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## **Early-blooming spring flowers**

The arrival of spring is a welcome occurrence for many people. Budding flowers are among the harbingers of spring. Spring flowers can revitalize winter-weary people just when they need it most and provide reassurance that brighter, warmer and longer hours of sunlight are just around the corner.

Cold-tolerant flowers are hardy enough to start blooming before the last frosts have dissipated. Other flowers will begin to fill in as days warm a little bit more, according to Better Homes and Gardens. Home gardeners looking to warm up their gardens with

early blooms can use these flowers in their early-season containers, window boxes and planting beds.

• Pansy: Pansies prefer cool weather, which can make them one of the best flowers to plant in early spring and late fall. Pansies come in a variety of colors, so there's bound to be an offering that will blend with any homeowners' land-scape design.

• Creeping phlox: Also known "moss phlox," creeping phlox is a short groundcover that is a herbaceous perennial. Phlox produces small, fragrant flowers in dense clusters, which can attract wildlife, such as butterflies, to their mats across the soil surface.

• Snowdrops: Snowdrops can peek out even when there is snow still on the ground, sometimes as early as January and February. But their name is actually a reference to their appearance, as snowdrops have three white petals that hang down like drops dripping off the stem.

• *Violets:* These flowers are closely related to pansies and, as a result, prefer cool seasons. Violets are generally slightly smaller than pansy blooms, but they can be just

as beautiful. But as with pansies, violets will start to fade when the heat arrives.

• Crocus: Crocus plants are relatively small, only reaching three to six inches in height. However, their grass-like leaves are some of the first sprouts that can be seen among bulb and corm plantings. Preferring full to partial sun, these gold, purple, lavender, white, or yellow flowers can be enjoyed during the earliest days of spring.

• Daffodil: Daffodil bulbs produce cheerful, yellow flowers in early spring. They're one of the most recognizable flowers



Crocus blooms are some of the first seen in early spring.

thanks to their familiar shape and fragrant aroma.

• Lenten rose: Hellebores, also called the Lenten rose or Christmas rose, can tolerate light frosts. These blooms get their name from the time of year when they bloom, which

is typically around the Christian Lenten season. Despite their name, these delicate flowers are not actually related to roses, however.

Early-blooming flowers give winter-weary gardeners hope that spring has arrived.

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## The average timelines for popular renovation projects

Home renovation projects are significant undertakings. Working with skilled and experienced contractors can ensure projects go smoothly and are completed promptly. Timing is a big consideration for homeowners as they begin renovating their homes, and the home improvement experts at HomeAdvisor note that the following are some general timelines for popular renovation projects.

- Home addition: Short of a full-scale demolition and rebuild, home additions are the most time-consuming projects homeowners can HomeAdviundertake. sor notes that its survey of customers who recently completed home addition projects reported that the average time from start to finish was between three and four months. Certain variables, including the scale of the project and the local permits process, can extend the time it takes to complete a home addition.
- · Kitchen remodel: Scale is a big factor to consider when estimating the time it takes to complete various home improvement projects, and kitchen remodels are no exception. Some HomeAdvisor users reported projects taking as long as four months, though the average time reported was roughly six weeks. Projects that require major overhauls like rearranging the plumbing and moving walls will likely take longer than more cosmetic projects that are limited to replacing cabinets and countertops.
- Bathroom remodel: More than 1.000 homeowners surveyed by HomeAdvisor reported that bathroom remodels took about 4.5 weeks from start to finish. Smallscale remodels that focus on painting the walls a fresh color and replacing existing tiles can be completed in less than two weeks. But like with kitchen remodels, bathroom remodels that involve replacing plumbing fixtures and removing walls figure to take much longer than that. • Siding installation: Home-Advisor users report that new siding projects take roughly two weeks from is the same regardless of which materials homeowners are replacing and install-
- Replacement windows: Homeowners who want to replace all the windows in their home can expect such a project to take roughly three weeks. HomeAdvisor notes that such a timeline need not concern homeown-



ers worried that they will be forced to brave the elements during the length of the project. Much of a contractors' time during a window replacement project will be spent on upfront measuring and then ensuring a tight fit once the windows have been installed.



