



Fall HOME IMPROVEMENT

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Home interior trends on the rise

Trends that seem ubiquitous one day can seemingly vanish before the sun rises again just 24 hours later. That's especially true in the digital age, when overnight celebrities and viral videos can be on the tips of everyone's tongue before being forgotten entirely when the next online sensation emerges in an increasingly rapid news cycle.

Home trends typically benefit from a longer shelf life than viral videos and other fads that originate on the internet, and that's something renovation-minded homeowners should consider when improving their homes. Homeowners preparing to do just that can consid-

er these notable trends, which the online renovation experts at Houzz suggest will be particularly popular in the year ahead.

- **Rounded furnishings:** Houzz noted that gentle curves and rounded edges embody the organic modern styles that many current homeowners love. Rounded dining tables and similarly circular coffee tables may merit consideration among homeowners who want to embrace popular trends.

- **Arches:** Houzz cites arches among the more popular modern trends, and the experts at Better Homes & Gardens note this unique, eye-catching style has been gaining popu-

larity for several years. Better Homes & Gardens suggests that part of the appeal of arched doorways could be their deviation from a more traditional door shape. That uniqueness draws the attention of residents and visitors alike, and Houzz notes that arched windows, cabinets and even millwork details are part of the pivot toward arches.

- **Stove alcoves:** If it's a touch of history homeowners want, kitchen range alcoves might be just the project for them. Range alcoves call an earlier time to mind when wood burning stoves were commonplace. The report from Houzz notes range



alcoves immediately draw attention, which undoubtedly adds to their appeal.

- **Wood for warmth:** Homeowners who hear "wood and warmth" might think fireplaces, but Houzz reports that wood elements are being

incorporated into interior designs as a means to giving homes a more cozy vibe. Ceiling beams, trim, wall paneling, and cabinetry are utilizing wood to add warmth to a home.

Trends come and go, but home trends typically

have more staying power than styles that emerge in other arenas. Homeowners who want to upgrade their home interiors can consider the latest trends and choose those that align with their own personal tastes.

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Now is time to prepare for winter

BY KAREN
M. JORGENSEN

As fall arrives and winter approaches, now is the time to prepare your home for the coming cold.

Gary Laatsch, assistant manager at Ace Hardware in Owatonna, and Josh Proulx, his “right-hand man,” both urge homeowners to get ready now and not wait until the first cold snap or snow hits.

“Fall is the time to winterize,” Laatsch said. Turn off the water to the outside faucets, sprinklers and valves. Empty all the outside water lines, Proulx said.

For underground sprinklers, Laatsch said, hire a professional. “We don’t recommend the homeowner do that themselves,” he said. If those lines freeze, he said, the repair cost can be expensive.

Both men also recommend that furnaces should be checked every fall and homeowners should make sure they have a supply of furnace filters.

Older homes also can become less efficient in eliminating drafts, and many people use plastic sheeting that can easily be applied to windows to cut those drafts. Also, make sure to check the space at the bottom of doors and get a “door sweep” to control the draft.

Another inside the home project, Proulx said,



STAFF PHOTO BY KAREN M. JORGENSEN

Josh Proulx and Gary Laatsch, assistant manager at Ace Hardware in Owatonna, encourage all homeowners to start preparing their homes for winter now and not wait for the first snowfall.

“Fall is the time to winterize.”

Gary Laatsch
Ace Hardware

of ice dams, which can damage roofs.

It’s also time to check all those items one needs to get through the winter.

Run your snowblower

before it snows, Laatsch said. And know where your snow shovel is and get the salt you will need for the sidewalk. With the first snow of the season,

or if a storm is coming, he said, “that day is one of the busiest we have.”

And while it is time to prepare for winter, it is also time to prepare your summer items for storage.

That includes winterizing RVs, campers and boats. Use fuel stabilizer or drain the gas from the lawnmower. Put the lawn furniture away.

Laatsch said if you have a shed, store the summer items there and bring the winter items to the garage. Reverse the process when spring arrives.

Being prepared and ready can take away the panic that comes with that first snowfall, Laatsch and Proulx agreed. The bottom line is do the work now, and don’t wait until it is too late.

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Signs it's time to replace gutters

Home improvement projects run the gamut from complex undertakings like room additions to simpler renovations like a new front door. Some home renovations excite homeowners more than others, but all improvements are a way to make a home safer, more comfortable and/or more functional.



A gutter replacement might not inspire the same level of excitement as a room addition or an overhaul of an outdoor living space, but new gutters can help to prevent roof damage and make properties safer by ensuring rain water is directed away from walkways. Homeowners who suspect it might be time for a gutter replacement can look for these signs of fading gutters.

