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HOME TRENDS MAGAZINE

home theater

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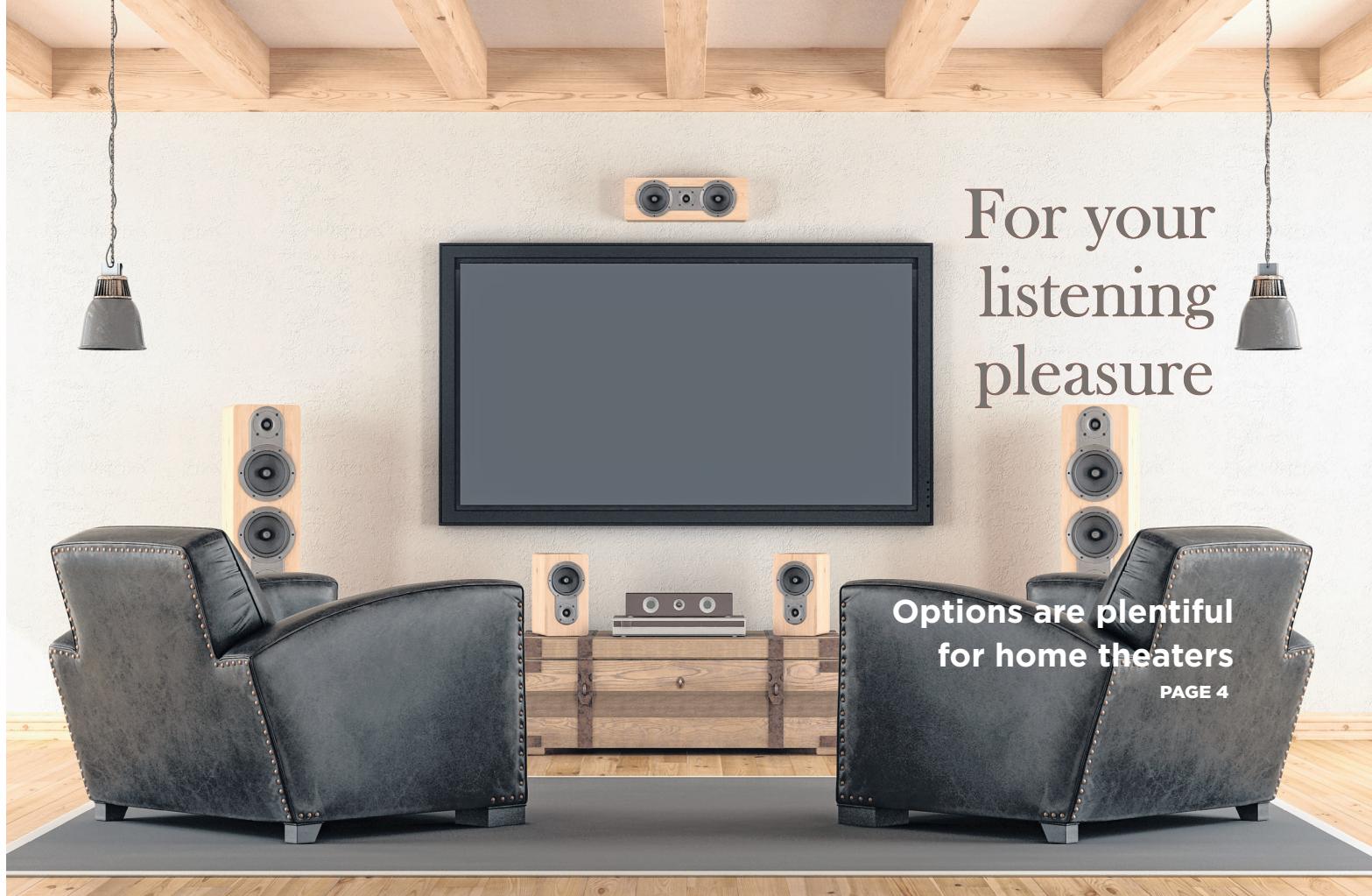
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Options are plentiful
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Incorporate floral designs
on your mantel.

HOME TRENDS MAGAZINE

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WATCH IN STYLE

Customize your home theater with technology, furniture, accessories

BY JENN WILLHITE | PHOTOS BY ADOBE STOCK



Customizing your home theater space doesn't have to be a daunting task that breaks the bank. Today's trendiest home theater spaces are the epitome of stylish convenience, comfort and theatrical ambiance that simply require a little planning, budgeting and vision, say area experts.

