

MIKE'S Tool Box

Mike Forner's Home Services:

My mission is to treat your home with the same passion and attention to detail that I use on my own home.



Remodeling Tips

Soon, homes all over the country will undergo a remodeling project of some sort. And if you're like many others and want to remodel your home, but are unsure of where to start, here are a few ideas and tips:

Don't forget about the outdoors

Your home shouldn't just be what's inside the four walls. Extend the living experience of the inside outdoors. Create a heavenly outdoor living environment with a deck, patio or gazebo, and make the backyard a place for cooking, relaxing and entertaining.

Energy efficiency

With energy costs ever increasing, all of us are trying to find ways to decrease energy usage in our homes. One easy way to do so is by installing motion sensor lighting. Not only will motion sensor lights decrease your electric bill, they will also increase your home's safety and security.

Other great ways you can increase energy efficiency through home remodeling:

- Install new, energy-efficient windows
- Insulate your home if not done, or not done properly, already
- Replace current showerheads with low-flow types
- Fix water leaks & drips in your water piping systems
- Upgrade to an energy-efficient furnace
- Upgrade to a programmable thermostat
- Change air filters in your furnace regularly to maintain operational efficiency

How Do I find A Professional Remodeler?

Consumers should choose a remodeler in the same way that they would choose any professional. Look for expert skills, experience, rapport, and the recommendations of ongoing and/or recent customers and other knowledgeable people you trust. You shouldn't necessarily look for the lowest priced contractor.

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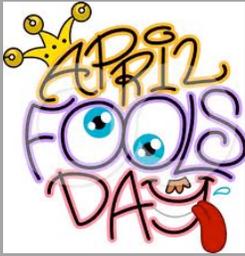
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Stay tuned for next months article on air conditioning tips!

Remodeling Tips Continued...

Upcoming Events In April That Might Interest You...



* April Fool's Day on Monday April 1st, 2013.

* Tax Day on Monday April 15th, 2013 ☺



* Earth Day on Monday April 22nd, 2013.

* Novi Spring Home & Garden Show.

Anything and everything you need for your home and garden can be found under one roof. Walk through 25,000 square feet of landscaped gardens and browse hundreds of home improvement booths and exhibits. For hours and admission, call 313.600.5812



* Detroit Tigers Opening Day on Friday, April 5th 2013. The Detroit Tigers vs. The New York Yankees at Comerica Park.

* Festifools is Ann Arbor's homage to April Fools Day: an annual street parade featuring towering papier-mâché creations and various other hijinks. Festifools is for everyone! Parade goes from 4-5pm on April 7th, is free, and is located in downtown Ann Arbor (Main Street between Washington & William).

To obtain enough information to decide whom to interview, prospective remodeling customers should do the following: Ask neighbors, family, and friends who have had remodeling work done. Call your local homebuilders association for a list of remodelers. The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) has over 800 affiliated local and state builder associations that will be happy to give you the names of their members who offer remodeling services. Find out how long the firms have been in business and whether the firm has plenty of experience with your type of job.

Do You Know What You Want?

Before you look for a professional remodeler, think through your needs, wants, and desires from start to finish. Hiring a designer would be really helpful during this process (See the article below). A designer can help you look at features you like in other homes and imagine how you might incorporate what you like about those homes into yours. A designer can also assist you with picking layout, colors, textures, lighting, and other materials and give you a vision for how you will use the space in the future. A designer can aid you in conveying your ideas to the remodeler that you choose. If your ideas are accurately & successfully communicated to a professional remodeler, they will be able to transform your ideas into reality.

Not sure what to do with your remodel? Give us a call ☺

What On Earth Do I Need A Designer For?

Maybe you've asked yourself this question in the past. Let me explain...

I used to have the mindset that spending time and money on a designer for a project wasn't the best use of the money I'd allocated for a home project...even for myself.

I have definitely changed my mind for good.

Before I'd call an Architect to draft my addition, bath or kitchen renovation, interior room re-work, storage, organization, or landscape project (that's right, a landscape project)...I'd consult my *trusted* designer...every time!

