

YOUR HOME

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TIPS AND TRENDS FOR HOMEOWNERS, BUYERS AND SELLERS



SNEEZE THE DAY

Spring is prime time for itchy, watery eyes and never-ending sniffles. Do you or someone in your house have allergies? Get relief — in every room — with tips from the Mayo Clinic on how to allergy-proof your house.

Bedroom: Choose bedding that is made of synthetic materials, and wash sheets, pillowcases and blankets in warm water at least once a week. Comforters should be cleaned, too. While your laundry is in the wash, vacuum with a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter. Keep the windows closed during pollen season, and turn on the air conditioning. Clean mold and condensation from the frames and sills. Washable curtains made of cotton or synthetic fabric are best.

Bathroom: Watch out for moisture and mold. Avoid carpet and wallpaper, and dry the tub after use.

Kitchen: Make sure there's a vented exhaust fan above the stovetop hood to take out cooking fumes and reduce moisture. Keep up on dishes and clear the fridge of spoiled food regularly. Cleaning cabinets and counters will also go a long way toward keeping your allergies in check.

THE GREEN MILE

New light bulbs? Check. Thermostat lowered? Check. You're working to be more energy-efficient, but how will you be green when it's time to renovate or refresh your home? Learn what materials are good for the Earth — and even your health — with tips from Tree Hugger and the Environmental protection agency.

Paint Plus: Pick paint low in volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which contain hazardous chemicals and are found in many household products. The standard for low-VOC is fewer than 250 grams per liter, and zero-VOC labels must have fewer than 5 grams per liter. Several brands offer a variety of colors and finishes, including Behr premium plus Enamel Low Luster, Benjamin Moore Natura, Old-Fashioned Milk paint, YOLO Colorhouse and Sherwin-Williams Harmony.

Floor Cure: Hardwood might last longer than carpet, which can contribute to poor air quality and end up in landfills. Find lumber salvaged from construction and renovation sites through online marketplaces such as PlanetReuse.com and AmericanBuilderSurplus.com. Tile can be another green option (just use low-VOC adhesives and sealants). Bamboo is popular, too, but the shipping distance doesn't make it the most sustainable choice.



Clean Scene: Look for cleaning products with labels that include "nontoxic," "bio-degradable" and "made from renewable resources." Or, try making your own. Vinegar and baking soda can be mixed with warm water to create an all-purpose cleaner. There are green housecleaning services, too.

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MOW TIME

Don't let the grass grow under your feet this season. For a healthy-looking yard, now's the time to get started. Take a page from HGTV's lawn care handbook with these tips.

First, clear the weeds and roots and rototill 6 inches below ground. This will help prepare the area to include equal parts loam, sand and topsoil. During this time, create a slight slope to help with drainage.

If sod is not in your budget, the next step is to hand-seed or hydroseed (a technique that spreads the seeds evenly). Choose the grass seed that is right for your climate and

how you will use the lawn.

When it's time to cut the grass, set the mower to the highest notch that only mows the top third. This helps with root development and prevents the ground from drying out too quickly.

Then, get out the hose. If you just seeded, water every day for five to 10 minutes. After new grass comes up, water once a day for 15 to 20 minutes. Consider your soil type to figure out how much.

Twice a year, in spring and fall, fertilize.

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DID YOU KNOW?

Americans in 2013 planned to celebrate St. Patrick's Day by wearing green (84 percent), decorating their home or office (23.3 percent) and making a special dinner (34.6 percent).



Source: National Retail Federation



Do you know someone who is thinking about buying or selling a home? Please mention my name.

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