

MIKE'S Tool Box

Mike Forner's Home Services:

MY MISSION IS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY BY PROVIDING PROMPT, COMPREHENSIVE, EXPERT HOME MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS. I WILL TREAT YOUR HOME AS IF IT WERE MY OWN!



Is Your Home Wasting Energy?

There are a few basics that every homeowner should pay attention to when it comes to energy conservation in the home: heating and cooling, windows, insulation, electrical systems, roofing, and doors. If you keep these systems in optimal condition, and update with newer, energy saving materials whenever possible, then you should be in good shape. If you haven't evaluated the state of these areas of your home, then you should have an energy audit and/or a home inspection to figure out where you can improve the energy efficiency of your residence. Cost effective energy conservation makes good sense environmentally and financially. That being the case, here are some of the most common solutions when it comes to energy conservation and home improvements.

Install Thermal Replacement Windows

If your old windows are single panel or drafty, installing thermal replacement windows is one of the best home improvement decisions you can make. It's an investment that will pay for itself in short order with the increased energy savings. And, not only will you be improving your home from an energy conservation standpoint, but your thermal replacement windows will look better, require less maintenance, and increase the resale value of your home as well.

Replace Incandescent Light Bulbs with Fluorescent or L.E.D. Bulbs



While the florescent and L.E.D. bulbs cost more up front, they last at least 10 times longer than the old bulbs and use far less energy to produce the same amount of light, drastically reducing your energy bills. Also, changing less bulbs means you don't have to keep shelling out money for replacement bulbs, either. Some used to complain about the light quality of fluorescent and L.E.D. bulbs, but the new generation of these bulbs give off a pleasant, soft light, and special bulbs can be purchased for places where you have dimming switches installed.

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Stay tuned for next month's front-page article on insurance tips for homeowners!

Upcoming Events In February
That Might Interest You...

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

* The month of February is Black History Month.



* Groundhogs Day On Sunday, February 2nd. February 2 brings the most-watched weather forecast of the year—and the only one led by a rodent. Legend has it that on this morning, if a groundhog can see its shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter. If it cannot see its shadow, spring is on the way.



* The Super Bowl on Sunday, February 2nd.



* Valentine's Day on Friday, February 14th.



* Presidents Day on Monday, February 17th.

Is Your Home Wasting Energy?

Continued...

Taking all that into consideration, it's clear that replacing your incandescents is one of the easiest, and best, methods of energy conservation you can employ.

Check Home Insulation

Poor insulation, from your attic on down to your basement and crawl space, is a big source of energy loss for your home. Improving or adding insulation to any area that needs it is going to reap big benefits when it comes to reducing energy bills and upping energy savings.

Upgrade to Energy Efficient Appliances

Old appliances, from refrigerators and dishwashers, on up to furnaces and air conditioning units, use massive amounts of energy compared to newer, high tech models. You might consider a full appliance overhaul, if you've got the means, or you can just replace the old appliances with new, energy efficient models, as they wear out. Either way, these new appliances pay for themselves over time in energy savings. Look for appliances with the Energy Star label, since they are specifically manufactured with energy conservation in mind.

Consider an Energy Audit or Home Inspection

It's one thing for you to evaluate your home yourself for ways to improve energy efficiency and another to hire an expert to come do the job for you. Investing in an energy audit or home inspection is well worth the money, since the auditor will investigate your home top to bottom, then draw up a list of the most important, and effective, steps you can take towards creating a home where energy conservation & efficiency is the rule, not the exception.



Home Energy Audit

Looking at replacing your water heater but don't know if it is worth it? Considering new energy-efficient windows? Before making individual efficiency upgrades, it's important to know how your home uses energy. A home energy audit is the first step to saving energy and money.

Sometimes called an energy assessment, a home energy audit helps you learn how you use energy, determine where it's being wasted and prioritize your efficiency upgrades. Making energy efficiency upgrades identified in a home energy audit can save 5-30 percent on your monthly energy bill while also ensuring the health and safety of your house.

During a professional energy audit, an energy auditor analyzes your energy bills, completes visual, health and safety inspections, and may use special equipment -- such as a blower door and an infrared camera -- to detect sources of energy loss. Based on the data collected, an energy audit will provide you with a comprehensive home energy report that shows which energy efficiency upgrades are best for your home and your potential energy savings. Learn how to find a certified energy auditor and if your state or local utility offers free or discounted home energy audit. Be sure to look for a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR participating contractor -- they're specially trained to conduct a whole-house assessment and help you determine how efficiency improvements will work together.