Starting with the basic elements of furniture and accessories to define and flesh out the space, Suzanne Sherman, co-owner of Martin Fine Furniture, says convenience and comfort are front and center for most shoppers.

And, although, the majority of shoppers are looking to kit out their entire home theater space from top to bottom, Sherman says it is essential to start with the basics, and that means measurements.

"You really need to lay it out," Sherman says. "One of the old-

school ways is to lay newspapers or somehow otherwise mark off measurements on the floor, including how deep and long the furniture elements will be and where the turns will go. Lay it out and have your measurements before you go out shopping. Most people forget that. The furniture pieces look a lot smaller in the showroom and then when they put it in their house, it is too big."

From consoles, USB charging outlets and cup holders, to patterned or plain cloth versus leather, today's home theater seating includes an array of choices including sectionals, Barcaloungers and recliners that offer a little something for everyone. Sherman says it is simply a matter of personal preference.

"It is about 50-50 for us," she says. "We get a lot of leather requests and a lot of cloth ones, too. It is really a matter of personal choice as some think cloth has a warmer feel, but leather offers less worry."

Shoppers are choosing to power up some of their furniture purchases, Sherman says.

"The biggest thing selling now is power headrest, power lumbar and power recliner," Sherman says. "When power first came out, everybody thought it was for old people. No. Everyone loves to get comfortable."

If you want an old-school option, you can still get manual recliners, Sherman adds, but should you choose to power up, bank on adding a likely \$200 or so to the base cost of the item.

"The expense isn't huge, but it is worth the comfort," she adds.

Chris Johnson, owner of Galaxy Home Theater in Greenwood, says the home theater industry continues to build, expand and improve.

"Think of the wheel, invented eons ago and it has undergone many iterations," he says.

Designing a home theater space involves much more than seating and deciding how big the TV should be. There's a method to the madness and science to the reasons for choosing certain sound systems over others, Johnson says.

"It's all about the science of engineering the room based on the client's audio-visual perception, the room acoustics and visual presentation," he says. "It is scalability. We do everything from IMAX down to general media; it is still a unique experience. The federal government defines home theater as anything 50 inches or larger in a television."

Among some of the elements to keep in mind when shopping for a home theater system includes what the system will be used for and the layout of the room, including lighting and furnishings.

"You don't buy a television designed around cinematography if you are just going to watch TV," Johnson says. "We look at the acoustical environment and lighting conditions and apply the science to the need."

Surround sound is no longer confined to speakers of varying size placed strategically throughout the room, Johnson adds.

"We can put sound transducers into seating," he says. "It is the experience. It's like going to theaters. They are all different in shapes and sizes, like going from a small theater all the way up to IMAX. Some people want a general, large-scale sound system."

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According to Johnson, everyone makes a decent speaker these days. It is simply a matter of finding the right one to fit your needs.

"It is not a right or wrong answer; it is apples and oranges," Johnson says. "If you listen to a lot of orchestra music, you would want to buy a musical speaker system. If you wanted to do just movies, you would want more of a theatrical speaker. Will they play music? Sure. It is about coming at it from a different angle."

Not only is it a matter of getting the right speaker system in the right size, but getting quality of experience.

"Ideally, we want to have the consumer point and shoot," Johnson says. "It is about escapism. Watching a great theater production, or whatever it is, it is about escapism in the comfort of your home. We are very scientific when it comes to the audio-visual and we look at it solely from the science in terms of audio and visual presentation."

When it comes to TV size, the consensus has always been the bigger the better and that remains unchanged. Today, it is simply a question of how big could be too big?

"I think the general consensus is about every American home has a 65-inch TV these days," Johnson says. "The affordability of these have dominated the market. People want to go big, and maybe they don't have room for a 120-inch or a 150-inch TV, but ideally, an 85-inch TV can deliver exceptional video quality these days at an affordable price."

Regardless of all the current hype surrounding screen resolution and the advent of 8K, the source material just isn't quite there yet, Johnson says, and that leaves 4K as still offering all the magic right now.

Another part of making the home theater magic happen is blending the audio-visual experience with refreshments.

Mike Richardson, manager with Bishopp's Appliances in Columbus, says beverage centers, wine coolers and air fryers are the top three most sought-after home theater appliances.

