

# DIY: To paint or not to paint

Enthusiastic first-time homeowners back in the early 1990s, my husband and I decided we wanted to paint our house.

I say “we” rather loosely — John is a teacher, so he was off for the summer and the bulk of the job was left to him and our friends Dave and Chris Alteneder.

We wanted to put our personal fingerprint on the house by choosing new colors. John envisioned a black house with red trim.

Dave suggested black may not be the best color, so we went with gray.

The Alteneders, friends we met back in our college days, traveled from Newberg to help us. Dave, who also was an educator, supplemented the family income by painting houses during the summer months, so he had spraying gear and other supplies.

We discovered that the tiny paint strips that show the color doesn't always translate the same once it's up on the siding or trim. Unfortunately, we learned this too late. Germanium, the trim color, was hot pink rather than a deeper red. I guess we could have re-painted it, but by that time everyone was pretty much spent on the project.

Fast forward 15 years later when John thought the house needed to be painted again. He suggested we forgo our regular summer vacation plans and use the time and



STAFF PHOTO BY GARY L. WEST

**A fresh coat of paint can liven up the inside or outside of your house. But if you do it yourself, and you only paint every 15-plus years, there may be some pitfalls you encounter along the way.**

money to paint the house. I quickly put the brakes on that silly talk — I look forward to our summer trips together and wasn't up for painting in the sweltering heat.

Because of the way vacation accrued when I started at the *East Oregonian* in April 2006, I wasn't eligible to take time off for an entire year. That meant no summer vacation that year — so I revived John's idea about painting

the house that summer. Well, that didn't happen — instead, John packed up and hit the road without me.

As the years went on, it became clear the house needed a new coat. In 2013, I became motivated to take action after a crew knocked on the door and asked if we wanted an estimate to have our house painted.

I figured we would save money if we just did it our-

selves. So, I pitched the idea to John and off to the store we went to get paint. We chose “deep space,” which is pretty close to black, for the main part of the house. In addition, we got gray for the trim and red (NOT pink this time) for the shutters and doors.

We started the project in late July and I finished the front door on August 31. Yup, the hottest time of year in Hermiston and we were

out there painting. I'm not a morning person, so I truly was painting in the heat of the day. I sported a “Karate Kid” headband that I kept dipping in water. In addition, I finally talked John into a little pool. Those two things probably saved me from heatstroke.

Although, John used a sprayer when climbing on scaffolding to get the highest part of the split-level, we used brushes and paint pads for

most of the project.

In retrospect, I wish I had said yes when the paint crew asked if I wanted an estimate.

*Tammy Malgesini is the community editor. Her column, Inside my Shoes, includes general musings about life. Contact her at [malgesini@eastoregonian.com](mailto:malgesini@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4539.*

## WATER:

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ery. “You still have to water stuff, just not as much.”

If you really want to “go native,” visit the CTUIR Tribal Native Plant Nursery on the Umatilla Indian Reservation. While much

of the stock they produce goes to restoring native Inland Northwest habitats, they also sell locally collected, locally adapted native plants on a limited basis. For more information on plant availability and operating hours, call 541-278-8525 or email [info@tribalnativplants.com](mailto:info@tribalnativplants.com).

But don't forget the mulch. Xeric species can withstand heat and drought, but even the hardiest plant can use a little help. In hot conditions, drought-tolerant plants mulched with 4 inches of rock, pea gravel or bark can reduce water consumption by as much as 50 percent over Kentucky

bluegrass.

Resources abound for information on plants that will thrive in Eastern Oregon conditions. To get you started, a great list of native plants suited to our region can be found on the Plant Native website, [www.plantnative.org](http://www.plantnative.org). Local nurseries like Westwinds

in Hermiston, Schichtel's in Milton-Freewater and the garden center at D&B Supply in Pendleton have knowledgeable staff that can guide you in plant selection for your particular situation. And many companies online have searchable catalogs that can be narrowed down by planting

zone, water requirements, light requirements, soil type and more.

Last, but not least, your local Master Gardeners are a wealth of information. Contact OSU Extension at 541-278-5403 or visit the Master Gardeners online at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/umatilla/mg>.

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