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Smart and simple ways to enrich your home living

HOMEXPERT



Innovations

New Technology Turns Plumbing into Hi-Tech Savings

You probably don't think much about your plumbing. Until there's a problem, that is. But thinking ahead in terms of your plumbing needs isn't just good sense. It can save time, money, and even injury. Especially when plumbing technology is making leaps and bounds toward increased functionality and comfort.

Anti-scald Valves

Anti-scald valves prevent the "shower shock" caused by sudden extremes in water temperature – due to a toilet flushing or someone turning on the washing machine. That can keep you – and your family – from being one of the 200,000 Americans the Consumer Product Safety Commission says are injured each year by sudden water temperature changes.

Sensor Technology

This technology allows for more hygienic restroom conditions. Since

it is unnecessary to touch restroom fixtures, the spread of communicable diseases and germs is limited. Sensors keep water from flowing continuously, saving water and lowering utility costs.



Low-flush Toilets

In 1994 the government mandated the use of a maximum of 1.6 gallons of water per toilet flush. The intended water savings were not immediately recognized, however, because it often took 2 or more flushes to empty the bowl. This double flush dilemma has since been solved by new technology, cutting water usage by 50%. Since toilet-flushing accounts for about 25% of a home's water usage, the savings can be significant.

So take advantage of new plumbing technology to increase your savings and your comfort. And let us know how we can help.



MyWord



Don't Be Fooled by Smoke And SEER Ratings!

by Ken Wonderly

Hello Friends,

We had a great time meeting many of you at this year's Spring Home and Garden Show. The weather was beautiful and we had fun giving away a full kitchen sink makeover.

We were surprised however to hear that our competitors are trying to sell expensive high efficiency equipment based on SEER ratings.

The SEER rating for air conditioning equipment is an efficiency rating that is tested at 82° F outside air temperature. This test is fine for areas of the country like Florida or Texas where the high humidity requires that systems run at 82° F. Here in Bakersfield, 82° F weather is window weather. Due to our dryer climate, we typically do not run our air conditioning units until the temperature outside reaches over 90° F.

Here in Bakersfield we have always relied on the EER efficiency rating to determine an accurate operational efficiency of air conditioning equipment. The EER is tested at 95° F. We have found in some cases that equipment with a higher SEER rating can have the same EER rating of a 13

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How to Add a Touch of Luxury to Your Home (and increase your property value!)

Bathrooms are among the most popular remodeling projects, second only to kitchens. The benefits include comfort, beauty, function and property value.

There are three general bathroom categories. First, the “economy” version seeks function over form, tending only to the basics of sink, toilet and bath. The other extreme, the “luxury” model, gives you the basic functions plus roominess, ambiance and amenities. Most bathrooms in between seek to balance function and style with cost and comfort.

You can take many steps to keep costs down. So, what should you



do? And what should you not do? We’ve got some answers.

Plan carefully. Once construction begins, changes can be expensive. Also, decide on the features that are important to you and set aside the budget dollars to make that happen. Especially consider spending more for quality fixtures.

Consider simple improvements. Instead of replacing stained tubs and showers, consider re-glazing them. Of course, one of the easiest ways to add to your bathroom’s attractiveness is to buy a new shower curtain. Also, don’t overlook new soap dishes, toilet-tissue holders and towel bars.

Use soft lighting. Bright, harsh lights can be a lot to face early in the morning – especially in

the mirror. Minimize shadows with at least a two-bulb fixture.

Don’t try to cut corners on structural, plumbing or electrical materials and installation. Get the best that your budget will allow. Durability and performance are key in these areas.

Don’t move plumbing fixtures. It’s expensive and may not be necessary. We can advise you on fixtures that work (and look) better in the same space.

Don’t move walls – unless you must. Moving walls is expensive, but it can be worth it in the long run when your “luxurious” bath serves as a real motivation for future home buyers.

Let us help you with your remodel or upgrade. Just give us a call.

