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Tips to successfully grow tomatoes

Slicing into the first tomato of the season is a much anticipated moment for gardeners. Tomatoes are among the most popular fruit or vegetable plants grown in home gardens. Much of that popularity may be credited to the fact that red, ripe tomatoes have a delicious, juicy flavor that serves as the basis for all sorts of recipes. And since tomatoes can just as easily be grown in a full backyard garden or in a container on a patio or balcony, tomatoes appeal to gardeners regardless of their living situations.

While tomatoes are relatively easy to grow, they are prone to certain problems and pests. Knowledge of what to expect when planting tomatoes and how to start off on the right footing can help produce a season's worth of delicious bounty.

- **Wait until after the last average frost date.** Tomatoes can be grown from seeds outdoors in warm areas, but tomato gardeners often find success starting seeds indoors six to eight weeks before the last frost date. Gradually introduce seedlings to the elements for a few hours each day, increasing the duration of time outside. Then they can be transplanted outdoors when temperatures are

consistently over 60 F.

- **Choose a sunny spot.** Tomatoes love to soak up sunlight, according to The Home Depot. Place the plants in a sunny spot so they can thrive.

- **Space out plants.** The experts at Better Homes and Gardens say to leave anywhere from 24 to 48 inches between plants to accommodate for growth and ensure the plants will not get stunted.

- **Plant deeply.** Tomatoes tend to root along their stems. If transplants are long and lean, dig a trench and lay the stem sideways in the dirt, and then bend the top of the plant upward. Snip off the lower branches and cover with soil up to the first set of leaves. This will produce extra root growth and stronger, more vital plants.

- **Give the plants support.** Tomato cages or stakes can help keep the leaves and fruit from touching the ground, which can cause rot and, eventually, death to the tomato plant.

- **Lay down a layer of mulch.** Tomatoes grow best when the soil is consistently moist. Mulch can help retain moisture from



watering and rain. Mulch also will help prevent soil and soil-borne diseases from splashing on the leaves and plants when it rains. While you amend the soil, make sure that it drains well and is slightly acidic.

- **Prune away suckers.** Tomatoes produce "suckers," which are leaves that shoot out from the main stem. Removing these leaves promotes air circulation and keeps the plant's energy focused on growing fruit. Tomatoes are a rich addition to any garden. A few simple tricks can help even novice gardeners grow delicious tomatoes.

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Caution and caustic products go hand-in-hand



Caution and caustic products must go hand-in-hand to avoid injuries and accidents around the house.

Keeping a home clean is no small task. All sorts of stains appear in homes every day, some harder to clean than others. And for each individual spill or accident that can dirty up a home, there seems to be a cleaning product tailor-made to address it. That can make choosing the right cleaning product more complicated than simply choosing the least expensive option.

Cleaning products are not one and the same, and various consumer advocacy groups have emphasized the importance of choosing products that are both

effective and safe. Caustics are one type of product that get ample shelf space at grocery stores. According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, caustics are chemicals that burn or corrode people's skin, eyes and mucus membranes. While it may seem as though no one would willingly bring such products into their homes, caustics are widely used. In fact, the National Capital Poison Center notes that drain cleaners, oven cleaners, rust removers, toilet bowl cleaners, dishwasher detergents, and cleaning products for brick and

concrete are among the various products that can cause chemical burns.

Adults generally know to exercise caution around potentially dangerous cleaning products, including caustics. However, children and pets may not be so savvy. That only underscores the importance of exercising extreme caution when bringing such products into a home. The NCPCC notes that caustic products cause instant damage, which means parents and/or pet owners won't be able to prevent injuries if curious youngsters and animals come into contact with these substances. Before purchasing caustic cleaning products, consumers can consider these pointers, courtesy of the NCPCC.

- **Only purchase caustics if nothing else will do the job.** Because of their potential to cause so much damage so quickly, caustics should only be purchased if no other product is up to the task. A little extra elbow grease is worth avoiding the potential problems caused by caustics.

- **Don't buy caustics in bulk.** Extra caustics around the house only increase the risk of injury. Only purchase the amount you need, storing anything you bring home in areas that cannot be accessed by curious kids and pets.