Beverage centers offer not only convenience, but are aesthetically-pleasing, he says.

"They're basically an upgraded dorm fridge, that size," Richardson says.

Starting in the neighborhood of about \$800, and available in a variety of finishes, including stainless and black, beverage centers are about 24 inches in size with a vented front and have glass shelves and lighting that offer a built-in look, Richardson says.

Wine coolers offer similar ambiance with two front doors that work like a French door refrigerator with dual zones for red and white wines, Richardson says.

"The thing people ask for most is an air fryer in something, whether that be a range or microwave," Richardson says. "Microwaves these days have air fryers built into them, so if you want a little countertop unit, that is a way to go."

Richardson says most small appliances such as these are available for purchase off the showroom floor, however, there are still some that may need to be ordered. The process isn't nearly as frustrating or stressful as it may have been one year ago.

As kinks and lapses in the supply chain continue to resolve themselves, it is becoming easier to make your home theater vision a reality. Shipments that would once take months are now enjoying a much shorter turnaround, Sherman adds.

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5 Tips to make your home safer for aging in place

BY BRANDPOINT

According to the AARP, the number of households headed by people 65 and older will grow to 48 million in the next twenty years, and many of those adults plan to age in place for as long as they can. If you or a loved one want to stay at home as you get older, it's crucial to make the home environment as safe as possible. Even if you're currently active and healthy, as you age you may experience decreasing strength, balance and vision that might make your home more difficult to navigate safely. Because these issues can develop gradually, you may not be aware of your limitations until you have an accident or injury — so it's best to make your home safer now.

To review your home's trouble spots, it's a good idea to have a friend or family member provide input, as you may be unaware of potential hazards another person could see. Better yet, ask a trained occupational or physical therapist to visit your home to assess the environment. Your healthcare provider may be able to recommend someone.

1. Start by looking down

As you age, it's harder to recover from sprains and broken bones, so it's important to reduce tripping hazards to prevent falls in the first place. Remove these potential dangers:

- Throw rugs
- Cords — move them behind furniture or tape to the floor
- Small furniture like footstools and ottomans
- Clutter, like pairs of shoes

Also consider what footwear you wear at home. Are your socks, slippers or shoes well-fitting and non-slip?

2. Increase bath safety

Bathing is a challenging activity for people with mobility or balance issues. While you could remodel your entire bathroom, there are smaller changes you can implement to reduce hazards. These include:

- Using non-slip mats or strips for your floor, shower or tub
- Installing safety grab bars in and around your tub
- Using a shower or tub seat and handheld nozzle for bathing
- Having a tub cut-out or step-in shower installed

3. Make sure using the toilet is safe and easy

When you can be independent in the bathroom, you maintain your dignity and have better peace of mind. Unfortunately, most toilets are low enough that they're difficult for seniors or others with disabilities to safely get up and down.

One solution is an elevated toilet seat. The Bemis Independence Clean Shield 3-inch Elevated Toilet Seat, which is raised to ease sitting and standing, includes easy installation. The Snap 2 Secure system provides the correct clamping force so the seat will never loosen or shift, and its 3-inch height is ideal for seniors, plus anyone with mobility concerns, back, hip or knee issues.

4. Check your stairs

Staircases are another high-risk area for accident or injury. Make sure there are railings, even for just a couple of steps, and that they are solid and secure. Keep clutter from accumulating on or near stairs, and consider adding stair treads to wooden stairs, replacing carpet with stair treads and/or applying differently colored tape to help differentiate one stair from the next.

5. Light it up

Using nightlights throughout the home can help with nighttime trips to the bathroom or moving around during early morning hours when it's still dark. Light switches that are both easy to access and that light up can also help seniors find their way around more easily, any time of night or day.

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BANISHING BUGS

The good, the bad and the ugly of at-home pest control

BY STATEPOINT | PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES PLUS

If you hate the idea of bugs in your home, you're in fine company — 1 in 3 Americans have seriously considered burning down their own home after experiencing a bug infestation, according to a new survey.

The study, commissioned by Zevo and conducted by OnePoll, found that 66% of respondents are willing to do "nearly anything" to get rid of bugs at home — including fumigating their entire home (51%), throwing the nearest thing at it, no matter what that nearest thing is (43%) and even DIYing a flamethrower (35%). Others have changed their diet and lifestyle to avoid sightings at home, with 59% saying they will even refrain from keeping fresh fruit in their homes or buying houseplants out of fear that it will attract flying insects.