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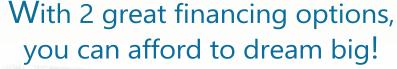
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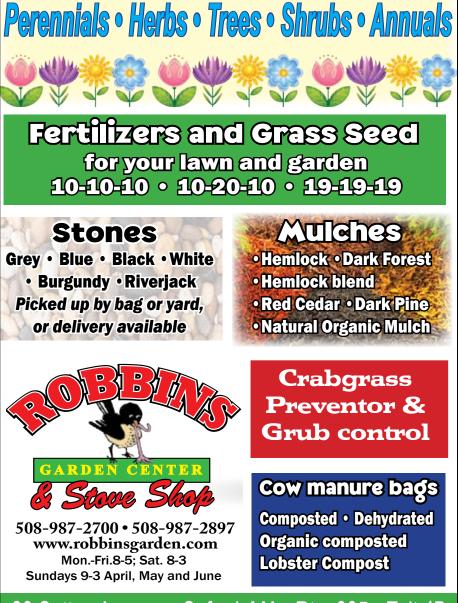
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## Spring is here! It's time to plant and the greenhouses are flourishing

Like every customer that comes in the door, we at Koopman are relieved to see spring come this year. Warmer temperatures, longer days, budding flowers and returning robins make us eager to get outdoors. Winter may be fine for looking at seed catalogs and planning, but Spring is the time to make it all happen.

During 2020, many people began gardening for the first time or expanded their gardens. Flower gardens, vegetable gardens and even fruit and berry orchards offered outdoor activity, solace, and something to look forward to when we were staying at home. If you were just beginning last year, the hardest work is already done! Establishing new plots and new plantings is always hardest the first year. Now it's time to get those plots ready for another productive and beautiful year.

If you're planting a vegetable garden, we have seeds of every variety. We have tried-and-true vegetables and flowers, but also heirloom variet-

ies, certified organic seeds, and guaranteed non-GMO selections. Why not make a little room in your garden to try something new, like chilies? If you



are not sure when to start your seeds, consult our planting calendar (Koopmanlumber.com/planting-calendar) for advice on when to start, when to transplant, and how many days until maturity.

Our greenhouses are open, and new plants arrive almost daily. Garden vegetables and herbs of all kinds, as well as annuals and perennials for

your flower gardens are ready in season. It's a great time to plant something that rewards you every year like blueberry bushes, strawberries

> or rhubarb. If you love to see the first flowers of the year, try planting perennial Hellebores (Lenten Rose) along your patio or walkway. They'll be the first to bloom and cheer you up as early as late February!

While you're here, find the broadest selection of garden soils, mulches and

fertilizers we've ever had. You'll find favorites from companies like Miracle Gro® and Espoma®, along with newer fertilizers and soils from Fox-Farm. And we've brought back favorites from Coast of Maine. Garden soil, raised bed soil, potting

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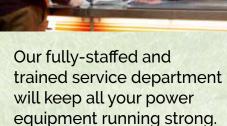
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## Two Girls Reclaimed - check it out!

#### By Janet Stoica

Their business must be one of the most unique in New England, no kidding. Their work is simply amazing, very well-made, and expertly crafted. They really should have their own HGTV show. Viewers would love it.

These two ladies, Ann and Jennifer Flanders-Doland, together for 24 years, have surely cornered the market on distinction and originality. "I've always enjoyed woodworking and refurbishing furniture," says Ann. "Welding is also a skill that I find rewarding, especially if a



Dixie Bells Chalk paint display.

client has a specific project in mind."

Jennifer's words describe their business as a blend of industrial and modern. "It really is cool," says Jen. "We create and mix the mediums of wood and metal. Recently, we took an old warehouse fire door and made a unique dining room table. We stripped the paint using wire brushes and sanding machines. It was brought down to the original bare metal. After putting the finishing touches on the "table," we applied several layers of a clear coat finish, added industrial bench legs, and the reclaimed fire door became a stunning eight-foot long and four-foot wide dining table capable of seating 10-12 guests."

