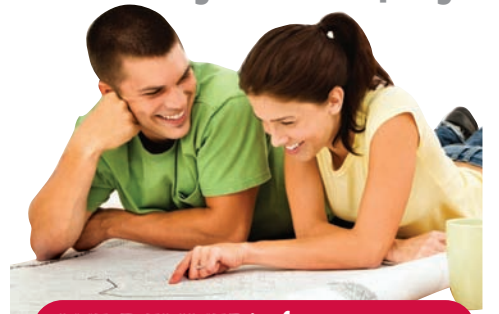


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How to make the most of your
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SPRING 2019



Home & Garden



Finally it's Spring!

Summer is on its way and you can finally get on with those home improvements you've been putting off all winter, but where to start?

It's time to remind homeowners to take stock of important work to be done for themselves and potential buyers down the road. Keeping on track with seasonal maintenance will lower costs and raise value.

Besides cleaning closets and planting flowers and cool-weather vegetables, Spring should involve scrutinising the condition of a house following the rough winter. Repairs and replacements won't just help owners enjoy their properties more; they'll also keep energy costs down as hot weather rolls in and attract more buyers, many of whom have become meticulous about inspecting roofs and appliances.

Figuring out where to start is job number one. Maybe it's as simple as finally cutting that grass and making your garden welcoming for yourself and your family as the weather improves. It won't be long before you're inviting your friends and extended family around for that first BBQ of the year.

Perhaps the inside of your home needs a make-over. New carpets, flooring, a coat of paint or even replacing some furniture can be a great way to kick off the new season.

Whatever it is you want to do to your home this Spring, *Wicklow Times* have you covered with this Special Home and Garden edition filled with

tips and of course a guide to who to hire locally to carry out some of this work or where to shop for the best deals. Bye-bye winter, hello Spring!



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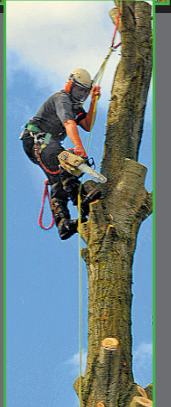
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First impressions count...

First impressions count! So if your lawn is overgrown and unkempt, it is time to call in those in the know to ensure the front of your house has the neighbours talking about you for all the right reasons.



Maintaining your lawn is an all year round job. Grass can quickly become overgrown, patchy, unhealthy and full of weeds.

There is nothing like a well-kept lawn. Having a lush green lawn requires a lot of work, and it is advisable to get a professional gardener or lawn mower in to give you a hand. This service usually won't

cost the earth but will go a long way to ensuring your garden is looking its best for the summer months.

An expert will know for example, that when it comes to mowing the lawn, you should never cut off more than one third of the blade and avoid mowing a lawn at the lower blade setting. If the lawn is cut at a higher level it is less

cost effective as it requires less watering. Weeds also tend to grow less when the lawn is higher.

A lawn expert can also inspect your lawn for disease, insects and weeds and manage any disease using fungicides and weed killer.

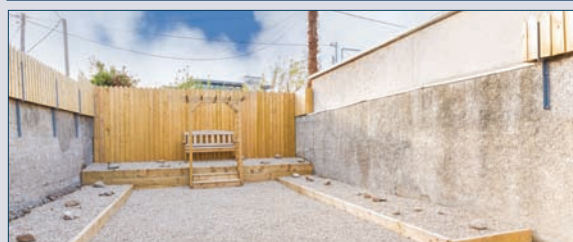
Most lawns need to be fertilised every year, because they need more nitrogen, phosphorus,

and potassium than soils usually contain. Lawns need to be fertilised to maintain colour, density, and vigour. Healthy lawns can better withstand heat, drought, and traffic pollution. The amount of fertiliser to apply and the timing of application can affect both turf and groundwater quality and that is why it is best to invest in some sound advice

from those who know these things.

To compliment your lawn, a new wall, a garden shed or a gazebo can be assembled with ease and you might also take the opportunity to build some decking or lay a new patio. Again local tradesmen or gardeners can be invaluable in helping out with the trickier jobs.

Galtrim Lodge, Galtrim Park, Bray, Co. Wicklow



Sherry FitzGerald is delighted to bring to the open market this recently renovated period bungalow located in the heart of Bray. Bought in a state of disrepair, **Galtrim Lodge** has been transformed by its current owners into a deceptively spacious and contemporary family home which is full of character and charm and further complimented by its secure private parking behind electronic gates, a large west facing garden and its convenient location beside all that Bray Town has to offer.

The property is presented in an immaculate 'turnkey' condition having been completely upgraded and modernized to include a new kitchen (new appliances included), new bathrooms, flooring, attic insulation, plumbing, rewired, internal plaster boarding and decorated in a neutral tone. To the rear there is a wonderful west facing garden where one can take advantage of the afternoon/ evening sun and is ideal for 'al fresco' dining and entertaining. This property will be a popular choice for both young families, professionals or indeed someone looking for a modern convenient house over one level to trade down to.

The accommodation is of generous proportions; a bright entrance opens up to the main living room with two generous single bedrooms set just off it. Off the living room there is a newly installed kitchen a family bathroom, separate guest WC and a large storage closet. To the rear of the property is the principal double bedroom and adjacent to this is the dining room or fourth bedroom leading to a cosy sunroom with direct access to the west facing rear garden.