- **Do not transfer products to different containers.** Caustics should always be kept in their original containers. That reduces confusion and the risk of accidents. In addition, product warning labels on the original packaging will ensure anyone who needs to use the substance will be made aware of its potential safety hazards.

- **Follow directions carefully.** All it takes is a simple spill for a caustic product to cause an injury. When using caustics, follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully and exactly.

- **Protect yourself.** When using caustic products, wear gloves and safety glasses to reduce your risk of injury. In addition, open windows if the label advises doing so.

- **Do not use caustics near kids or pets.** Never use caustics in front of children or pets. Kids and pets are naturally curious, and that curiosity may compel them to look for products they saw mom and dad using.

Caution and caustic products must go hand-in-hand to avoid injuries and accidents around the house.

The dangers of mowing the grass too low

Spring marks the return of many things. Trees and flowers begin to bloom again in spring, while warmer temperatures are welcomed back with open arms. Grass also begins to grow again in the spring. That means it's not too long before homeowners have to dust off their lawn mowers and get to work. Those who don't necessarily enjoy mowing the lawn may be tempted to cut their grass very low, as doing so can mean longer intervals between mowing sessions. However, mowing grass too low can have a very adverse effect on a lawn.

- **Cutting too low can injure the grass.** Cutting grass too low can injure the grass, creating what's essentially a domino effect of problems to come. Injured grass will focus on its recovery efforts, thereby making it vulnerable to other issues.

- **Cutting too low promotes weed growth.** Injured grass is vulnerable to invaders, including weeds and insects. Weeds and insects can attack grass as it recovers from injury, and before homeowners know it, their lawns are overcome with a host of problems.

- **Cutting too low allows crabgrass to thrive.** Crabgrass needs ample sunlight to grow. By cutting grass too low, homeowners may unknowingly be promoting crabgrass growth. Crabgrass is unsightly and can rob surrounding grass of the moisture it needs to grow. So lawns cut too low may not only lose their lush appeal thanks to the unattractive appearance of crabgrass, but also because areas surrounding



the crabgrass patches might turn brown due to lack of water.

- **Cutting too low can stress the grass.** Cutting too low also makes lawns vulnerable to summer heat. Without blades tall enough to block some of the summer sun, grass can quickly succumb to summer heat, leading to dried out, discolored lawns.

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Tips for planting blueberries

A trip to the produce aisle at a local grocery store can unveil a host of healthy additions to anyone's diet. Such a jaunt also can raise eyebrows, as produce, particularly organic fruits and vegetables, can be very expensive. Consumers may feel helpless to corral the cost of healthy foods like fruits and vegetables, but all hope should not be lost. That's especially so for people willing to give gardening a try.

Blueberries are one of the healthiest foods people can eat. The USDA National Nutrient Database notes that blueberries, which are low in calories and high in fiber, are great sources of the vitamins C, K

and B6. However, organic blueberries can be among the most expensive foods in the produce aisle. Various factors, including where blueberries come from and whether or not they're organic, dictate their cost. But it's not uncommon to pay roughly \$4 for a six-ounce package of organic blueberries. For some, such costs are prohibitive.

Growing blueberries in a home garden can save blueberry lovers substantial amounts of money while ensuring they reap all of the benefits of this highly nutritious and edible berry. The following are some tips novices can employ as they plant their first batch of blueberries.



- **Consult a local garden center.** The U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council recommends consulting a local garden center before planting blueberries. The professionals at such centers can recommend the best variety of blueberry to plant. That's an important first step, as the USHBC notes that farmers cultivate dozens of varieties of highbush blueberries across North America. Lowbush varieties also may be a gardener's best option depending on where he or she lives. A local garden center can

help you determine which variety best suits your local climate.

- **Plant where there is ample sun and well-drained soil.** The roots of blueberry plants should remain moist throughout the growing season, so choose an area where the soil drains well. If that's hard to find, consider planting in raised beds or patio containers. In addition, the University of Minnesota Extension notes that blueberries require full sun, so plant in a spot where the blueberries will not be denied daily sunlight.

- **Prepare the soil.** Blueberries require acidic soil, so running a soil test prior to planting is a good idea. Speak with a local garden center about soil adjustments if the soil is unlikely to

promote growth.

