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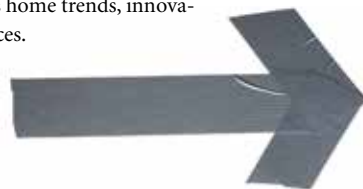


AND



BY KATE E. STEPHENSON

AS THE PROMISE OF SPRING awakens us from our frozen hibernation, many of us will take a look around and notice that our homes aren't exactly ready for summer fun. But never fear — the Hudson Valley is home to many businesses which can help get your home prepared for warm-weather entertainment. Whether you're renovating your interior to let in more of the sun, or enjoying the sun's rays next to the pool — inside or out, these friendly and knowledgeable professionals can answer all your questions about this season's home trends, innovations, and value-added services.



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YOUR HOME

A home is one of the largest investments most of us will make, so we might as well make it work for us. Exploring the equity in your home and investigating energy options can help you do just that.

Hudson Valley asked **Mid-Hudson Valley Federal Credit Union** (10 IBM Rd., Poughkeepsie; 845-336-4444; www.mhvfcu.com):

HUDSON VALLEY: What's the best way for consumers to use a home's equity to enable updates and renovations?

MHVFCU: There are two types of loans that can leverage the equity in your home to aid you in your renovation projects: home equity line of credit and fixed rate home equity loans. The benefits of each are directly related to the projects at hand.

Home Equity Line of Credit: For the homeowner undergoing several projects over a specific period of time who does not want a lump sum of money, the home equity line of credit may be most beneficial. This type of loan can be used similarly to a credit card: A specific amount of credit is made available, and you take the amount of money you need at the time that you need it; the balance is available to you in the future. This offers a bit of flexibility as you only pay interest on the amount of money you borrow. The interest rate for this type of loan is often lower than a credit card, currently at a variable three percent, and the consumer determines a schedule to repay the loan.

Fixed Rate Home Equity Loans: For the homeowner who is ready to start a major renovation soon and needs that large influx of cash, a fixed equity loan may be the right fit. The entire balance of the loan is immediately distributed to the borrower to fund that home addition, total renovation or other large project. The repayment is structured, with a fixed interest rate and payment; these low rates average five percent.

We asked **New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA)** (17 Columbia Circle, Albany; 518-862-1090; www.nyserda.ny.com):

HV: What are the top three things consumers can do to save energy?

NYSERDA: 1. The most important thing consumers can do to save energy is to obtain a home energy assessment through a NYSERDA Home Performance with ENERGY STAR contractor, and then get as many of the recommended energy improvements done as possible. Home Performance with ENERGY STAR uses a "whole-house" comprehensive assessment approach to reduce home energy usage.

2. Replace older appliances with new ENER-

GY STAR appliances. For example, depending on the model year of the old refrigerator, consumers can save up to \$200 on their energy costs annually by replacing it with a new ENERGY STAR model, which uses 20 percent less energy than conventional models.

3. Install and properly use a programmable thermostat. This machine offers preprogrammed and customized settings to regulate your home's temperature when you are home, asleep or away. A programmable thermostat can help save up to \$200 a year on energy costs.

AROUND THE HOUSE

Cabin fever may set in during spring, and wanderlust usually takes over in the summer. But sometimes the cure for both of these ailments isn't travel; it's renovation. Make your home the ultimate getaway with these great tips.

We asked **Masterwork Paint Company and Sun Wallpaper and Paint** (47 Overocker Rd., Poughkeepsie; 845-471-2880; www.sunwallpaperandpaint.com):

HV: What are the hottest paint trends?

MPC: The hottest trend in the industry right now, without question, is environmental awareness. Most manufacturers now are creating more and more coatings that are environmentally protective, so that they have less volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

You'll find there are two categories: low-VOC — which contains under 50mL of compounds per gallon — and zero VOC, which has none. The difference is that a little VOC makes paint work a little better, so low-VOC will give you a more familiar feel than a zero VOC.

Masterwork Paint Company, the parent company of Sun Wallpaper and Paint, is a multiline distributor — we don't sell just one brand. We choose the finest of each manufacturer's products to offer to our clients. We are not restricted like other retail paint distributors. Being able to choose the best products gives us the best opportunity to give our customers the best value for their homes.

We asked **Closet Concepts** (various locations, www.closet-concepts.com):

HV: How can someone declutter a space that has accumulated too much stuff?

CC: Decluttering spaces is one of the most challenging projects that we encounter with our customers. At Closet Concepts we suggest a simple approach:

Consider each item and ask: Do I



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need this? Or do I just like it and want to keep it?