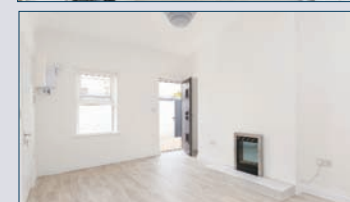
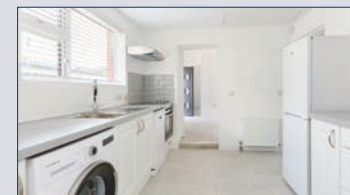
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Windows & Doors

Selecting doors and windows for your home and conservatory can be a daunting task because of the sheer choice that now exists. Not only is no home complete without them, but they also provide security, ventilation and restrict the entry of strong wind and other elements.

Do your homework before investing to ensure that you adhere to building regulations, buy the best quality within your budget and have them correctly installed.

Skimping too much on doors and windows is a false economy and can cause major problems in the future. It is recommended that you do some research and make your own decision as to which to go for. Advice from builders should be welcomed but make sure you do your own homework as well.

You may want to take into consideration the weather conditions of where you live before choosing your doors and windows. Also keep in mind that windows and doors can help reduce your electricity bill. If fitted well they will help block the escape of heat and stop the entry of cold wind from outside. Don't forget that the frames in which the windows and doors are fitted should be strong and the colour should be compatible with the home décor.

There are a number of materials to choose from including timber, aluminium, PVC, aluclad/composites, steel and structural frameless glass. There are pros and cons to all possibilities depending on your house type.

It is worth remembering, that if you have existing timber frames in good condition, there are com-

panies who can machine these in situ and fit real double glazed units into them. By doing this you get to keep your treasured timber and perhaps, avoid a lot of re-tiling, plastering and decorating.

as well as providing proper insulation and security.

The windows and doors of your conservatory are another area to consider. Conservatories have a number of uses whether it be as a playroom, dining area, an office or something else. Light is key, and your choice of windows and doors can help maximize and manipulate its potential. Important decisions might include whether you want blinds on the windows, or if you want a glass roof that lets in the light, or a roof that shuts it out. Just as your

conservatory should compliment your home, a conservatory's windows and doors should also compliment, and are essential to, the style of the conservatory itself, whether it's a Victorian design, a Lean-To, a pavilion, Bespoke or Edwardian conservatory.

When it comes to windows and doors, there are local businesses around the county that can help you out with choosing the perfect ones to suit your home and your budget.



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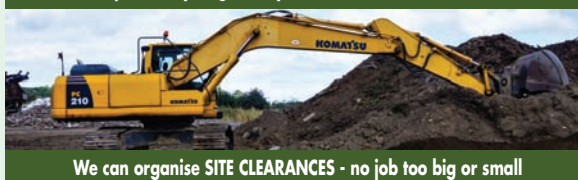
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The Kitchen - a room of many functions

Over the years the kitchen has developed into a room of many functions, becoming the centre of family life. A place to cook, dine, relax and entertain, the kitchen must offer an efficient and comfortable environment. Installing a kitchen is a major outlay, which requires planning and budgeting, no matter what your price bracket.

The first consideration is analysing how much you are willing to spend. No matter what your requirements, everyone has a preference for either traditional or contemporary looks.

However, while some homeowners prefer to opt for the timeless appeal of traditional styling, others are choosing more cutting edge, ultra-modern designs. With a notable move towards stainless steel and aluminium, the European influences of light maple woods are being introduced as an alternative to the traditional concept.

The importance of layout cannot be stressed enough; after all, you will be working in the kitchen and so it is not sufficient that it only just looks good, the layout must also be about efficiency and convenience.

Basically you have a choice of three ways of how you can go about installing a new kitchen. If you are one of those talented individuals who God has blessed with a 'good pair of hands', you can carry out all the work yourself.

If you bring the dimensions of your kitchen along to a kitchen specialist entre, they will help you to design a kitchen to your budget, and will also assist with advice of suitability of various materials. The second method is somewhat similar to the first, but recognizing that you neither have the time nor the ability to install the kitchen, you employ the services of a good carpenter and plumber. However, a word of caution - make sure you get a reference from them for similar work they have done, and check it out thoroughly. A kitchen centre will be able to supply you with names of reliable workmen who regularly do work for

their customers.

The final approach is the one where you hand over the entire job to kitchen specialists. They will call to your home, measure up, design plans, bring you samples of material and install the final product. Admittedly this is the dearer option, but you have the certainty of when the job will start, and more importantly when it will finish. You also have the recourse of calling back the company if anything goes wrong. Specialist kitchen companies, especially ones operating locally, are very protective of their reputations as they depend on it for referrals.



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Furniture

Finding the right furniture

The right choice of sofa, table, bookcase, bed or cabinet can make the room, but equally the wrong choice can ruin the room and haunt you. When choosing furniture, don't just pick something that looks nice in the shop; you must always visualise how it will look in your own home and how it will compliment the other furniture and décor of the room.

Do you want a wooden or glass table, for example, and if you choose wood, do you want pine or oak or something else?

With so much choice when it comes to tables, chairs, cabinets, beds, bedside lockers, shelving, wardrobes, etc, it is easy to become daunted and overwhelmed. If you have a preference for a certain type of wood or material this can help to narrow the choice; perhaps you wish to choose a particular theme for the whole house or give each room its own unique identity.

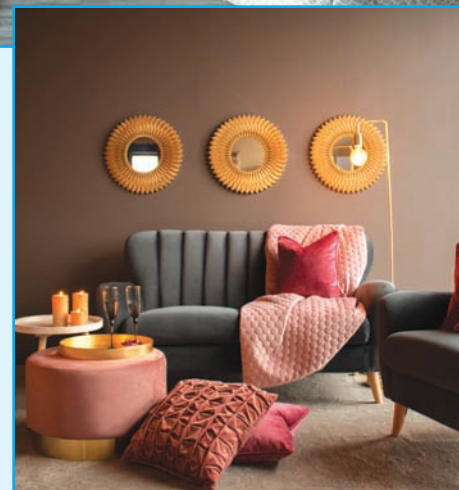
When choosing furniture, it's also important to keep in mind the colour schemes, particularly when it comes to livingroom furniture such as sofas and how they look against the walls and flooring.