- **Fertilize carefully.** The USHBC notes that established blueberry plants will respond well to acid fertilizers. However, it's important not to overdo it, as blueberries are sensitive to overfertilization. Follow fertilization instructions and speak with local garden center professionals for advice.

- **Be patient.** The UME notes that plants won't bear much fruit in their first two to three years, and that harvests are bigger after five years. So patience is a virtue blueberry planters must embrace.

Planting blueberries can be a rewarding hobby that also can save gardeners money at the grocery store.

- **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.

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

Decor ideas to give homes a fresh look this spring



Spring is a season of rejuvenation, and that spirit of renewal can take hold inside a home.

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

- **Wallpaper:** 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:** Nothing embodies the spring quite like 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.



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Mulching mistakes to avoid

Landscape features vary significantly from house to house. Some homeowners may prefer water features on their properties, while others focus on flowers that would be the envy of a botanical garden. Regardless of those preferences, lawn and garden enthusiasts who want to make their properties as idyllic as possible may eventually look to mulch to help them accomplish that goal.

Mulch helps soil retain moisture, which promotes strong, healthy flowers, plants, trees, and shrubs. And because soil beneath mulch retains more moisture than soil that's not protected by mulch, homeowners won't have to spend as much time watering mulched landscapes. That saves time and conserves water, which can be a big benefit in areas prone to drought and/or especially hot summers. Mulch also helps to suppress weed growth, which can ensure all that hard work needed to create an eye-catching garden won't be compromised by the presence of unsightly, thirsty weeds.

Mulching seems like a simple task, and it can be. But that does not mean homeowners cannot make mistakes when mulching. The following are some common mulching mistakes to avoid as lawn and garden season hits full swing.



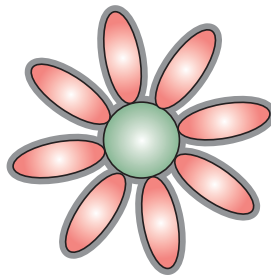
• **Not enough mulch:** Mulch is ineffective when spread too thin. The Virginia Cooperative Extension at Virginia Tech and Virginia State University recommends applying mulch no less than two inches in depth. Anything less than that will prove ineffective at preventing weed growth and helping the soil retain moisture, and that means you will need to water more often.

• **Poorly located mulch:** Mulch should not be placed too close to plant stems or tree trunks. When it is, tissue is so wet that it makes for a perfect environment for disease and insect infestation.

• **Failing to mulch to the drip line:** The drip line of a tree refers to the outermost circumference of the tree's canopy from which water drips onto the ground. The VCE recommends mulching to the drip line of a plant or tree, which ensures the plant or tree will get the most out of the mulch. Mulching to the drip line also minimizes competition from the grass, leading to stronger plants and trees.

• **Failing to weed before mulching:** Weeds should be removed prior to mulching. If they're not, the mulch can provide the same growing environment for weeds that you're trying to create for your plants and trees.

Mulching benefits a landscape in myriad ways, especially when homeowners avoid some common mulching mistakes.



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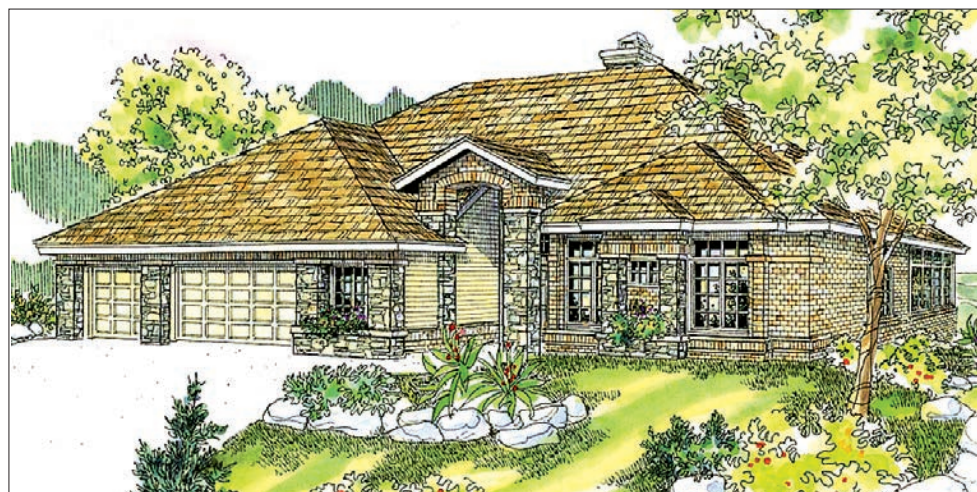
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Stevenson naturally bright throughout

The custom brick work and stone veneer of the Stevenson's lofty and gently arched entry exude a distinctly European charm. While this contemporary ranch-style home was designed for construction on a lot with a rear down slope, it could just as easily be built on a flat parcel.