Their distinctive venue of exclusive and one-of-a-kind furniture must be seen to be appreciated. "We build furniture with reclaimed wood," Ann says. "We take down barns and use the material for our craft. A year ago we took down an old barn in the town of Barre. Some of our materials are barn beams from the 1700s. We make fireplace mantels, custom dining room tables, custom desks, live-edge coffee and side tables, console tables, and just about anything a client might request. We've used driftwood and plants in our designs.



Concrete sink on red oak cabinet base.

"We also restore tables, buffets, and bars. Custom orders are the specialties of the house. Ask us, we'd be happy to discuss your thoughts and ideas. We really enjoy our customers; they truly are fantastic. When you genuinely enjoy what you do, it's simply a fun environment."

Recently, Two Girls designed and created the new Radio Worcester recording studio of broadcaster Hank Stolz. A respectable accomplishment indeed.

The latest original piece that Jennifer and Ann created was a bathroom double-vanity sink. No ordinary fixture to be sure as its construction involved a concrete sink with a back-slotted wide drain within a handsome five-foot wide red oak cabinet complete with a sliding barn door opening at its front. A striking creation with his and hers off-the-wall faucet fixtures. Simple and beautiful.

Ann's dad was definitely a great influence in her craft. "When he passed on," she said, "I inherited his chop, table, band, and circular saws as well as his lathe, sanders, clamps, and a multitude of accessories, his wood patterns included." Apparently she has inherited his genius and skills as well. Ann mentioned that the creations at the shop are her form of true relaxation and she hopes it will be her and Jen's retirement future.

Two Girls makes custom orders on a monthly basis and looks forward to new projects of creativeness. The reclaiming of old wooden structures is what they are about. Their enjoyment of working with vintage wood like early cherry, blue pine, oak, and black walnut is enhanced by their abilities to work with exotic woods like St. Croix Monkey Pod, with its distinctive curly and wild grain patterns, as well as those from the sustainable acacia tree. "We re-



Jennifer and Ann Flanders-Doland.

cycle and reclaim everything we can," said Ann, "we are very proud of this."

Their retail outlet offers one-of-a-kind furniture creations as well as home goods like planters, pillows, vases, throws, candles, and Dixie Belle chalk paint (for which they are this area's exclusive dealer). "Dixie Belle chalk mineral paint is very durable and blend-able," stated Ann. "It's an artist's way to paint furniture. This paint is our biggest and best seller. We have about 35 vendors/ craftspeople who come here exclusively for this brand of chalk paint.

Their retail emporium encompasses 1800 square feet of displays and hard goods

and they invite customers to come in to see their handiwork along with their fashionable presentations of home décor. "We do have terrariums too," said Jen, "we buy the glass containers and create miniature gardens of air plants and succulents." It's like a small forest enclosed in its own ecosphere.

Two Girls Reclaimed is at 22 West Street (Felters Mill), Millbury. Phone: (508) 581-4200. Hours: Thurs-Sat 11 a.m. – 7p.m.; Sun. 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Appointments are available. www.twogirlsreclaimed.com Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/twogirlsreclaimed Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/twogirlsreclaimed



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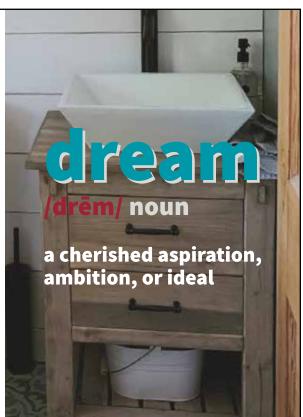
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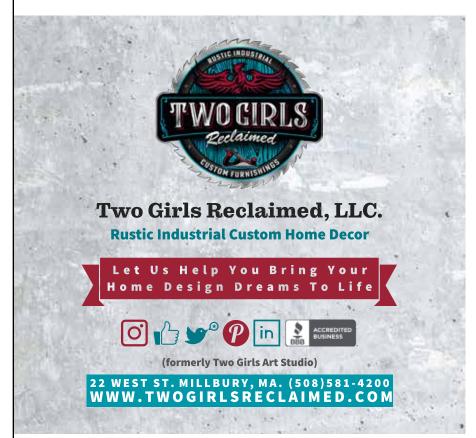




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## Techniques to revitalize a lawn after a long winter

Pristine, snow-covered landscapes can be wonders to behold. While that blanket of white is idyllic, a lawn's delicate blades may be paying a hefty price beneath the cold, heavy piles of snow.