The other key thing when it comes to choosing furniture is to take measurements; measuring both the space that will be filled in your home, and also the fur-



niture in the store before you buy it. It's not enough just to have an approximate measurement, the more precise it is the better as a centimetre can mean the difference between that cabinet fitting perfectly or not fitting at all.

Once you have the main pieces of furniture in place, you can begin to look at other accessories such as cushions and rugs that will develop a theme and give character to the room.



Imagery courtesy of EZ Living

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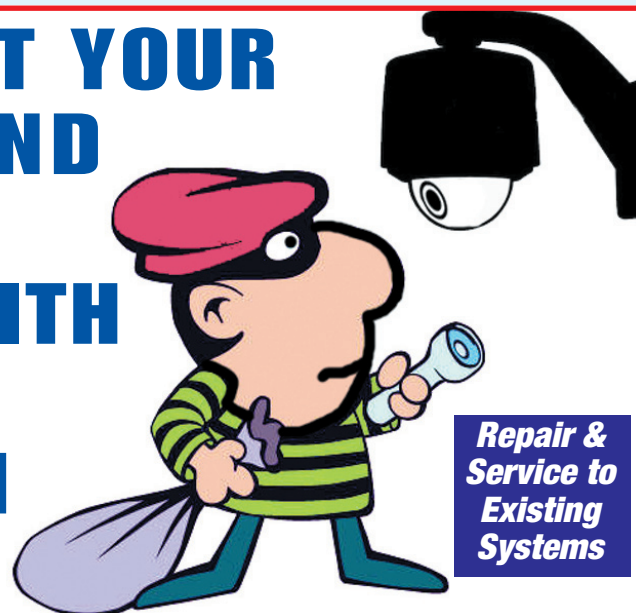
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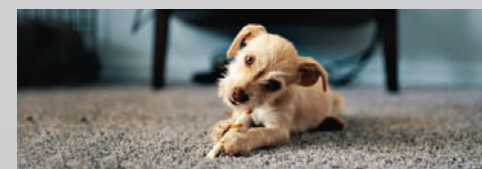
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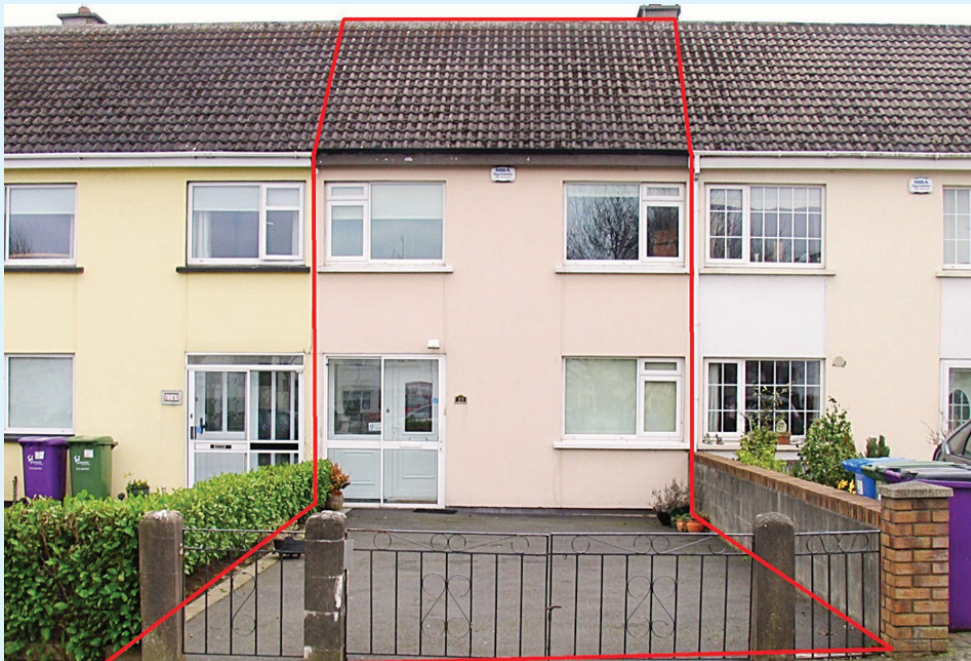
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The bathroom - a room for relaxation

Choosing the right tile for your bathroom remodel can up the 'wow' factor and give your space an extra source of colour and texture. However, with thousands of tile options out there, it can be tough to choose the correct one. There are several things you want to look for when shopping for tiles for your bathroom remodel, including size, shape, colour, and price. You will also want to consult with a bathroom remodelling contractor to ensure that the job is done correctly for a professional finish.



The material you choose for your bathroom tile can make a big impact on its final look. Each material also ranges in resiliency, smoothness, amount of shine, and price so choose carefully.

Each room in your home should have a set colour scheme, even your bathroom. Building a colour scheme can sometimes be difficult, especially when you do not know where to begin. One tip to get started with your bathroom remodel is by choosing the larger pieces of furniture first, such as your cabinet and vanity colours. Once you have those pieces picked out, create a colour scheme for the rest of the room. When shopping for tiles, navigate towards lighter colours that will help make your bathroom accessories pop.

It's not always the most glamorous part of a bathroom remodel but choosing the right vanity can make or break your bathroom's design. If it's placed awkwardly in a traffic route, uses poor or mismatched materials, or doesn't have enough storage, the rest of your bathroom will suffer.

