



Fall Home Improvement

Fall is a great time to tackle projects around the house. The weather in fall allows homeowners to make improvements to their homes' exteriors without worrying about extreme heat or cold, while interior projects like painting are made easier because homeowners can open the windows to allow for proper ventilation.

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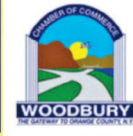
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A few words on DIY demolition

Home improvement projects can range from relatively inexpensive undertakings to complex endeavors that cost homeowners thousands of dollars. In an effort to make expensive projects more affordable, homeowners may look for ways to pitch in, and do-it-yourself demolition is a common way to cut costs.

Due to geographical fluctuations in price as well as the scale of a project, it's hard to pinpoint just how much homeowners can save by doing demolition work themselves. HomeAdvisor estimates that the average small interior demolition project costs just over \$3,000, though more significant demolition projects can cost considerably more than that. Given the cost, it's no surprise that so many homeowners volunteer to do demolition on their own. Though it's possible to do so safely, homeowners can take steps to determine if it's in their best interest to take on a DIY demolition or leave it to the professionals.

• **Conduct a cost analysis.** Demolition projects seem simple, but they often require the use of equipment most homeowners don't have on hand. Rentals can be considered in such instances, but the cost of renting equipment can reduce the amount of money homeowners are saving by going it alone. For example, homeowners may be able to pull up vinyl or tile flooring on their own, but not all floors are installed the same. Some floors may have been



glued more effectively than others, making it hard and/or time-consuming to pull them up by hand. A walk-behind floor scraper can make it easier to remove such floors, but that equipment must be rented. A cost analysis comparing the contractors' demolition cost estimate and the cost of DIY, complete with equipment rental projections, can give a more accurate picture of how much money homeowners will save by going it alone. If the savings of DIY are negligible, homeowners should probably let the contractor handle the demo.

• **Speak with a contractor.** Prior to saying they'll do the demo work on their own, homeowners should speak with their contractors to get an accurate idea of what the project will entail. Demolition projects may seem simple enough, but contractors can illustrate the correct way to do things so as to minimize potentially costly damage. Some contractors may offer to help homeowners start the demo project and then leave them to their own devices once they get a knack for what to do. Once homeowners see what it will take, they can then decide if DIY is best for them.

• **Enlist help.** No DIY demo should ever be done alone. The risk for accident and injury is simply too great for homeowners to go it alone. Homeowners who can't enlist some volunteers to pitch in should leave the job to the professionals.



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Prepare your garden for winter's onslaught

The inevitable slowing of activity in the garden during fall marks a time to shift attention from constant plant care to preparing the landscape for next season. It may be tempting to simply let Mother Nature take over, but a little pre-winter TLC can ensure gardens make it through winter unscathed.

Remove spent plants

Decomposing organic material is the basis for compost and other fertilizers. However, vegetable plants that are left to sit can lead to decay in the garden. Decaying plants can serve as hosts for pest populations and diseases. Rotting vegetables also can drop unwanted seeds into the soil, which eventually can strip nutrients that normally would go to next year's crops.

Ornamental plants and perennials can be left to reseed if wanted. Dispose of any diseased stalks and leaves.

Plant a cover crop

A cover crop protects the soil and can return nutrients to it. When the



soil is bare during winter, weed seeds can easily blow in ultimately becoming a problem during the next growing season. Cover crops can include clover or field peas, which will increase the levels of available nitrogen.

Amend the soil

Fall is a perfect time to add soil amendments, such as manure and compost. These fertilizers will add nutrients and break down gradually, enriching the soil over the winter.

Mulch

Replacing or adding mulch when the mercury drops can insulate the soil, which helps to regulate soil temperature. A thick layer of mulch around perennials and root vegetables left in the garden can offer protection against hard frosts.

Divide bulbs

Divide plant bulbs and plant them where you want flowers like daffodils and tulips to grow in the spring.

Prune dormant plants

Wait until plants are dormant to prune. Most shrubs and trees should be pruned in late winter, right before new growth.

Move potted plants

Bring delicate plants into a sheltered area, such as a greenhouse or garage, so they can go dormant for the winter.

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When a roof needs repair

The average life span of a roof depends on when the roof was installed and the materials it is made from. According to Central Homes Roofing, three-tab shingles may last between 10 and 15 years, architectural shingles can endure for 15 to 20 years, and tile may last between 35 and 50 years. RPS Metal Roofing indicates a metal roof may last as long as 70 years. However, climate and color of the roof also will affect its longevity.

The age of the roof is a major factor in determining if it will need to be replaced or if repairs can be made to isolated damage. Individuals who live in neighborhoods where neighbors are now replacing roofs will likely find it is time to consult a roofing company. Homeowners also can check to see if they have any receipts that indicate the roof's installation date so they have an idea about its age.

Roofing shingles are designed to overlap, and sealant keeps them steady. Friction, weather and atmospheric changes can impact sealant and cause degradation. Gutters with grainy

material in them could indicate worn out sealant and shingles.

Ridges are spots where two separate areas meet and often are important to the structural integrity of the roof. If the roof ridge is showing signs of wear, it could be time to repair or replace it.

If shingle tabs are curled or cupped, the shingles may need to be replaced. But if curling is extensive, a whole new roof may need to be installed.

Missing granules and missing shingles are reasons to consult a pro for a roof evaluation.

Homeowners who find dark streaks or moisture in the attic may discover that water is penetrating the roof underlay. Water often comes in around chimney flashing. Other water signs are blistering and bubbling in walls.

Look up through the attic and see if any light is coming through the roof, which may indicate there are cracks or holes in the roof.

If a homeowner doesn't like the look of the roof from a design standpoint, a replacement also may be warranted.



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