The answer to this question helps determine what to do with each item; i.e., toss it or donate it or find an appropriate place for it.

Determining the importance and frequency of use of each item also helps to figure out where it should live, increasing functionality for the homeowner.

HV: What tips can you offer to make a space feel even bigger?

LM: We encourage homeowners to paint the walls in as light a color as possible, which gives the illusion of a bigger room.

Making closets feel bigger means maximizing storage but also leaving some open shelving and hanging space. That way air can circulate and the space can feel larger. It may sound simple, but keeping closet and storage areas neat, with items folded and neatly stacked, helps increase the feel of the size of the space.

We asked **George Cole of George Cole Auctions and Realty** (7578 N. Broadway, Red Hook; 845-758-9114; www.georgecoleauctions.com):

HV: How can consumers choose pieces of value when looking to update their spaces?

GC: Choose what appeals to you. And remember to bring your measuring tape, to make sure your antique and modern pieces fit well together. Choose a focal piece and work from there. When restoring furniture, use a professional. An auction house can connect you with the right restorer for the job.

We asked **Davis Furniture** (645 Main St., Poughkeepsie; 845-473-1990; www.davisfurnitureonline.com):

HV: How can consumers choose pieces of value when looking to update their spaces?

DF: Certain things people are looking for include better fabrics, better warranties, and American-made products. With American product warranties, parts are readily available, whereas with imported products it's difficult to get parts at all. Also, with some of the imports, the materials are not of the same quality. Some may contain chemicals that emit gases, which make people ill with migraines, asthma-like symptoms, and skin breakouts. There have been many recalls in Chinese-made furniture, the most recent being cribs. Davis Furniture takes care to sell quality furnishings, such as organic mattresses, to alleviate parents' concerns when laying their children down for bed at night.

We asked **The Bells' Ethan Allen** (94 North Plank Rd., Newburgh; 845-565-6000; www.ethanallen.com/newburgh)

HV: What furniture styles and



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patterns offer a timeless look?

EA: Look for furniture with clean lines and historical details, as these pieces will stand the test of time. Classic furnishings are great investments because they're not only compatible with a variety of styles, colors, and fabrics, but the pieces themselves are also versatile. For example, a classic demilune table in a small studio apartment could serve double-duty as a desk or dining table, but later in life, it could become part of a spectacular focal point in a larger home's foyer.

We asked **ProBuild** (40 Golf Links Rd., Middletown; 845-343-7742; www.probuild.com):

HV: If I want to redo my kitchen or bathroom, where do I begin?

PB: If you are doing a total renovation, you have to determine what is affordable and within your budget. You also have to be aware of budgeting for moving appliances or plumbing locations or changing their size.

HV: What advice can you give to a homeowner with a small kitchen who needs more space?

PB: Can there be any reconfiguration of walls to make the kitchen bigger? Try adding an island, taller wall cabinets, a pantry cab, and/or moving appliance locations for more space.

We asked **N&S Supply** (various locations; www.nssupply.com):

HV: What's the first step for reworking a bathroom or kitchen?

N&S: Decide what kind of experience you would like to have in your bathroom. What will make you feel comfortable and relaxed? What kinds of surfaces appeal to you — granite, marble, quartz, wood? What kinds of finishes for your fixtures — chrome, stainless steel, nickel? All of the elements add to the atmosphere of your bathroom. The N&S showroom can help you generate great ideas for your bathroom renovation, and our knowledgeable sales staff can answer many of your questions about functionality and design.

HV: Are there any innovations that consumers might consider in a bathroom renovation?

N&S: One of N&S Supply's specialties is heating, and there are so many practical and pampering heating innovations for the bathroom. For instance:

- Radiant floor heating. It's so nice to step out of the shower onto a nice warm floor. No more frozen toes.
- Towel warmers. Treats you and your guests to the warmth and luxury of a warm towel while reducing moisture, mildew, and musty smells.

We asked **H.G. Page and Sons** (360 Manchester Rd., Poughkeepsie; 845-452-7130; www.page-homecenter.com):

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HV: What are the most important things to consider for the design of a bath or kitchen renovation?

HGP: Conceptualize what you want the end result to be. We find Houzz.com very helpful in finding inspiration for the finished project. Then budget for realistic expectations regarding the timeline of the project, from start to finish.

HV: How can I give my kitchen a timeless look?

HGP: By avoiding obvious trends while embracing a classic look, such as a white kitchen.

We asked **Masterwork Home** (97 New York 416, Campbell Hall; 845-294-9792; www.masterwork-home.com):

HV: What are the most important things to consider for the design of a bath or kitchen renovation?

