

JULY 2022 | DAILY JOURNAL

HOME TRENDS

MAGAZINE



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ENERGY: Upgrade and save // **CLOSETS:** Organize and simplify

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Stone age

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Tips to reduce your energy usage and save money.

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CLUTTER-FREE CLOSET

Reorganize your storage space and help reduce stress.

HOME TRENDS MAGAZINE

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STONE COLD

Modern countertops provide options, d

BY JENN WILLHITE | PHOTOS BY ADOBE STOCK



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When it comes to versatility, durability and aesthetics, granite and quartz remain the go-to materials for kitchen countertop facelifts and remodels — and for good reason. But before investing precious time and money, spend some time exploring the finer details, experts say.

Both materials offer superior performance compared to laminate and, when properly maintained, you can expect a 15- to 20-year lifespan, which makes them worth the investment, says Derik Blosser, director of sales with Peak Stone Company.

Granite and quartz are installed the same way. Both offer durability and a long life-span, which when balanced with the ease of installation and maintenance can make them priceless options.

“Quartz is still on the upward swing as far as trending, granite is still a popular option, but quartz falls into those softer tones that people are looking for,” Blosser says.

However, it is worth taking a closer look at both materials before making a final decision.

Granite is rock. It is volcanic rock, which means it costs less than quartz, however, there’s a tradeoff. Because granite is a porous material and prone to imperfections and pitting, it must be sealed more than once.

Quartz is not only durable, but it is also smooth. Since it is engineered from microband material, it inhibits the growth of bacteria, which is why quartz is used in many hospitals and industrial situations, explains Chris Alspach, owner of Distinctive Kitchen & Bath.

“When you pick out quartz, what you see is what you get,” Alspach says. “You can do a pattern match, to where they can match the veining as it goes across the countertop to the seam. With granite, it is what it is.”

With quartz, the waterfall edge is something that is certainly trending right now, Alspach adds.

“It is where the countertop goes up the side, across the countertop and down the other side,” he says. “It makes it look like a solid piece of stone. They can photograph different slabs and put that vein so it runs through.”

Much has been made over the years of quartz’s potential for thermal shock, which happens when the quartz is exposed to an extreme temperature change, like placing a pan directly from the oven or stove top to the counter top without using a trivet or potholder.

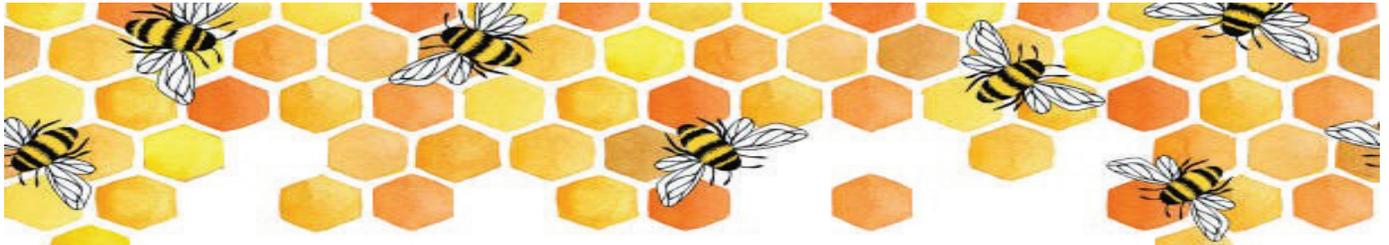
Thermal shock can cause discoloration and possible cracking in the affected area. Alspach and Blosser agree the potential is there, but the possibility of it actually happening is almost unheard of in their professional experience, they say.

Keeping new countertops looking tip-top simply requires daily cleaning with a pH-neutral product,

D STYLE

ns, durability

Continued on Page 7



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A stone countertop with a small “waterfall” design on the left. Unlike traditional toppers, which are flat slabs that sit on top of base cabinets or an island, waterfall countertops flow over the sides, creating a seamless appearance.

Blosser says. When it comes time to apply sealer to granite, you simply wipe it on and wipe it off, like waxing your car.

When it comes to hue, granite is naturally dark-colored with marbled options that add shades of neutral color. Quartz, on the other hand, comes in a plethora of shades and colors from the subtlest earth tones to poppin’ blues and greens for a more monochromatic look, Blosser says.

“In terms of color, we are trending back to warmer tones overall,” Blosser says. “The lights and grays have been very popular, but we are starting to see the soft, subtle warmer tones coming back. People are also playing with finishes like matte and suede.”

