

Home CAR



STATEPOINT Photo

Beware of under-inflation. Even when tires look properly inflated, they may be under-inflated.

9 things all drivers need to know about their tires

(STATEPOINT) - Today's cars are packed with impressive features. Stability control. Ride assist. Ever-more-powerful engines. But no matter what technology makes its way into your car -- it's your tires that connect it to the road, making their construction and maintenance critical for safe, effective driving.

So, what do you need to know? The experts at Cooper Tires are offering these help-

ful insights.

- **Valve stems are crucial.** Those little caps on the valve help to keep out moisture and dirt, as well as provide an additional seal to the valve core, holding air in the tires and helping maintain tire pressure.

- **Check the manual.** Proper tire pressure is important for safety, performance and fuel economy, and can extend the life of your tires by reduc-

ing the chance of uneven wear. But don't check the tire sidewall for this information. That's where the maximum pressure allowed for the tire is listed. The proper inflation pressure can be found by checking the vehicle's owner's manual or the placard found on the driver's side doorjamb, glove box or fuel door.

- **Beware of under-inflation.**

SEE TIRES ON PAGE B2

Key to healthy yard starts with fall and winter care

(STATEPOINT) - The key to a healthy year-round yard is in how you care for it during the fall and winter months. Ignoring your lawn when the temperatures change can mean even more work for you when the springtime rolls around again. So get ahead of the game now to help yourself in the long run.

Mow and rake

Even when the cool air enters your neck of the woods, it's still necessary to continue mowing your yard. If your grass is still growing, you should still be mowing.

Raking and lawn sweeping your yard after you mow is necessary to prevent sun deprivation from impacting your yard.

By neglecting the areas of your lawn with built-up grass on top, you're ensuring you'll end up with unattractive brown spots peppered throughout.

Keep the clippings in check by raking and removing your grass after every mow. This not only helps your lawn look great but prevents overworking your mower.

Create a compost pile

The fall season is an excellent time to start your own compost pile and can help you put your yard waste to good use.

Start a pile of green leaves, clippings and non-meat kitchen scraps close to your garden. Add a second layer of brown material such as

garden soil, leaves and coffee grounds before adding another layer of greens. Finally, add some garden soil to the top and turn it throughout the season. You'll end up with a rich, black pile of fertilizer for next year's garden.

Tend your garden

You may think your gardening is done once you pull the last carrot or onion from the ground, but your garden needs regular maintenance just like the rest of your yard.

Remove any damaged annuals and clear out debris from flower beds. This freshens up the appearance of your garden and helps prevent mildew and mold from taking over.



BPT Photo

There's still plenty of time to savor some of the garden's best flavors before you close your door on the season.

Fabulous fall flavors: Why autumn is ideal for gardening, plus timely tips for success

(BPT) - For any gardener, fall is bittersweet. The exuberance of summer's bounty has started to fade, while cooler nights and less daylight signal the approach of cold, dark winter.

However, there's still plenty of time to savor some of the garden's best flavors before you close your door on the season. In fact, now is the perfect time to plant what are collectively known as "cool weather" crops - tasty favorites that thrive in autumn's chill.

Bonnie Plants grows a wide variety of cool-weather veggies and herbs, perfect for fall planting. Availability of Bonnie's fall varieties is limited to specific regions, so check your local garden retailers to find plants near you.

Select some hardy favorites to get weeks of crisp cabbage slaws, healthy kale bowls, crunchy cauliflower and broccoli or even hearty greens like collards or Swiss chard, perfect to pop

in a long-simmering winter braise.

Other fall favorites include Brussels sprouts - delicious roasted with slivers of garlic, olive oil and a touch of balsamic vinegar - or any of the versatile salad greens like lettuce and spinach or flavorful herbs like cilantro that tend to suffer and bolt prematurely in sweltering summer sun.

Here's six timely tips from Bonnie Plants to help you make your fall garden as enjoyable as your summer harvest.