Natural light washes into the vaulted entry through an arched-top, gridded-glass transom that crowns the double-door entry. Even more striking, the rear wall of the home is more glass than solid walls, and almost all of the windows

are capped by transoms. That makes for an exceptionally bright home.

On the right side of the vaulted entry hall, double doors open into what could be a study, home office, or even a fourth bedroom, if needed. A roomy coat closet is on the left side of the entry, just before a hallway that runs perpendicular to it. The owners' suite anchors the left end, family gathering spaces are straight ahead, and bedrooms are to the right. Storage closets, including a built-in china hutch just out-

side the dining room, line the hallway.

A wide arched opening leads into the vaulted great room. French doors on the far side open onto a deck that spans most of the rear. Flames dancing in the two-sided gas fireplace can be enjoyed from both the vaulted great room and the octagonal dining room.

In the Stevenson's kitchen, counters wrap around three sides of a wide window bay, while a centrally placed cook-top work island adds even more work space. A roomy walk-in

pantry nestles into a corner next to the naturally bright vaulted sun room. Luxury amenities in the vaulted owners' suite include a vista sitting room and a plush private bathroom.

Associated Designs is the original source for the Stevenson 10-502. For more information or to view other designs, visit www.AssociatedDesigns.com or call 800-634-0123.

Stevenson PLAN 10-502

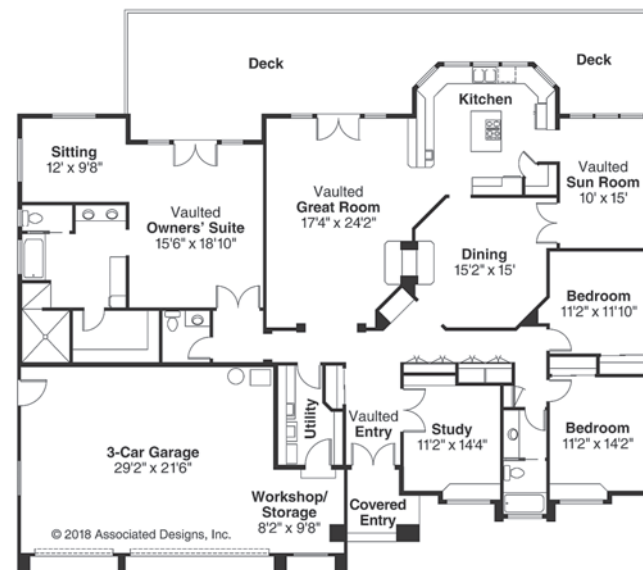
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How to Grow

Plant in a sunny garden location. Fertilize in spring and summer, once per month during actively growing conditions. Remove old foliage after freezing weather in the fall.



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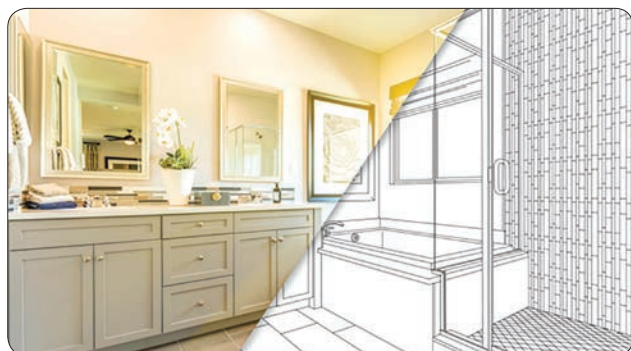
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What to expect during a bathroom remodel



There are many reasons to renovate a home. Some homeowners purchase fixer-uppers and commit to making major renovations before they even move in, while others may renovate their homes with an eye on resale value. But many homeowners also take on renovation projects to make the homes more livable for themselves.