Why? Because I know that there are limitless possibilities and that fact in itself is enough to stall my decision to proceed with a project. The designer, knowing what I might like, limits my options to just a few and that makes it easy for me to decide. How can I arrange the layout of the rooms in my home to make them more user friendly and more efficient? The designer assures the best options for me to choose from. What colors should I use in my design scheme? The designer will provide a few pallet choices! Voilà...that was easy. How about material choices for tile, countertops, plumbing fixtures, appliances, paint vs. stain, wood flooring, carpet, vinyl flooring, molding profile, windows, doors, trim details...the designer makes getting through the abyss of what to choose quick and almost painless (some of what you like or love may be expensive).

"But I have an architect who does this for me", you said. That may be true but are you getting the best design for *you* from your architect? I have found that it's particularly rare that one person can do both processes with the high degree of skill you expect for your project.

"Who should I use?" This is a question only you can answer, unless you already have someone you know, trust, and are always amazed by the ideas and choices they provide you. Will they work with "your" schedule? Will they come to you unless it is absolutely necessary to meet at a design center or showroom to make choices? Will they work with *your* tastes to satisfy you or try to steer you in some uncomfortable direction? Consider interviewing several potential candidates before choosing the designer you want to work with. Ask for the designer's recent referrals and CALL them (at least 2-3). The design process should be fun and exciting and get you motivated to begin that project that you've been planning in the back of your head.

Need a referral or 2? I have them for you ☺



Earth Day History

By the early 1960s Americans were becoming aware of the effects of pollution on the environment. Rachel Carson's 1962 bestseller "Silent Spring" raised the specter of the dangerous effects of pesticides on America's countryside. Later in the decade, a 1969 fire on Cleveland's Cuyahoga River shed light on the problem of chemical waste disposal. Until that time, protecting the planet's natural resources was not part of the national political agenda, and the number of activists devoted to large-scale issues such as industrial pollution was minimal. Factories pumped pollutants into the air, lakes and rivers with few legal consequences. Big, gas-guzzling cars were considered a sign of prosperity. Only a small portion of the American population was familiar with—let alone practiced—recycling.

Elected to the U.S. Senate in 1962, Senator Gaylord Nelson, a Democrat from Wisconsin, was determined to convince the federal government that the planet was at risk. In 1969,

Nelson, considered one of the leaders of the modern environmental movement, developed the idea for Earth Day after being inspired by the anti-Vietnam War "teach-ins" that were taking place on college campuses around the United States. According to Nelson, he envisioned a large-scale, grassroots environmental demonstration "to shake up the political establishment and force this issue onto the national agenda."

Nelson announced the Earth Day concept at a conference in Seattle in the fall of 1969 and invited the entire nation to get involved. He later recalled, "The wire services carried the story from coast to coast. The response was electric. It took off like gangbusters. Telegrams, letters and telephone inquiries poured in from all across the country. The American people finally had a forum to express its concern about what was happening to the land, rivers, lakes and air—and they did so with spectacular exuberance." Dennis Hayes, a young activist who had served as student president at Stanford University, was selected as Earth Day's national coordinator, and he worked with an army of student volunteers and several staff members from Nelson's Senate office to organize the project. According to Nelson, "Earth Day worked because of the spontaneous response at the grassroots level. We had neither the time nor resources to organize 20 million demonstrators and the thousands of schools and local communities that participated. That was the remarkable thing about Earth Day. It organized itself."

On April 22, rallies were held in Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles and most other American cities, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. In New York City, Mayor John Lindsay closed off a portion of Fifth Avenue to traffic for several hours and spoke at a rally in Union Square with actors Paul Newman and Ali McGraw. In Washington, D.C., thousands of people listened to speeches and performances by singer Pete Seeger and others, and Congress went into recess so its members could speak to their constituents at Earth Day events.

The first Earth Day was effective at raising awareness about environmental issues and transforming public attitudes. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, "Public opinion polls indicate that a permanent change in national priorities followed Earth Day 1970. When polled in May 1971, 25 percent of the U.S. public declared protecting the environment to be an important goal, a 2,500 percent increase over 1969." Earth Day kicked off the "Environmental decade with a bang," as Senator Nelson later put it. During the 1970s, a number of important pieces of environmental legislation were passed, among them the Clean Air Act, the Water Quality Improvement Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Toxic Substances Control Act and the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. Another key development was the establishment in December 1970 of the Environmental Protection Agency, which was tasked with protecting human health and safeguarding the natural environment—air, water and land.