Plumbing. If you need to change your bathroom's plumbing to install your new vanity, it's going to account for a chunk of your budget. Even switching from a traditional floor-mounted vanity to a wall-mounted version will mean rerouting pipes and drains.

Taking account of

what you truly use will help you decide how much storage you'll need in your new vanity. Take inventory of what you store in your current vanity. Organise everything by what you'll need to have in reach and what you'll just need to have nearby.

If you're wondering which shower is right for you, be it electric, mixer, power shower or thermostatic shower, understanding the options and fittings available is the first step to making the right choice. Before choosing a shower, it is important that you understand the way the hot water is already heated in your house. Some showers cannot be used with some heating systems. Electric showers can be used within any domestic water system. They, in most cases, are connected to the mains cold water and an element within the shower heats the water as it passes through the unit.

Mixer showers are so called because they will mix the existing hot and cold water, in a special valve, before it is available at the shower head. They are suitable for either low or high pressure (check with your supplier that the mixer valve you buy is suitable for the system you have). They are available as surface mounted fixtures, where the pipework is easily installed on the top of your existing surface, or flush mounted, where the

valve is seen, but the pipework is hidden behind the surface. They are ideal to install in a new shower cubicle construction where the pipes can be built into a wall.

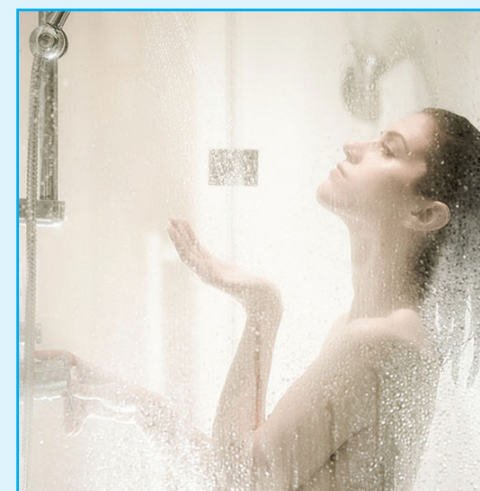
A thermostatic mixer shower incorporates a pre-set thermostat that will sense a dramatic change in temperature and rectify the situation. Some advanced thermostatic mixers

will even cut the water off when a failure in flow is detected. Most thermostatic mixers also have a temperature limiting device to stop very high temperatures being selected by the user.

Power showers are mixer showers with integral pumps which increase the rate of flow from the shower head. They can only be

installed on low pressure, tank fed systems

We are all familiar with the humble shower cubicle. Again, these can come in a vast range of shapes, sizes, colours, materials and designs to suit pretty much any given taste. The choice of shower door, cubicle size and finishes can complete the overall look of your bathroom.



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Gardening

Spring gardening tips...

**Survey the Yard**

Make note of tree limbs that should be removed or cabled, especially those that overhang structures. Hire an arborist to maintain large trees. Cut down last year's perennial foliage, and toss it into the compost pile. Rake mulch from beds planted with bulbs before foliage appears, and refresh mulch in other planting areas after soil warms. Check fences, steps, and pathways for disrepair caused by freezing and thawing.

Order Tools and Plants

Tune up tools so everything is ready when things start growing. Make note of what is missing, and order tools for the new growing season. Choose new plants for the garden. Order perennials, trees, and shrubs for spring planting.

Get Ready to Mow

Send the mower and leaf blower for servicing, or if you have the right tools, sharpen the mower blades yourself. Refill your

mower with oil, install fresh spark plugs, and lubricate moving parts if necessary. Clear the lawn of winter debris, and look for areas that need reseeding before mowing.

Prune Trees and Shrubs

Remove dead, damaged, and diseased branches from woody plants. Thin and trim summer-blooming shrubs such as butterfly bush, hydrangea, and most roses, except for old-fashioned once bloomers. Prune cold-damaged wood after plants resume spring growth.

Prune spring-blooming shrubs and trees after flowering. Cutting limbs that may have been damaged during winter and that might fall on a roof is smart, and it can be a cost savings later on. Called "thinning out," this method gets excess foliage trimmed to allow more natural light into a house and cut down on artificial illumination. It opens the tree so you don't have dead spots in the interior and lets the tree take advantage of air flow rather than chop off the top. A certified

arborist will know the best ways to do this without removing too much of a canopy, which is useful for privacy and shade.

Take a Soil Test

Check soil pH with a home soil-test kit, taking several samples from different planting areas for an accurate reading. Enrich soil as necessary: Add dolomitic lime to raise the pH or elemental sulfur to lower the pH.

Prepare New Beds

Clear the planting area as soon as soil can be worked, removing sod or weeds and debris. Spread a 4-inch layer of compost or well-rotted manure and any amendments over soil, and cultivate it to a depth of 10 to 12 inches with a spading fork.

Plant

Plant bare-root trees, shrubs, and perennials such as hostas and daylilies by early spring. Choose a cool, cloudy day if possible. Transplant container-grown plants anytime during the growing season except mid-summer; be sure to

water them thoroughly. Sow seeds of cool-season flowers like sweet peas, poppies, and calendula, and vegetables such as lettuce, parsley, and spinach.

Fertilize

Apply balanced fertilizer (6-6-6 or 8-8-8), fish emulsion, or other soil amendments rec-

ommended by soil-test results around trees and shrubs when new growth appears. Spread high-acid fertilizer and pine-needle mulch around acid-loving shrubs like azaleas and camellias. Begin fertilizing perennials when active growth resumes.

Start a compost pile, or use a compost bin.