1. Go big at home

Plant pre-started vegetable or herb transplants rather than seeds to squeeze every last moment out of fall's compressed growing season. These plants love warm soil coupled with cool air and will start to grow quickly. Using transplants instead of seed also means you'll be gathering tasty produce weeks earlier than you would with seed-sown varieties.

2. Stretch the season

While you can certainly plant cool-season veggies and herbs in pots or in the

ground, a simple, commonly available garden product, a "cold-frame", can help you extend your fall season by providing some added protection. A cold frame is a four-sided, clear box - open to the soil at the bottom - with a hinged lid. Because the ground inside stays warmer than the ambient air temperature, a cold frame protects plants long after unsheltered veggies start to fail. (On warm, sunny days, be sure to crack the lid open to prevent too much heat from building up inside.)

3. Prepare you plot or pot

If planting in-ground, be sure to clear the area of previous planted crops and weeds, as they may decay and harbor bacteria. Always bag, tie and discard debris. Turn up the soil's top layer and add some bagged compost, and mulch. If planting in a pot, be sure to sanitize pots and use fresh, new potting soil, specifically formulated for containers.

4. Proactively patrol for pests

SEE GARDEN ON PAGE B2

Traveling with pets? What to know

(STATEPOINT) - Do your upcoming travel plans include pets? Whether you're flying to an exciting destination or hitting the road, these suggestions can make the journey easier for animals and humans alike.

- **Prep your pet:** Traveling can prove stressful to animals, so don't catch your pet off-guard. Before leaving town, practice taking short rides in the car or spending time in a carrier. This will help your pet get used to the experience.

If you haven't already microchipped your pet, this may be a good opportunity to do so. This is also the time to ensure your pet's collar is up-to-date with your current contact information.

- **Pack right:** Pack plenty of food and fresh water and a sufficient supply of any medications your pet is taking, as getting refills away from home could be difficult. To alleviate anxiety, bring along pet blankets and toys as reminders of home. Also pack a pet-specific first aid kit, which should include non-stick bandages, adhesive bandages, towels, gauze and your veterinarian's phone number.

- **Follow rules:** Do your research to ensure you're following rules along the way and at your destination. Check airline policies, as well as hotel and campsite restrictions and accommodations. Travel across state or international borders requires a health certificate. Some locations



STATEPOINT Photo

Prep your pet: Traveling can prove stressful to animals, so don't catch your pet off-guard. Before leaving town, practice taking short rides in the car or spending time in a carrier.

require more information and documentation. Give yourself plenty of time to handle these details. Your veterinarian can be a good resource in learning what to expect. To that end, a check-up is also a good idea before a trip, as vaccinations or preventive medications may be needed before traveling.

- **Safety first:** While seatbelts alone can keep a dog from moving about the cabin of the car, they are not your safest option. To help protect pets in a crash, anchor a crate using a seatbelt or other secure means. When flying, opt to keep your pet in the cabin of the plane if possible. Temperatures and air quality in cargo can put a strain on pets. If your animal is too large to fly in the cabin, speak to your veterinarian about what you can do to keep your pet safe and relaxed in-flight.

- **Prepare for anything:** Even the best laid plans can hit snags. Be prepared for the

possibility that your pet will become accidentally injured or develop an unexpected illness while traveling, prompting an unplanned trip to the vet. To prepare, consider solutions like the CareCredit credit card, issued by Synchrony Bank, which features special financing options (subject to credit approval) that can allow you to focus on getting your pet better while making monthly payments. More than 200,000 health care providers and health-focused retailers, including over 20,000 veterinarians accept the CareCredit credit card nationwide, which also sponsored the distribution of the tips in this article. Go to www.carecredit.com for pet healthcare providers closest to your vacation destination.

Advance planning is key when traveling with a pet. With a little care, you can make your travels with furry friends safe, fun and memorable.

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5 tips to bring your home's Wi-Fi 'Dead Zones' to life

(STATEPOINT) - Whether it's to stream a movie from the bedroom or lock the front door using smart home technology, you've likely come to expect Wi-Fi to reach every corner of your house. The reality is that there are certain locations in many homes where Internet-connected devices and smartphones are unable to receive a steady Wi-Fi signal (or any signal at all) from the router. These sad places are called "dead zones."

