



## 7 traits of modern homes to embrace this Fall

□ A glimpse at seven defining features that make modern homes uniquely appealing and different from traditional designs.

Homes contain a variety of components that appeal to homeowners with different ideas about the perfect place to call home. That starts with the style of a home.

Buildings are classified according to share components. A Craftsman style home will have a covered porch with a set of wide base columns, while a Cape Cod home is often defined by a gabled roof and dormer windows. Modern houses, which are sometimes called contemporary homes even though the terms are not interchangeable, will have their own sets of unique characteristics. Here's a look at seven features that make modern homes unique.

**1. Minimalist approach:** Contemporary and modern homes both employ an approach that leans toward minimalism, including

clean design lines. Spaces are open and airy without the clutter of too many ornate architectural details. While modern homes may have some curvature to their design, contemporary ones are all about an angular look.

**2. Neutral color palette:** Modern homes tend to utilize a neutral color palette. Modern homes may use "earthy" elements, such as wood and brick, in ways that do not look rustic. Contemporary homes rely on a color palette of black and white with shades of gray or other neutral colors.

**3. Geometric shapes:** Modern homes have strong horizontal and vertical elements that showcase geometric shapes in their designs. Contemporary homes often have flat roofs, while modern homes may not.

**4. Large, unadorned windows:** Most modern homes showcase a lot of natural light by utilizing large windows that are not covered up by heavy window treatments or elements like shutters and thick trims. Large windows are the focus of the interior and shift attention to the view outdoors.

**5. Open floor concept:** A hallmark of modern interior design, the open concept floor plan removes many of the walls that tend to separate common areas of a home. This helps to foster the spread of natural light and maintains the emphasis on simplicity of design.

**6. Smart elements:** Thanks to the proliferation of smart technology, smart homes are cropping up with greater frequency. While smart devices can be included in any home



style, they tend to feel like they were designed specifically for modern homes. In a similar vein, modern homes may include environmentally friendly elements, such as solar panels, upcycled materials, added insulation, and energy

efficient lighting.

**7. Updated kitchen spaces:** The clean lines and attention to technology and open space generally extends to modern kitchens. Modern kitchens tend to feature efficient, top-tier appliances with

additional storage and space amenities that keep the room from feeling cluttered.

While some may consider modern homes austere, many others are right at home among their clean lines and airy spaces.

## Kitchen cabinets: should you reface or replace?

The kitchen is a busy room in many homes. That popularity likely has something to do with why so many homeowners spend sizable sums renovating their kitchens. According to highlights from the 2022 U.S. Houzz Kitchen Trends Study, the median spend on major kitchen remodels grew by 14 percent from the previous year, and minor remodels increased by 25 percent. Spurred on by increased time spent at home during the pandemic,

the main impetus for kitchen remodels according to the study was that homeowners wanted to make these improvements all along and finally had the time and means to do so.

There are many aspects of a kitchen that homeowners can change. Houzz found 94 percent of renovators either fully or partially replaced cabinets in their improvement plans. Cabinets are a major component of kitchen

layouts. Cabinets help to establish the aesthetic of a kitchen and serve a useful function, providing necessary storage space to ensure the room does not appear cluttered.

Homeowners have different options when it comes to cabinet renovations, and they may need to decide if they need to replace or reface their cabinets.

### Replacement

Cabinet replacement involves removing all of

the existing cabinets before new cabinets are leveled and installed. According to the home improvement resource The Spruce, homeowners can expect to pay between \$13,000 and \$30,000 for contractor grade cabinets. Cabinet replacement is a good idea when homeowners want to add more cabinet space or create a new layout in the room.

### Refacing

Cabinet refacing is less messy and less disruptive

than replacement. All cabinets remain the same size and in the same location. The cabinet boxes must be in good shape to facilitate a refacing. The process involves installation of new drawer fronts and cabinet doors, as well as veneering of the cabinet boxes. New hardware typically is installed as well. The insides of the cabinets typically remain the same. The Spruce says cabinet refacing can be 30 to 50 percent cheaper than a

replacement.