**Install garden features**

By the time spring arrives we're all sick of freezing weather

and can't wait for sunshine; so why not start planning how you're going to spend those warm evenings in your garden? Creating a central outdoor dining or relaxing area is a great idea; consider installing decking or a patio to provide the perfect spot.

Mulch plantings

if you don't have one already. Begin by collecting plant debris and leaves raked up from the garden. Chop these up first to speed decomposition. Add equal amounts "brown" (carbon-rich) materials like dried leaves and straw and "green" (nitrogen-rich) materials like grass clippings and weeds in even layers with water and a compost bioactivator. Turn regularly. Continue adding to the pile throughout the season for rich, homemade compost next spring.

Clean Bird Feeders and Baths

Disinfect the feeders by scrubbing with weak bleach solution (1/4 cup bleach: 2 gallons warm water). Rinse and dry the feeders thoroughly before refilling them. Scrub birdbaths

with bleach solution, then rinse them thoroughly and refill, changing water weekly. Clean birdbaths and feeders regularly throughout the season. When it comes to artificial light, most contractors recommend switching burned-out bulbs to LEDs, which last longer than incandescents, consume less energy, and have come down in price. Quality has improved too and they're dimmable and available in colours.



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Home Improvements

Home improvement tips...

**Check your roofing and guttering**

Winter may have taken its toll on your roof, causing holes, leaks or broken tiles. The best thing to do is regularly check your roof, look at the tiling, cement work, verges and chimney. Your guttering is just as important and can easily be effected by ice, snow and

excess water, so check you have no blockages or leaks. If water in your gutter isn't running freely it can overflow and cause serious damp problems.

External painting and maintenance

Spruce up the exterior of your weather-weary walls, but first, check that they don't have

any cracks in them. Painting will also protect your home from damp - don't forget that window frames can also be transformed with a lick of paint or gloss. Painting your front door can also make a big difference to your home.

Check the plumbing

Over winter your pipes

and plumbing may have suffered frost damage, particularly if they haven't been lagged. Other common plumbing problems such as blocked pipes, leaks or dripping taps may not seem immediately pressing, but it's best to get them repaired as soon as possible to avoid further damage. Hire a qualified plumber to deal with all your plumbing problems.

Sort out your boiler and insulation

Spring is the perfect time to make your home more energy efficient; this will also help you save money on fuel bills. Give your windows a good clean to help heat and light your home naturally as well as using energy-saving light bulbs. Cut down your heating bills by switching your boiler to summer mode and installing proper heating controls. Loft insulation will keep your home cool in summer as well as warm in winter.

Extend or convert your property

If your home is starting to feel cramped or you're looking for a change without having to move completely, consider a home extension or conversion. Take advantage of neglected areas of your house and convert your garage, loft or basement into usable space. A new one or two-storey extension will also provide with that vital extra room and inject new life into your property.

Get your garden in good shape

Check that your fencing, shed or greenhouse hasn't been damaged during the winter and clear the garden of debris. You may find that outdoor furniture and fittings are covered in mould or mildew from the wet conditions, these can be easily cleaned with a soap and water mixture. Garden paths or driveways may also have come under attack from moss or algae, which is simple

to remove too. Spring is a good time to repaint or stain outdoor furniture to protect it from further weather damage and to start composting.

Install a new heating system and change filters

If a seller's furnace and boiler were on their last legs this past winter, it may be time to install a new one, or at least provide sellers with a credit toward new equipment. Existing systems still in good condition should have filters checked monthly and replaced when dark and clogged, a DIY project.

A home's first line of defense to stop cold or hot air, depending on the season, should be the attic, according to most contractors. An energy audit can determine how much more is needed, if they already have some. For colder weather, installing under-floor heating under bathroom and kitchen floors will provide comfort next season.

Replace inefficient appliances

Sometimes appliances are no longer smart to repair. The determining factors for that should be their age and the cost of repair versus replacement. If homeowners need to replace most of their kitchen



Image courtesy of EZ Living

equipment and have a limited budget or plan to move, they should prioritise and first switch out the range, followed by the refrigerator, dishwasher, and microwave - in that order.

Paint

Damage often shows up at this time of year, especially if it's been a particularly cold win-

ter. Use the time to reassess your colour choice for better curb appeal. Even changing the front door's colour can make a difference.

Spring clean

Finally, the good old fashioned spring clean is a must. De-clutter to begin with, recycling where possible. Dust thoroughly, taking care

to clean blinds, windows and sills as well as curtains. This is a good time of year to also take apart and clean your smoke detector.

While you're at it, change the batteries! When cleaning, check for signs of damp which might have set in over winter. Penetrating and rising damp are common household problems.