While not as thorough as a professional home energy audit, you can conduct your own simple home energy audit. A do-it-yourself home energy audit -- or walk through -- can help you pinpoint some of the low-hanging fruit when it comes to energy efficiency upgrades. If you're looking to see how much you could save by making certain upgrades, check out Home Energy Saver, a free online home energy audit tool.

Remember, the home energy audit is only the first step to cutting your energy bills. Making the recommended energy efficiency upgrades is what leads to energy savings.

Shmily



My grandparents were married for over half a century, and played their own special game from the time they had met each other. The goal of their game was to write the word "SHMILY" in a surprise place for the other to find.

They took turns leaving "SHMILY" around the house, and as soon as one of them discovered it, it was their turn to hide it once more. They dragged "SHMILY" with their fingers through the sugar and flour containers to await whoever was preparing the next meal. They smeared it in the dew on the windows overlooking the patio where my grandma always fed us warm, homemade pudding with blue food coloring. "SHMILY" was written in the steam left on the mirror after a hot shower, where it would reappear bath after bath.

At one point, my grandmother even unrolled an entire roll of toilet paper to leave "SHMILY" on the very last sheet. There was no end to the places "SHMILY" would pop up. Little notes with "SHMILY" scribbled hurriedly were found on dashboards and car seats, or taped to steering wheels. The notes were stuffed inside shoes and left under pillows. "SHMILY" was written in the dust upon the mantel and traced in the ashes of the fireplace.

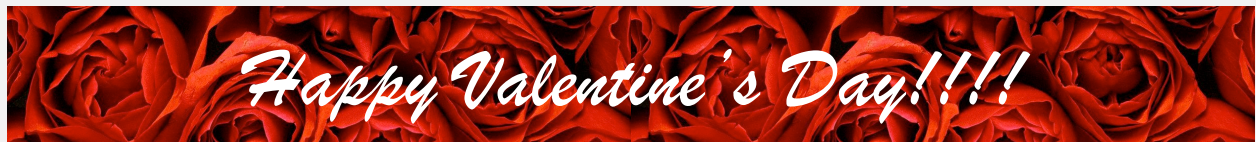
This mysterious word was as much a part of my grandparents' house as the furniture. It took me a long time before I was able to fully appreciate my grandparent's game. Skepticism has kept me from believing in true love - one that is pure and enduring. However, I never doubted my grandparents' relationship. They had love down pat. It was more than their flirtatious little games; it was a way of life.

Their relationship was based on a devotion and passionate affection, which not everyone is lucky enough to experience. Grandma and Grandpa held hands every chance they could. They stole kisses as they bumped into each other in their tiny kitchen. They finished each other's sentences and shared the daily crossword puzzle and word jumble. My grandma whispered to me about how cute my grandpa was, how handsome an old man he had grown to be. She claimed that she really knew "how to pick 'em." Before every meal they bowed heads and gave thanks, marveling at their blessings: a wonderful family, good fortune, and each other.

But there was a dark cloud in my grandparents' life: my grandmother had breast cancer. The disease had first appeared 10 years earlier. As always, Grandpa was with her every step of the way. He comforted her in their yellow room, painted that color so she could always be surrounded by sunshine, even when she was too sick to go outside. Now the cancer was once again attacking her body. With the help of a cane and my grandfather's steady hand, they still went to church every Sunday morning. But my grandmother grew steadily weaker until, finally, she could not leave the house anymore.

For a while, Grandpa would go to church alone, praying to God to watch over his wife. Then one day, what we all dreaded finally happened. Grandma was gone. "SHMILY." It was scrawled in yellow on the pink ribbons of my grandmother's funeral bouquet.

As the crowd thinned and the last mourners turned to leave, my aunts, uncles, cousins, and other family members came forward and gathered around Grandma one last time. Grandpa stepped up to my grandmother's casket and, taking a shaky breath, he began to sing to her. Through his tears and grief, the song came, a deep and throaty lullaby. Shaking with my own sorrow, I will never forget that moment. For I knew then that, although I couldn't begin to fathom the depth of their love, I had been privileged to witness its unmatched beauty. S-H-M-I-L-Y: See How Much I Love You.



