

# Summer Home Improvement

## Improve storage at home

Homes are getting bigger, but it seems like people are still lamenting a lack of storage space.

National Public Radio says the average American home has nearly tripled in size during the last 50 years. Despite that, 10 percent of Americans still need to rent off-site storage.

Improving storage at home can be a cost-effective alternative to renting storage space. With these easy tips, homeowners can maximize space immediately.

### Track storage systems

Closets may be plentiful, but if not efficiently utilized, space may still seem lacking. Track closet storage systems often make greater use of closet space than traditional shelf and hanging rod systems. Customizing closets using track systems or other modifications can improve utility of all closets in the house.

### Under-the-bed storage

Storage beds typically feature cubbies or drawers within a platform-style bed frame. It's a practical home storage solution, and does not require any building. Another option is to purchase containers for under-the-bed storage. Often including wheels, these easy slide-outs are great places to put seasonal clothing, spare bedroom linens and other items.

### Think vertically

Maximize spaces by looking up and down for storage possibilities. Items that are not used frequently, such as seasonal decorations or travel suitcases, can be stored in high spaces. Shelving on walls can go as high as nec-

essary and be put to use in awkward wall areas, such as in corners or under eaves.

While in the attic or garage, add hanging shelves to rafters or exposed beams to create off-the-floor storage as well.

### Storage benches

A stopping area inside the front door replete with a storage bench can house shoes, umbrellas, hats, backpacks, and other items, keeping them tidy and out of sight. In living rooms, look for chests or ottomans that are decorative and functional. Store throw blankets or board games inside.

### Recess drawers or shelves

Gain more storage by recessing a chest of drawers into what is called the "knee wall" of homes that have sloped ceilings in attics and upstairs bedrooms. Utilize these short walls in an efficient manner by sinking drawers or shelves into them, without taking up floor space.

In the kitchen, add drawers to the space (toe-kick) beneath lower cabinets to store rarely used items. Shelving and bookcases, either built-in or freestanding/open or enclosed, will transform unused wall areas or sections of large closets into instant storage.

Finding more space to store and display all the stuff used for day-to-day living can be an adventure that ends with everything in its perfect place.

There are fun ways, too. Nooks cut out of the wall and covered by pictures offer one of many concealed storage options that also include nooks or drawers in the sides of enclosed staircases.

## Décor ideas to give homes a fresh look

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

### Wall treatments

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

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.

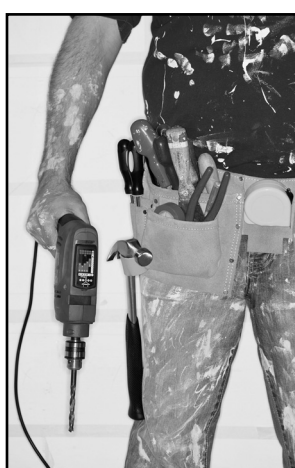
### Accent features

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.

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

## Safety a vital component of DIY projects



mission found that certain tools are more likely to cause injuries than others. Power nailers, for example, are among the most dangerous tools DIYers can use. Chain saws, table saws, circular saws, and riding mowers are some additional tools that have very high injury rates.

The following are some safety guidelines all DIYers should heed when using

power tools.

- Use tools that are the right size and right type for the job. If you are uncertain about which tools to use, watch online tutorials, contact tool manufacturers or seek advice at home supply stores.

- Always wear eye protection and the right safety equipment when manufacturers recommend doing so. Gloves, sturdy work boots, hearing protection, and hard hats can protect DIYers from injury.

- Keep cutting tools sharp and in good condition to reduce kick back and potential injuries.

- Regularly inspect tools to make sure they are in working order.

- Never carry tools up a ladder by hand; use a bucket or bag to hoist tools.

- Never leave tools lying out in any area where they

can present a hazard. Unplug power tools when not in use.

- Secure work with a clamp or vice grip when appropriate to keep things from slipping.

- Ensure that the handles of tools like hammers and axes fit tightly into the head of the tool.

- Keep work environments tidy to avoid clutter, as cluttered workspaces can contribute to accidents.

- Read the manual and operate the power tool as instructed.

- Do not force open a safety on a power tool or modify a tool to override safety features.

- Cut away from yourself when using chisels and other edged tools.

Let common sense prevail when using tools. If it doesn't seem like a good idea, it probably isn't. Safety is important to avoid injuries and help prevent delays on the job.

## Tips on how to level an uneven yard

Many things can cause a yard to be uneven. Drainage problems, leaky pipes beneath the grass and pests can wreak havoc on a yard, resulting in uneven turf that can be both unsightly and unsafe.

Addressing an uneven yard might be homeowners' ultimate goal, but the home experts at BobVila.com note that homeowners should first figure out what's causing the problem and make fixing that their first task. Fixing uneven ground above leaky pipes will only be a temporary fix if the leaks themselves are not addressed.

Professional contractors might be necessary depending on what's causing the problem. However, once the underlying issue has been addressed, many homeowners can handle the task of leveling

an uneven yard on their own.

- Leveling an uneven yard may require various tools. Thatch will likely need to be removed from the lawn before it can be leveled out, so homeowners will need a thatch rake or dethatching machine to get this task started.

Dethatching machines are generally necessary for especially large lawns, and these can typically be rented from home improvement retailers. A shovel, bow rake and push broom are other tools homeowners will likely need. Materials such as topsoil, compost and sand will be necessary as well, and these are typically sold at local garden centers.

- Areas beneath the grass can be filled in with a mixture of sand, topsoil and compost. The experts at BobVila.com advise using two parts sand,

two parts topsoil and one part compost.

Each of these components plays its own role in restoring the yard to full health. Sand helps the ground stay level, while the topsoil and compost provide the grass with valuable nutrients. If the low spots are not especially deep, this mixture can be applied without removing the grass. However, before filling in holes when addressing spots that are deeper than two or three inches, remove the grass then place it back in place once the hole has been filled. To dig up the grass, put the blade of the shovel at the outside of the low spot before sliding it under about two or three inches so you do not upset the grass roots.

- Spread the top dressing. Once the holes have been filled and the grass has been placed back on the ground (if it was removed), spread the top dressing mix with a shovel. The mix should be spread evenly with the back of the bow rake at a depth of no more than half an inch. Make sure the mix is worked into the low spots and that it's not completely covering the grass, as that will suffocate the lawn. If necessary, use the push broom to work the mix into the soil.

- Water the lawn. Finally, water the lawn to help the top dressing settle into the grass. If necessary, repeat the process of applying top dressing and watering until the lawn is even and has returned to full strength.

Fixing an uneven lawn is simple once homeowners discover and address what's behind the issue.

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