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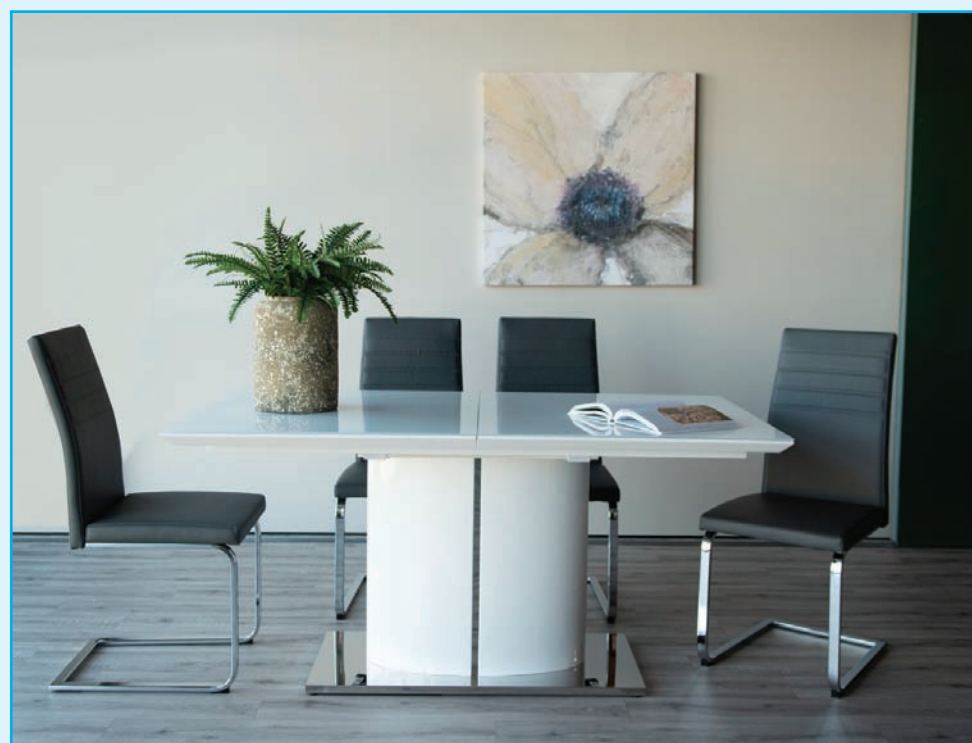


Image courtesy of EZ Living

Flooring

Flooring - What are my choices?

There's really a wide range of choices available to you when it comes to flooring. The key to making a good choice is matching your performance expectations with the appropriate material. As an example, the kitchen is a room that sees a lot of traffic and it's prone to food and water spills. A floor surface that's durable (will stand up to traffic, grit, etc.) and easy to clean is a good choice here.

By the same token, a bathroom floor experiences a lot of moisture so flooring choices that can stand up to this type of environment long-term are the best choice. Laminate probably wouldn't be the best option given its seams and the susceptibility of its backing material to damage from moisture.

Vinyl is still a mainstay of floor covering material. It's easy-to-clean surface and wide range of available colours and patterns make it a versatile, economical and low-maintenance choice. There are lots of vinyl choices that incorporate new technologies in texturing and durability for

a more modern and realistic look.

Laminate Flooring mimics the look of other floor materials by employing a picture of real wood, stone or tile covered with a wear-protective layer. Some laminates are virtually indistinguishable from the real thing while costing less too. **Care of laminate** flooring is relatively easy, armed with a sweeper and a little knowledge on how to take care of it.

You also have a choice on whether to use solid wood or engineered wood. Solid wood is just what the name implies - solid from top to bottom. Engineered wood

consists of a top layer of real wood bonded to several other layers of wood beneath it, similar to plywood. Solid wood can be purchased prefinished or it can be finished on-site using **unfinished hardwood stock**. Engineered wood is usually purchased prefinished. Solid wood and some engineered wood floors are capable of being refinished several times.

Linoleum is an all-natural product, made up of linseed oil, wood or cork flour, mineral fillers and pigments that are combined and applied to a jute or canvas backing. It's sometimes confused with vinyl but its natural ingredients provide a more environmentally friendly material than vinyl. It's resilient like vinyl which makes it more comfortable to stand and walk on.

Carpeting offers a warmth and softness not found in other surfacing options but it's obviously not for all applications. Carpeting not only

comes in a wide variety of colours and patterns but in many different textures as well, making it a versatile style option. New synthetic fibre technology gives you better alternatives for stain resistance, greater resiliency and even "green" carpeting choices. If natural fibres appeal to you, **wool carpeting** is still the measure that all synthetic carpets try to emulate, with natural resilience, durability and softness.

Tile provides almost infinite style and decorating variety. There's practically an endless range of styles available and the ability to combine them within a floor plan offers even wider design options. Tile is durable, long-lasting and works well with in-floor radiant heating systems.

Concrete can be a decorative and durable floor while providing a real design statement. It's basically a creation-in-place so you have limitless design options in the way of colours, patterns, borders and textures. Floors can be styled to mimic stone or brick or just about whatever style you can dream up. Their natural coolness offers cooling benefits in warmer months and they can be combined with radiant floor heating systems to warm them up in colder months.

Stone is typically made up of pieces of actual stone cut into various

sizes of tiles. Stone provides a durability and beauty that's difficult to

duplicate in the man-made world. There's a range of colours to choose from

depending on the type of stone, anywhere from neutral tan and grey to purple

and red. Stone is also a good surface to use with radiant floor heat systems.



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PETER FLANAGAN’S TOP 5 SOFA TIPS

1. FASHION OR CLASSICS - THE FIVE TO TEN YEAR RULE

Perhaps the most important criteria to consider when picking your sofa is that you’re going to have to think carefully as you swoon over a very contemporary piece which looks great now but could date very quickly.
2. SIZE AND SCALE

Also, think about the room where the sofa will go. Then think two, three, four-seater, what works best? What shape is the right choice? Will an L-shaped sofa swamp the room or enhance it? Would 2, two-seater sofa’s make the room look bigger than one single four-seater sofa? Bear in mind that most regular rooms can’t take big, bold patterns so something less exuberant could work better.
3. COMFORT MATTERS

Don’t compromise on comfort – good posture and lower back support are important. Whether you’re a Slouchy kind of person or more Upright, you need to feel as relaxed as possible every time you sit down. Peter also speaks about the “Feet on The Floor factor” (when you’re trying the furniture for the first time, sit upright with your feet on the ground) – if it feels comfortable in this position, it’s going to feel good in whatever myriad ways you choose to enjoy your new sofa.
4. FABRIC FACTS

When choosing the right fabrics for your sofa, consider a few lifestyle pointers.