Snow plows push salt and sand up on the grass while subterranean animals like mice and moles dig burrows beneath piles of snow as they try to find food and stay warm. Such conditions are not favorable for thriving landscapes. When the spring thaw arrives, lawns may be in dire need of some TLC. The following techniques can mitigate winter-related lawn damage.

- · Clear out debris. Remove any scattered leaves, branches and other debris that has been strewn across the property due to storms or snowladen trees. This will give you a clean canvas to work on.
- •Dry out snow mold. The Family Handyman says snow mold is a cold-season fungus that causes gray-colored circles or patches on the lawn where there has been snow. To alleviate snow mold, rake the lawn to loosen matted grass and facilitate the drving-out process.
- · De-thatch the lawn. Heavy snow can compress the grass and cause some of it to die



Remove any debris from the lawn after snow thaws to see what you're working with.

off. De-thatching helps to remove dead grass blades and separate any matting. This enables water, nutrients and air to reach the lawn's roots more effectively. Thinning out old organic matter also helps encourage new growth. • Aerate the soil. Coupled with dethatching, aeration involves loosening the soil or poking holes to allow nutrients to move freely to the roots.

• Kill weeds before they spread. Weeds may be the first to start growing when the weather begins to warm. Address them promptly by manually pulling them or applying an herbicide.

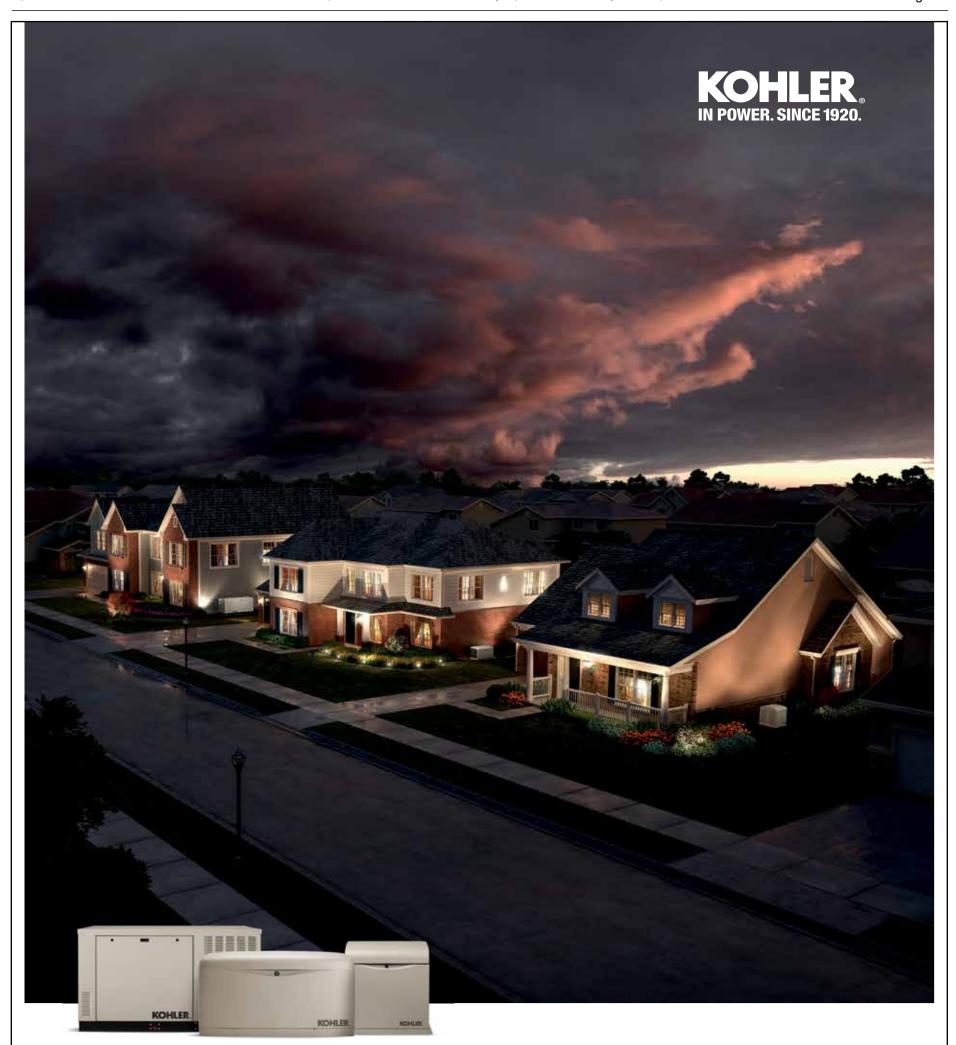
· Overseed the lawn. Chances are there are some bare spots that have formed over

