

# Home Improvement Guide

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## Wood Floors Help Busy Builder Sell

Crystal chandeliers and wood floors are prestige features that helped one Southern California builder ignore last year's slow-down in new homes.

Robert H. Grant, 44-year-old Anaheim developer, has installed hardwood floors in all of the 8,000 houses he has built in the last decade. One of his ad-

vertising themes is: "Wood is for your feet—concrete is for your tires."

Wood floors make up in beauty and comfort their small extra cost, states Grant. Under his flooring, he installs 2x6-inch tongue-and-groove fir subflooring, over 4x6-inch fir girders placed up to 4½ feet apart.

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## Tips on Gardening

By Betty Frankel

### HARBINGERS OF SPRING

Kites and roller-skates, crocuses and pussywillow; each of us has a particular sight or sound or scent that presages "Spring" for us. Eagerly we watch for these harbingers because the season is arbitrary and certainly does not arrive on the designated calendar date. Rather, Spring is like the proverbial shy maiden who is reluctant to be seen. Slowly she emerges and then hastily retreats, but eventually appears so we can enjoy her sunny smiles and gay beauty.

Even before the season officially arrives the wild creatures and the plants sense the impending change. Long before we can observe it, there is a quickening of life. The sap surges in the trees, rising and falling like a tide in response to warm days and frosty nights. This is "maple sugar" time and the time when the willow branches form a vivid golden hue and twigs on the apple trees become lively rose pink. Bud scales loosen and the buds begin to swell. Fluffy gray pussywillow catkins creep from beneath their glossy brown coverings, and soon after the silver maple branches are adorned with delicate thread-like pom-poms.

### ALONG SWAMPY

streams the skunk cabbage is in bloom. The curious flower spathe is hooded with a purple and green spotted plain cap. In the woods furry hepatica buds are curled beneath the old, leathery leaves awaiting a touch of Spring sun. Each pea-sized bulb of Spring Beauty has a sprouted pair of grassy leaves and a short slender stalk beaded at the top with round green buds. Before long the woods will be carpeted with their dainty blooms.

In sheltered spots in the garden erythronium or winter aconite have spread their golden petals above a ruff of deep green leaves and even though sometimes covered by snow, dainty white snowflakes and snowdraps have bloomed for a month or more. Crocuses pop up like magic when there's a warm day or two. They open their cups of gold and purple and white, gladdening the hearts of all who see them and providing nectar for the first drowsy queen bees to emerge from hibernation.

### MILD WEATHER

calls out the "frog chorus." Spring peepers, tiny inch-long frogs creep out from beneath their winter covering of moss or leaves to chirp from shallow swampy places. The astonishing volume of sound is produced when they inflate their throats into a bubble almost as large as the frog itself.

Red-wing blackbirds trill from cat-tail marshes. Cardinals call lustily, and robins sing cheerily in the backyard. Flocks of birds have returned from the South and are busily searching for nesting sites and

### Antiqued Beams

You can get the authentic look of an old beamed ceiling by "distressing" 4x6-inch timbers before installing them as beams. Gouge the timbers with a hand axe and knives, and beat them with chains or a ring of heavy keys for the distressed look. Then smooth lightly with sandpaper and stain the beams dark, allowing additional stain to settle into the pits and gouges you've made.

staking out claims to their own particular territory.

As the season progresses, the signs of Spring come ever more quickly. Small boys "grow" baseball gloves on their left hands, grass greens, bulbs sprout; and before April has passed, daffodils and early tulips will be in bloom, cherries will be laden with a cloud of fragile white blossoms, and forsythia will be laden with golden bells. Then we know that Spring is no longer "on the way," but has truly arrived.

### REMINDERS

Clean up flower beds and burn old stalks and foliage. . . . Edge beds. . . . Rake debris off lawns, but do this gently because bluegrass needs time to grow new roots in the Spring. . . . Feed lawns with a quick-acting high-nitrogen fertilizer, a long-acting urea-form one, or a combination. . . . New lawns may be started now although Fall is an easier time to do this. . . . Take advantage of light soil that dries early and make an early sowing of peas

and sweet peas. . . . Plant onion sets for a crop of green onions. . . . Plant seeds of radishes, lettuce, larkspur, cornflowers, and poppies. . . . Plant deciduous trees and shrubs. . . . Plant roses. . . . Divide old summer-blooming perennials, but do not disturb early bloomers until they have flowered.

(Next week—Trees to Make a House a Home.)

John Says:



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## Old Fashioned?

Every once in a while what was regarded as an old-fashioned idea makes a strong comeback.

A case in point is the idea of installing a lavatory in the bedroom. Grandmother's bedroom had a wooden washstand with a pitcher and a bowl, but gave them up in favor of the bathroom. Now the idea of having washing facilities in the bedroom is back in favor and gaining popularity every day.

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