In fact, some people would rather just leave it all behind and start over somewhere new. More than half of respondents (52%) have considered moving because of bug infestations, and of those who considered that option, 69% actually followed through and packed up their things.

When it comes to putting up with bugs,

there are a number of home woes people would prefer to live with, including broken appliances (29%), creaky floors (26%), broken windows (26%), not having television connections (25%) and even rodents (24%).

Given how bugged by insects people are, it's no wonder that they have come up with some pretty creative and expensive ways to try to deal with the problem, with 48% of survey respondents having turned to DIY "hacks" and the average person spending \$177 on creating homemade methods to deal with bugs. Some of the methods mentioned by respondents include using cinnamon, coffee grounds and even maple syrup to get rid of bugs. One person even recalled pouring gasoline on bugs to drown them.

Of course, many of these homemade solutions produce iffy results at best or are downright dangerous. The bug biology and behavior experts at Zevo say that if you want to rid your home of pests, there are much easier and more effective ways to go about it that don't involve putting your home on the market and relocating.

Here's an effective two-pronged approach

you can try for killing bugs and preventing future infestations:

1. Go worry-free. Most traditional insect sprays on the market today use synthetic pyrethroids as their active ingredients, which can have a noxious smell and make a room uninhabitable after spraying. For a solution that's safe for people and pets when used as directed, check out Zevo Instant Action Sprays, which rely on essential oil to target and shut down biological pathways found in insects.

2. Safeguard entry points. Pests enter the home most typically through windows, doors and the garage. Check screen doors and windows for tears, and patch or replace them. You can also plug flying insect traps into outlets in areas where bugs typically gather in your home, like kitchens, bathrooms, garages and entryways. The traps use a combination of UVC and blue light to attract and trap flying insects, offering continuous defense for up to 45 days or until the trap is full.

To learn more about defending your home against insects, visit zevoinsect.com.

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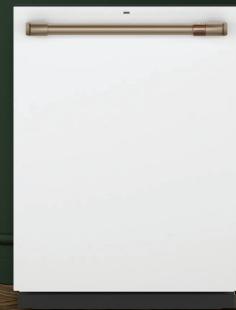
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YOUR DREAM HOME

Tips for selecting the perfect house

BY FAMILY FEATURES | PHOTO BY UNSPLASH

For those beginning the process of home buying, there are many factors to consider. Keep these ideas in mind as you conduct your search — whether it's online or at a series of open houses.

CONSIDER FUTURE NEEDS

Because life is always evolving, it's important to move into a home that has enough space for your family's anticipated changes. While features and space are always prime considerations, don't forget to look into the area schools, day care options, parks and other kid-friendly amenities if you plan to grow your family in your next home.

LOOK FOR FLEXIBLE SPACES

Seek homes that offer rooms with multiple functions. For example, an office area may be suitable for a small child's room, or a sunroom may be converted to a laundry area down the

road. Unfinished basements are also blank canvases that can be customized to meet your family's wants and needs.

GET TO KNOW THE AREA

The purchase of a home goes well beyond the property line. Be sure to examine the neighborhood in which the house is situated. From the condition of the neighbors' houses to highway access and the proximity of necessities like grocery stores and gas stations, be sure to take every factor into account to help ensure you're selecting the right location.

Find more tips to aid you in your home search at eLivingtoday.com.



Marvelous Mantels

Incorporate florals into your fall designs

BY KATIE LAUGHRIDGE | TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

I love to walk the shop floor early in the mornings before anyone else has arrived. It inspires me. As I walked the floor recently, I was awestruck by the one thing that tied each room together: fall foliage. While I might be a bit biased, our florals are always fantastic, but this season, I felt as though I was seeing them with fresh eyes.

It's true, fall foliage is having a moment.

Incorporating floral elements into fall designs just made perfect sense. I love celebrating fall, especially through design, though the season seems fleeting. So for now, I am looking for timeless pieces that can make the transition to Christmas.

The stag head mantelpiece, at right, is a fantastic example of an element that could be put up in the fall and transition through to Christmas. The candlesticks could ride out the holiday season, to be swapped with something lighter and brighter in the spring.

