

your home

Tips and trends for homeowners, buyers and sellers

time TO CHILL

As summer begins to heat up, keeping your home cool and comfortable is important. You may want to consider purchasing a new air conditioning (A/C) unit before it's too late. Whether you're replacing a broken unit or upgrading to become more energy efficient, here are four things to consider before purchasing a new A/C unit.

Learn about energy efficiency. First and foremost, you'll see A/C units branded with a Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) number. This is an objective measuring tool to evaluate the energy efficiency of units across brands. While being efficient is important, the higher the SEER number, the higher the initial price tag. These more complicated units end up costing consumers more in the long run with maintenance and repair costs, defeating the original cost-saving purpose. Experts recommend buying a new unit with a SEER value between 14 and 16 for the best results.



Choose the right size. This can be difficult for most buyers, as contractors should send out technicians rather than salespeople to make this determination. You'll hear the term "tonnage" mentioned, which is a measurement of the A/C unit's cooling power, not its actual weight. The perfect size unit will depend on a variety of factors, but for reference, on average a 2,000-square-foot home will most likely require a 5-ton A/C unit.

Don't get fooled by branding. There are numerous brands of A/C units on the market today. What's the difference? In reality, most units have similar internal components, and many of these brands are owned and manufactured by the same parent company.

Choose the right HVAC contractor. Above all else, proper research before jumping into a purchase is necessary to ensure you're getting the best service possible. Use Google or Yelp to look at reviews of local HVAC providers, and make sure to get multiple bids before pulling the trigger. Choosing a good contractor can save you significant time and money throughout the lifespan of your A/C unit.



15 IDEAS TO SPRUCE UP OUTDOOR WALKWAYS

Thinking about adding or renovating the outdoor path for your home? Here are several materials that can help make your walkway stand out.

1. Stepping Stones
2. Brick
3. Pallet Wood
4. Gray Gravel
5. Wood Slices
6. Bark Mulch
7. Pavers
8. Bamboo
9. Stamped Concrete
10. Bluestone
11. Tumbled Glass
12. Thyme
13. Stenciled Concrete
14. Lava Rocks
15. Mosaic Pebbles

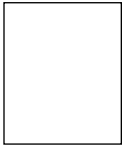




DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS THINKING ABOUT BUYING OR SELLING A HOME? PLEASE MENTION MY NAME.

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home improvement 101

When to DIY and when to hire help

DIY Projects

- **Clogged pipes**—You can often fix these with plungers or commercial drain cleaning products.
- **Broken toilet handle**—If your toilet doesn't flush, remove the tank lid and see if the chain is detached from the lever.
- **HVAC maintenance**—You can easily change your system's filter yourself.
- **Blown fuse**—Simply throwing the switch in your circuit breaker could get your power back on.
- **New light switches**—It's fairly easy to replace a switch. Just make sure you turn off the circuit breaker before touching any electrical outlet.

Trained Professional Required

- **Major electrical work**—Anything involving wiring can be extremely dangerous and should be left to a licensed electrician.
- **Extensive plumbing replacement**—Replacing any fixtures can cause extensive flooding if not done properly.
- **HVAC installation**—Since these are some of the more expensive pieces of equipment in your home, don't try installing units yourself, as it may void the warranty.
- **Remodeling projects**—Don't start knocking down or building new walls without first discussing the project with a maintenance or remodeling professional.

Homeowners can see expenses add up quickly. From home improvement projects to ticky-tack repairs, people are looking to avoid additional costs for their home. But what projects make sense to take care of on your own, and which ones need professional assistance? Here are some examples that will help guide your plans.



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