



Spring Home & Garden

Wood Floor Care

Ticks

Recycling News

Safe Pressure Washing

Pet & Lawn Harmony

Guide To Awnings

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WOOD FLOOR CLEANING GUIDE

Wood floors are coveted for a number of reasons. Many people prefer wood flooring because dust and dirt do not become trapped as they would in carpet fibers, seemingly making wood flooring easy to clean.

Most floors endure a lot of wear and tear. However, with care, wood flooring may last for decades. Part of that care includes understanding how to properly clean and maintain wood floors so they look their best. The following are some steps for keeping wood floors as pristine as possible.

- **Remove shoes.** It's a good idea to remove shoes, particularly heels, when walking on wood floors. Sharp heels, cleats and other shoes can scratch or dent wood flooring. All shoes can track in excess dirt, which can contribute to a lack of luster as well.

- **Sweep or vacuum frequently.** The experts at The Spruce suggest sweeping, vacuuming or dust mopping wood floors daily. Dirt and dust make floors more slippery, and dirt or sand particles can lead to scratches on the floor.



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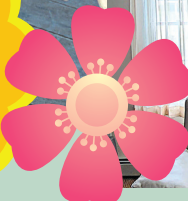
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• **Learn your flooring type.** Wood flooring is broken down into three main categories: solid hardwood flooring, engineered hardwood flooring and laminate wood flooring. Traditional hardwood is made of planks or strips of any hardwood covered in a wood stain. Engineered flooring is manufactured by gluing together several thin plies of hardwood. Laminate flooring looks like wood but generally is a veneer or a photographic image of wood covered by a thick layer of melamine resin over fiberboard.

• **Skip harsh cleansers.** Regardless of flooring type, most are covered by a sealant that can become streaky or dull if the wrong cleanser is used. Avoid chlorine bleach, ammonia, pine oil, or undiluted vinegar. Instead, choose a cleanser that is specifically recommended for the flooring type. Do not allow water or solutions to sit on the floor, as that can contribute to staining and warping. With laminate flooring, avoid wet mopping unless the flooring

is specifically marked as being able to be wet. The underlayers of laminate flooring can warp if it gets wet.

• **Damp is better than wet.** When cleaning wood flooring, use a damp rather than a soaking wet mop. Better Homes & Gardens says standing water can damage wood surfaces.

• **Use the hard floor setting.** When vacuuming, adjust the vacuum to a hard flooring setting, which will not engage the brush rollers on the vacuum head. Rollers can scratch wood and laminate flooring, advises The Home Depot.

• **Use repair products as needed.** Scratch and repair kits can fill in small scratches. Wood floor polish and wood waxes also can revitalize worn floors. Again, check that the product is safe for your particular flooring before use.

Wood floors bring warmth to a home cleaning them correctly can add to their appeal and longevity.

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Don't invite ticks to your yard

Warm weather afternoons can quickly go off the rails when an unwelcome visitor makes its presence known

Ticks are found throughout the world, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that only a select few types of ticks transmit bacteria, viruses and parasites, or pathogens, that cause diseases in people. Even if the number

of tick species that transmit diseases to humans is relatively low, ticks that can infect humans are a notable threat. Ticks carry pathogens that the CDC notes can cause diseases, including Bourbon virus, Ehrlichiosis and, of course, Lyme disease, among others.

Human beings can come into contact with ticks in their own backyards. But humans can take various steps to make their lawns less welcoming to ticks.

Cut your grass short and keep it that way. Black-legged ticks are transmitters of Lyme disease, which the CDC notes is the most common vector-borne disease in the United States. Lyme disease also poses a growing threat in Canada, where data from the Public Health Agency indicates human-reported Lyme disease cases increased from 144 in 2009 to more than 2,100 in 2022. Black-legged ticks do not like environments that are dry and hot, so short grass makes lawns less attractive to this type of tick. Consumer Reports

advises homeowners who have let their grass grow a little too high (around five or six inches) to bag their clippings when cutting the grass. Lots of clippings on the grass can provide a respite from the heat for black-legged ticks.

Create a tick barrier if your property abuts woods. Woods provide a cover from summer heat that black-legged ticks crave. So properties that abut the woods may be more vulnerable to these unwanted guests than yards that do not border woodlands. A barrier of dry mulch made of wood chips between a property and a bordering wooded area can help repel ticks, who won't want to settle in often dry, hot mulch beds.