Bathroom renovations are popular projects. In fact, a 2018 survey from the National Association of Home Builders found that bathroom remodels are the most popular remodeling projects. But just because bathroom remodeling projects are popular doesn't mean they're easy to endure. Knowing what to expect during a bathroom remodel can help homeowners

get through the renovation process.

Cost

Bathroom remodeling projects can be expensive. According to Remodeling magazine's "Cost vs. Value 2019" report, a mid-range bathroom remodeling project cost an average of \$20,420 in 2019, while an upscale remodel cost just under \$64,000. Homeowners should develop budgets for their bathroom renovation projects to determine which type of project they can afford. In addition, setting aside a little extra money for overruns is a wise move that can help homeowners handle any unforeseen expenses that arise during the project.

Noise

Few home renovation projects can be undertaken quietly, and bathroom renovations tend to generate a lot of noise. The noise can be difficult to overcome for professionals who work from home full-time, and it also can be hard on parents of young children who still nap and don't yet go to school. Parents of young children may find it best to delay bathroom renovation projects until their children are school-aged and out of the

house for most of the day on weekdays.

Mess

The debris generated by bathroom renovation projects is another thing homeowners must prepare for. In addition to preparing for the waste generated by the project, first-time renovators must realize that dust might be a big issue once the project begins. Dust can pose a threat to residents' overall health, particularly the health of youngsters whose bodies haven't yet fully

developed. As a result, parents of young children may want to schedule renovations during family vacations so their children are exposed to as little dust as possible.

Changes

Few renovations go off without a hitch. Once a project begins, contractors often uncover issues that weren't noticeable to the naked eye. These issues may increase the cost of completing a project or force homeowners

to change their plans to make the project stay as close to their budgets as possible. Recognizing that these decisions may have to be made on the fly can help homeowners feel more prepared when unexpected issues arise.

Bathroom renovation projects are worthwhile investments. Knowing what to expect during a bathroom renovation project can help homeowners handle all the twists and turns that may arise.

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Tomato Chef's Choice
Bicolor F1

The first bicolor tomato in the Chef's Choice series is here! Indeterminate plants produce large 7-8 ounce flattened beef-steak fruits with beautiful pinkish-red internal stripes within a yellow flesh. The lovely stripes extend to the base of the outer fruit skins. These heirloom looking tomatoes are as sweet as they are beautiful with a better flavor and texture than the comparisons. Gardeners will enjoy earlier maturity and more uniform fruits that hold up all season long, producing well into September in the Heartland. As

with all the colors in the Chef's Choice series, each plant can produce about 30 fruits per season.

How to Grow

Early maturing in 75 days. Indeterminate plants must be staked or caged, tasty flattened round fruits weigh 7-8 oz. Beautiful pink, and red internal stripes with in a yellow beef-steak fruits. These lovely stripes are also extended to the base of the outside fruit skins. These classic heirloom looking tomatoes are as sweet as they are beautiful.

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Eight garden tools for beginners

The right tool for the job is essential to working safely and efficiently. This is as true in the workplace as it is in the garden.

Novice gardeners may not know where to begin in regards to which tools they need. The following are eight items that can serve as a solid foundation for beginning gardeners.

1. Gloves: Your hands will be working hard, so it pays to pro-

tect them from calluses, blisters, splinters, insects, and dirt. Look for water-resistant gloves that are also breathable.

2. Hand pruners: Hand pruners are essential for cutting branches, cleaning up shrubs, dead-heading flowers, and various other tasks. Choose ergonomic, no-slip handles that will make work easier. Rust-resistant, nonstick blades also

are handy.

3. Wheelbarrow: A wheelbarrow can transport gear to garden beds or tote dirt, leaves, rocks, and other materials around the landscape. A good wheelbarrow is strong but light enough to maneuver when full.

4. Loppers: Long-handled loppers will fit the bill for thick branches. The long handles provide leverage to cut through branches an inch or more in diameter.

5. Hand trowel: A hand trowel is a handy tool that lets you dig holes or unearth weeds. While shopping for a trowel, consider getting a hand-held garden fork, which can aerate soil and cut through roots.