MH: Engage a professional: research firms, request referrals from friends and interview potential designers to make sure they are good listeners. Schedule a field visit, which should include:

- Building measure and survey
- Extensive discussion of options/reasoning, fixtures and equipment
- Evaluation of potential building changes and improvements
- Budgets and cost components
- Design and sketch plan
- Identify your thought process and logic

We asked **Security Plumbing & Heating Supply** (341 Mill St., Poughkeepsie; 845-471-7050; www.secsupply.com):

HV: What are the benefits and drawbacks of baseboard heating? Of central heating?

SPHS: Baseboard heat is second only to radiant heat in comfort. With baseboard there is typically a more even heat throughout a room, no hot air blowing around and cold spots in others, so there are no drafts. It's also not as dry as the hot air furnace ducted systems that take more moisture out of the already dry winter air. One drawback is that you have to be careful where you put furniture. A sofa right up against a wall with baseboard is going to restrict heating capability. Also, if you want air conditioning, a separate system has to be put in. Fortunately in the last several years, new mini-split air conditioning systems that do not require the addition of ducts to an existing home are a great way to add A/C to houses heated with baseboard and get extremely efficient, very quiet cooling that can be zoned to areas of the house being occupied. Mini-split A/C systems are proving very successful in the Northeast where there is a high percentage of baseboard or radiator heated homes; sales have been increasing 30-40 percent every year for the past five years and they get better every year with high-



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er efficiencies, more compact designs, and other features.

HV: What are the newest innovations on the market to better heat your home?

SPHS: The mini-splits mentioned above also have a heat pump option. Traditionally in the Northeast heat pumps would not work effectively with our severely cold winters, and they are more popular in the mid-Atlantic and Southern states. Now the newest generation of mini-splits with heat pumps work down to outside temperature of -15 degrees. These are great for that new addition, and one unit can heat and cool the new space.

We asked **Ghent Wood Products** (1262 New York 66, Ghent; 518-828-5684; www.ghentwoodproducts.com):

HV: What is the best wood to use for a high traffic surface, i.e. a bar or countertop?

GWP: Oak or walnut because they are hard and durable. They can take a beating.

HV: Why is kiln-dried wood beneficial?

GWP: Wood is dried in a number of ways, including air-drying. The kiln is calibrated depending upon the species and the desired moisture content and dries the wood fast. Kiln-drying the wood makes it so that it doesn't move or shrink up. It is ready to use for all your projects.

We asked **Williams Lumber** (various locations; www.williamslumber.com):

HV: What kind of project is good for the first time DIYer?

WL: This all depends on the confidence one has and degree of handiness. Try to repair a hole in the wall, replace a doorknob, hang a picture, and painting first. DIYers can do projects as long as they read the instructions, watch a video, or go to a seminar. Just because it looks easy doesn't always mean it is.

HV: What kinds of jobs should be left to the professionals?

WL: Anything that requires a license to do, like electrical or major plumbing work; roofing or major tree work; or demolition jobs.

OUTDOOR LIVING

When the days get longer and the nights get warmer, everyone wants to be outside. Find the tools you need to make your outdoor living area a care-free oasis.

We asked **NeJame Pools** (Rte. 82, Verbank; 845-677-7665; www.nejamepools.com):

HV: Many people think it's a hassle owning a pool. What are the best low-maintenance pool options?

NP: More often than not, when people think about the purchase of a brand-new pool, they cor-

relate it with a maintenance nightmare. They forget that it's not your father's pool anymore. Pools can be made to be self-cleaning and can even be chemically adjusted with your smart phone. Like everything else in today's world, swimming pools can be designed to be completely user-friendly. Imagine pushing a button on your iPhone to adjust your pH level or the temperature of your pool. Heavy maintenance is a thing of the past.

HV: What are the main things I need to know to properly treat my pool for the changing seasons?

NP: Maintenance for the changing seasons is just as easy. Built and designed properly, your pool can withstand many, many years of fun and enjoyment. While building and designing the pool is a large part of making the pool transition from season to season with little or no maintenance, the proper service company tops it off. The NeJame name has been building and servicing pools in the Hudson Valley for over 50 years. The synergy that we offer gives you the seamless care the pool needs for many years to come.

We asked **Hudson Valley Kayak Pools** (14 Barberry Ln., Wappingers Falls; 845-831-7576; www.hvkayakpools.com):

HV: How often do I have to clean my pool?

HVKP: You don't! With Kayak Pools, there's no need. It's all automatically done for you. The filtration system takes out the top and bottom sediments so that it cleans itself.