A. If you’ve got young kids or pets, you should opt for a durable material that’s easy to clean. Look for Aquaclean fabrics - they make removing stains and marks pretty simple.

B. On soft-touch fabrics, do a “Rub Test” to see if the fabric returns to shape after a semi-vigorous rub – it’s a good way to see if it returns to its pristine look, or not.

C. Choose wisely with leather – it’s a great material, no doubt. But there’s lots of types of leather on the market from leather-look (Leatherette) to Aniline (the most natural looking, with natural surface visible, but is less resistant to soiling and therefore not a great choice for a young family).

D. Don’t be afraid to mix it up – there’s no rule that says you can’t have leather and suede together on one sofa. Or Suede and Cotton Fabric. Or Velvet and Tapestry – the choices are endless.
5. COLOUR CHOICES

For many, a new sofa will provide a pop of colour to the room. If you don’t want a sofa with one colour Peter advises the option of keeping the base fabric a block colour such as various shades of cream, grey, blues, pinks and then add character with patterned cushions, graphic designed bolster cushions and so forth. Also, you might want to consider seat or back cushions clad in a different by complementary fabric or design. All these are valid choices and, remember, we shape our homes and our homes shape us.

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The bedroom...

We spend about a third of our lives in the bedroom so it's important to get things right with regards to décor, furniture and colours.

Since much of our time in the bedroom is spent relaxing or sleeping, many people prefer to choose calm and serene colours when it comes to the walls. This can mean choosing a more toned down version of what your preferred colour might be.

In the bedroom, the ceiling takes on more importance than it does in other rooms, since many of us spend time looking up at it while lying in bed. You can make the ceiling more interesting simply with some added texture, colouring or design. Think of the ceiling as extra wall in the room rather than ignore it.

A bedroom should be cosy and relaxing, and the positioning of the furniture can matter a great deal with regards to this. The bed shouldn't be an obstacle you have to constantly walk around, and other items of furniture such as desks and dressers should be tailored according to the size of the room ; if the dresser is too large for example it will be too domineering in a smaller room. On the other hand, if your bedroom is large, small items of furniture will look lost.

Less is more when it comes to the amount of furniture in the bedroom. A bed, a bedside locker, a wardrobe and a dresser are generally thought of as essentials. A dresser can sometimes fit inside a wardrobe to maximise

space. If you have a TV in your bedroom, perhaps it can be mounted on the wall to save space also, and if you must have some shelving for books or dvds, this can be mounted on the wall as well. Many people also like to have a chair and desk in their bedroom, but be careful; clutter can accumulate very easily in the bedroom and the more surfaces there are, the more likely that is to happen. The option of adding drawers or boxes which fit under

the bed is a great way to reduce clutter and store things out of sight. This is of particular importance when it comes to children's bedrooms and the conundrum of where to put all those toys.

A reading chair can be a great addition to a bedroom, but if space won't allow, then adding a window seat could be an option. Finishing touches can be provided with rugs, pictures on the walls, potted house plants and some ornaments.

Lighting in the bedroom is key to setting a certain mood or serving a function; many people like to have a dimmer switch for this reason, but additional lighting will most likely be required in the form of a bedside lamp for reading. Fairy lights are another way of adding additional lighting that can change the atmosphere of the room. Whatever your preference, it's important to have options.

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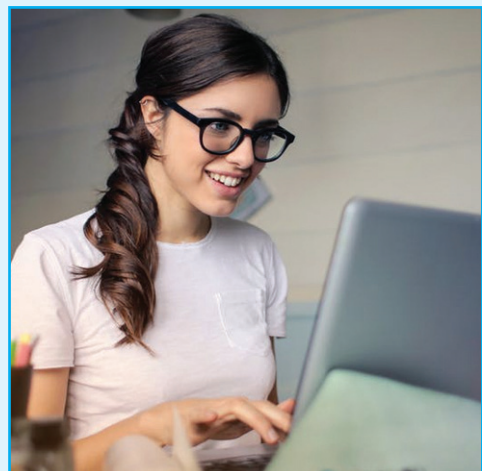
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Buyers can be excused for being wary of purchasing or building a new home in the current downcast climate but numerous people are making the most of the recession to negotiate better deals and get reasonably priced materials. Contractors eager for work will also be more willing to offer affordable rates. So take advantage of the recession and get planning for your dream home now with these useful tips and suggestions.

The Architect's Role

According to the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (R.I.A.I.), architects have the most appropriate training and experience to design, co-ordinate and manage your building project. Your architect will advise on the design of your home or extension, or the refurbishment of your house, so that it is laid out economically and efficiently and will add to the value of your house

and to your lifestyle. The architect's work begins with an analysis of your requirements. The architect will relate your needs and aspirations to your budget for the project. The ultimate success of your project depends on the quality of your brief - your description to your architect of what you need from your building. This information will enable your architect to develop a design solution related to your needs. The architect will present proposals in the form of sketch designs. Drawings can be difficult to understand and it is important that you work with your architect to understand the proposal. If you have any doubts, discuss these with your architect so that both of you can understand exactly what is proposed. Once your project goes on site changes can be very expensive - some alterations may even require an additional planning application and can have implications in terms of compliance with

Building Regulations.

As the client you are part of the team and you need to maintain effective communication with your architect throughout the project so that he or she can act in your best interest at all times.

Extensions under a particular size may be exempt from the requirement to obtain Planning Permission and your architect will advise. Above this defined size, planning permission is necessary. Your architect will apply on your behalf for the necessary permission. There can be difficulties with neighbours and you should not rule out the possibility of a planning appeal which will delay your project. Your architects will advise you on the correct procedures if an appeal is lodged against your project, if planning permission is refused or if you need to appeal against a condition in your permission.