Most people opt to call in professionals to change their cabinets. Although cabinet replacement can be a do-it-yourself job, but it involves measuring and ensuring everything fits and is leveled appropriately. Homeowners who choose to reface their cabinets themselves may opt to paint or restain. Wood veneer or a new door and drawer panel installation can be complicated and is best left to qualified contractors.

# How to pick paint for home interiors



Many components combine to define a home's interior. Some homeowners may be partial to certain styles, such as ultra modern or farmhouse, while others may opt for a more traditional look that cannot necessarily be categorized as one style or another. Though many homeowners may spend considerable time and devote a lot of energy to making their home embody a certain style, those who aren't willing to commit to a particular look can lean on one component to make a stylish statement all their own: paint.

Color can be a part of every homeowner's design arsenal. Bold colors can be used to create a stunning accent wall, while homes with open concepts often utilize color to define rooms. Homeowners who want to revitalize their home interiors can do so with paint, and this approach doesn't require homeowners to commit to a whole new design style.

Though paint may seem simple to novices, homeowners who have painted home interiors in the past recognize how complicated the process of picking paint can be. Paint retailers have a seemingly endless swatch of paint colors to choose from, and before long homeowners heads may

be spinning as they try to narrow down their options. The following tips can help homeowners pick the perfect paint for their home interiors.

• **Take stock, and photographs, of your current furnishings**

Many interior designers rely on a simple technique when recommending color schemes to their clients. Choose a standout color from existing furnishings, such as the dominant color from a patterned decorative pillow or piece of furniture, and then look for the same shade to paint the walls. A photograph of the item can be handy when visiting the paint store.

• **Lighten colors as you go up**

The home renovation and design experts at HGTV recommend picking darker color values for the floor, medium color values for the walls and light values for the ceiling. This approach mimics the look of the great outdoors, where the ground tends to be darker than the trees, and the trees are darker than the blue sky.

• **Utilize paint to create the vibe you want**

The home renovation experts at This Old House note that colors evoke an emotional response. Cool colors like blue and green give off a relaxing vibe, which makes them ideal for bedrooms and bathrooms. Red is an intense color that can up the energy ante in any room, which can make it an option for homeowners who want to spark debate around their dinner tables.

• **Give personal preference its place at the table**

Though interior designers may have years of experience picking paint colors for a home and researchers may have determined how certain colors can be utilized to create a desired ambiance in a given room, ultimately homeowners are the ones who will be living in the home. So it's important that homeowners pick colors they like for their home interiors.

Paint is an inexpensive way to transform a room. Homeowners can rely on a combination of color strategies and their personal preferences as they try to decide which colors they want on their interior walls.

# Signs a roof must be repaired or replaced

The exterior components of a home, such as the siding and the roof, play a crucial role in safeguarding its occupants from harsh weather conditions. While many roofing materials are designed to last for decades, there comes a time when homeowners will need to address roof repairs or replacements. Roofs, like any other part of a house, experience wear and tear over time. However, because most homeowners do not frequently inspect their roofs up close, signs of damage can sometimes go unnoticed until they become more serious.

Often, the first indication of roof issues is a leak that becomes apparent from inside the home. This could manifest as a discolored spot on the ceiling or even pooled water in the attic. Minor leaks might stem from storm damage or issues as small as a nail hole or a missing shingle, and these can often be fixed relatively easily. On the other hand, more significant problems may require a full roof replacement.

Here are several key signs that a roof may need repair or replacement:

• **Sagging Roof:** A sagging roof can indicate structural issues, such as water-damaged shingles or a weakened roofing framework. This type of problem often requires the intervention of a professional to restore the roof's structural integrity.

• **Cracking and Buckling:** If shingles are showing signs of cracking or are buckling and warping, it's likely time to replace them. These issues can compromise the roof's ability to protect the home effectively.