HV: How important is the pool filtration system?

HVKP: Extremely! How we set up our filtration system eliminates the vacuuming. Plus, it eliminates hot and cold spots, giving an even temperature throughout the pool. There is complete circulation.

We asked **Cambridge Pavers Inc.** (various locations; www.cambridgepavers.com):

HV: What are the latest trends in backyard renovation?

CPI: No backyard gathering spot is truly up-to-date without an open-air pergola or pavilion for outdoor dining, relaxing, and entertaining. A pergola is typically a patio or garden structure with an open roof such as a trellis. In contrast, a patio pavilion has open sides and a closed roof. For added convenience and value, look for the aforementioned products in prepackaged kits like those from Cambridge.

We asked **Adams Fairacre Farms** (various locations; www.adamsfarms.com):

HV: What are the latest trends for sprucing up the garden/landscape around the house?



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HOME AND GARDEN

AFF: As winters warm up, flowers and shrubs that were not winter-hardy in the Hudson Valley are now thriving — English heather, boxwood, crape myrtle, pansies, and hardy chrysanthemums come to mind. We have even seen hardy banana trees! With the economy finally improving, the new trend is towards optimism — bright colors (i.e., flowers). We see it in fashion, cars and gardens.

We asked **Quality Lawn Irrigation II, Inc.** (51 Greenwood Dr., Beacon; 845-838-9184; www.qualitylawnirrigation.com):

HV: What are the latest trends for sprucing up the garden/landscape around the house?

QLI: One of the latest trends for sure is the organic fertigation/mosquito control system, either added to an existing sprinkler system or as part of a new installation. Some advantages are:

- Reduced watering by 10 percent on the day we install the fertigation system
- Another 10 percent reduction after 90 days of fertilization/feeding due to a stronger root system
- Increased nutrient absorption by plants and lawn (liquid fertilizer absorbs best over granular fertilization)
- Organic — kid and pet friendly
- Safely protect your family and pets by treating your entire yard for mosquitos with organic mosquito control (all automated through your sprinkler system)

HV: How often should the lawn be trimmed/watered?

QLI: A lawn that is watered and fertilized by an automated irrigation system should be trimmed at least every seven days to promote and maintain a good root system. As far as the amount of watering, every location should be on its own individual scale depending on:

- amount of sun exposure
 - soil composition (clay, loamy, or sandy soil)
 - type and amounts of plantings in an area.
- Shallow rooted trees and bushes require more watering than deep rooted trees and plants.

As an overall rule of thumb, 10–15 minutes per day per 120 square feet of property is about average

We asked **L. Browe Asphalt Services** (East Greenbush; 845-479-1400; www.broweasphalt.com):

HV: I need to repair my driveway.

What are my options?

LBAS: We recommend regular maintenance, sealcoating your asphalt surfaces every few years to prevent wear and tear. For driveways beyond this point, there are asphalt patch products on the market, but these are extremely temporary and unattractive. We would recommend having a professional like Browe Asphalt Services assess the situation to determine if resurfacing or reinstallation is appropriate. →

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HV: Are there green alternatives for paving driveways?

LBAS: Yes! Browe has invested in exciting new equipment that allows millings to be transformed into new asphalt. Many asphalt plants have reduced the amount of liquid asphalt, which has reduced the quality of this mass-produced material. This new technology gives us greater control over the quality of the product. We now have the ability to repurpose old asphalt to provide a higher quality new product using all DOT approved materials, which translates to a better product at a lower cost, and less material in landfills.

We asked **United Rentals** (various locations; www.unitedrentals.com):

HV: What are the most common heavy machines used in home improvement projects?

UR: The most common home improvement heavy machines would be compact excavators and backhoes as well as full-size excavators, backhoes, and dozers. But in addition to larger equipment, United Rentals has a full fleet of power tools, lawn and garden equipment, aerial lifts, and just about anything you would need to complete a project large or small.

HV: Can a residential homeowner rent these from you or is a contractor necessary?

UR: United Rentals has the largest rental fleet in the industry, with over 900 locations which rent to contractors, homeowners, developers, landscapers and do-it-yourselfers.

We asked **Pine Bush Equipment Co., Inc.** (various locations; www.pbeinc.com):

HV: What is the most common equipment used in home improvement projects?

PBE: Tractors or excavators can assist in most home improvement projects. PBE Group sells and/or rents the Kubota line of tractors and smaller excavators — the perfect sized equipment for homeowner use.

HV: How would I go about learning how to operate an excavator myself?

PBE: PBE offers equipment training classes to ensure safe operation, taught by our certified safety expert.

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