"Dead zones typically include bathrooms, second and third story bedrooms, attics, basements, garages and back patios -- and they can drive everyone in the house absolutely crazy," says Jeff Parker, the "Wi-Fi Guru," and editor of the Milo Wi-Fi Blog, a source for practical advice, new products, and leading-edge technology dedicated to enhancing the Wi-Fi experience.

So, given today's basement-to-attic demand for Wi-Fi access, what is the most eco-



PHOTO SOURCE: (c) nuclear_lily / stock.Adobe.com

There are certain locations in many homes where Internet-connected devices and smartphones are unable to receive a steady Wi-Fi signal (or any signal at all) from the router.

nomical and effective strategy for winning the battle against dead zones in your home? Parker offers five no-cost/

low-cost suggestions:

1. Keep your router away from metal. Objects such as mirrors, televisions, appli-

ances or anything large made primarily of metal (i.e. decorative furniture, filing cabinets, even fish tanks!) have

the potential to impair your network's signal strength. If possible, move such items and your router apart.

2. Switch to a less crowded frequency. In living spaces like apartment buildings, too many broadcasting networks can interfere with each other and impact Wi-Fi quality. Because routers broadcast across two wireless frequency bands, 2.4 and 5 GHz, when one is too crowded it acts like a highway packed with cars. The good news is you can usually switch frequencies within your mobile device settings to use the less crowded channel.

3. Reboot regularly. Routers asked to complete many requests, such as handing out multiple IP addresses to different devices and handling large downloads, can end up slowing down because of the heavy workload. You can think of rebooting your router as basically refreshing it and clearing any memory or stalled tasks.

4. Get the latest hardware.

If you're still using that dinosaur router from the early 2000s, it's probably time for an upgrade. Outfitting your home with a smarter and more advanced router could be the solution to your Wi-Fi woes, especially if your existing router is a very old model with limited capabilities. Internet service providers often provide router upgrades by request for no charge.

5. Consider a distributed mesh Wi-Fi system. For Wi-Fi that reaches farther, consider a mesh Wi-Fi system, which consists of a main router connected to a modem and a series of satellite Wi-Fi distribution modules placed throughout the house. Those from Milo provide a strong uninterrupted signal to every Wi-Fi device in the home, from attic to basement. To learn more, visit milowifi.com or call 1-877-426-6456.

Don't just live with the dead zones in your home. By taking a few simple steps, you can enjoy a more satisfying Wi-Fi experience.

Weatherization myths – Debunked!

(STATEPOINT) - Weatherizing your home for each season can make it more comfortable – but how to do it can be confusing. Here are four common weatherizing myths – busted! – to help get your home ready for cooler weather to come.

Myth 1: It doesn't matter where your thermostat is placed.

Truth: Location, location, location! You may be spending more on heating and cooling than you need to be if your thermostat is in the wrong place. Placed in direct sunlight, you run the risk of getting false readings, as it can "think" the room is warmer than it actually feels, causing your air conditioner to turn on when it isn't needed. Similarly, a thermostat placed near the kitchen often reads that the home is far warmer than it truly is due to the stove and oven. The best location is on an interior wall, centrally located and near areas where you spend the most time, ensuring these rooms are the

