

Fall Home Improvement

A Special Supplement to Siuslaw News

ENJOY AN ECO-FRIENDLY AUTUMN

Reduce fire risk as cold weather sets in



Shopping at a nearby farm stand can guarantee fresh, quality produce while supporting local businesses.

Autumn arrives with cool breezes, awe-inspiring foliage and the hint of holidays on the horizon. Fall is a favorite time of year for many people because the crisp weather motivates people of all ages to enjoy the great outdoors.

Individuals conscious of their carbon footprints can use fall as a time to take inventory of their behaviors and make changes where necessary. The following are some steps to take right now that fit perfectly with the harvest season.

- Shop at a local farm stand. Take advantage of the many roadside stands that crop up this time of year where you can find bushels of apples, pumpkins, gourds and late-summer vegetables. After a day of sightseeing, visit a farm stand for warm cider and freshly baked doughnuts. Buying local produce reduces reliance on foreign-shipped foods and other products, while also cutting back on the fuel consumed to get foods from the farm to the table.

- Use nature to decorate. Skip plastic, mass-produced decorations and rely on nature to dress up your home. Fill vases with leaves and berries. Place small pumpkins on mantles, and enrich the landscape



of your home with vibrantly hued mums and other cool-weather plants. Corn husks and stalks can add harvest flair to front porches. Twigs nestled and tied together can make interesting table centerpieces.

- Create a composting pile. Outdoor chores are easier in cool weather than they are when the mercury rises. Set aside a place in the yard for composting. A healthy compost pile should have roughly two-thirds carbon (brown) materials and one-third nitrogen (green) materials, says EarthEasy.com. Use those lawn clippings and raked leaves to make compost for spring plantings.

- Visit a corn maze. After corn has been harvested, farm owners often use their land for supplemental income. Corn mazes can be simple or complex depending on visitors' ages. Engage in family bonding outside and turn off electronics in the process.

- Bake your own pie. After a fun-filled day picking apples at a nearby orchard, head home and use those locally sourced apples to whip up a delicious pie.

- Recycle old clothes to dress your scarecrow. Clothing that is not worthy of donation can be transformed into a festive scarecrow just in time for Halloween hijinks. Fill out the body of the scarecrow with newspaper and then add some pieces of straw around the neck, hands and feet.

- Host a football party. Watch the game on television or have a pickup game in the yard. Serve finger foods to cut down on the need for plastic or paper plates and flatware. Purchase a keg of beer from a local brewery to eliminate individual beer cans and bottles. Set out a nonalcoholic punch bowl so the kids can enjoy refreshments, too.

Autumn can be a great time of year to embrace some eco-friendly practices.
— Metro Creative Connection

Plenty of things heat up when the temperature drops, including the risk for fire hazards. Fireplaces, stoves, heating systems, candles and even electric lights are used more often during the winter than any other time of year, so it makes sense that the risk of home fires increases when the mercury drops.

The U.S. Fire Administration says 905 people die in winter home fires each year. Understanding potential risks and exercising caution can help homeowners protect themselves, their families and their homes from fire.

Home heating fires peak when many people are home preparing dinner. The following steps, courtesy of the American Red Cross, can improve safety in the kitchen and reduce the likelihood of a home fire.

- Never leave cooking food unattended, as it can take just seconds for fires to ignite.

- Keep anything that can catch fire away from the stove or other appliances that generate heat.

- Clean regularly to prevent grease buildup.

- Make sure appliances are turned off before leaving the room or going to bed.

The National Fire Protection Association warns that heating

is the second leading cause of home fires, deaths and injuries in the United States.

- Install heating appliances according to manufacturers' instructions or have a professional do the installation.

- Fuel-burning equipment needs to vent to the outside.

- Never use an oven to heat a home.

- Keep anything that can burn away from heating equipment, including portable space heaters.

- Clean and inspect heating appliances regularly.

- Turn off portable heaters when leaving the room or going to bed.

Electricity also can contribute to home fires. The Energy Education Council offers these safety suggestions.

- Never force plugs into outlets.

- Check that cords are not frayed or cracked.

- Make sure light bulbs are the proper wattage for fixtures.

- Install ground fault circuit interrupters in kitchens, baths, laundry rooms, and elsewhere, making sure to test them regularly.

- Check periodically for loose wall receptacles and loose wires. Home fires can be prevented with simple safety checks.

— Metro

CORRAL ENTRYWAY CLUTTER NOW

The entryway to a home is the first thing guests experience when coming inside. It also can be the first place residents drop their belongings after long days at school or work. As a result, entryways can quickly be consumed by clutter. Taming such messes takes a mixture of ingenuity and planning.

Homeowners hoping to clear their entryways of clutter must first decide what they want to get out of the space. Will it simply be a decorative spot with photos and other home decor on display? Or is functionality the primary goal?

Once that decision has been made, take inventory of which items need to be in the area, such as shoes, keys, umbrellas or coats, and which don't. To make things more organized, rearrange the former while removing the latter.

Next it is time to assess storage needs and what's already available. User-friendly storage items may need to be purchased to make the room as functional as possible. The following ideas also can help bring order to the space.

- Create a command center. Create a central location where items are neat, orderly

and within reach. Use a bulletin board, dry-erase calendar or something that can house schedules and important notices. Hooks can hold keys, chargers and more.

- Keep it covered. Covered bins can serve as a seating area and also a place to store shoes, hats and scarves.

- Create cabinet space. Store items in cabinets so they are organized but out of sight. This way belongings are not just left on an entryway table.

- Create another drop zone. If the entryway is too small to serve its purpose, outfit another room or area that also can do the job. This can be a laun-

dry room or mudroom area. Install shelves, a bench, cabinets and hooks. Just be sure this space is close enough to the entryway to make it useful.

- Go vertical. An easy way to keep things neater is to remove items from the floor and embrace vertical storage. Shoe racks, hooks for purses and a cabinet for coats may do the trick.

Clutter can accumulate in entryways. But some simple adjustments can quickly revamp the space to make it neater and much more functional.

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