine a home's interior design in a new light. The following are a handful of decor ideas that may inspire homeowners to give their homes an entirely new look this spring.

► **Wallpaper:** Wallpaper fell out of favor years ago, but new styles that aren't so heavily patterned can make for wonderful additions to any room. Large-scale prints can give a room a whole new feel without giving homeowners or their guests the impression that they have stepped back in time. A simple, mural-style floral wallpaper on the walls surrounding a table in a

breakfast nook can bring nature inside.

► **Pastel colors:** Nothing embodies the spring quite like pastel colors. If colorful, bright flowers dot the garden in the backyard, homeowners can bring those uplifting pastels inside by painting an accent wall or even adding some brightly colored accent furniture to rooms that could use a lift.

► **Declutter:** Clutter is often conquered during spring cleaning sessions, but homeowners who want to create more free-flowing interior spaces can downsize their furniture and/or look for multipurpose features that make it hard for clutter to take over a room. Create more open space in entertaining areas by mounting the television and getting rid

of a bulky entertainment center. Create even more space by replacing rarely used end tables with a storage ottoman where books and magazines can be stored to give a room a fresh, clean look.

► **Accent features:** Sometimes the smallest changes to an interior space make the biggest impression. Replace dated accents like vases and table lamps with newer items that reflect the latest styles and trends. Such adjustments won't break the bank, and they can give rooms a whole new feel.

Spring is a great time to reconsider home interiors. This spring homeowners can embrace various strategies, both big and small, to give their homes a whole new feel.

## GREAT ACTIVITIES TO EMBRACE THIS SPRING

Spring arrives in the Northern Hemisphere on March 19, bringing with it visions of more hours of sunshine, warmer temperatures and ample opportunities to embrace the great outdoors.

Come mid-March, people who live in climates marked by cold winters have no doubt been anticipating spring fun in the sun for some time. Once spring arrives, the following make for some great activities.

### Sports

Come spring, various sports fill up afternoon and weekend schedules. Whether these are professional sports or youth sports leagues, the games can be a great way to spend time outdoors in the fresh, suddenly warmer air.

### Visit an Orchard

Spring is a season when many berries, such as strawberries, blackberries, and blueberries, begin to ripen. Find your local pick-your-own establishment to spend a day having fun (and getting a little messy) grabbing sweet berries for salads, jams and pies.

### Hit the Links

It's time to dust off the clubs and play the greens at any of the thousands of golf courses in North America. The National Golf Federation says the United States is home to around 15,000 courses. The warmer temperatures are ideal for practicing your short game on the putting green or for playing all 18 holes.



### Get the Patio Ready for Entertaining

Clean off patio furniture or start shopping for new items if you didn't partake in end-of-season sales. This is just the start of the outdoor entertaining season, and it pays to refresh the deck or patio and invest in some quality furniture to keep guests comfortable.

### Plan a vacation

Many schools go on a hiatus for a week or two during the spring, prompting otherwise busy families to get away for some R&R. Book early to score the best deals on hotel rooms and flights.

### Prepare Gardening Equipment

Before long, the grass will need mowing and the shrubbery will have to be pruned. Ensure that lawn and garden tools and equipment are in top form before they are called into action. Stock up on fuel for gas mowers and sharpen those pruning shears.

### Visit a Local Garden

Enjoy the sights at a garden when the first spring blooms start to peek out of the soil. Spring is known for tulips, daffodils, crocuses, and snowdrops.

### Give Your Bike A Tune-up

Take your bike out of storage and give it a once-over. Now is the time to put air in the tires, grease the chain and make sure that the brakes and other equipment are working properly. Most bike helmet manufacturers recommend replacing helmets every three years, even if you haven't been in a crash. That's because the polystyrene foam can degrade over time from environmental exposure.

### Visit a Farm

Many farm animals give birth in the spring. Children may be excited to see piglets, foals, kids, and all the other adorable young animals draw their first breaths.

Spring's arrival presents the perfect opportunity to acquaint oneself with the great outdoors.

## Did You Know?

Outdoor living is wildly popular, as more and more homeowners are bringing elements once reserved for home interiors into their backyards. When designing outdoor living spaces, homeowners may learn about biophilic design, an architectural concept that aims to incorporate natu-

ral elements into outdoor living spaces. Proponents of biophilic design say it satisfies an innate human need to affiliate with nature, thereby helping to reduce stress that people may experience after being stuck indoors for much of their days. Biophilic design is often part of a

home interior design, but many homeowners also embrace it when designing their outdoor living spaces. For example, surrounding outdoor living areas with noninvasive plants, flowers and trees and using natural materials like wood and stone when building such spaces are great ways to embrace biophilic design and create a tension-free ambiance in outdoor living spaces.