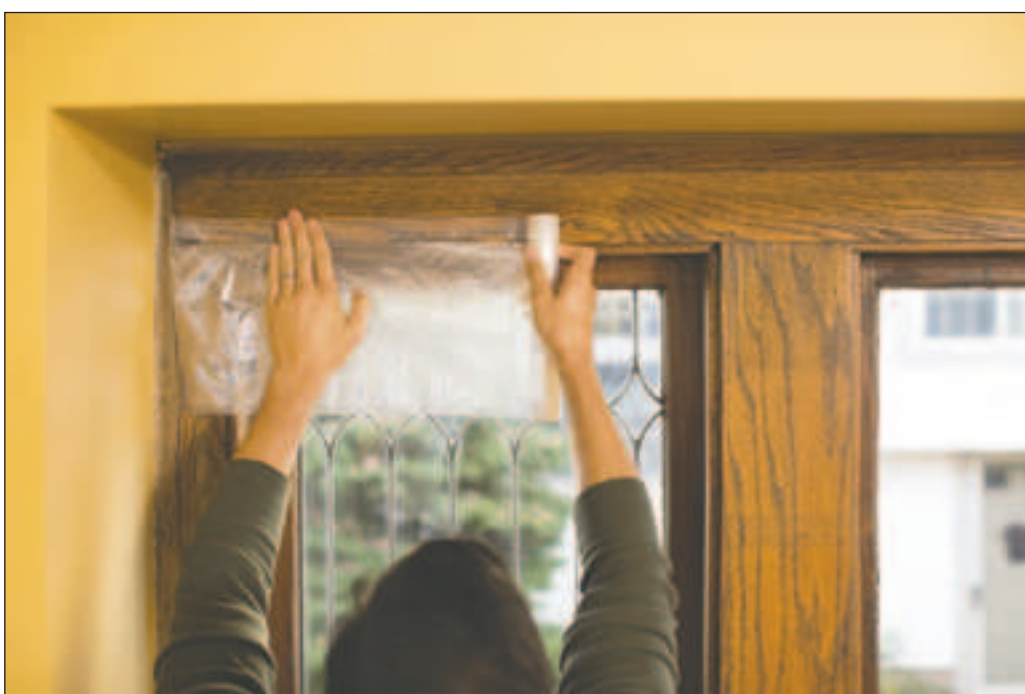
most comfortable.

Myth 2: Closed curtains and blinds in cold weather prevent heat escape.

Truth: According to the Department of Energy, shades and drapes can reduce heat loss from a warm room by up to 10 percent. However, opening curtains and blinds during the day when direct sunlight hits can also allow for a warming effect. In winter, draperies should be closed at dusk but opened at dawn.

In addition, heat escape through windows can be prevented with window insulation products such as Duck brand Roll-On Window Kits, which create a barrier between outdoor air and a home's interior, helping block drafts and air leaks. And, it's also a myth that these are hard to install: A pre-taped edge makes for easy roll-on application, requiring no measuring, while fitting snugly to indoor window frames to provide an airtight, crystal-clear seal.

Myth 3: It's expensive to



STATEPOINT PHOTO

Windows and doors are the two largest draft sources in any home and should be top priorities for homeowners.

draft-proof your home.

Truth: Homeowners can actually save hundreds of dollars annually on heating and cooling costs with proper weatherization early in the

season. How do you do it? There are many inexpensive, do-it-yourself weatherization products that are easy on the wallet and easy to install, requiring minimal -- if any

-- tools.

Windows and doors are the two largest draft sources in any home and should be top priorities for homeowners. Duck brand MAX Strength

Silicone Weatherstrip Seals are quick to install and seal various size gaps around windows and doors that may be allowing air to escape.

Myth 4: It's cheaper to keep your home at a constant temperature.

Truth: A common misconception is that it's better to keep your home at a constant temperature, even when you're not home. However, if the system runs less during the day, it uses less energy. According to Energy.gov, you can save as much as 10 percent a year on heating and cooling by turning your thermostat back 7-10 degrees from its normal setting for eight hours a day.

Still need more help? For additional tips and information, text "Weather" to 84444 to access Duck brand's Project Selector, an online resource for project guides, instructional videos and more, or visit DuckBrand.com.

Don't let common myths scare you. Weatherizing can be an affordable, easy do-it-yourself project -- especially if you plan ahead.

TIRES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1

Even when tires look properly inflated, they may be under-inflated by as much as 50 percent. Under-inflation can lead to tire failure, and tires that are under-inflated by 8 pounds per square inch (PSI) or more can increase your fuel consumption by 4 percent.