• **Exposed Nails:** Nails that have become exposed can rust over time and lead to leaks. The extent of the exposure may determine whether a repair is sufficient or if a more comprehensive redo is necessary.

• **Lost Granules:** Asphalt roofing shingles are coated with small granules that protect them from the elements. Over time, these granules can wear away and accumulate in gutters. If you notice a significant amount of granules in your gutters or see bare patches on your shingles, a new roof may be needed.

• **Visible Light:** Seeing streams of light coming into the home through the roof is a clear sign of damage. This often points to holes, cracks, or gaps that need to be addressed.

• **Growth on the Roof:** The presence of mold or mildew on the roof is a sign that the roof is suffering from moisture issues, which can lead to rot and further damage. This growth indicates that repairs or replacement are necessary to maintain the roof's health.

A well-maintained roof is essential for protecting a home from the elements. Recognizing these signs early can help homeowners address roof issues promptly and avoid more costly repairs in the future.

# The rise in all-electric homes

When asked to think of modern homes, many people might think of minimalism, neutral colors, open concept floor plans, and large windows without treatments. While each of those features are components of modern homes, just what qualifies as "modern" is everchanging and often a reflection of what buyers are looking for. And lately, many buyers are looking for all-electric homes.

A study by the U.S. Energy Information Administration found that the number of all-electric homes had increased over the previous decade. In fact, the EIA study found that 25 percent of homes in the United States used only electricity. All-electric homes are generally considered more environmentally friendly because they lessen homeowners' carbon footprint by reducing their need

for fossil fuels like natural gas. Electric heat pumps, induction stoves and electric fireplaces are just some of the technologies that can be found in all electric homes.

Though the design style of all-electric homes needn't be modern, there's no denying that the growing popularity of such homes makes them an option for homeowners with modern sensibilities.

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# Wood floor installation dos and don'ts

Jaw-dropping features can sell a home in a heartbeat. A penthouse apartment with floor-to-ceiling windows and a panoramic view of a city skyline likely won't prove a hard sell, nor will a home with an infinity pool overlooking a landscape of rolling hills. As awe-inspiring as such features can be, some more subtle components, such as authentic hardwood floors, also can do much to make a home more appealing to prospective buyers.

Hardwood flooring is a sought-after commodity. Data from the National Association of Realtors indicates that 54 percent of home buyers are willing to pay more for hardwood floors. In fact, NAR figures indicate that 28 percent of buyers between the ages of 35 and 54 consider hardwood floors "very important" when looking for a home. Homeowners who are considering selling their homes, or those who simply want to upgrade their existing flooring, may want to consider installing hardwood flooring. Though it's a project best left to professionals, hardwood flooring can be installed by skilled DIYers. In such instances,



homeowners may want to keep these dos and don'ts in mind.

**DO** hire a professional if you have limited or no DIY flooring experience. Hardwood flooring installation is not generally a project for novice DIYers. Hardwood flooring projects may present some common challenges, but no two homes are the same. So unless they have prior experience installing floors in multiple rooms or homes, homeowners may save

themselves time, trouble and a significant amount of money hiring a professional to do the job.

**DON'T** ignore the subfloor. New hardwoods won't erase the problem of subfloors in poor condition. According to the home renovation experts at BobVila.com, squeaky floors could be an indication that the subfloor has begun to warp or twist. Sinking floors are another indicator of deteriorating subfloors. Subfloors should be somewhat

level before new hardwoods are installed, so DIYers should inspect and address subfloor issues before installing new flooring.

**DO** expose wood flooring to the elements in your home prior to installation. The home improvement resource BuildDirect recommends acclimating hardwoods to the space where they will be installed. Skipping this important step could result in gaps during the winter and cupping over the summer. To

acclimate hardwoods, open the boxes and spread them out for about a week while running the air conditioner or heater at normal levels. When storing hardwoods prior to installation, avoid keeping them in potentially moist areas like a basement.

