Upgrade your home’s interior with easy fixes

By Sally Rummel

Larger updates will take more resources and planning, but will make your home ready for spring.

Remove all hardware and cabinet doors.
Tape off walls, countertops and flooring with painter’s tape.
Clean all parts of cabinetry and lightly sand with medium grit sanding wedge to remove any debris.
Prime cabinet door fronts, drawers and frame with oil-based primer. Sand away any brush strokes or drips.
Paint with two coats of either oil-based paint in semi-gloss, or latex paint especially designed for bathrooms.
Reattach doors/drawer fronts and hardware.

Scott Tarkleson
Fenton Lakes Building & Design

6 simple steps to re-finishing the vanity

If your bathroom contains a typical dated oak vanity, globe lighting with gold fixtures, here’s an affordable, not-too-time-consuming budget fix, according to a blog on Centennial Girl.

6. Larger updates will take more resources and planning, but will make your home ready for spring.

This project also included disassembling the faucet and painting over the gold with a nickel paint, adding a new light fixture and frame around the mirror.

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GRAY

is still the most popular neutral

Pair it with new colors for an exciting new look at home

By Sally Rummel
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“Fifty Shades of Grey” may be the name of a new movie based on a series of titilating novels, but it also speaks volumes about the continuing popularity of the color gray as a neutral for home décor.

“Gray is still our most popular neutral paint palette,” said Morgan Freeborg of Sherwin Williams Paints in Fenton. “Grays don’t age a home’s décor like beiges do. Be sure to choose a rich gray tone in gold, green or blue to avoid an industrial ‘garage-feel’ in your home.”

A fresh coat of paint is still the best “bang for your buck” in bringing a new look to your home’s interior.

“People are playing with different sheens, like flat on walls and semi-gloss on trim,” said Freeborg, who provides in-store design help for customers who request it. “Popular this year is the matte finish, which is in between a flat and a satin. Gray is still the neutral of choice; it’s a good foundation, which allows you to ease into color. Blues and teals are very pretty with grays.”

If you’re planning to play a bit with color this spring while tackling a paint job, you might want to look at some of the color trends for 2015.

The Pantone Color Institute has once again made its selection of “Color of the Year,” choosing Marsala, named after the full-bodied wine. It’s a rich and welcoming hue in paint, accent pieces and upholstery, especially when the color is applied to textured surfaces, such as rugs and upholstered living room furniture, according to the Pantone website. It’s a natural fit for the kitchen and dining room, providing a unifying element for walls, tabletops and linens. The hue will be especially prominent in striped and floral patterns found in printed placemats, dinnerware, bedding and throws.

Marsala combines dramatically with neutrals, including warmer taupes and grays. Because of its burnished undertones, this sultry hue is highly compatible with amber, umber and golden yellows, greens in both turquoise and teal and blues in the more vibrant range.

Speaking of blues, dark navy is a growing trend because of its versatility with other colors, including pink, cream, gray, coral and sage.

With so many choices, a wise homeowner will take home a sample of custom-mixed paint in the desired hue and try it out on a wall, or at least on a poster board “swatch.” The natural light at home, plus the ability to try out the color with your own home furnishings, will make it more likely that the paint will be the exact color you were looking for.

The right tools for the job

For a consistent, long-lasting finish, you need to apply paint with high quality brushes and rollers for a thicker, more uniform and durable coat of paint. Top quality equipment will also speed up and simplify your work.

“Having the right brushes and rollers is huge, when it comes to the outcome of your paint job,” said Ken McKay, of McKay’s Do-it-Best Hardware in Holly.

Which brush do you need?

Match the size and shape of your brushes to the job at hand — large brushes for...
Beyond that door — tips to tame your cluttered closet

By Yvonne Stegall
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When it comes to organizing your home, one of the hardest spots may just be your closet. Closets serve many purposes, as you likely know. The closet isn’t just home to clothes — it can often become a catchall to many items.

Holly resident Brigitte Todd of Chatter T.O.S.S. said, “They tend to be over filled. The results are no space, wasted time in searching, being late, and the emotional stress one feels as a consequence.”

If your closet is causing you stress, it’s time to get it organized. As an expert at decluttering and organization, Todd has many tips for getting your closet back in shape.

First, she said, “Go through your closet and anything not being worn should go.” Damaged and stained items should be gotten rid of, including items with any bad memory associations.