• Weather matters. Outside temperature can affect tire pressure more than you might expect. On average, experts say that tire pressure decreases by about 1 PSI for every 10-degree Fahrenheit drop in

temperature. The changing seasons are a good reminder to check pressure.

• "All season" tires have limits. "All season" tires are meant for year-round moderate weather. Install winter tires for dealing with severe winter weather conditions.

• Tread check is easy. Tire tread should be more than 2/32 of an inch deep. Check for this by inserting a penny into the tread with Lincoln's head facing down. If the top of Lincoln's head is covered by tread, there's at least a minimum acceptable amount of tread. If the top of his head

is visible at any point around the tire, it's time to replace the tire.

• Off-road adventures require off-road tires. Road tires may be able to handle the occasional jaunt down a gravel driveway or dirt road, but when you're heading off-road you'll need something more rugged, such as the Cooper Discoverer STT Pro, which has been designed for off-road use.

• Tires should be checked regularly. Every month and before long road trips, perform this DIY routine: check tire pressure, check tread depth, check the overall con-

dition of the tires for cuts, cracks, splits, punctures, irregular wear and bulges.

• Know the limits of your tires. If you're the type of driver more likely to use the gas pedal than the brake, choose tires designed for high-performance, such as the Cooper Zeon RS3-G1, which features great grip and handling.

More tips and information can be found at coopertire.com. As cars go high-tech, don't forget that selecting the right tires and keeping them in good shape are two of the most important things you can do to stay safe on the road.

GARDEN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE B1

While pest numbers naturally decline in the cooler days of fall, they don't disappear entirely. Common pests of cool-season plants include

tiny, sap-sucking aphids, caterpillars (particularly from cabbage white butterflies) and harlequin bugs. Inspect your plants for tiny clusters of aphids or tell-tale holes in the leaves. Handpick caterpillars or harlequin bugs

from plants and dispose of them or use a strong blast of water from a hose to dislodge aphids.

5. Embrace cooler, care-free comforts

With the warm days and cool nights of fall, less moisture evaporates from your garden or pots, so you'll need to water less often. (Only water when the soil 2" deep is dry.) In addition, many cool weather crops handily survive light frosts, growing well until a very hard freeze ends their productivity. Better yet, chilly weather improves the flavor of many late-season varieties, including members of the cabbage family, kale, Brussels sprouts and chard, by turning their starches into natural sugars,

making them a sweet and healthy treat.

6. Take time to relax

Just like plants, gardeners enjoy a break from the stifling heat of summer. With the leisure of cool days, fewer chores and less weeding as the garden begins to wind down, you'll be able to enjoy the garden more while you wait to harvest your fall favorites to boost your recipes and brighten your table.

If you don't want to give up on your garden's bounty, pick up a selection of cool-season favorites from Bonnie Plants now - and keep your garden growing!

For more information on fall gardening and varieties, please visit www.bonnieplants.com.

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Is your family prepared for an emergency?

(STATEPOINT) - With wildfires, floods, earthquakes, tornadoes and hurricanes occurring around the world, having access to safe drinking water in the event of an emergency should be top of mind no matter where you live.

Natural disasters can contaminate and disrupt water supplies, making it difficult to access safe drinking water at home. Emergencies also force families out of their homes, making it necessary to hydrate from natural water resources where harmful contaminants like bacteria, chemicals, microplastics and heavy metals may be present.

"The everyday public health concern of water contamination is elevated during emergencies, when water can be unreliable

for drinking," says Alison Hill, managing director of LifeStraw, a manufacturer of water filtration systems that is often involved in disaster relief both in the U.S. and around the globe.

"If an emergency has your family on the move, being able to hydrate safely from any fresh water source -- fountains, streams, rivers and ponds is key," points out Hill.

When building your emergency supply kit, be sure to include a portable filter to help eliminate harmful contaminants from your drinking source.