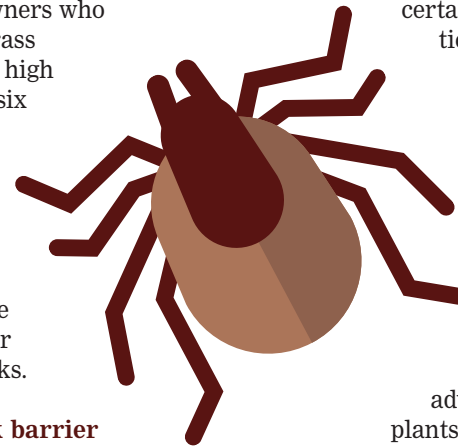
Plant with infestation prevention in mind. Some plants can help to repel ticks because they boast

certain characteristics that ticks cannot tolerate.

The fragrances, textures and oils of plants like garlic, mint, lavender, marigolds, and others create less welcoming conditions for ticks. Homeowners can speak with local garden centers for advice on tick-repellant plants that can thrive in their particular climate and on their properties.

Remove yard debris. Piles of wood, leaves and brush can make for good conditions for ticks that transmit disease. After raking leaves and gathering brush, discard the resulting piles immediately.

These measures will not necessarily prevent all ticks from establishing themselves on a property, always inspect clothing, skin and pets after a day in the yard.



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Did you know?

Recycle Across America®, a nonprofit organization dedicated to expediting environmental progress, notes that there's much to learn about the products that find their way into recycling bins and recycling centers every day.

- Residents of the United States discard 2.5 million plastic bottles every hour. Recycling just one ton of plastic bottles saves the same amount of energy as a single two-person household consumes in an entire year.
- Every three months enough aluminum is deposited in landfills to build the entire commercial air fleet of the United States.
- Recycling a single aluminum can saves enough energy to power a television for three hours.
- The amount of office paper discarded each year in the United States is enough to build a 12-foot-high wall from Seattle to New York.
- Recycling paper is highly effective, as more than 37 percent of the fiber used to make new paper products in the United States comes from recycled sources.
- The Empire State Building in midtown Manhattan is one of the tallest buildings in the United States. Two Empire State Buildings could be filled every three weeks with the glass bottles and jars that end up in American landfills every year.
- The Steel Recycling Institute reports that recycling steel saves enough energy to provide electricity to 18 million homes for a year.
- One ton of recycled cardboard saves 46 gallons of oil. Waste Management notes that 70 percent of commercially shipped cardboard boxes are recovered for recycling. Increasing that percentage could conserve even more oil.

SAFE PRESSURE WASHING

Always read the instruction manual and practice using the tool before you put it to use on the task at hand. Learn how to operate the machine and all accessories. Figure out how to shut it off in a hurry. Determine if it is safe to use an extension cord on an electric model.

Be sure the shoes are non-slip or work boots. Wear eye protection whenever operating the washer. OSHA guidelines recommend a full face shield for water pressure higher than 2,000 psi to avoid eye or head injury. Waterproof gloves also are wise to provide better grip. Ear protection for a gas-powered pressure washer can protect against hearing loss.

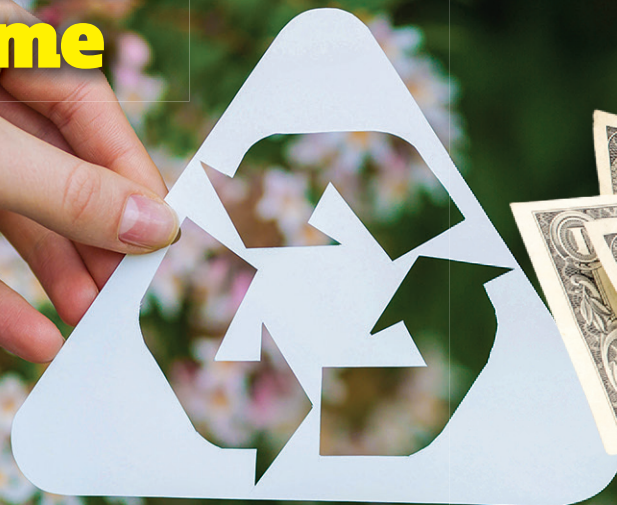
Pressure washers often include various nozzles or nozzle settings that may range from a 65-degree mist to a

- The strong spray can cause serious wounds. High-pressured water can cut through flesh.
- The fast, strong spray can strike objects and toss them powerfully into others who are close by.
- Electric shock may occur if the pressure washer is not used properly.
- The force from the washer can knock a person off balance, whether operating the tool on the ground or while on a ladder.
- Pressure washers help clean any number of surfaces. Safety must always be the top priority when using any machinery.

zero-degree pinpoint jet. Most people never need to use the most intense jet sprays. Begin washing with the widest angle spray tip, from around two feet away, to test cleaning capabilities, and adjust nozzle and distance as necessary, according to PressureWasher.com.