6. Hose/watering can: Keeping gardens hydrated is part of ensuring their health. That makes a hose and a watering can two invaluable tools to have around. Invest in a lightweight, expandable hose if storage space is at a premium. An adjustable nozzle will enable you to customize the water flow as needed. A watering can is an easy way to tote water to hard-to-reach pots and containers.

7. Garden kneeler: Gardeners



often bend and kneel while working in the soil. That puts pressure on the back and knees. A comfortable garden kneeler with memory foam or one made from shock-absorbing material can reduce aches and pains.

8. Garden hoe: Garden hoes till soil, remove weeds and per-

form many other tasks. A garden hoe can be used along with a full-sized shovel, trowel and garden rake.

This list is just the tip of the garden tool iceberg. Visit a garden center and speak with a professional about other tools that can be added to the mix.

Frequent harvesting can easily bump up production for a long, substantial harvest window. Peas are a great early-season crop as they can be planted when soil temperatures are above 45 degrees F.



How to Grow

Snak Hero is adaptable to a variety of growing situations and containers. Plant in-ground or have fun with it in 12"+ patio containers or hanging baskets. Snak peas are considered a cool-season crop and can be sown in early spring once soils can be worked and soil temperatures reach a minimum of 45F. Soils that are too cool will encourage slow and erratic germination while soil temperatures above 70-75F will inhibit germination. Direct sow seed 1-1.5" deep and 1-2" apart.

2020 AAS Edible – Vegetable Winner

Article & photo by
All-America Selections

Pea Snak Hero

Slender 4" long pods have the straight and elongated appearance of a succulent green bean but the surprising taste and texture of a snap pea. Snak Hero is so super-sweet and delicious it would be no surprise if they never make it to the kitchen. Stringless, edible pods are perfect for healthy, garden-fresh snacking, stir-frying, or freezing for later. 18-24" vines can be grown with or without sup-

port and are perfect for patio containers or hanging baskets.



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5 outdoor projects that add value



Exterior renovations can enhance the appearance of a property and make it more enjoyable for homeowners. Certain renovations have the potential to add value to a home, while others may do the opposite. Learning which ones have the largest return on investment can help homeowners select features that will have the most positive impact.

Curb appeal goes a long way toward attracting potential buyers. According to the National Association of Realtors, first impressions of a property have a strong influence on buyers. Landscaping and external features can do much to influence such impressions.

• **Lawn care program:** Investing in a lawn care program that consists of fertilizer and weed control application and can be transferred over to a subsequent home owner is an attractive feature. NAR says such a care program can recover \$1,000 in value of the \$330 average cost, or a 303 percent ROI.

• **Low-maintenance lifestyle:** When choosing materials for projects, those that offer low-maintenance benefits can be preferential. These include low-maintenance patio materials, composite decking, vinyl fencing, and inorganic mulched beds.

• **Fire pit:** A fire pit can be used for much of the year. In the spring and summer, the firepit is a great place to congregate to roast marshmallows or sip wine and gaze into the fire. In the fall, the fire pit can make for a cozy retreat. A fire pit that has a gas burner is low-maintenance, and the National Association of Landscape Professionals says that most can recoup about \$4,000 of their \$6,000 average price tag.

• **Softscaping:** Hardscaping refers to structures like outdoor kitchens or decks. Softscaping involves the living elements of the landscape. Hiring a land-

scape designer to install trees, shrubs, natural edging, and rock elements can do wonders toward improving the look and value of a home.

• **Pool or water feature:** In certain markets, particularly hot climates, a pool or another water feature is a must-have. However, in other areas where outdoor time is limited, a pool or water feature can actually lower the value of a home. Speaking

neighborhood.

Outdoor improvements can improve the marketability of a home, as well as enhance its appearance and function.

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2020 AAS Ornamental Winner

Article & photo by
All-America Selections

*Coleus Main Street Beale
Street*

The first-ever coleus to be named an AAS Winner! Main Street Beale Street coleus is an outstanding variety exhibiting deep red foliage that holds its color extremely well in the garden. The rich color doesn't fade, bleach or get spotty as the season moves into late summer. The lush, bushy plant grows uniformly and as a huge bonus, does not flower until very late in the season – up to 6 weeks later than the comparisons. A unique feature of this coleus is that it

can be successfully grown from full sun to full shade, making it an ideal foliage item for anywhere in the garden. Growers, retailers, landscapers, and homeowners will all appreciate the beautiful color and uniform height of this coleus.