HomeFront

Get Rid of Unwanted Houseguests

...at least the four-legged variety

Nothing says home like a houseful of family and friends. But there are some guests that, no matter how well intentioned they may be, just aren’t welcome (I’m not talking about the in-laws!). They eat your food, diminish your property value, and can wreak havoc on your home systems.

Who are these beasts? The four-legged visitors that sneak in unawares, innocently looking for a free meal and a place to sleep. Namely, mice, rats, and squirrels, which account for 80% of all animal break-ins.

These vagrants can chew through wires, destroy property, and spread disease. So what can you do to stop them before a full-scale infestation has taken root?



- Identify points of entry and seal them. Garages, basements, drain pipes, gaps around utility lines – all of these represent areas of vulnerability for your home. Be sure that they are sealed up tightly.
- Eliminate water and food sources around your home. Store all food – including pet food – in airtight containers.
- Contact a pest control professional immediately if you suspect an animal infiltration. Rodents can carry viruses and even rabies.

To find a qualified pest control professional, check professional organizations, the Yellow Pages, or use internet searches.





How Necessary *Is* Spring Cleaning, Anyway?

Spring cleaning has become a ritual of transforming the home to match the changing outdoors. The urge to bring that same sense of refreshing inside grows stronger. And while cleaning may not be high on your hobby list, this small investment in home maintenance can help maintain your property value as well as keep things running smoothly year round.

An organized approach can make the process both more productive and enjoyable. So here's your quick list of Spring cleaning "musts":

Sort Through "Stuff"

There are always those things you can't bear to part with: clothes, books, old bicycles. The two year rule is a good measure for whether you need to keep it or toss it. That means if you haven't used it in the past two years, it's just taking up space. Take a deep breath, then let it go. Literally. You'll be making better use of your space as well as clearing the clutter.

Give your home comfort system a little affection

That means replacing filters in furnaces or air conditioners, and vacuuming and cleaning grates, coils and condensers. A Spring tune-up can also help prevent future breakdowns and repairs.

Clean rugs, carpets, and floors

Shampooing wall-to-wall carpeting and waxing bare floors not only extends the life of your flooring, it impacts your health. Thorough

cleaning can remove many allergens and pollutants that can affect your home's indoor air quality.

Check Your Safety Devices



Replace your smoke detector, carbon monoxide detector, and emergency flashlight batteries. This should be done every six months since batteries lose energy even

when they are not in use. Test fire extinguishers to be sure they are functioning properly too.

Clean Windows, Shades, and Curtains

Remove and wash window treatments. Clean blinds to remove dust. White vinegar or ammonia solutions should be used to wash windows. If you also replace storm windows with screens, be sure to make any needed repairs before storing.

Spring gives us the chance to start fresh and take control of our lives, homes, and the year ahead. Make the most of the opportunity. It is, after all, an investment in yourself.



DidYouKnow?



- Venetian blinds – which were actually invented in Japan – are known as 'Persian blinds' in Venice.
- If you head directly south from Detroit, the first foreign country you enter is Canada, not Mexico.
- While science has been traditionally identified as largely dominated by men, *women* were responsible for inventing Bulletproof vests, fire escapes, windshield wipers, and laser printers.
- More than half of the world's population – that's over 3 billion people – have never made or received a telephone call.
- The screwdriver was invented before the screw.
- A German company has built the first washing machine that talks and recognizes spoken commands. Now if it could only load itself!
- Neglected plants will cry for help. When thirsty, they emit high-pitched sounds that are too high for the human ear to hear.

MyWord



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SEER unit. With cost differences up to \$3000.00 for higher efficiency equipment you will never get your money back through savings in electrical usage.

If you would like some more information on this subject the PG&E web sight has a good article that explains more on the subject.

Wishing you the best and looking forward to visiting you in your home soon.

Sincerely,

Ken Wonderly

P.S. We hope you'll enjoy the great home tips that come in this newsletter, but don't forget to check out the super offers you'll find on this page. If you aren't able to use them, feel free to pass them on to friends. After all, your friends are our friends, and we'd love to help them out too!

HomePoints

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