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Pet & lawn harmony

It can take some trial and error for pet parents to protect their lawns from the effects of having furry friends playing in the yard. While many treatments can be applied to lawns to help them thrive, animal waste is not among them.

Pet owners will have to take a few extra steps to help grass persevere despite the presence of furry companions.

Use a damage-resistant grass

There are many different types of grass, and some are more resilient than others. Tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, and Bermuda grass are just some of the grass varieties that can capably handle pet traffic. If replacing the entire lawn is not possible, consider reseeding or addressing the areas that pets frequent.

Avoid chemical lawn treatments

When pets use the yard and rest on the lawn, you'll need to eliminate products that can be harmful to them. Choose all-natural fertilizers and weed and pest preventatives.



Strengthen the root system

It may be tempting to cut the lawn short, particularly if dogs or cats like to nibble on longer blades of grass. But that approach could be doing the lawn a disservice. According to The Home Depot, letting the lawn grow to at least three inches will help keep moisture in the soil and prevent evaporation. That moisture will strengthen the roots, creating a healthier lawn for pets and people.

Create pet paths

Various materials can be used in these high-traffic areas to minimize the sights and signs of

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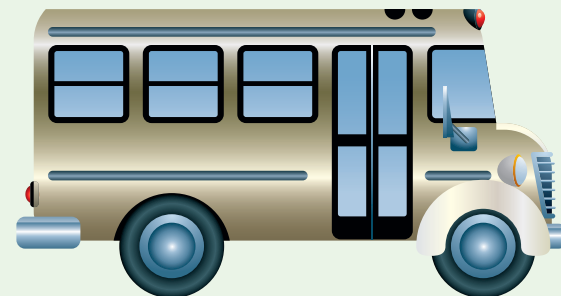
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pet traffic. Mulch or crushed stone can establish these pet highways and look like intended features.

Set boundaries

Pet urine contains high levels of nitrogen, which can burn grass and turn it brown. It's not possible to water down urine or pick up solid waste immediately every time a pet goes outdoors, so designate a pet-friendly spot for potty time. Use fencing or a dog run to separate this area and help mitigate "land mines" all over the lawn. Fencing also can keep

pets out of vegetable gardens and away from potentially toxic plants.

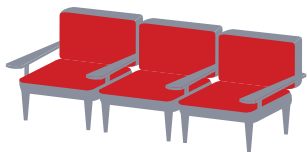
Look for alternatives

If maintaining a lawn with pets seems like an uphill battle, consider swapping out your landscape with a variety of materials. Scale back on grass, and incorporate groundcover, hardscape materials like pea gravel, or extend the patio. Artificial turf also is an option, as it won't brown and wither. Some turf products can even be quickly and thoroughly cleaned with water.

Valley Central Scholarship Council

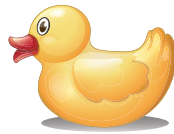
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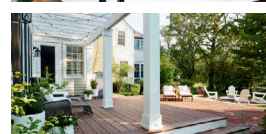
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Upgrades can improve the functionality and comfort of homes. The National Association of Home Builders reports that outdoor living has been propelled to the top of homeowner wish lists. Plus, a recent survey conducted by the New Home Trends Institute found connection to the outdoors/nature and outdoor entertaining ranked high among desired home designs.

One way to make outdoor spaces more accommodating is through the installation of awnings. Many homeowners would like to enhance their homes with awnings but do not know where to begin. Learning about the various types of awnings can help homeowners determine which option best suits their needs.

Fixed awnings

Fixed awnings are stationary on a building's exterior. While the awnings are generally stable, they

A quick guide to awnings



can be damaged by snow or wind. It's key to find an installation expert to make sure the awning is installed correctly so that it can withstand weather and other issues. It's also important to know that fixed awnings remain in the same position and orientation, its best to know where beforehand.

Retractable awning

Retractable awnings are the most popular type of awnings because they can be extended when necessary to keep a space cool or protected, then rolled or folded up when not in use. These awnings

are advantageous because they can be retracted when bad weather hits to prevent damage.

Motorized awning

Motorized retractable awnings offer the utmost convenience. Standard retractable offerings require a handle or hand crank to manually extend or fold up the awning. Motorized awnings can be operated with a sensor, remote or even motion trigger. Even though they cost more, they're a favorite among homeowners.

Areas of use

Awnings can be installed in various locations. Patio awnings are much preferred they typically spans entire patios. Door awnings are installed above the exterior door of an entryway to protect visitors and occupants from precipitation and to improve the home's look. Window awnings can add additional shade and privacy. There also are side awnings, which are essentially wall-like structures that run across a patio, garden or balcony for wind or sun protection. They're also utilized to improve privacy.

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