the winter. Overseeding can help to fill in the lawn. Make sure that frosts are largely a thing of the past and soil temperature is around 50 F to 60 F before seeding. Water daily until grass fills in.

• Apply nutrients. Fertilizer and compost can restore nutrients to the lawn that may have been used up over winter. A soil test at a nearby horticultural center can tell you which nutrients are needed. according to the Chemistry Cachet, a guide to using chemistry secrets for healthy living, beauty, cleaning, and gardening.

Lawns can be restored to their pre-winter glory after some sweat equity and about five to six weeks of consistent sunshine and warm weather.





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## Renovation trends that figure to be popular in the year ahead

Home renovation trends are ever-changing. Renovations that might have been de rigueur 20 years ago may seem dated now. Recognizing the potentially popular trends of tomorrow is a great way for homeowners to give their homes a fresh new look and put themselves in position to capitalize on popular trends when they put their homes on the market. That's especially so after 2020, a year when millions of people spent more time at home than ever before.

All that time working from home and relaxing at home gave millions of homeowners ideas about what they like about their homes and what they hope to change. The following are some renovation trends that various experts suspect could emerge in 2021.

• Eco-friendly living: Climate change, and how to combat it, was a hot button issue during the 2020 presidential election in the United States. So it should come as no surprise that urdesignmag. com, a web magazine that

showcases creative trends in design, architecture, art, technology, and fashion, predicts that eco-friendly living solutions figure to be hot commodities in 2021. Ecofriendly appliances, furniture and designs can help to conserve energy and reduce waste, which environmentalists and government agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency note are two critical components in the fight against climate change.

• Large windows: Large win-

dows can provide stunning views of the outdoors and allow ample natural light into a home. It may not be a coincidence if large windows prove to be a hot trend in 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic that dominated much of 2020 forced many people to spend considerably more time at home. Darker homes without much natural light can adversely affect mood, especially when people are spending more time at home. HGTV predicts that homeowners will seek ways to bring more natural light into their homes in 2021, and large windows naturally brighten homes while making rooms appear bigger, helping people feel less cramped. That's an especially beneficial characteristic when spending more time indoors at home.

• Minimalism: The anticipated popularity of minimalism in 2021 may also be connected to the pandemic. As professionals were forced to work from home and many families spent more time together inside their homes then ever before, they may have recognized a need to cut back on clutter, including extra furniture. A minimalist approach is both



simple and clean, which can make homes feel less claustrophobic.

• Multi-functional spaces: Homeowners asked a lot of their homes in 2020, as rooms were transformed into multi-functional spaces seemingly overnight. HGTV notes that spending more time at home showed homeowners that it may not make sense to dedicate entire rooms of a home to a single purpose. Renovations that can help homeowners transform rooms into multifunctional spaces figure to be hot commodities in the years ahead.









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## Three techniques to keep mosquitoes out of your backyard oasis

The value of a retreat-like backvard was never more apparent than in 2020. Over the last year-plus, much of the world has been forced to stay home as a global pandemic has claimed millions of lives while countless others have had to fight to survive in hospitals. It's no surprise people have looked for a respite from the harsh realities of living during a deadly pandemic, and many turned their attention to their own backyards to provide such an escape.