## Insurance Protection for Emergency Situations

Emergencies, especially storms, can be unpredictable and cause personal injury and costly damage to homes. The right insurance is essential to help mitigate damage from storms and soften the financial blow that such destruction can cause. Not all insurance is the same, and additional policies and riders may help reduce the impact of emergencies.

### Homeowners Insurance

Standard homeowners insurance policies will cover a wide range of issues. American Family Insurance says damage from wildfires, wind storms, tornadoes, ice storms, lightning strikes, hail, power surges, and fallen trees is included. But additional coverage may be needed to cover excessive damage.

### Matching Siding Coverage

Some homeowners may want to replace all of the siding on their homes if parts are damaged and color or siding materials cannot be matched exactly by patching up damaged areas.

### Roof Replacement Insurance

This insurance will be used to pay for the full replacement of a roof, minus

the deductible, which may differ from what's covered through standard homeowners policies.

### Sump Pump Overflow Insurance

Sump pumps are designed to engage and pump water out of basements and crawl spaces, helping to avoid flooding in the home. If the power goes out and the sump pump cannot work, or if the sump pump fails, homeowners typically are not covered for any ensuing damage. Sump pump overflow insurance provides additional peace of mind and protection.

### Flood Insurance

Homeowners insurance may not cover flood damage, especially if a home is in a flood zone. Flood insurance can bridge the gap of coverage. The National Flood Insurance Program offers building coverage and contents coverage policies. Building coverage will cover carpeting, electrical and plumbing systems, window blinds, foundation walls, and more. Contents coverage protects curtains, personal clothing and furniture, artwork, and appliances, among other things.

### Umbrella Insurance

According to Geico, umbrella insurance is extra insurance that provides protection that goes beyond limitations and coverage of other policies. It can offer coverage for injuries to people staying at your house or renting your property, property damage, personal liability, and certain lawsuits.

### Renters Insurance

Renters insurance protects renters, yet the Independent Insurance Adjusters & Brokers of America says almost two-thirds of residential lessees in the United States do not carry renters insurance. Renters insurance can protect belongings destroyed in a fire or weather event; provide assistance should someone be injured in your apartment; or it can protect you if you were found legally responsible for damages to someone's property, according to State Farm Insurance.

Many types of insurance can offer various levels of protection in emergency situations. An insurance representative can walk interested parties through the policies available to customize an insurance package that will offer sufficient protection against emergencies.

## SPRING HAS SPRUNG

This is a great time to review your coverages and check your property for maintenance needs.

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## LOW-COST WAYS TO REVAMP LIVING AREAS

Home improvement projects require substantial financial investment. But just because a homeowner wants to bring a fresh look indoors doesn't mean he or she has to break the bank along the way.

Living rooms are some of the most frequently used spaces in a home, and they can use an update from time to time to stay on trend or to make the area more functional for a changing family dynamic. Here are some budget-friendly ideas for breathing new life into living room designs.

**▲ Establish the budget.** Homeowners should figure out how many dollars they can designate to a living room makeover before purchasing supplies or hiring out the work. Figure out the scope of the remodel, visit stores or suppliers to price out materials, get estimates from contractors, and then plan for some unforeseen circumstances along the way to determine if this type of renovation is affordable. If not, scale things back until the project more

closely aligns with your budget.

**▲ Change the paint color.** Lighter and brighter colors are on trend. A can or two of paint can do wonders for updating a space without a large financial commitment. Pair that new paint color with new window coverings and complementary throw pillows to pull the theme together with minimal expense.

**▲ Update the flooring.** Tired, outdated carpeting or other flooring can use an overhaul. While solid hardwood flooring may be preferable, there are many types of laminate flooring that mimic the looks of popular wood colors and styles for a fraction of the cost. Laminate flooring also may be a potential DIY job for a skilled homeowner, saving even more money.

**▲ Introduce a fireplace.** Fireplaces were once hot commodities, but that popularity waned in the 1970s and 1980s. Homeowners with chimneys may discover a fireplace was boarded over and

the bare bones still exist that can be renovated to bring back character. There also are ventless freestanding units that are quite affordable that can mimic the look of a built-in fireplace.

**▲ Reupholster instead of replace furniture.** There's no need to throw away quality furniture if the fabric is the only thing impeding design. New upholstery or even a slipcover can update designs.

**▲ Conquer clutter.** Rather than adding something to the living room, remove clutter to give the room a more airy feel. This can instantly change the look of the room. Use cord covers to tame plugs for electronics and remove unnecessary furniture from the room.