LifeStraw makes it easy to hydrate safely at home and outdoors. LifeStraw Go is a refillable bottle that incorporates a two-stage filter removing bacteria, chemicals, microplastics and bad



STATEPOINT PHOTO

Hydrating safely from any fresh water source is key during emergencies.

taste from drinking water. Another good option for personal use is LifeStraw Flex, a multi-use filter that removes heavy metals including lead as well as bacteria and parasites. Finally, those traveling in groups may find it more efficient to use a filter specifically designed for a crowd, such as the brand's Mission model, a high-volume gravity-powered purifier that also filters viruses, available in a 12-liter compact roll bag.

Being prepared for any situation will help keep your family safe and healthy, for whatever comes your way. Gain the confidence of knowing that you will have access to safe water for days, weeks and even months should your water supply be compromised by a natural disaster or other emergency.

Vinyl siding cleaning and maintenance tips

(STATEPOINT) - The type of siding you have on your home can affect how you spend your weekends, as some options require more maintenance and upkeep than others.

"While stucco, wood siding, fiber cement siding and engineered wood all require regular painting and caulking to look their best, today's vinyl siding needs only periodic cleaning with mild soap and water from a garden hose to achieve the same result," says Kevin Mickle, product manager at ProVia, a manufacturer of siding and other exterior building products.

For maximum curb appeal, the experts at ProVia are offering the following tips for maintaining and selecting vinyl siding.

- To clean vinyl siding, use a soft cloth or ordinary long-handled, soft bristle brush. For textured surfaces, use only a soft bristle brush to keep the grooves in the texture stain-free. For best results, start at the bottom of the house and work your way up, taking care to rinse the cleaning solution completely before it dries.



STATEPOINT PHOTO

For maximum curb appeal, the experts at ProVia are offering the following tips for maintaining and selecting vinyl siding.

During this process, cover any brick facing so it's not affected by the runoff. To remove mold and mildew, use a solution of 30 percent vinegar and 70 percent water.

- Before using a power washer, read the washer's

instructions carefully, as well as the recommendations of the siding manufacturer. Some manufacturers advise against the use of pressure washers on their products or have limitations on the amount of pressure and the cleaners that

can be used. If you do choose to use a power washer, hold it at eye level to keep water on top of the siding where it can clean most effectively.

- Ensure your cleaner of choice won't harm your siding. Spot check a small area first.

Never use cleaners containing organic solvents, undiluted chlorine bleach, liquid grease remover, nail polish remover or furniture polish.

- When doing any home maintenance project involving stains, sealants and wet concrete, or when spraying the lawn with insecticides or herbicides, cover vinyl siding to protect its color.

- Keeping siding away from significant heat sources -- do your barbecuing many paces away from the house and keep readily ignitable materials such as dry leaves, mulch and trash away from the structure.

- Whether you're building a home or upgrading your current exterior cladding, make an informed selection. Look for the VSI Product Certification Program label.

This means the vinyl siding has gone through a third-party inspection process and was independently verified to meet or exceed the industry standard for quality. One brand meeting these rigorous standards is ProVia, which specializes in elegance and endurance and offers three types of professional-class vinyl siding to choose from: insulated, traditional and decorative. All of their cladding is created with a Super Polymer Formulation for enhanced durability. To learn more, visit provia.com/siding.

Want to take your weekends back? By selecting vinyl siding for your home, you can get all the charm and curb appeal that traditional materials offer with a simpler maintenance routine.

5 ways to get your home ready for the season

(StatePoint) A change in seasons often means it's time to make home decorating updates, entertain friends and family, and more. Want to make all of this happen affordably?

To help, the discount experts at Dollar General are offering some essential shopping tips to save time and money while finding the items you need to live it up in style this season and beyond.

Refresh Your Home

Refresh home décor on a budget any time of the year. Explore your creative side as you pick out new curtains, throws, pillows, wall art and more. To avoid getting overwhelmed, you may want to start out by updating spaces one at a time, rather than giving your whole home a complete overhaul all at once. Shop at a discount retailer to find the perfect decorating solution for your style and budget, in an easy and convenient way.

