

Spice up your home decorating

From kitchens and bathrooms to living rooms and bedrooms, people are remodeling their homes to make the interiors more beautiful and more functional. They're adding style room by room, but it's not always easy. With the variety of products and materials available, deciding what they want and understanding how to install them is a challenge. Knowing how to explain it to the contractor can be a project in itself.

Talking with experienced professionals and reading home-improvement books can help people make an informed decision. In Home Magazine's "How Your House Works" (Ballantine), Don Vandervort explains a home's many systems, from pipe schemes and electrical systems to architectural style and inner surfaces. When discussing the home interior, he covers such topics as moldings, cabinets and countertops, providing information people need to create beautiful homes.

Moldings - Both decorative and functional, moldings add style to a room while hiding the joints between walls and floors, ceilings, doors and windows. They are made in many patterns from a variety of woods. They can be used individually or in combination to create a variety of styles. Now moldings are sold at lumberyards and millwork shops. With large selections available, these are the best places to look for moldings. Hardwood moldings that are mounted to be stained or finished naturally are relatively expensive. Paint-grade pine or fir moldings are less expensive. There is also a variety of ready-to-paint decorative moldings made from high-density polymers. Most moldings are nailed in place with finishing nails.

Cabinets - A key contributor to a room's appearance, cabinets

are made from a range of materials, from hardwoods and laminates to veneers and painted particleboard. There are two types of cabinet construction: face frame and frameless. Face-frame cabinets have a frame around the front of the cabinet. Frameless cabinets don't. Because a face frame adds rigidity to the construction, it usually won't have a top panel or a full back, or the back will be quite thin.

Countertops - Countertops are made from materials that are durable and easy to maintain. Most combine a base of plywood or particleboard, which spans across the top of the cabinet, and the finish surface material, as well as the adhesive to attach the surface to the base and keep it impervious to water and stains. The surface material chosen depends upon a homeowner's budget and the appearance and qualities needed. Hard-

woods applied in a butcher-block fashion make handsome, durable countertops in some situations, but they can warp, scorch and allow bacteria to grow. Inexpensive and durable, laminates come in hundreds of colors and patterns. However, they can be scorched by hot utensils, they show scratches, and they're not suitable as cutting surfaces. Ceramic tile is extremely durable, easy to clean and scorchproof. A relatively new countertop material, solid surface, is durable and offers seamless, easy-care surfaces that often have a stone look. However, installation requires a professional.

People should understand the advantages and disadvantages of the home-improvement options available and know what they want before beginning a remodeling project. It can make the work so much more smoothly and give them the home of their dreams. H964608

Because kids can't fly: window safety tips

By FRANK S. FITZGERALD
SPECIAL WRITER

According to the National Safety Council, more children die each year from injury than from all childhood diseases combined. Most of these injuries occur in the home. Sadly, many of them could have been prevented. Recently, the Screen Manufacturers Association suggested that its members place a warning label on insect screens to remind customers that these screens are not designed to keep children from falling out of windows.

Many manufacturers have decided to support this effort by attaching the most effective label we could devise.

Unfortunately, the safety issue doesn't have one simple solution. Like electricity, water, stairways and other vital aspects of the home, we take windows for granted. They make our lives better, but they can present potential hazards under certain conditions.

Develop a family emergency plan to make sure family members know how to escape through any code-required emergency exit window or accessory.

You must be able to open windows in an emergency. Do not paint, nail or weatherstrip them shut.

Do not remove cranks from casement and awning windows.

Keep children's roughhousing away from windows and patio doors. Falling through a window could cause serious injury or prove fatal.

Consult your local police and fire departments regarding home safety awareness and security tips.

Learn to recognize hazards and prevent injuries. What looks "normal" to an adult may be deadly to a child.

Whenever small children are around, close and lock windows. If you need ventilation, open the windows that are out of reach of children.

Do not place furniture near windows. Children with their boundless energy, love to jump on beds and climb furniture and they can quickly reach window ledges or sills and fall.

Keep window treatments (blinds, cords, drapes, etc.) out of children's reach. They may injure themselves when climbing or be strangled. Climbing on radiators, especially those in front of windows, can also be dangerous for kids.

Keep children away from open windows, and don't allow them to lean on the insect screens. Don't depend on these screens to keep your child from falling out of a window. Screens are designed to keep insects out, not children in.

Don't leave young children alone - injuries can happen in seconds. Nothing can substitute careful supervision.

For a free brochure and six labels, write to Frank S. Fitzgerald, CAE, BCFE, Executive Vice President and Technical Director, Screen Manufacturers Association, 2850 S. Ocean Blvd., #114, Palm Beach, FL 33480-5535.

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