• **Cracks or splits:** Cracks or splits at the seams of the gutters where two pieces connect is a telltale sign they need to be replaced. Cracks or

splits can slowly lead to separation of gutter pieces, which will lead to leaks. But not all cracks or splits are found at the seams. In fact, some homes feature seamless gutters, which also can crack or split. Regardless of where they're found, cracks or splits are a warning signs of fading gutters.

• **Rust:** Rust is rarely a good sign whether you're looking at a vehicle or even garden tools. Rust also is a bad sign in relation to gutters. Gutters are painted, and not only for aesthetic purposes. Paint on gutter also serves to protect them from water. When paint begins to flake, gutters will begin to rust and may even produce noticeable rust flakes on the ground below. Rust on gutters and rust flakes beneath them are indicative of gutters that need to be replaced.

• **Gutters pulling away from the home:** Gutters

that appear to be pulling away from the home is a sign that they need to be replaced. Gutters are fastened to a home during installation, which ensures they can withstand rain and water. Over time, those fasteners can wear down, ultimately leading to gutters that appear to be pulling away from the home. Though gutters can be refastened, eventually they will need to be replaced.

• **Pooling water:** Pooling water in a gutter may just be a sign that gutters need to be cleaned. However, pooling water on the ground directly beneath gutters indicates they're not effectively directing water away from the home.

• **Water damage inside:** A home's interior might not be the first place homeowners look when inspecting for damaged gutters, but a flooded basement or crawl space could indicate a gutter problem. Gutters and downspouts are designed to direct water away from a home when functioning properly. When that isn't happening, water can pool beneath the foundation, leading to pooling water and other water damage in basements and crawl spaces.

Gutter replacement projects may not be exciting, but new gutters can make a home safer and prolong the life of a roof and other features on a property.

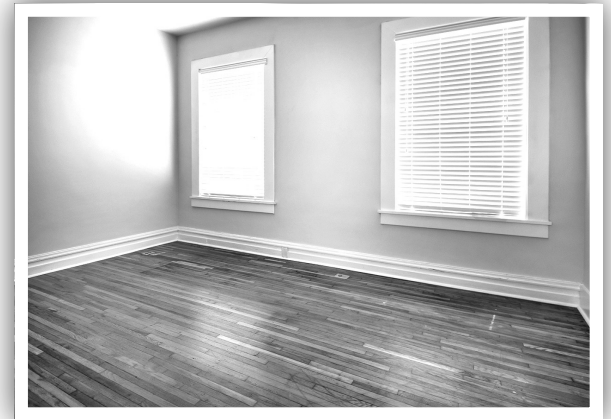
Remedies for creaky floors

Hardwood floors are coveted features in many homes. The National Wood Flooring Association says wood floors are the most environmentally friendly flooring options available. In the United States, the hardwood forests that provide flooring products are growing twice as fast as they are being harvested. Furthermore, wood floors can last for many generations and require fewer raw materials to produce than other flooring options. That means less waste may end up in landfills.

Hardwood floors can endure for decades in a home, but over time those same floors may need some tender loving care to keep them looking good and working as they should. Squeaky floors are a common nuisance that homeowners may experience. Squeaking is often caused by movement and friction between floorboards. Treating the problem involves identifying the underlying issue.

Loose hardware

Squeaky floors may be due to the loosening of the hardware holding the floor in place, says The Home Depot. When nails or screws no longer are secured tightly, the boards can rub together. The noise heard is the sound



produced by rubbing. Tightening or replacing the hardware can help reduce the squeaking.

Counter-snap kit method

This Old House says this kit method is a great way to fix squeaks without damaging the floor. Once the source of the squeak is located, drill a 3/32-inch pilot hole through the hardwood flooring. Then insert a screw through the kit's depth-control fixture and into the pilot hole, and drive it until it automatically snaps off below the wood surface. Follow this up by filling the hole with wood putty that matches the floor color. Once the putty is dry, lightly sand the area to blend.

Use a shim or shims

Sometimes the floor may squeak because of a gap between the joists and the subfloor. Filling the gap with a small piece of wood called a

shim can help alleviate the gap or gaps.