For anyone without time, or motivation, for a closet redo, Todd suggested, “Take all the clothing on hangers and hang the hangers backwards in your closet. As you use items in your closet, hang them correctly.” This will show you what you’ve worn and what you haven’t, making it an easier decision on what to toss.

Don’t just throw all the unwanted stuff in the trash to go to the landfill. Todd said, “Have a container to put clothes that you wish to donate.” When your container is full, drop it off at Goodwill.

Todd also suggested ensuring that you use all of the available space in your closet. “The high shelf, the back of the doors and the walls are all great spaces to use to their fullest potential,” she said. “On the high shelf, place items that you use the least. If they are used rarely but needed, perhaps you can find a place elsewhere in the house.”

She added, “Use the back of the door too, by hanging a towel bar for scarves or belts, or a pocket organizer for the small items in your closet. She said, “The walls too can be used to hang hooks, bars or small shelves.”

Once your closet has been decluttered, Todd said, “Everything in your closet should — fit well, be worn regularly and project the image you want to project. Any clothing that does not fall into one of these categories should be gone.”

INTERIOR

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• Give a room an updated look with an accent wall of wallpaper in a geometric print or texture.

• Use indigo blue or deep navy as an accent color, as the perfect complement to Marsala, the 2015 Pantone Color of the Year, according to Zillow Digs home design expert Kelly Kerrie.

• Change out knobs or handles in cabinetry, dressers and vanities for an easy, updated look. “Be sure to measure carefully where the holes are, so you don’t have to fill in holes later,” said Scott Tarkleson of Fenton Lakes Building & Design.

• Re-facing or re-painting cabinets for a fresh new look. Try a vanity in your bathroom first (see sidebar).

• Update your kitchen or bath countertops with granite or quartz. “I’ve sold more quartz countertops than ever before,” said Tarkleson.

• Learn how to design and install your own backsplash for an easy and affordable new look in your kitchen. Check out do-it-yourself workshops at home retailers or youtube.com videos to get started.

• Install chair rails and moldings on walls, around ceilings and doors to add a touch of class and texture to any room.

LARGER UPGRADES

Kitchens and baths are always a good place to start, according to Tarkleson. “To create an open concept floor plan, you can gain space by removing the walls from a small formal dining room and small kitchen.”

Here are a few other large upgrades:

KITCHEN

• Add a second sink for food preparation. “People want to have room for two cooks in the kitchen,” said Tarkleson.

• Add a second oven.

• The newest cabinetry style is painted cabinets. Custom painted cabinets allow homeowners to match, accent and customize their new cabinets. “People are mixing up cabinet colors, using whites and tans on cabinetry and an accent color on an island, for example,” said Tarkleson.

• Engineered wood-look laminates are becoming more and more popular. “Many of our clients are requesting heated floors in their kitchens, for cozy comfort for early morning coffee and late-night snacking,” said Tarkleson.

BATH

• Big showers with multiple showerheads and Euro-style glass shower doors continue to be the most popular bath renovations, according to Tarkleson.

• Oversized deep soaking tubs are more popular than hot tubs or air tubs for the bath, but most homeowners are replacing tubs with large showers.

• Electric heated floors under tile are becoming an affordable luxury, said Tarkleson. For 50 square feet of heated flooring, you can expect to pay about $400 for the heating units, plus $300 to $400 to wire and install, adding the cost of tile. “When you’re changing the flooring in your kitchen or bath, that’s the time to put in the heated flooring,” said Tarkleson. “You’ll never regret doing it, but you’ll always be sorry if you don’t.”
What home improvement project would you like to tackle first this year?

“We’re finishing up painting a beach scene in our bedroom.”
Megan Worley
Fenton

“We’re re-doing our kitchen, starting with the cabinets and countertop.”
Darren Warford
Fenton Township

“We just remodeled our entire home and are putting it up for sale.”
Shannon Spencer
Linden

“We’re going to have our 15-year-old roof re-done.”
Cheryl Ryearson
Fenton Township

“I’m going try to re-do the electrical job that a drunken electrician did in 1996.”
Terry Paul
Holly Township

“We’re going to paint the basement and make it into a rec room for the kids.”
Mike Steele
Holly

What home improvement project would you like to tackle first this year?
Warm grays, tailored accents, texture are trending in 2015

By Yvonne Stegall
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If you want to have windows that make your friends jealous, it helps to look into the trends and designs that are being predicted for the year. The New Year is well under way, and folks are busy talking about beautiful Victorian patterns that will be adorning many a window.