Opting for a special finish means you need to be a bit more mindful with day-to-day use because the surface can patina over time, Blosser cautions.

When it comes to price, some companies

and contractors will charge by the square foot, while others charge by the project.

All told, you can bank on spending a minimum of \$2,500 or so on the low end for new countertops, Blosser says. Above that, the sky is the limit.

“It is pretty standard in the industry that there is a one-year installation warranty,” Blosser says. “If you have a quartz product there is an extended manufacturer’s warranty. And if it is a natural product, like granite, we install it with a 15-year sealer warranty.”

Regardless of what material you go with, installation is quite simple.

“When it is ready to go, someone will show up to template the cabinets,” Alspach says. “They will take a digital photo of the layout, transfer it to a CAD program and it will be cut out.”

The goal is the least amount of seams the

better, however, depending on the layout and access to the area, they will put the seams where they need to, Alspach adds.

From start to finish, a kitchen facelift to a complete overhaul can be completed within one to two weeks. If cabinetry is already in place, new countertops can be installed in a matter of days, Blosser says.

When shopping, do your homework, Alspach recommends. If you are shopping for quartz, get a sample of what you like and use it to compare. Not only is it good to compare color, but also veining.

“Suppliers and supply houses can have the same slab, but supply houses can change the names, so it is hard to compare apples to apples,” Alspach says. “Getting a sample and going place to place would be your best bet. It is the same material; they just want to confuse the process.”

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QUICK FACELIFTS

Preparing your home for sale in today's market

BY STATEPOINT | PHOTO BY ADOBE STOCK

In the current market, houses are selling fast — meaning there's typically no need to spend time and money on large home repairs and renovations to get an offer. Instead, homeowners should focus on quick, easy DIY projects to give their space a facelift before listing — here's how.

ENHANCE CURB APPEAL

"The exterior of your home sets the tone for what buyers can expect inside," says Lindsey Mahoney, DIYer behind Building Bluebird and licensed realtor with Rigali Group at Danberry. "If a buyer pulls up to a house where the outside is in disrepair, it sets off red flags that the home may have hidden issues from neglect."

The simplest way to enhance your home's curb appeal is to maintain the yard, regardless of the season or weather. Depending on the climate, homeowners should consider cutting the grass, planting flowers and greenery, raking leaves, watering the grass and flowers, or removing snow and ice.

If the home's exterior is in need of a little more TLC, consider adding a pop of color to the front door with a fresh coat of paint, installing unique shutters for visual interest or updating to a new mailbox. Pull it all together with a seasonal wreath or welcome mat.

PAINT AS NEEDED

Moving into the interior, spruce things up by refreshing walls with new paint. Rather than redoing every room, focus on painting over bright, bold colors with a neutral palette more likely to appeal to the masses.

To get started, tape off the room with FrogTape Multi-Surface Painting Tape. The tape is made with PaintBlock Technology, a super-absorbent polymer that instantly gels to form a micro-barrier that seals the edges of the tape. This will prevent bleed and leave the walls with crisp, clean lines that won't need touch-ups.

MAKE MINOR REPAIRS

As you're gearing up to sell, pay close attention to minor things that may need to be updated or repaired. For example, leaky faucets, loose cabinet handles or doors that stick are all minor fixes — but ignoring them could leave potential buyers assuming that there are larger problems within the home. Do a careful walkthrough before listing to look for any small fixes that need to be made.



DECLUTTER AND CLEAN

A messy house is a major turnoff for potential buyers, so prioritize decluttering and cleaning. Start by eliminating as many personal items as possible, including toiletries, kids' items and personal décor like family photos, fan memorabilia and religious and political objects. It's also important to spruce up the appearance of beds, couch pillows and counters in the kitchen and bathrooms.

"If you have a small closet and your clothes are jammed into it, take out half so it looks like there is room to add more," Mahoney recommends. "You don't want your buyer's first thought to be that they won't be able to fit their belongings in the bedroom closet."

Once things are organized, each room should receive a deep clean, including wiping surfaces, floors and baseboards, as well as cleaning any appliances, sinks, toilets and showers. As the open house approaches, open doors and windows for fresh air and natural light, leaving the home looking and smelling pleasant for potential buyers.

If you prioritize the right projects, preparing to sell is painless. By taking these four simple steps, your home will be in its best shape to hit the market — and maximize your potential profit.



7 steps that save energy

Upgrade your home, downgrade energy bills

BY FAMILY FEATURES | PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

The best home upgrades not only make spaces more livable and energy-efficient but are also cost-effective. Making energy-efficient improvements is a savvy way to save money on utility bills, curb energy usage and add to the house's value.