How to Grow

Coleus are one of the easiest foliage additions to gardens and containers. Main Street Coleus are unique because they can be grown in full sun or full shade, making it an ideal foliage item to tie the whole yard design together. Main Street Beale Street will thrive in almost any soil conditions, as long as they are provided with plenty of water and fertilized every 2 to 3 weeks.

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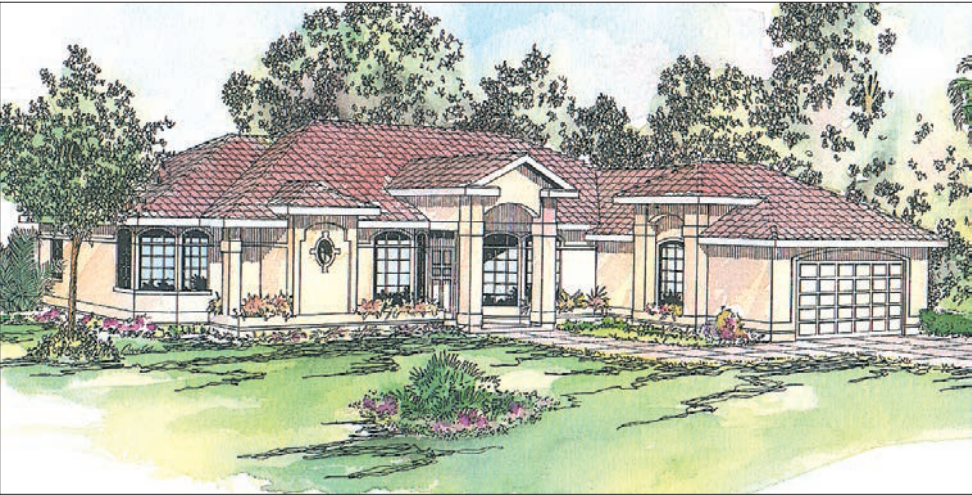
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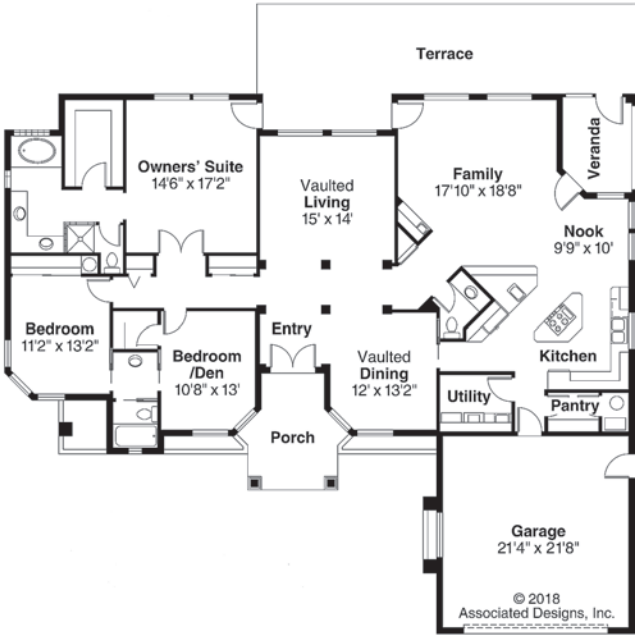
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Richmond blends traditional and modern, elegant and informal

The Richmond blends traditional and present day Mediterranean styling in a plan that is at once elegant and informal. Traditional elements include a tile roof, arched windows, and stucco relief. Bold columns, a cameo window and planters overflowing with veg-

etation provide contemporary flavor. Vaulted ceilings create a sense of openness in the formal living spaces at the core of this plan. Widely spaced columns support plant shelves that delineate the boundaries of dining room, living room and hallways. A small powder room, tucked into the passageway to the kitchen, is close to everything. Everyday activities take place in the large, open family room/kitchen. The cooking island is set at a diagonal to create a uniquely shaped triangular kitchen. Having the vegetable sink right across from the range offers increased efficiency in food preparation. The eating bar adds still more counter space. Utilities and a walk-in pantry are conveniently located between the kitchen and the garage. On the far side of the kitchen, a glass door in the nook leads to a veranda that opens onto a terrace.