Actually, Victorian and art deco are the looks to watch for according to HGTV. They both add whimsy and texture to your home’s overall look.

When visiting the store to purchase your window treatments, you can expect to see more subtle color palettes, with relaxing grays and pale blues. These tones will match up well with other natural tones that are popular right now.

Pale isn’t the only way to go, though. There will be some more loud colors from nature out there too. The bright floral colors of the Brazilian rainforest are also looking to be in style this year.

According to Dawn Volz, at Interiors by Bonnie in Fenton, “We are still seeing a lot of browns, but now they are merging into a gray/brown.” She said the gray is staying a warm tone, such as cement colors.

One of the biggest judges of the popular color palette each year is Pantone, an X-Rite company and the global color

See TREATMENTS on 12B
Home improvement projects can turn a house into a home. Homeowners plan scores of renovations to transform living spaces into rooms that reflect their personal tastes and comforts.

Homeowners going it alone may find things do not always go as planned. In fact, a Harris Interactive study found that 85 percent of homeowners say remodeling is a more stressful undertaking than buying a home. But homeowners about to embark on home improvement projects can make the process go more smoothly by avoiding these common pitfalls.

Failing to understand the scope of the project
Some homeowners don’t realize just how big a commitment they have made until they get their hands dirty. But understanding the scope of the project, including how much demolition and reconstruction is involved and how much time a project will take can help homeowners avoid some of the stress that comes with renovation projects. For example, a bathroom renovation may require the removal of drywall, reinforcement of flooring to accommodate a new bathtub or shower enclosure and the installation of new plumbing and wiring behind walls. So such a renovation is far more detailed than simply replacing faucets.

Not establishing a budget
Homeowners must develop a project budget to ensure their projects do not drain their finances. If your budget is so inflexible that you can’t afford the materials you prefer, you may want to postpone the project and save more money so you can eventually afford to do it right.

Without a budget in place, it is easy to overspend, and that can put you in financial peril down the line. Worrying about coming up with money to pay for materials and labor also can induce stress. Avoid the anxiety by setting a firm budget.

How thermostats save money and energy
Homeowners who have not yet upgraded to a programmable thermostat could be doing themselves a significant disservice. Not only are programmable thermostats key to saving energy, they also save money.

The Alliance for Environmental Sustainability notes that for every degree they adjust their thermostats, homeowners save between 1 and 3 percent on their heating and cooling bills. Setting the thermostat slightly warmer in the summer and a notch or two cooler in the winter can save a considerable amount of energy and money. The United States Department of Energy says homeowners who make slight seasonal adjustments to their thermostats can save as much as 10 percent a year on heating and cooling costs.

But such adjustments are only truly effective when homeowners commit to them on a daily basis. The best way to stay on top of temperature settings is to purchase a programmable thermostat, which allows homeowners to predetermine when heat or air conditioning will turn on and off. Many programmable thermostats can store multiple daily settings, allowing homeowners to further customize their heating and cooling schedules based on the time of day as well as the day of the week.

According to Energy.gov, a common misconception associated with thermostats is that a furnace or an air conditioning system works harder than normal to get the space back to a comfortable temperature after the thermostat has been set back, and that this hard work means the overall savings are negligible. However, when a home’s interior temperature is similar to the temperature outside, the home will lose energy to the surrounding environment more slowly. The lower the interior temperature, the slower the heat loss in cold weather, and a higher interior temperature will slow the flow of heat into your house in hot weather.

Programmable thermostats are available in a variety of models. Some are more expensive than others. Certain thermostats can be linked to a home’s wireless system so that adjustments to the thermostat can even be made when you are not at home. Consult with an HVAC expert to see if a particular thermostat works best with your system. Some homes may benefit from a dual- or multi-zoned system, which allows homeowners to adjust the temperature independently from other floors or wings of a home.

The location of the thermostat also is important. The thermostat should be placed where it can get the most accurate reading of the house. It should be on an interior wall away from direct sunlight, doorways, drafts, and windows. It should not be directly facing an air vent. Avoid placing furniture above or below the thermostat, as such furnishings can impede proper air flow.

If you feel like your HVAC system is cycling on and off even after programming, you may need to call a technician, who can determine if there are any obstructions to the thermostat or if the unit is the appropriate size for your home.