Drive up screws

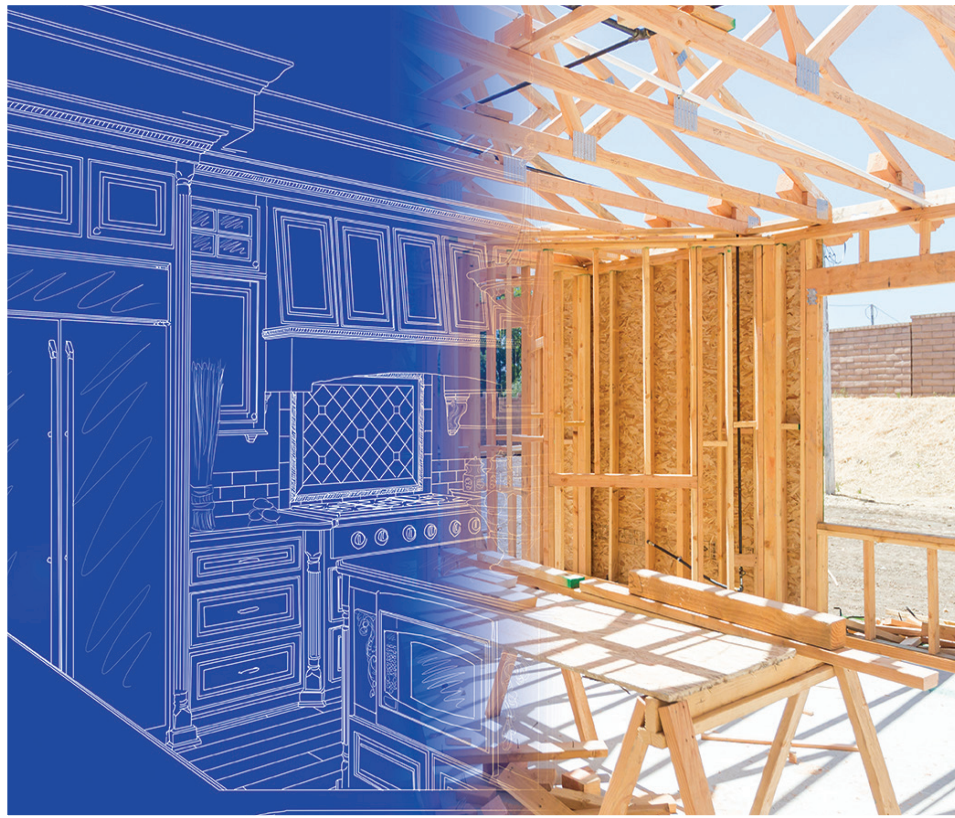
If a squeak is just in one spot, The Home Depot says that you may be able to drive short screws from below into the subfloor.

Small gaps

For small gaps between boards, sprinkle talcum powder or powdered graphite between squeaky boards to reduce friction. Wood filler applied with a putty knife also may work. For larger gaps, use a liquid filler designed for wood floors.

Homeowners also can visit their local home improvement center for other hardware solutions designed for underfloor repairs to remedy squeaks. Many work from underneath the floor and involve mounting plates or brackets to sure up the floor.

Squeaky floors can be problematic, but noises can be banished with some repair work.



What to expect of a room addition project

There are many reasons homeowners consider adding a room to their current homes. Some outgrow an existing space, while others take up new hobbies or have different needs that were not apparent when purchasing the home. Indeed, a room addition can remedy a host of issues affecting a home.

Those considering adding a room may wonder what is involved in this type of project. According to The Spruce, no home improvement project is more complicated or expensive than building an addition. The National Association of Realtors says building an addition can cost between \$90,000 and \$270,000, depending on the size and intended purpose of the room. An addition structurally changes a home, which requires the work of professionals whether homeowners plan to build upwards or outwards.

With so much to ponder when considering a home addition, here's a look at what homeowners can expect of the process.

• **Design and planning:** Homeowners must determine the purpose behind the addition and how it will integrate with the existing home. A bedroom design likely will be different from a garage addition or family game room.

• **Hire an engineer and contractor:** An addition changes the footprint of a home. Homeowners will require professional contractors and structural engineers/architects to properly design the addition and ensure that it will not compromise the existing structure. Detailed architectural plans will be drawn up considering the layout, size and integration with the existing structure. The home may require a new property survey as well.

• **Comply with building codes:** The project

will have to meet with local zoning regulations, building codes and homeowners association rules.

• **Timing involved:** Adding a room is a major overhaul of a space. It may require months of a home being in upheaval. If the renovations are particularly extensive, homeowners may need to temporarily move out of the space. Electrical, plumbing and HVAC must be considered, and drywall and finishing the interior are some of the last steps to make the room habitable.

• **Demolition:** Adding a room may involve taking down walls or modifying existing spaces, necessitating hiring a dumpster to remove debris. This is an added consideration and expense.

Putting an addition on a home is a complex process that will take time and money. Such a project requires careful planning and consultation with an array of experts.

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