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Richmond
PLAN 11-048

Living Area	2396 sq. ft.
Veranda	85 sq. ft.
Garage	484 sq. ft.
Dimensions	70'x60'

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Bedrooms are clustered together at the left. Luxury amenities in the owners' suite include a large walk-in closet, a private bathroom with two lavs and an enclosed toilet and shower. Glass blocks form the shower stall and brighten the bathing alcove. Each of the Richmond's secondary bedrooms has direct access to a dual-compartment bathroom. The bedroom closest to the entry porch could be outfitted with French doors and used as a den or office. Associated Designs is the original source for the Richmond 11-048. For more information or to view other designs, visit www.AssociatedDesigns.com or call 800-634-0123.

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Signs your tools may need some TLC

A do-it-yourselfer is only as good as his or her tools. Without the proper tools, even the handiest men and women may struggle to complete jobs well within their abilities.

It doesn't take a seasoned do-it-yourselfer to recognize when hammers and screwdrivers need to be replaced. And such tools are generally so affordable that replacing them, even when they still have some utility, won't affect too many DIYers' budgets. However, power tools are considerable investments that do not necessarily need to be discarded when the first signs of trouble pop up. In fact, sometimes power tools just need some TLC to become useful once again. The following are some common symptoms of power tool problems, and what may be behind those problems.

Difficulty starting

A power tool that won't start can delay a project. But a tool that won't start should not be immediately written off, especially not before DIYers employ a multimeter. The cost of dig-



owners pick up their tools for the first time in months. Inspect a power tool that's not starting to see if dust or dirt is the culprit. If so, clean the tool and then try to start it again.

Loss of power

Some power tools may start but still lack the extra muscle that make power tools more beneficial than manual tools. In such instances, the carbon brushes might need to be replaced. The online resource ereplacement.parts.com notes that heat damage to brushes can reduce the overall conductivity of the brush, result-

ing in less power reaching the tool's motor. In such instances, replace the carbon brushes. In addition, chipped or damaged brushes can result in inconsistent power output. Replacing the brushes in such instances may be all that's necessary to restore a tool to its powerful self.

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2020 AAS Edible - Vegetable Winner

Article & photo by
All-America Selections

Pumpkin Blue Prince F1

"Princely" is defined as being sumptuous and splendid; this AAS Winner lives up to its name! For any edible entry to become an AAS Winner, it must outperform the comparisons and Blue Prince Pumpkin certainly scored high in the areas of maturity (earlier), yield, fruit size, and uniformity, color, taste, and texture. Vigorous trailing vines produce seven- to nine-pound beautiful blue flattened pumpkins with non-stringy, deep



orange flesh with savory sweetness. These pumpkins are as pretty as they are delicious; after fall decorating, bake the flesh for a smooth and creamy treat. Of all the varieties tried, Blue Prince was first to flower and fruit which is beneficial for gardeners with a shorter growing season. Plus, this winner has slightly better disease resistance than the comparisons.

How to Grow

Sow seeds in garden setting

ing in less power reaching the tool's motor. In such instances, replace the carbon brushes. In addition, chipped or damaged brushes can result in inconsistent power output. Replacing the brushes in such instances may be all that's necessary to restore a tool to its powerful self.

Burning smell

Many a DIYer has dealt with a power tool that emits an odor of burning. The power tool experts at Grainger notes that tools like sanders contain drive belts, and these belts should be the first place to look when tools produce a burning smell. When the drive belt is to blame, the tool will typically stop working even when the motor is running. Capacitors may be behind the burning smell when using tools without drive belts. Sometimes tools have simply overheated. Whenever DIYers get a whiff of

leaving enough of room for five-foot vines. Plant as soon as soil temperatures reach 65 degrees to ensure maturity in 110 days. Seed in sunny location. Vigorous trailing vines produce seven- to nine-pound beautiful blue flattened pumpkins with wonderful deep orange flesh.

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that burning smell, turn off the tool immediately and let it sit for 30 minutes before trying to diagnose the problem. Replacing these parts can restore them to full usefulness and get rid of that unwelcome aroma.

Replacing worn or damaged power tool parts as opposed to the tools themselves is often the most budget-friendly way to get these must-have DIY accessories back on track.

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