

# Spring

## Inside-Out



April 2025  
A Special Supplement to

**Advance Monticellonian**



# Small renovations that make a big impact

Homeowners may think they have to tear down walls or build room extensions to transform their homes with renovation projects. But small projects can yield impressive results, and that's something homeowners working with limited budgets can keep in mind.

There's no shortage of small projects that can change the look and feel of a home. Many of these undertakings can be achieved with a modest investment.

- **Front door replacement:** A new front door instantly improves curb appeal and can make a home more secure and energy-efficient. Painting the existing front door is an even smaller project that still offers appeal.

- **Lighting addition:** Whether a homeowner enlarges a window or adds skylights, natural light can produce incredible results. Investing in new lighting can feel like expanding a space without pushing out walls.

- **Kitchen and bath fixture upgrades:** Faucets and door pulls are used every day. Swapping existing fixtures for something a little more modern can unify spaces and provide subtle changes that enhance these popular spaces.

- **Wood floor restoration:** Scuffing and scratches can adversely affect the pristine look of a natural wood floor. Homeowners can polish a floor to restore its shine. A professional service will sand down and refinish older floors at a fraction of the cost of a new floor installation.

- **Exterior lighting:** Lighting isn't just important inside. A welcoming glow in the yard is awe-inspiring. There are many energy-efficient lighting options, including ones that do not need to be hard-wired to the circuitry inside the home.

- **Staircase renovation:** Coordinate the staircase to the style in the home with a decorative carpet runner. A secure runner is attractive and can help reduce slipping down the stairs. Tighten shaky railings or replace them while upgrading the stair treads.

- **Interior paint:** Change the color of walls, doors, cabinets, or even furniture with paint. All homeowners need is a paint color that inspires them and a little bit of time.

- **Replace outlet covers:** Upgrade outlet covers with screwless options. Screwless plates for outlets and light switches can make walls look more sleek.

- **Entry organizer installation:** Banish



clutter from the home by catching it at the door. An entry organizer with spaces for shoes, coats, backpacks, and shopping bags can be eye-catching and functional.

- **Carpets cleaning:** Soiled carpets can

look drab and dingy. Homeowners can rent carpet-cleaning machines or hire services to revitalize carpets with a deep cleaning.

Small changes around a home can create a big impact without breaking the bank.

## Signs of pest infestation in a home

As any seasoned party host knows, guests can sometimes overstay their welcome. But what about guests that were never welcome in the first place? Pests can wreak havoc on a home, contributing to significant and costly damage and potentially exposing residents, particularly pets, to harmful illnesses.

Pest infestation can occur any time of year, but homeowners may be most likely to see signs of infestation during spring cleaning sessions in areas of the home where they didn't spend much time in the previous months, such as attics and garages. As spring cleaning season kicks off, individuals can keep an eye open for the following signs of pest infestation.

- **Nesting materials:** Pests may drag certain nesting materials from outdoor areas into a home. Leaves and grass clippings as well as twigs may be used to construct a warm nest in interior spaces. Pests also transport nesting materials that are inside a home to other areas of a home that are more secluded. Fabric, paper products, including chewed cardboard, and insulation seen in unusual spaces may be left behind by pests nesting in other areas. If there's a trail of such materials, follow it to see if you can find a nest.

- **Pets behaving strangely:** Pets can't tell their owners if there's pests in a home, but they may exhibit signs suggesting an infes-

tation. Pets may start scratching at walls and doors with their paws or sniffing around areas where they can smell pests.

- **Unexplained odors:** Foul odors are not necessarily indicative of a pest infestation, as such aromas could indicate a range of issues. But pest feces can produce a foul odor, and some pest infestations can lead to mold growth that also produces unpleasant smells.

- **Destroyed items:** Certain pests may gnaw or chew on items, including electrical wires, home furnishings and food packaging. Homeowners who keep a stocked pantry of dry goods and notice packages have been damaged or chewed through likely have a pest infestation.

- **Droppings:** Of course, droppings are a telltale indicator of a pest infestation. Rodent droppings are small, black and shaped like a grain of rice. Pests such as termites might leave pellet-shaped droppings in their wake.