Consider a variety of home improvement projects, both big and small, that can reduce the financial burden of maintaining your home throughout the year and improve energy efficiency.

ADD INSULATION

A cost-effective way to save on heating and cooling bills is adding a layer of insulation in the attic where heat loss is typically greatest due to hot air rising. While many newer

homes are adequately insulated, those that aren't benefit from an upgrade in not only the attic but also in other areas of escape such as basements, crawl spaces and attics.

SEAL DOORS AND WINDOWS

Windows and doors are common sources of energy loss. Proper placement and maintenance of doors and windows can be improved. Weatherstripping and caulking can fill in gaps where air can escape around doors and windows for a fraction of the cost and make it



energy usage

ated, those that are several decades old (or older) may benefit by the attic but other common problem areas where air can crawl spaces, fireplaces and ductwork.

WINDOWS

common culprits for energy loss. While a complete replacement can be pricey, adding exterior caulk and weather stripping to escape around these openings can make a noticeable difference and make it cheaper to heat and cool your home.

INSTALL SKYLIGHTS

Skylights are a cost-effective option for transforming any room in the home with natural light while also delivering energy-saving benefits. For example, Sun Tunnel Skylights from Velux can be installed in as little as 90 minutes and funnel natural light from the roof through the attic and into the room below with an aesthetic that resembles recessed lighting. Customizable with six diffuser film styles to complement interior design, the skylights can make a home more energy-efficient by reducing reliance on artificial lighting. An optional daylight controller makes it easy for homeowners to adjust natural light entering a room, and a solar nightlight provides a moon-like guiding light at night. Installed with the solar nightlight, the skylights qualify for a 26% federal tax credit on solar property.

ADD REFLECTIVE WINDOW FILM

When the sun shines through windows, it can heat up the home's interior quickly and trigger the air conditioner to turn on. Window coverings, such as blackout curtains, can help, but adding low-e reflective window film to your windowpanes, particularly southern-facing ones, can provide an additional shield from the sun's hot rays and reduce energy costs.

INSTALL A PROGRAMMABLE THERMOSTAT

A programmable thermostat is an efficient way to control the climate inside your home, and those with smart technology take programming to a whole new level. Today's smart thermostats not only let homeowners control temperatures from their smart devices while on-the-go but can also learn daily habits and adjust the temperature accordingly with no other manual adjustments necessary. In addition, some utility companies offer incentives like money back at the end of the year for installing a smart thermostat because the energy savings are so substantial.

REPLACE APPLIANCES

Because appliances like refrigerators and ovens, among others, are major energy users, investing in more efficient models provides both cost and energy savings. Additionally, homes more than 15 years old could benefit from updates to the air conditioner or heater as systems 15-20 years old or older may be candidates for replacement as they're inefficient by today's standards.

ADD CEILING FANS

In comparison to running your air conditioner consistently, the cost of running a ceiling fan (or several) is significantly less. Particularly on days that may not require cooling the entire house completely, fans can provide a gentle breeze and circulate air in the spaces you use most often. Simply adjust the switch to the counterclockwise position to ensure it's pushing air downward during warmer months.

For more information and home improvement ideas, visit whyskylights.com/livellighter.

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GET ORGANIZED

Make the most of your closet space

BY FAMILY FEATURES

Getting organized and making the most of your home's storage space can be a daunting task. To help keep clutter at bay and streamline organization throughout the house, consider these tips for revamping your closets and designated storage areas from the experts at ClosetMaid. Find closet systems and other organization hacks at ClosetMaid.com.

DETERMINE YOUR GOAL

Create a plan of attack and sketch out a closet design, accounting just for things you want to keep.

BEAT CLOSET BLAHS

Spruce up your closet with stylish storage accessories like drawers, shelves and sturdy, matching hangers.

GET COLORFUL

Get your closets in tip-top shape with a shelf track system with colorful and patterned fabric bins.

RELIEVE CLUTTER STRESS

Keep clutter at bay with functional materials and extras that allow you to make the most of every aspect of the room.

MEET YOUR NEEDS

Inspire and streamline organization throughout the whole house by redirecting clutter and taking advantage of adjustable shelving.



GOOD AIR

Take control of the humidity in your home

BY MENARDS | PHOTO BY ADOBE STOCK

Everyone likes to feel comfortable in their home. With a humidifier you can control the amount of moisture in your home's air and further enjoy the time you spend at home.

BENEFITS OF A HUMIDIFIER

Helps prevent and treat illnesses — moistening the air helps soothe certain symptoms of colds or other respiratory issues.

