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Despite their diminutive stature, ticks are a big concern for people, particularly those with pets.

As the weather warms, ticks are out looking for a host to climb on and get a blood meal. Ticks are a significant concern because they can be infected with bacteria, viruses or parasites, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Lyme disease, ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, tularemia, and babesiosis are just a few of the many tick-borne diseases. These pathogens can be passed to humans and pets via the bite of infected ticks.

In 2018, at least one variety of disease-transmitting tick had been found in all of the lower 48 states, according to the CDC. In addition, researchers at Cornell University identified 26 species of ticks along the East Coast alone. Preventing tick bites has never been more important. The process starts right in one's own backyard.

FRFF



Other ideas include landscaping techniques that can reduce tick populations:

- Remove leaf litter from the yard.
- Clear tall grasses and brush around homes and at the edges of the lawn. Mow regularly to keep the lawn short.
- Create a barrier between wooded areas and the yard if it abuts a forested area. According to Consumer Reports, a three-foot-wide path of wood chips or gravel can prevent tick migration by creating a physical barrier that's dry and sometimes too hot for ticks to tolerate. Such a barrier also serves as a visual reminder to anyone in your household to be especially careful if they step beyond the perimeter.



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- Bag grass clippings, which can serve as habitats for ticks.
- Remove old furniture, trash and other debris that can give ticks places to hide.
- Remember to use a tick-repellent product when venturing into wooded areas. Flea and tick products also are available for pets; consult with a vet.

Ticks are problematic, but various measures can help control tick populations in a yard.





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3 SPRINGTIME HOME IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Are you thinking about updating your home this spring? If so, these three projects are perfectly suited to the season.

- 1. Upgrade the landscaping. Spring is the perfect time to upgrade flower beds and walkways or even install a pool or hot tub. Your garden will have time to grow in and you'll be able to enjoy your new outdoor space all summer long.
- 2. Rebuild or refinish the deck. If your deck has seen better days, this is the ideal time to repair or rebuild it. Consider expanding it to create zones for eating, cooking and relaxing.
- 3. Replace the siding. If your siding took a beating over the winter, now's the right time to replace it. Choose a quality product and consider using a more modern color. Cool tones like gray, blue and green have been popular in recent years.

Spring is the best time of year tackle most outdoor projects. Just be sure to get to them before the hotter weather arrives.



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3 WAYS TO CREATE AN ACCENT WALL

An accent wall is a striking way to make a room more dynamic. Here are three ways you can add one to your home.

- 1. Paint. This is the easiest way to create an accent wall. For a subtle difference, opt for varying tones of the same shade. If you prefer a dramatic look, choose a color that contrasts nicely with the rest of the room.
- 2. Wallpaper. If you prefer a patterned or textured accent wall, wallpaper is just what you need. Choose a pattern with a color scheme that matches the rest of the room for an effect that's pleasing to the eye.
- 3. Bricks. Exposed brick walls look great in almost any type of room. If your home doesn't already have this feature, you can create your own using regular bricks and mortar, or you could mimic the look with textured wallpaper or thin bricks intended as decoration.

Accent walls are the perfect way to play with color, texture and design in your home. And because they only occupy one wall in a room, they won't overpower the space they're in.



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SPRING MAINTENANCE: 5 KEY THINGS TO INSPECT OUTSIDE YOUR HOME

When spring arrives, it's important to inspect the exterior of your home to make sure it hasn't been damaged over the winter. Here are five key things you should check.

- 1. The roof. A visual inspection from the ground or a window will indicate if immediate repairs are needed. In particular, look out for curled, wavy or missing shingles. Also, check the ceilings inside your house for signs of water infiltration.
- 2. Gutters and spouts. Make sure they're still firmly attached to the house and that nothing is blocking water from flowing through them. Remove any debris that's accumulated over the winter.





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- 3. Foundation. Examine the concrete for cracks or signs of water damage. Even the smallest fissure can cause big problems for your home. If you see any signs of degradation, schedule a repair as soon as possible.
- 4. Balcony or patio. Clean your deck thoroughly and secure any loose boards. Wood patios should be stained every one to three years. If it needs to be done this spring, sand the surface and apply your chosen stain.
- 5. Windows and doors. Check the caulking around each window and door, and replace it if necessary. Inspect wooden frames to make sure they don't show signs of water infiltration or rot.

If you notice any major damage during your inspection, be sure to make the needed repairs









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THE BEST STORAGE SOLUTIONS FOR EVERY ROOM IN YOUR HOME

Did you finish your spring cleaning only to realize you need more storage space? Here's a room by room look at some of the best solutions available.

KITCHEN

Install hidden trays under your cabinets to hide chargers, coffee pods and other essentials. In addition, placing pull-out shelves in cupboards will make it easier to organize your items.

BATHROOM

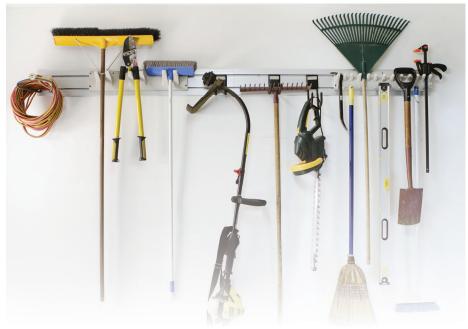
Store your cleaning supplies on a Lazy Susan to make them easy to find when you need them. Use baskets to hold things like bath towels or toilet paper.

LIVING ROOM

Put a bowl on the coffee table to stylishly corral remote controls, magazines and other items. Additionally, a storage ottoman is perfect for holding throws and pillows.



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BEDROOMS

Take advantage of the space under your bed by adding drawers or using under-the-bed storage boxes.

GARAGE

Install overhead racks near the ceiling. This allows you to incorporate storage in the garage without sacrificing parking space. Use this area to hold stuff you don't need to access often, like seasonal decorations and sporting gear.

WORKSHOP, OFFICE OR CRAFT ROOM Mount a pegboard above your work area and use it to organize your tools or supplies. By hanging things on the wall, they'll be easier to find and you'll free up some room.

In addition, be sure to use the vertical space in your home. Install shelves above doors, get extra tall bookcases and put hooks on the back of closet doors.





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SPRING CLEANING: ARE YOU FORGETTING TO TIDY THESE PARTS OF YOUR HOME?

To guarantee that this year's spring cleaning is a success, target these often-neglected areas of your home.

- Refrigerator. Remove everything from the fridge and throw out anything that's past its expiration date. Take out shelves and drawers, scrub them using warm, soapy water and then replace them. Don't use bleach or other strong cleaning products that shouldn't come into contact with food.
- Bedding. Wash your duvets, comforters and pillows in the washing machine using the gentle cycle. Run the rinse cycle twice to be sure all the soap is removed. If your machine isn't



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big enough to fit a comforter or duvet, or you want to do it all at once, head to a local laundromat.

- Blinds. Dust vinyl, aluminum or wood blinds with a vacuum or a microfiber duster on both sides. If there's a buildup of
 - dirt, wash with a sponge and a solution of water and vinegar. Fabric shades can be vacuumed or brought to the dry cleaner.
- Walls and ceilings. Re-٠ move cobwebs caught in the corners using a vacuum and wash the ceiling with an extendable sponge mop and slightly soapy water. Continue by cleaning the walls in the same way and giving the baseboards a good scrub.

Once you're done, make it a point to re-clean these areas every few months. This will ensure your home is tidier throughout the year and minimize the amount of work



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