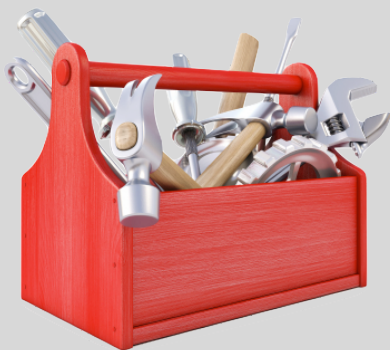
Groundhog Pecans Recipe

Ingredients:

- 4 cups pecan halves
- 1/4 cup pure maple syrup (do not use pancake syrup)
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon ground mace (or sub with additional nutmeg)
- cooking spray

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
2. Place the nuts in a large mixing bowl. Add the syrup and butter, and toss. Sprinkle on the salt, cardamom, nutmeg and mace. Toss until the nuts are evenly coated.
3. Spray a large baking sheet that has a rim (such as a jelly-roll pan) with cooking-oil spray. Pour the nut mixture evenly onto the pan.
4. Bake, removing the pan from the oven to stir the nuts after every five minutes, until the nuts are toasted and fragrant and have absorbed the syrup, about 20 minutes total.
5. Remove the pan from the oven and let the nuts cool to room temperature, about 25 minutes.
6. Store them at room temperature in an airtight container, preferably a tin or glass jar, for up to three weeks.



NOTABLE & UPCOMING...

Check out the latest happenings with the Mike Forner's Home Services crew!

- * Check out our new website mikefornerhomeservices.com...it is still under construction.
- * Darren welcomed twin boys on April 16th, 2013.
- * Jesse moved from Chelsea to Ann Arbor in August of 2013.
- * We hired Rebekah in May of 2013 to assist Danielle in the office.
- * We now have an all-season shop onsite!
- * Mike earned his 3rd degree black belt in May of 2013.
- * Mike received his Master Scuba Diving Certificate in June of 2013.
- * Danielle & Ryan were married on September 5th, 2013.
- * Mike dove for Megalodon teeth off the coast of Grand Cayman this past summer!
- * The entire staff made major progress towards mastering their positions within the company during a busy and challenging 2013.



Wise Home Owner Tip:

Water Saving Ideas For The Bathroom

- Do not use toilets as a trash can. Each time you flush trash down the toilet you use *up to* six gallons of water.
- Take shorter showers. Long, hot showers use between five and ten gallons of water every minute.
- Have water-saving showerheads and/or flow restrictors installed.
- Turn off the water while brushing your teeth. Run as much as you need, then turn off the tap until you need some more.
- Rinse your razor in the sink. Fill the bottom of the sink with a few inches of warm water. You can rinse your blade just as easily as with running water and a lot less wastefully.
- Check your toilets for leaks. Drop a little food coloring or leak tablet into your toilet **tank**. Wait a few minutes. If color shows up in your bowl, you have a leak. A leaking toilet wastes up to 60 gallons of water per day.
- Have a low flow toilet installed. New toilet models use 1.6 gallons per flush, considerably less than older models, which use up to 6 gallons per flush.
- Have your faucets, pipes & toilets inspected for leaks.

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Did You Know...

That you can use W-D 40 to remove strong glue? So, you didn't wear protective gloves when using that super-strong glue and now some of it is super-stuck to your fingers? Don't panic. Just reach for the WD-40, spray some directly on the sticky fingers, and rub your hands together until your fingers are no longer sticky. Use WD-40 to remove the glue from other unwanted surfaces as well.

Uplifting Quote of The Month

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."

~ Winston Churchill

Joke Of The Month

Over breakfast one morning, a woman said to her husband, "I'll bet you don't know what day this is."

"Of course I do," he answered as if he was offended, and left for the office.

At 10:00 a.m., the doorbell rang and when the woman opened the door, she was handed a box of a dozen long stemmed red roses. At 1:00 p.m., a foil-wrapped, two-pound box of her favorite chocolates was delivered. Later, a boutique delivered a designer dress.

The woman couldn't wait for her husband to come home.

"First the flowers, then the chocolates and then the dress!" she exclaimed.

"I've never had a more wonderful Groundhog Day in my life!"