

Tips and trends for homeowners, buyers and sellers

Add Floating Shelves Without Overcrowding the Room

Floating shelves can add storage, personality and a finished look without taking up floor space. The trick is giving them enough breathing room so the wall still feels open.



- ① **Pick the right wall.** Start with a spot that could use function or visual interest, such as above a desk, beside a fireplace or over a small cabinet.
- ② **Plan before you drill.** Use painter's tape to mark the shelf lengths and spacing on the wall. Step back and make sure the arrangement feels balanced with nearby furniture.
- ③ **Install for the weight you need.** Locate wall studs whenever possible and check the shelf's weight limit. If studs are not available, use wall anchors rated for both the shelf and what you plan to display.
- ④ **Keep styling simple.** Mix a few books, framed photos, small plants or decorative objects rather than filling every inch.
- ⑤ **Leave some empty space.** Open areas between objects keep shelves from looking cluttered and make favorite pieces stand out.

Before mounting anything, use a level and double-check your measurements. A thoughtfully placed set of floating shelves can turn an overlooked wall into useful display space while making the whole room feel more intentional.

Should You Rake Your Leaves or Mulch Them Into the Lawn?

When leaves start covering the yard, you do not necessarily have to reach for the rake. Mulching some leaves with your mower can save time, reduce yard waste and return useful nutrients to the soil.

Mulching works by chopping dry leaves into small pieces that settle between the grass blades and decompose. Those pieces can add nutrients and organic matter while helping improve soil structure. For best results, mow when

leaves are dry and make another pass if the pieces are still large.

But there can be too much of a good thing. A thick layer of leaves can block sunlight, trap moisture and smother grass if it remains on the lawn.

Try this simple rule:

- ▶ If plenty of grass is visible after mowing, keep mulching
- ▶ If leaves pile up and cover most of the lawn, rake or collect the excess

- ▶ Compost collected leaves or use them as mulch around garden beds

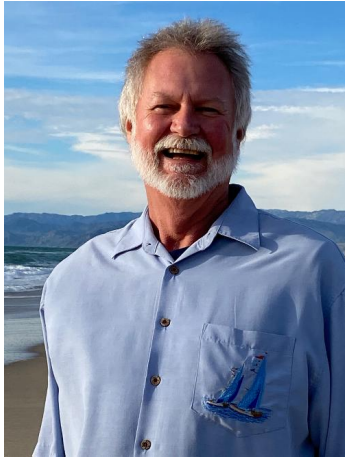
The best approach may be a combination of both methods. Mulch manageable amounts throughout the season, then remove excess leaves when they become too heavy. Your lawn gets some of the benefits without spending winter buried beneath a dense layer.





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Check Your Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms Before Heating Season

As furnaces, fireplaces and other heating equipment return to regular use, October is a good time to make sure your home's smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are ready too.



Q: How often should alarms be tested?

Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms at least once a month using the test button. If an alarm does not sound, follow the manufacturer's instructions for replacing the battery or unit.

Q: Where should they be located?

Smoke alarms should be installed inside every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. Carbon monoxide alarms should be installed outside sleeping areas and on every level, with placement based on manufacturer instructions and local requirements.

Q: When should alarms be replaced?

Smoke alarms generally need replacement after 10 years. Carbon monoxide alarms have varying lifespans, so check the date and manufacturer guidance on each unit.

Q: Why check them before winter?

Fuel-burning heating equipment can produce carbon monoxide if it malfunctions or is improperly vented, while increased use of fireplaces and heaters can raise fire risks.

A few minutes spent testing alarms now can provide an important layer of protection throughout heating season.



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