**DON'T** skimp on tools. A DIY hardwood flooring installation might be less expensive than hiring a professional, but homeowners should resist any temptation to increase those savings further by purchasing less costly tools or fewer tools than is necessary to complete the job. BuildDirect notes that DIYers will need at least a miter saw, table saw, cleat-nailer or stapler, finish nailer, compressor, jamb saw, chalk line, nail set, and tape measurer when installing hardwood floors. Purchase all necessary tools and read product reviews to ensure each tool is up to the task.

Wood floors can be awe-inspiring. Some homeowners can install such flooring on their own, and the project can be much easier if they learn as much about installation as possible prior to beginning the project.

## Wood Floor Cleaning Guide

Most floors endure a lot of wear and tear. However, with care, wood flooring may last for decades. Part of that care includes understanding how to properly clean and maintain wood floors so they look their best. The following are some steps for keeping wood floors as pristine as possible.

- **Remove shoes.** It's a good idea to remove shoes, particularly heels, when walking on wood floors. Sharp heels, cleats and other shoes can scratch or dent wood flooring. All shoes can track in excess dirt, which can contribute to a lack of luster as well.
- **Sweep or vacuum frequently.** The experts at The Spruce suggest sweeping, vacuuming or dust mopping wood floors daily. Dirt and dust make floors more slippery, and dirt or sand particles can lead to scratches on the floor.
- **Learn your flooring type.** Wood flooring is broken down into three main categories: solid hardwood flooring, engineered hardwood flooring and laminate wood flooring. Traditional hardwood is made of planks or strips of any hardwood covered in a wood stain. Engineered flooring is manufactured by gluing together several thin plies of hardwood. Laminate flooring looks like wood but generally is a veneer or a photographic image of wood covered by a thick layer of melamine resin over fiberboard.
- **Skip harsh cleansers.** Regardless of flooring type, most are covered by a

- sealant that can become streaky or dull if the wrong cleanser is used. Avoid chlorine bleach, ammonia, pine oil, or undiluted vinegar. Instead, choose a cleanser that is specifically recommended for the flooring type. Do not allow water or solutions to sit on the floor, as that can contribute to staining and warping. With laminate flooring, avoid wet mopping unless the flooring is specifically marked as being able to be wet. The underlayers of laminate flooring can warp if it gets wet.
- **Damp is better than wet.** When cleaning wood flooring, use a damp rather than a soaking wet mop. Better Homes & Gardens says standing water can damage wood surfaces.
- **Use the hard floor setting.** When vacuuming, adjust the vacuum to a hard flooring setting, which will not engage the brush rollers on the vacuum head. Rollers can scratch wood and laminate flooring, advises The Home Depot.
- **Use repair products as needed.** Scratch and repair kits can fill in small scratches. Wood floor polish and wood waxes also can revitalize worn floors. Again, check that the product is safe for your particular flooring before use.

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# A beginner's guide to fall planting and maintenance

Spring and summer are perhaps the busiest times of year for gardeners. However, fall also is a prime time to tend to gardens.

The tree and bare root retailer Bower & Branch advises that soil temperatures in many regions of the country may still be warm enough to encourage root growth well into the start of winter. Furthermore, fall is often the ideal time to plant, fertilize and keep a garden going or to get a head start on next year's bounty.

Here are some tips to make the most of the fall gardening season.

• **Think about fall annuals and bulb planting.** Near the end of September, start planting cool-weather-loving pansies and violas for pops of color as summer flowers fade. Also, it's a good idea to stock up on bulbs that will bloom in the months to come before they sell out in stores. Wait until the temperatures really cool down before planting them in desired spots for spring sprouts.

• **Sow salad seeds.** Lettuce, spinach, radishes, and arugula tolerate cooler temperatures. Try new and interesting lettuce

varieties and enjoy salads well into the fall season.