Get Party-Ready

The items needed to pull off a successful shindig can quickly add up, whether you're hosting the party or

planning to attend one. To be the hostess with the mostest, select thematic items that color coordinate, or find seasonal options to complement your party essentials, like balloons, plates, party favors, disposable table cloths, napkins, silverware and more. A discount retailer such as Dollar General can serve as an affordable one-stop shop for finding all of these items and is also a good destination for those in need of gift items for birthday celebrations or other special occasions. Find gift cards, candles, toys and cards for recipients of all ages.

Stock up on Seasonal Décor

Make every holiday un-

forgettable and keep your spaces look bright and festive by updating your home and work station with fun and inexpensive décor every season.

Everyday Essentials

Instead of buying everyday items as-needed at an expensive shop, save both time and money by stocking up on these supplies at a discount retail store. At home, be organized and have a handle on where you store items, so you can grab them as you need them.

Save More

From your favorite snacks to cleaning products and more, private brands are a great option when looking to save on quality products.

You can also save even further with digital coupons that provide customers with an easy-to-use platform. Seek out stores that offer perks, like Dollar General. To sign up for deals and discounts, visit dollargeneral.com/coupons or access coupons on the mobile app. Shoppers can load coupons to their account and redeem them at checkout during their next visit.

Whether you're looking to update your home décor or you're searching for affordable party supplies for an upcoming gathering, free up some space in your budget and your schedule by one-stop shopping at a discount retailer.

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How to keep pests out of your chimney

(BPT) - As temperatures drop, many people will start spending more time in the warmth of their homes. Animals don't have the luxury of extra heating and take whatever refuge they can find, making chimneys a convenient place for pests to seek shelter. The team at Terminix has some helpful information to share so that homeowners can be better prepared to address critters that find their way into chimneys.

What kinds of pests can

end up in your chimney?

If you hear rustling or scratching coming from your chimney, some type of rodent may be the culprit. Your visitors could be squirrels, which are excellent climbers and can be found in all sorts of places within your home, from attics to crawl spaces to wall voids. Or your chimney might become the den of choice for a female raccoon birthing her young.

Rats are yet another option. Norway rats can enter

this area of your home from the ground floor and nest on little shelves inside your chimney. And while roof rats, a different species of rat found mostly along the coasts, are more likely to nest in your attic, they can also find their way into your chimney.

Rodents aren't the only animals that can end up in this space, either. Flapping sounds or chirps indicate that a bird may be nesting in your chimney. It may not look much like a tree to you, but to

certain species of birds, your house's chimney could look very similar to the hollow trees in which they like to build their nests.

How do you keep pests out of your chimney?

Ideally, you'll want to set up some preventative measures to reduce the chances of a mother raccoon or other pest in your chimney. Installing a chimney cap can help keep birds, raccoons and other large pests out. When it comes to pests like rats and mice,

you should focus on sealing smaller entry points, as a rat can squeeze through a hole the size of a quarter! It can be difficult to spot these access points from the ground, so you should have a professional inspect your roof and chimney for possible holes.

What do you do when a pest is already inside?

Pest control measures vary depending on what kind of animal has entered your chimney, but the general rule is that you shouldn't light a

fire or try to smoke the animal out. Pests like raccoons can attack when they feel threatened, and rodents can spread ectoparasitic insect pests like ticks and fleas, so you don't want to come into direct contact with whatever animal has decided to seek shelter in your home. Leave the actual removal to professionals, as Terminix's trained technicians can safely and effectively remove pests that have taken up residence in your chimney.

Black and white: a reemerging home design trend

(STATEPOINT) - Black and white always has been a classic color pairing, and this neutral palette has resurged as one of today's hottest design trends.

Whether your look is modern or traditional, knowing how to properly use black and white can provide balance and boldness to a home. Here are some tips to help integrate this trend into your space.

• Create a Luxurious Living Room. They say the darker the wall color, the smaller the space feels -- but that's not entirely true when black walls are paired with the right light accents. In the right instances, black and white go together like yin and yang, transforming living rooms into picture-perfect spaces.