Signs of pest infestation may be discovered during spring cleaning sessions. If homeowners suspect pest infestations in their home, they can examine out-of-the-way spaces with a flashlight and contact a pest control specialist to identify and address any issues they uncover.





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# Gardening safety for seniors

Longer hours of daylight and warming temperatures are hallmarks of spring and each of these variables do much to contribute to the reputation of a season that's become synonymous with rejuvenation. After months spent confronting cold temperatures and huddling up indoors, people might find the welcoming conditions of spring irresistible, which compels many to spend more time outdoors.

There's no shortage of things to do outside in spring, and the season marks a perfect time to reestablish one's green thumb and get down and dirty in the garden. Gardening is a rewarding and healthy activity, though some, particularly seniors, may need to approach springtime sessions in the garden with a heightened degree of caution. Seniors can keep these health and safety tips in mind as they celebrate the return of spring and what that means for their gardens.

- Recognize that gardening is exercise. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identifies gardening as a good form of exercise, and evidence supports the notion that gardening is a particularly beneficial form of physical activity. A 2024 meta-analysis published in the Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery & Psychiatry indicated that individuals who engaged in low

levels of leisure time physical activities such as gardening are likely to have a lower risk of stroke than peers who are sedentary. It's important to keep these findings in mind when gardening, which is perhaps more physically demanding than some may recognize. Seniors can approach gardening just like they would other forms of exercise, taking the same precautions, such as stretching before and after each session and making a concerted effort to remain hydrated, while out in the garden.

- Incorporate rest into your garden routine. Rest is vital for anyone engaged in physical activity, including gardeners. Frequent breaks during gardening sessions can help avoid strains and sprains and provide opportunities to hydrate and get out of the sun. If possible, seniors can identify a shaded spot on their properties and place a bench there so they have somewhere to rest during gardening sessions.

- Utilize ergonomic gardening tools and other specialized products. The Center for Excellence in Disabilities at West Virginia University notes that ergonomics studies movements of a person's body during physical activities in an effort to produce tools that ensure a task has as little physical impact on the body as possible. Ergonomic tools are designed to lower injury risk, im-



prove efficiency and increase satisfaction that stems from performing a particular activity. Before each gardening season, seniors can inspect their existing tools and replace them with ergonomic alternatives, if necessary. In addition, seniors can utilize specialized products, including long-han-

dled gardening tools that reduce the need to bend over or kneel down, to further reduce their risk of injury while working in the garden. These simple strategies can ensure seniors' springtime gardening sessions are as safe as they are rewarding.

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# A spring lawn revitalization strategy



New growth is a hallmark of spring, whether it plays out in the birth of birds and bunnies or with the returned buds on trees and plant stalks. While most greenery rebounds naturally, lawns may need a little extra TLC in order to return to their once lush, green glory.

Revitalizing a lawn in spring is a multi-

- faceted process but can be well worth the reward when green grass adds to a beautiful landscape and functional yard. Here is how to get started when the weather warms, courtesy of The Farmer's Almanac and The Home Depot.
- Clean up debris. Spend a few hours raking up leaves from the lawn and removing any other winter debris like twigs so that air can reach the grass below. Also remove any thatch that has developed.
  - Test the soil. Take a sample of the soil to determine its pH level and nutrient needs. Then you can make adjustments to set a strong foundation for the lawn to grow.
  - Do some weeding. Pull out any weeds that have poked through early on and apply a pre-emergent herbicide to prevent additional weeds from taking over.
  - Start the aeration process. A core aerator punches holes into the soil. This enables air and water to penetrate through to the roots.
  - Overseed the lawn. Apply grass seeds over the lawn, paying special attention to any bare or thin areas so that the seed will fill in the lawn.

- Water consistently. It is important to water the lawn deeply and consistently, especially when the weather is dry, to help promote strong root development.
  - Time fertilizer correctly. Apply a spring fertilizer around three weeks after the lawn starts to turn green or after the first two or three mowings. If fertilizer is applied too early it can feed weeds instead of the grass and result in fertilizer runoff.
  - Mow to an appropriate height. Begin to mow when the ground is dry enough and the grass is long enough to need cutting. Leave some length to the lawn; otherwise, sunlight will reach the soil and encourage weed seeds to germinate.
- With a little elbow grease at the start of spring, homeowners can establish strong and healthy lawns.

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