Since 1970, Earth Day celebrations have grown. In 1990, Earth Day went global, with 200 million people in over 140 nations participating, according to the Earth Day Network (EDN), a nonprofit organization that coordinates Earth Day activities. In 2000, Earth Day focused on clean energy and involved hundreds of millions of people in 184 countries and 5,000 environmental groups, according to EDN. Activities ranged from a traveling, talking drum chain in Gabon, Africa, to a gathering of hundreds of thousands of people at the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Today, the Earth Day Network collaborates with more than 17,000 partners and organizations in 174 countries. According to EDN, more than 1 billion people are involved in Earth Day activities, making it "the largest secular civic event in the world."

Barefoot Contessa Lemon Cake Recipe

Ingredients

1/2 pound (2 sticks) unsalted butter, at room temperature
2 1/2 cups granulated sugar, divided
4 extra-large eggs, at room temperature
1/3 cup grated lemon zest (6 to 8 large lemons)
3 cups flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon kosher salt
3/4 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice, divided
3/4 cup buttermilk, at room temperature
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

For the glaze:

2 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
3 1/2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Grease and flour 2 (8 1/2 by 4 1/4 by 2 1/2-inch) loaf pans. You may also line the bottom with parchment paper, if desired.
2. Cream the butter and 2 cups granulated sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. With the mixer on medium speed, add the eggs, 1 at a time, and the lemon zest.
3. Sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a bowl. In another bowl, combine 1/4 cup lemon juice, the buttermilk, and vanilla. Add the flour and buttermilk mixtures alternately to the batter, beginning and ending with the flour. Divide the batter evenly between the pans, smooth the tops, and bake for 45 minutes to 1 hour, until a cake tester comes out clean.
4. Combine 1/2 cup granulated sugar with 1/2 cup lemon juice in a small saucepan and cook over low heat until the sugar dissolves. When the cakes are done, allow to cool for 10 minutes. Remove the cakes from the pans and set them on a rack set over a tray or sheet pan; spoon the lemon syrup over them. Allow the cakes to cool completely.
5. For the glaze, combine the confectioners' sugar and the lemon juice in a bowl, mixing with a wire whisk until smooth. Pour over the tops of the cakes and allow the glaze to drizzle down the sides.

How To Win Friends & Influence People

By Dale Carnegie

Be a Leader: How to Change People Without Giving Offense or Arousing Resentment.

Simply changing one three-letter word can often spell the difference between failure and success in changing people without giving offense or arousing resentment. Changing the word "but" to "and".

Calling attention to one's mistakes indirectly works wonders with sensitive people who may resent bitterly any direct criticism.

Principle 2: Call attention to people's mistakes indirectly.

Stay Tuned...



Uplifting Quote of The Month

"In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt."

~ Margaret Atwood,
Bluebeard's Egg



Wise Home Owner Tip:

Making Your Home More Earth Friendly

1. **Touch Points:** Anything we come in contact with is a good place to start. Look at your bath water, dishwater, clothing & cleaning solutions. For clothing, clean your favorites with all-natural plant-based cleaners or use safe synthetic cleaning materials for garb if you have chemically sensitive skin.
2. **Use Less Energy:** When you need to cool off on a hot day, instead of cranking up the air conditioner, create a cross breeze by opening two windows. Before you head out the door in the morning for your commute, be sure that all the windows are shut tight.
3. **Extreme Bedroom Makeover:** Change out your pillow, mattress & sheets. Replace them with bedding that doesn't include flame retardant or synthetic treatment and go for organic cotton sheets without silicone coating.
4. **Label Check:** Be sure to read the labels on your cleaning materials. Skip anything that contains phthalates, formaldehyde, ammonia or bleach. For those who love using bleach for deep cleaning, try oxygenated bleach, which is very environmentally friendly as it breaks down into natural soda ash and/or borax after the oxygen is released.

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Did You Know...

That WD-40 can keep garden tools clean and rust-free? It also keeps wicker furniture from squeaking, can loosen rusty parts on a lawn mower, and can clean and protect the bed of your wheelbarrow.

Joke of The Month

A man and a friend are playing golf one day. One of the guys is about to chip onto the green when he sees a long funeral procession on the road next to the course. He stops in mid-swing, takes off his golf cap, closes his eyes, and bows down in prayer.

His friend says: "Wow! That is the most thoughtful and touching thing I have ever seen. You are truly a kind man."

The other man replies, "Yeah, well, we were married 35 years."

Spruce Springclean