In 1992 National Building Regulations were introduced covering aspects of construction. You as a client, your architect and your contractor are legally obliged to comply with these building regulations. Your architect will know which materials and construction systems will meet the requirements for each part of the building and will advise you on a cost effective solution.

The Building Process

Having translated your brief into a final agreed design and having

obtained the necessary planning permission your architect will then produce documentation for pricing by contractors. The architect will also select a list of contractors and will help you to evaluate the tenders received.

The builder should be selected not only on the basis of the tender price, but also on quality. A good builder represents real value in reliability and quality of work and may ultimately cost less than one with lesser ability who has tendered a lower price. Builders selected for tendering should have a good track record for your type of project. For this reason architects often prefer to work with builders known to them.

The architect will advise you on the appropriate form of building contract, which is published by the RIAI, and will act as your independent advisor during the contract, liaising on your behalf with the builder and ensuring compliance with the contract documentation.

Your architect will advise you on stage payments during the project. Building even the smallest extension is a complex process and requires good management and co-ordination by the contractor. Even with the best contractors, problems can occur and it is important that you maintain good communication with your architect so that such problems can be dealt with effectively. During building it is important that you do not give direct instructions to



the contractors, because what may seem to you to be a simple matter, can be expensive.

Choosing your Builder

Have your project built by a reputable builder and check that he or she knows what the new building standards are. There are builders who specialize in small works as well as those that cater for bigger jobs. If possible get preliminary costs of building which will help you decide the size and nature of building suitable to your budget. It is imperative that you or your builder obtains material from reputable suppliers, as these must also comply with accepted standards as required by the new regulations. The building regulations also apply for standards and levels of workmanship.

Home Extension

Not everybody can afford the money and time to move to a bigger house. This is when you should look at building an extension. You will need to apply for planning permission (depending on size). A good indication of what will be allowed is to look around at any neighbours existing extensions and see what has previously been allowed.

Figure out what kind of space will be of the most benefit. For some this will be an additional bedroom while others it will be additional living space.

Make sure you set a realistic budget and leave some money over for contingencies. With few exceptions, building work will almost always cost more than you plan for.

It is worth remembering, when it comes to door and window frames in good condition, that there are companies who can machine these in situ and fit real double glazed units into them. By doing this, you get to keep your treasured timber and perhaps avoid a lot of retiling, plastering and decorating.

Assuming space is available either to the side or over an existing garage, in the attic or in the garden surrounding your home, the room(s) you add should help to enhance your living environment and fit it with the smooth planning of your existing layout.

There may be problems with overlooking and objections from neighbours that need to be overcome. Early discussions with neighbours, informing them of your intention to build, gener-

ally receives approval, however, there is always an exception.

If you are happy with your present house layout and have the necessary room to extend to give you the extra rooms you require this is probably the least expensive way to build.

To begin with you have a 'free' site, no moving costs, no legal fees and the least amount of upset. It may be worth noting that one can add 40sq. metres/430 sq. feet to the rear of the house without seeking planning permission. Such extensions should not reduce the area of the back garden to less than 25 sq.m.

However if the house has previously been extended under exempted development regulations the total may not exceed 40 sq.m. There are other considerations regarding exempted development and it would be wise to contact your own architect in these matters.

Doing up an older house

Site restrictions and planning requirements may be a reason to consider moving. A possibility you might consider is to find a new/second-hand property that will go some of that way to meeting your needs. The pluses are that you will know what your overall costs will be; however, you will have additional costs such as redecoration, changing the kitchen fittings to your taste and so on. There will also be removal fees, solicitors' fees and the trauma of uprooting and leaving neighbours, friends and family, as well as moving your children to a new school.

After all this you may not fully achieve what you set out to do, as you will most probably have had to compromise your accommodation requirements. So it is a matter for serious consideration and a question of balance.

Building by direct labour

If you choose to build by direct labour you will be taking on extra responsibility and will need someone to supervise the overall works. Time schedules will be hard to maintain and there is little or no comeback if things go wrong.

This method of building can be unsatisfactory, time consuming and produce only short-term savings.

If you are lucky enough to find trustworthy and diligent craftsmen, who are prepared to give the names of previous customers, ring them and see what their experience has been.

If you choose to build by contract or use a number of specialized sub-contractors, you will have the house supervised by the builder or his foreman, and a great deal of worry will be lifted from you.

On the surface this might seem more expensive than building by direct labour but often the contractor will return to correct faults if they occur as they have their reputation to protect.

There may be house builders that you know and trust, if not there are a number of them advertised in this feature, while the architect usually has a panel of builders.



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The paint your room **DEAL!** All these items for **€65.00**

Save
€27.65

1 preparation

Ready Mixed
Filler | 330g
NOW €3.95



2 the essentials



3 Piece Brush Set
NOW €5.95



9" Roller Kit
3 Sleeve
NOW €6.95

3 paint
your ceiling



Brilliant White | 5L
NOW €14.95
€2.99 per litre

4 refresh
your trim



Brilliant White
1L | Satin/Gloss
Water Based
NOW €15.95
€15.95 per litre

5 colour your walls



10L | Soft Sheen/Matt
7 Colour Options
Antique Cream | Frosted Silver | Ivory Spray
Magnolia | Manhattan Grey | Moonlit Sky | Sea Shell
NOW €39.95 €3.99 per litre

Prices correct at time of press and may change without notice. Images for illustration purposes only. Offers available until stocks last. E&OE. For store opening hours please visit our website.