**▲ Improve lighting.** Another easy and often inexpensive fix is to change lighting fixtures, including using brighter, more energy efficient LED bulbs, and to assess lighting needs to eliminate dark corners of rooms that can make the space seem drab.

Living room spaces in need of an update often can benefit from improvements that go easy on the wallet.

## Must-Have Features in Your Bathroom Remodel

Homeowners recognize the value of remodeling their kitchens and bathrooms. An average bathroom remodel costs anywhere from \$5,500 to \$15,000 depending on the size and scope of the renovation. However, a bath redo can increase a home's resale value and can return as much as 68 percent of homeowners' investments. As homeowners plan their bathroom renovations, it's a good time to consider improvements that will improve function and add design appeal for years to come.



**▲ Floating vanity:** Add an airy feeling to the room by creating space between the vanity and the floor. A floating vanity can be a counter with a vessel sink or even have cabinets, as long as the vanity doesn't extend to the floor.

**▲ Freestanding traditional sink or tub:** There's something elegant about a freestanding tub or pedestal sink. There are options for any design style.

**▲ Frameless showers:** Switch to a walk-in shower option, which improves aesthetics and makes it easier to "age in place" in a home. Pair that frameless shower with clear glass shower doors so sightline in the space remains unencumbered.

**▲ Natural textures:** Create a calm and serene sanctuary in the bathroom with light,

natural hues and materials. Nature-inspired colors on tiles, walls and vanities can add to the spa vibe.

**▲ Dual sinks and vanities:** With a double vanity, two people can share the space and easily use the bathroom without getting in each other's way.

**▲ Small textured tile on shower floors:** Small textures are appealing and add safety. The added texture and grouting will keep feet from slipping on wet floors. Also, opt for mold-resistant grout to make cleanup even easier.

**▲ Special shower heads:** Invest in shower heads that can run the gamut from creating steam showers to rainfall effects. Some showers will have multiple shower jets to offer an

invigorating experience.

**▲ Improve drainage:** Increase the diameter of the drain pipe in the bathroom from the standard to a two-inch drain pipe. This will reduce the risk of clogs and overflow leaks.

**▲ Install a window:** Natural light and air flow can reduce the risk for mold and mildew growth, and windows add some aesthetic appeal to a space. Just be sure to choose frosted privacy glass.

Additional considerations for a bath remodel include heated floors, well-placed and attractive storage options and a toilet enclosure (water closet) for added privacy. These and other bathroom renovation ideas can add value and improve the appeal of the room.

## Common Allergy Triggers

The human body is a well-oiled machine that is a wonder of biological efficiency when working properly. The body's immune system is integral to keeping a person healthy, and it does that by recognizing foreign invaders, such as viruses and bacteria, and then launching an attack to eradicate them. Sometimes, however, the body treats outside substances as harmful when they're really just nuisances. This is the case with allergens.

Allergens, according to eMedicine Health, trigger an immune system response to various substances the body deems harmful. In turn, the body overreacts to these substances, triggering allergic reactions. Allergic reactions may occur in one person and not another. The immune system produces antibodies, which can cause certain effects, including inflammation of the skin, sinuses, digestive system, or airways, depending on the allergen, according to the Mayo Clinic.

Many things can trigger allergies, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that more than 50 million people in the United States have allergies. Here's a look at some of the more

common allergies that tend to rear their heads when weather warms up.

### Pollen

The air is filled with pollen come the spring and summer. Freshly blooming grasses, trees, flowers, and even weeds produce an abundance of pollen this time of year. It may coat vehicles outside and make its way indoors when people throw open windows to enjoy warm breezes.

Pollen allergies are quite common and cause runny, stuffy nose, itchy eyes, sneezing, watery eyes, and itchiness of the skin or roof of the mouth in some instances. Decongestants tend to be recommended when pollen count is high. It's also best to leave windows closed during these times.

### Mold

Mold are very small fungi with spores that float in the breeze like pollen. Mold thrives in damp areas. Mold may grow unchecked after spring rains or in piles of damp leaves. It also can be found in musty basements or bathrooms. Using a dehumidifier indoors can help alleviate mold, but outdoors it may be a little more challenging to control. When doing yard work in damp

areas, wear a mask to avoid breathing in spores.

### Dust Mites

Chances are the arrival of spring may trigger the desire to do a little cleaning. In turn, it's highly likely that dust will be disturbed, and along with it, dust mites. WebMD says dust mites are microscopic and people may not even know they are around. Keeping a home free of dusty items can reduce dust mite numbers. Also, cover mattresses, pillows and wash sheets weekly in hot water to help alleviate dust mite infiltration.