The online home remodeling platform Houzz reported a 58 percent annual increase in project leads for home professionals in June 2020. Contractors who specialize in outdoor spaces saw the biggest increase in demand. A revamped outdoor space can provide the perfect retreat for homeowners who want to get away from it all. But one winged, unwelcome guest can quickly transform an oasis into an uninviting space.

Mosquitoes make their presence felt in many areas each summer. These pesky, often hungry insects can carry disease, and their bites can be painful and itchy. Homeowners can try these three techniques to keep mosquitoes out of their backyards.

1. Remove standing water.
Standing water is a breeding ground for mosquitoes, who don't even need a lot of water to successfully breed. A



A backyard retreat can be even more enjoyable when homeowners find ways to keep mosquitoes at bay.

daily walk around the property may uncover kids' toys, empty flower pots or other small receptacles that can collect water. Even clogged gutters can lead to the accumulation of a small amount of water, and that can be enough for mosquitoes to breed. Remove these potential breeding grounds when you find them, and do so each day, as mosquitoes mature from eggs to nymphs in roughly four days. 2. Mow regularly.

Mowing the lawn so the grass never gets too high is another way to make a backyard less hospitable to mosquitoes. The pest experts at Terminix® note that mosquitoes seek tall grass to protect them from the elements, including wind and hot summer sun. Mowing enough so grass never gets too high in summer can

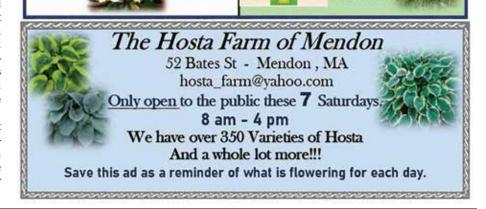
make backyards less inviting to mosquitoes.

3. Plant with mosquitoes in mind.

The home remodeling experts at HGTV note that plants can be part of homeowners' strategy to repel mosquitoes. Various plants have mosquito-repellant qualities. For example, bee balm releases a fragrance as it grows, and mosquitoes don't like that fragrance. Homeowners can speak with a local lawn and garden professional for recommendations about plants that can thrive in their region and repel mosquitoes at the same time.

Mosquitoes can make it hard to enjoy a backyard oasis. But various strategies can help homeowners keep these unwanted guests out of their backyards.







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## What to expect during a bathroom remodel





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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 remodeling bathroom 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.



No garden is immune to disease. Even the most attentive, experienced gardeners have had to confront disease in their gardens, which can lead to significant damage and potentially kill plants.

Various bacterial, fungal and viral diseases can affect gardens, and the University of Maryland Extension notes that fungicides, which are chemicals that destroy fungus, are only rarely recommended to combat disease. In fact, a proactive approach rooted in prevention is often the most effective way to reduce risk for disease in gardens.

• Choose the right varieties of plant. The UME notes that choosing disease-resistant varieties is an effective way to prevent disease in gardens. Gardeners who have confronted disease in their gardens in the past should do their best to identify which diseases were present and then choose plants that are considered re-

## Simple ways to reduce risk of disease in your garden

sistant to those diseases. A local garden center professional can help gardeners who are uncertain about what to plant. • Plant in the right spots. The choice of where to plant is significant. Avoid wet areas with insufficient drainage. The home renovation experts at HGTV note that wet soil can decrease plants' chances for survival because of excess water and a lack of oxygen. If the only spots available for planting tend to be especially wet, consider planting in raised beds or having a French drain installed. Learn how much light plants need prior to planting them. Some

can thrive in shady areas, while others require ample sunlight each day.

- Plant at the right time. Planting too early when the soil is not yet warm enough can make plants vulnerable to disease by weakening their ability to fight. Use a soil thermometer to determine soil temperature and only plant when the conditions for planting are ideal.
- Harvest on time. When planting vegetables, it's imperative that the vegetables are harvested on time. The University of Georgia Extension notes that fully mature vegetables left on the plant attract disease

and are vulnerable to insect infestations.

• Control insect infestations Certain insects can spread disease, so it's important that gardeners learn to recognize which insects pose a threat to their plants. Speak with a local

gardening center about invasive insects and how to address infestations without harming the plant. As the planting season approaches, gardeners can take various steps to make their plants and vegetables less vulnerable to disease.

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