"You can either go heavy on the black, with black painted walls or wallpaper, or make it the accent color and opt for white walls," says Danielle DeBoe Harper, interior designer and senior creative content manager at Moen, a leading manufacturer of kitchen and bath fixtures. "In a white-heavy room, include touches like artwork in black frames,



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Whether your look is modern or traditional, knowing how to properly use black and white can provide balance and boldness to a home.

a black fireplace or a black painted floor and ceiling moldings. In a black-heavy area, use white trim and rugs to offset dark walls for a contemporary look, or organic wood

accents to create a unique boho feel."

In modern homes, DeBoe Harper recommends incorporating a pair of bold buffalo check chairs or large scale

black and white photos. For a more traditional approach, she suggests using silk black and white striped curtains, or painting the ceiling in a black and white herringbone

design.

• Turn up the Heat in Your Kitchen. Also known as entertaining central, your kitchen is the perfect location for some wow factor. The boldness of black and white will seriously impress your guests.

"A lot of homeowners want the clean kitchen look, so they're afraid to bring in a dark, dramatic color," says DeBoe Harper. "In reality, incorporating black cabinets or fixtures into an all-white kitchen can give it an upscale, current feel that's still streamlined -- and doesn't require cluttering your countertops with accent pieces."

Consider combining a matte black faucet, such as Moen's Sleek kitchen faucet, with a white backsplash and counters, or mixing black bentwood café chairs around a modern white tulip table for a more eclectic approach.

• Shower Your Bathroom with Style. Black and white

can give your bathroom a clean, crisp look. Infuse black accents through a matte black faucet and coordinating accessories, like those from Moen's Genta bathroom suite, or through black and white floor tiles in a geometric print. Towels also provide an opportunity to add texture and visual interest, whether it's a modern floral or traditional houndstooth.

For a seriously eye-catching shower, install black and white striped tile. Keep the bathroom's walls white, so the tiles really pop, expanding the stripes to the ceiling to emphasize the height of your bathroom walls and make it feel bigger -- the thinner the stripes, the bigger the statement.

"Integrating black and white makes your space feel sophisticated, yet playful and on trend," adds DeBoe Harper. "Use these tips to achieve the ideal balance in your home."

Simple steps for smart storage and easy moves

(STATEPOINT) - Did you know 66 percent of Americans have difficulty finding things in household storage? And more than half are frustrated by the task.

Instead of stressing, consider using smart, tech-based storage solutions, like the Duck Pack & Track app-based labeling system to keep things organized. It uses a smartphone app and labels with unique QR codes to help you keep track of your boxes' contents. Additional information is available at DuckPackAndTrack.com.

Other things you can do to improve your storage skills? Turn stacks of paperwork into digital files by scanning them or snapping photos. Take advantage of vertical space by installing shelving and hooks. Also, some pieces of furniture, like ottomans, can pull double-duty as extra places to store books, photo albums, blankets, pillows and more.

Don't let your next move or seasonal cleaning be overly stressful. Smart solutions can keep you organized from start to finish.



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How a pressure cooker can save you time and energy in the kitchen

(STATEPOINT) - Pressure-cooking may sound intimidating, but it's important to keep in mind that it's actually a simple process that can save

you time, energy and money.

Not only does a pressure cooker use up to 70 percent less energy than a stove, it combines high pressure and

high heat to dramatically reduce cooking times, saving you as much as two-thirds the time it takes to cook with a conventional stove. Another benefit? More vitamins and minerals are retained by pressure cooking vegetables as opposed to boiling and steaming.

Using a pressure cooker is different than cooking on a stovetop or in the oven, so the first few times, follow a recipe

to get the feel for liquid ratios and cooking times. Recipes for all occasions, as well as tips and pressure-cooking advice can be found on Crock-Pot.com.

Don't let inexperience prevent you from trying a pressure cooker. Once you have a few strategies down, it can become a useful tool to prepare convenient, quick meals for your family.



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Not only does a pressure cooker use up to 70 percent less energy than a stove, it combines high pressure and high heat to dramatically reduce cooking times,

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