### Insect Stings

We tend to think of allergens in terms of small substances that are inhaled, but insects that are abundant in the warm weather can be troublesome, too. An insect sting or bite can cause hives, itching, swelling, shortness of breath, or even anaphylaxis. While there's no definitive way to avoid all insects, people can opt against brightly colored clothes and scented lotions or cosmetics. Insect repellents and skipping sweet foods or beverages at outdoor meals also may help.

Allergens are common this time of year, and people can take caution to feel better if they suffer allergies.

## The Buzz About Bees

Warm weather and extra hours of sunlight spark flowering trees and plants to bloom anew. This is the time of year when the air is sweet with the aroma of blossoms and the familiar hum of insects can be heard all around.

Not all "bugs" are the same this time of year. While you probably won't want ants invading your backyard grill fest, the presence of bees nearby can be a good thing - even if those curious yellow-and-black critters get a little close for comfort from time to time. That's because almost 90 percent of wild plants and 75 percent of the leading global crops depend on animal pollination.

The following are some bee facts to buzz about. Save the Bees, NASA, and the Texas A&M University Honey Bee Information Site.

**▲ There are roughly 20,000 species of bees around the world.** Most of them are solitary bees.

**▲ Bees have five eyes.** Two of the eyes are large compound eyes with hexago-

nal facets. The other three are small, simple eyes.

**▲ Honeybees have a move called the "waggle dance."** It is a clever way of communicating to tell them where to go to find the best sources of food.

**▲ Bees can carry up to 122 times their body weight in pollen and nectar.**

**▲ Bumblebees leave footprint scents behind.** They are able to distinguish between their own scents, the scent of a relative and the scent of a stranger as they look for food. They also can avoid flowers already visited.

**▲ Should a queen bee perish, the hive workers will select a new young larva and feed it a special food called "royal jelly."** The larva will develop into a fertile queen.

**▲ Bees flap their wings 190 to 200 times per second.** They can fly up to 15 miles per hour.

**▲ Female bees can sting; males do not.** Losing the

singer will cause the bee to die. The honeybee only can sting once because its stinger is barbed. Bumblebees and hornets can sting multiple times because they have smooth stingers.

**▲ It can require nectar from two million flowers to make one pound of honey.**

**▲ Many bees are not aggressive.** Simply moving away from them can prevent a person from being stung. Generally, bumblebees and honey bees will only sting by accident or if a nest is being disrupted.

**▲ Wasps are different from bees in that they are mostly known to be predators.** They eat other insects and often food that people eat, which is why wasps are more likely to be found around your cookout. Bees tend to be covered in hair, while wasps (which include yellow jackets) are smooth.

Bees are remarkable creatures and should be celebrated as the weather warms up.

## Did You Know?

Though new flooring and ceiling tiles might not offer the wow factor of a remodeled kitchen, a 2019 study from researchers at the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University found that replacing floors and ceilings was the most popular home improvement project in the United States in 2017, the most recent year for which data was available at the time of the study. More than five million homeowners replaced

carpeting, flooring, paneling, or ceiling tiles in their homes in 2017. The popularity of such projects may have something to do with the relatively low cost associated with them. Overhauling surfaces underfoot and overhead costs an average of \$3,283. That places floor and ceiling tile replacement projects among the least expensive home improvement projects homeowners can undertake, even though such renovations can immediately and dramatically transform the look of a room.

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# What To Know About Reseeding, Your Lawn

Spring marks the return of flowering plants and warm weather. And homeowners know that spring also ushers in the return of home renovation season.

Homeowners undoubtedly have an extensive list of projects on their to-do list this spring, and that may include helping their lawns and gardens recover after a long winter. Unpredictable weather, which can include drought and excessive rainfall and everything in between, can take its toll on a lawn. In certain instances, the best solution may be planting new grass. But homeowners can consider these tips before they begin the process of reseeding or replanting their lawns.

▶ **Scarify the lawn.** Scarifying a lawn can help to create a clean slate, but the timing must be right. Various lawn and garden experts, including those at BBC Gardeners' World Magazine, recommend scarifying in spring or early autumn. But don't jump the gun when scarifying in spring by scarifying before the lawn has started to grow after a dormant winter. Scarify when the soil is a little wet and the grass is once again actively growing. Scarifying can remove any lingering weeds from last season and also pull up any moss that might have taken hold over the winter. Without weeds and moss to contend with, freshly planted seeds are in better position to thrive.