How to achieve this look: This stag head was affixed to the wall using professional help and needed to be anchored in place above the mirror. We wreathed the stag in gold and green garland to incorporate an organic element into the design. We polished the look with a series of symmetrical candles on either side for balance.

Different ways to feature fall foliage

If you don't want to block a piece of art or beautiful mirror from view, we don't blame you. Keep your visual interest at the edge of the piece to allow your eye to travel across it. Layer in everyday items at varying heights for a design full of movement. In the mantel seen below right, monochromatic books and gourds lend to the autumnal motif without stealing the show from the striking red dahlias in the floral arrangement.

How to achieve this look: A floral arrangement layered between everyday items makes for a stunning mantelpiece. We took monochromatic books and pumpkins and tucked them on the mantel, ensuring that they were playfully stacked at differing heights. We then crafted this floral centerpiece using moody red dahlias and seasonal stems. The more stems the merrier for this bouquet for a full but not heavy look. Don't forget the candlesticks! We placed one on a stack of books to allow your eye to travel from the floral arrangement all the way across the mirror.

Fall foliage in full force

Not just for use during the holidays, fall garland and picks can create quite the statement, like on the mantel seen at left. Blue and white matches everything. The tried and true color combo really lets the colors of the season do the talking in this design.

How to achieve this look: To re-create a statement autumnal arrangement, add in your big stems and larger foliage first, then layer in the smaller stems to add fullness and visual interest. The beauty of this design is in its simplicity. We recommend a long and thin container for your blooms, to ensure it isn't too deep for the mantel, and to give your arrangement some room to spread out.

The season isn't officially here until my mantel has been updated. It is usually where I start with a seasonal changeover at home. Whether you like to swap out a few simple elements or completely redesign, these focal points in your home make for great places to display your love of seasonal decor.

Katie Laughridge is the owner of Kansas City interior design destination Nell Hill's. For more information, contact Katie at info@nellhills.com.





What to do if your mortgage application is denied

BY STATEPOINT | PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES PLUS

If you dream of homeownership, having your mortgage application denied can be devastating. If this does happen to you, it's important to remember that you're not alone. Thirteen percent of all purchase mortgage applications — a total of nearly 650,000 — were denied in 2020, according to federal government data.

Before quickly reapplying for a loan, it's important to first understand the reasons your loan was denied. The lender is required to disclose that information to you within 30 days of its decision. You can also call your lender for further explanation. Having this knowledge will help you work toward building your eligibility for a mortgage.

In some instances, the situation involves a quick fix, such as providing missing or incomplete documentation. However, if the reasons cited for your application denial involve down payment cost, a low credit score, an adverse credit history or a high debt-to-income ratio, here are six steps you can take toward recovery:

CONSULT A HOUSING COUNSELOR

Consider speaking to a community-based credit counselor or a HUD-certified housing counselor. They can help you create a plan to increase your savings, decrease your debt, improve your credit, access down payment assistance or take advantage of first-time homebuyer programs.

IMPROVE YOUR CREDIT

In a 2022 Freddie Mac survey of consumers denied a mortgage application in the past four years, three in five cited debt or credit issues as reasons given for their initial denial. If this describes you, take time to improve your credit profile before applying for another loan. Good credit demonstrates responsible money management and gives you more purchasing power, opening doors to better loan

terms and products. Visit creditsmart.freddiemac.com to access Freddie Mac's CreditSmart suite of free financial education resources that can help you understand the fundamentals of credit and prepare you for homeownership.

PAY DOWN DEBT

In the application process, lenders will look at your recurring monthly debts, such as car payments, student loans and credit card loans. By lowering or paying down monthly debts, you can build a positive credit history and lower your debt-to-income ratio. Not sure where to start? Tackle your debt with the highest interest rate first.

OBTAIN GIFT FUNDS

If you're short on money for your down payment, you may be able to use gift funds from a family member to decrease the amount you need to borrow.

FIND A CO-SIGNER

A co-signer applies for the loan with you, agreeing to take responsibility for the loan should you default. The co-signer's credit, income and debts will be evaluated to make sure they can assume payments if necessary. In addition to ensuring your co-signer has good credit, you should make sure they are aware of this responsibility and have sufficient income to cover the payment.

LOOK FOR A LOWER COST HOME

Remember, you should only borrow an amount you feel comfortable repaying. You may need to look for a lower-cost home than you're financially prepared to purchase and maintain.

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