Protects wood furnishings — low humidity can cause wood to lose moisture and shrink; extreme changes can cause warping and cracking.

Creates a sense of warmth and lowers heating bills — the more moisture in the air, the warmer it feels.

Helps to reduce snoring and nosebleeds — a moist environment encourages better sleep and lubricates nasal passages.

Eases asthma and relieves sinusitis — air with more humidity allows nasal and lung passages to stay hydrated.

Keeps house plants healthy — adding moisture to the air promotes healthy plant growth.

COMMON TYPES OF HUMIDIFIERS

Cool mist humidifiers — of which two main types are ultrasonic and evaporative. They create room-temperature mist that streams throughout your home and provide a child-friendly option to avoid hot water accidents.

Warm mist humidifiers — available in vaporizers and ultrasonic models. They work best in smaller areas like bedrooms and offices and are useful during cold months due to the warm moisture entering into the air.

Whole house humidifiers — which are available in ducted and non-ducted console models. They provide humidity control throughout the entire house and are permanently installed with central heating and cooling systems.

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4 home improvement tips to get you started

BY FAMILY FEATURES | PHOTOS BY REMODELINGDONERIGHT.COM

Whether you're thinking about a bathroom update, kitchen overhaul or any other type of home improvement project, these tips from the experts at the National Association of the Remodeling Industry and eLivingtoday.com can help you get started.

CREATE A PLAN

Improving your home can be one of the most exciting projects to undertake. Start by setting realistic expectations, determining your goals and needs, finding inspiration and, perhaps most importantly, setting a budget.

RENOVATE THE BATHROOM

You can improve your home's usability and increase its value with bathroom updates or a full renovation. Before you get started, think about these factors: the amount of space and storage you need, features that are important to you, sustain-

ability concerns and accessibility considerations.

UPDATE THE KITCHEN

The kitchen serves as command-central for most homes, and you can get the most enjoyment out of yours by making purposeful changes, reconsidering the physical space, re-evaluating your shopping style and choosing appliances with care.

START A REMODEL

If it's time for a serious undertaking, a full-blown remodel may be necessary (or simply desired). Remodeling typically calls for hiring a professional contractor, a process you can go about by gathering local recommendations, asking for licensing and insurance, checking references and comparing bids.

Find more home improvement ideas and solutions at remodelingdoneright.com and eLivingtoday.com.



HIDDEN DANGER

5 important things to know about radon

BY STATEPOINT

Radon is present at high levels in a surprisingly large number of American homes, schools and other buildings. While this naturally-occurring gas is odorless, tasteless and colorless, it's far from harmless. Experts are raising awareness about the serious health risks associated with radon exposure and what you can do about it.

“Elevated radon in homes is more common than you may think. In fact, at least one in 15 American homes have elevated levels of radon, and this is something that shouldn't be taken lightly. Exposure to radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States,” says Albert Rizzo, M.D., chief medical officer for the American Lung Association. “The good news is that it is easy to test for radon. Do-it-yourself test kits are simple to use and inexpensive.”

In an effort to eliminate this preventable lung cancer risk factor, protect all communities and buildings, and save lives, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), along with strategic partners like the American Lung Association, have launched a new five-year National Radon Action Plan.

The campaign is sharing five important things to know about radon:

1. Radon exposure is life-threatening. Radon-related lung cancers are responsible for an estimated 21,000 deaths annually in the United States.
 2. Smoking and radon exposure can separately increase the risk of lung cancer. If you smoke, exposure to both tobacco and radon enhances the risk of lung cancer even further.
 3. The only way to detect radon in your home is to test the air. The EPA urges anyone with radon levels above 4 picoCuries per liter (pCi/L) to take action to fix their homes. Both the EPA and the American Lung Association recommend that mitigation be considered if levels are greater than 2 pCi/L. After high levels are detected and confirmed, a radon mitigation system should be installed by a radon professional.
 4. Radon testing should always be done when you buy a home and after building a new home. Many states now require radon results (if known) to be disclosed during a real estate transaction. Some states require testing in priority buildings like schools and daycares.
 5. When high levels of radon are detected, professional radon mitigation should be a priority. Do-it-yourself radon mitigation is typically not an effective long-term solution. Some state health departments offer financial assistance or low interest loans for radon mitigation.
- While elevated radon is common, it is a problem that is easy to address. By finding, fixing and preventing high indoor radon levels, its health impacts are preventable.
- Learn more about radon testing and mitigation at Lung.org/Radon.

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