• **Take inventory of the sun.** Positioning a garden carefully means maximizing hours of sunlight, which begin to dwindle in the fall. Experts say gardens grow best in sunny locations that receive six hours of direct sunlight each day. This is where container gardens can be helpful, as they allow gardeners to move plants into spots that will get ample sunlight.

• **Fill in landscaping gaps.** Some fall plants can add color around the landscape and brighten up homes to add curb appeal. In addition to pansies and violas, asters, kale and chrysanthemums are fall blooms. Keep in mind that mums can come back year after year. So take them out of those flower pots and get them into the ground. They can be enjoyed next year as well, sprouting in early spring and developing leaves and buds through late summer.

• **Clean up unwanted growth.** Fall is an ideal time to cut back spent vegetable plants and get rid of errant weeds. Rather than



bagging leaves, mow them with a grass catcher and then add the mix to a vegetable garden as an excellent soil insulator. The nitrogen and carbon will fertilize the soil, enhancing growing possibilities and limiting weed growth.

• **Propagate plants in the fall.** As temperatures gradually begin

to cool, start taking cuttings from perennials, gathering seed pods from azaleas and rhododendrons and dividing hardwood cuttings, says the resource Gardening Know How. Consult with a garden center or horticulturist on the proper ways to propagate stems using rooting hormone and other techniques.

• **Continue to water plants.** Water is essential in the fall and winter as roots can still be growing. Gradually reduce watering duration as plants go dormant.

Fall planting and maintenance can extend gardening season and improve the chances of growing a healthy spring garden.

# Prepare your garden for winter's onslaught

Individuals who don't live near the equator or in another warm climate know that winter will rear its chilly head this year. Cold temperatures and snowy conditions may be excellent for skiing and sledding, but gardeners recognize these conditions are not ideal for their plants.

The inevitable slowing of activity in the garden during fall marks a time to shift attention from constant plant care to preparing the landscape for next season. It may be tempting to simply let Mother Nature take over, but a little pre-winter TLC can ensure gardens make it through winter unscathed.

## Remove spent plants

Decomposing organic material is the basis for compost and other fertilizers. However, vegetable plants that are left to sit can lead to decay in the garden. Decaying plants can serve as hosts for pest populations and diseases. Rotting vegetables also can drop unwanted seeds into the soil, which eventually can strip nutrients that normally would go to next year's crops.

Ornamental plants and perennials can be cut back in fall. Cut down stalks and remove leaves.

## Plant a cover crop

The gardening resource This Is

My Garden recommends planting a cover crop to set the stage for a successful spring. A cover crop protects the soil and can return nutrients to it. When the soil is bare during winter, weed seeds can easily blow in and lie in wait, ultimately becoming a problem during the ensuing year. Cover crops can include clover or field peas, which will increase the levels of available nitrogen.

## Amend the soil

Fall is a perfect time to add soil amendments, such as manure and compost. These fertilizers will add nutrients and break down gradually, enriching the soil over the winter.

## Replenish mulch

Gardeners may have added mulch around shrubs and other areas of the landscape early in the season because it is attractive. But mulch also does much to reduce water loss and protect the soil from erosion. It may inhibit weed growth as well. Replacing mulch when the mercury drops can insulate the soil, which helps to regulate soil temperature. A thick layer of mulch around root vegetables left in the garden can offer protection against hard frosts.

## Divide bulbs

Divide plant bulbs and plant them where you want flowers like

daffodils and tulips to grow in the spring.

## Prune dormant plants

Wait until plants are dormant to prune them and adjust their shape. Most shrubs and trees should be pruned in late winter, right before new growth.

## Move potted plants

Bring delicate plants into a sheltered area, such as a greenhouse or indoor garage, so they can continue to thrive during the winter.

Fall and winter still provide opportunities to spend time in the garden. At this point in the year, gardeners can prepare landscapes for the next season.



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