▶ **Work with a landscaping professional.** Homeowners with manageable lawns can likely scarify their own lawns with a relatively inexpensive plug-in scarifier. However, scarifying can be a strenuous physical activity, particularly for homeowners



with large lawns. In such instances, homeowners can benefit from working with a qualified landscaping professional. Such a professional can scarify the lawn and subsequently reseed or replant new grass. The latter task is not so simple, as the lawn care experts at Scotts' note that choosing the correct seed is a vital part of reseeding or replanting a lawn. Choosing seed may sound simple, but it's a potentially complex decision that requires knowledge of the existing grass, including when to plant it. Certain grasses are best planted in spring or early fall, while others are best planted in summer. A qualified landscaping professional can identify the existing grass and plan the seeding or planting around this important detail.

▶ **Prepare to water the lawn.** Watering is vital to the long-term success and health of freshly planted grass seed. Scotts' urg-

es homeowners to keep the top inch of soil consistently moist, but not soggy. That requires a daily commitment, and setting a multi-function hose nozzle or sprinkler to the mist setting once per day or more if it's hot outside can increase the chances grass will grow in thick and strong. Scotts' recommends keeping the top two inches of the soil moist until the new grass reaches a mowing height of roughly three inches. Once that benchmark has been reached, watering frequency can be cut back to about twice per week, but now the soil should be deeply soaked instead of misted. The soaking will help roots grow deep into the soil.

Spring is a great time for homeowners in various regions to reseed or replant their lawns. With the right approach, homeowners can enjoy a full and lush lawn throughout summer.

# VEHICLE MAINTENANCE TASKS DRIVERS DON'T WANT TO OVERLOOK

Savvy drivers recognize that maintenance is essential to keeping their vehicles running strong for years on end. Such maintenance ensures vehicles are safe to take out on the road, and basic upkeep also protects drivers' financial investments in their cars and trucks.

Drivers who are not mechanically inclined tend to put their vehicles in the hands of a trusted mechanic to perform routine maintenance like oil changes. But there's a host of simpler vehicle maintenance tasks that drivers don't want to overlook, some of which can be performed without visiting the auto body shop.

▶ **Brake inspections:** Brake inspections are best left to the professionals, who can check the thickness of brake pads and look for other indicators of excessive wear. The automotive resource Cars.com recommends having brakes inspected during routine tire rotations, which many

automotive professionals suggest should be done every six months.

▶ **Car wash:** Car washes might not be the first task drivers associate with vehicle maintenance, but they can prevent long-term damage to cars and trucks. Damage from bird droppings and road salt and ice melt products in the winter can damage a vehicle's paint job and its undercarriage. Wash the car on your own at home or visit a professional car wash to perform this simple yet vital maintenance at regular intervals and whenever you notice significant buildup of dirt and grime on the car's exterior.

▶ **Air filter:** The air filter on a car or truck prevents debris, dirt and other contaminants from getting into the engine. The auto insurance experts at Allstate advise drivers to inspect their vehicle

air filters once a year. Air filters in need of replacement may appear dirty, and reduced fuel economy, unusual engine sounds and reduced horsepower are some other potential indicators that an air filter needs to be replaced.

▶ **Windshield wipers:** Windshield wiper blades are easily overlooked, but automotive experts recommend replacing wiper blades every six to 12 months. Old wiper blades won't perform at peak capacity, dramatically reducing visibility during heavy rain and snowstorms. Anyone can replace their own windshield wiper blades in a matter of minutes, and new blades won't break the bank.

Vehicle maintenance is not exclusive to tending to what's under the hood. Keeping a car running smoothly for years involves routine tasks that many drivers can perform without professional assistance.

# Moderate-Intensity Activities To Improve Overall Health

Exercise is an important component of a healthy lifestyle. The current Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services indicates adults need 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each week. But what constitutes moderate-intensity physical activity?

Moderate-intensity physical activity gets the heart pumping, but only around one in five adults and teens get enough exercise to maintain good health. It

may be because people are having difficulty figuring out what constitutes moderate-intensity activity. Here is a more detailed explanation of the types of activities considered moderate-intensity.

- ▶ Walking very briskly (roughly four miles per hour)
- ▶ Heavy cleaning, like washing windows, vacuuming and mopping
- ▶ Mowing the lawn with a power mower
- ▶ Bicycling with light effort (10 to 12 miles per hour)

- ▶ Playing recreational badminton
- ▶ Playing doubles tennis
- ▶ Slow dancing
- ▶ Shooting a basketball
- ▶ Water aerobics
- ▶ Playing volleyball
- ▶ Heavy gardening
- ▶ Painting and decorating

Anything that doesn't increase heart rate and breathing speed will not count as moderate-intensity activity. However, any exercise is better than no exercise at all. As long as an activity breaks up long periods of sitting still, doctors says it is still beneficial.

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