

Quality water helps to energize the home

Turning over a new leaf. That's what many homeowners will do come spring when the final thaw reveals a home and grounds in need of cleaning and repair.

This year, along with the routine that's as much a harbinger as robin red breast, consumers will turn their attention towards "energizing" the house in conjunction with traditional improvements.

Homeowners staying put

Still reeling from winter's fuel bills, skyrocketing inflation and double-digit interest rates, homeowners are staying put and improving what they've got in an effort to beat the high cost of living.

In fact, recent reports show that consumers are spending a record \$58 billion on home repair and renovation with a large chunk ear-marked for improving energy efficiency.

While major energizers such as insulation, weatherstripping and storm windows may require a healthy financial commitment, there are some simpler measures that take little more than extra time and some common sense, report experts at the Water Quality Association.

Helpful measures

- On the exterior, check walls and foundation for cracks or damages. Repair immediately to prevent water, wind, and mud from seeping in.
- Keep storm windows in place during the summer months. They prevent heat gain just as they prevent heat loss.
- Plant trees and shrubs with a southern exposure. This thick leaf shading will lessen air conditioning demands and saves on

energy bills.

As April showers bring May flowers, spend the time inside checking that appliances are working at maximum efficiency.

• Repair leaky faucets. One drop per second can waste as much as 60 gallons of hot or cold water per week.

• Check the hot water heater. With hot water heating accounting for 20 percent of the home's total utility bill, it's important to keep heaters working at maximum efficiency.

According to the Water Quality Association, for homeowners residing in the 80 percent of the country that has a hard water problem, installation of a water softener can cut up to 1/4 off the water heating bill.

Virtues of softened water

According to studies, when water is softened, hardness minerals that create scale build-up on pipes are removed, helping the heater to work smoothly and efficiently.

• Keep lamps and lights clean. When bulbs are heated, they attract dust and dirt which can reduce light by as much as 50 percent.

• Inspect the door seal on refrigerator and freezer. If condensation or frost appears, repair immediately. Another way to test is to close the door on a sheet of paper; if it pulls out easily, the seal needs attention.

A more efficient home

This season as homeowners begin the annual spring cleaning tradition, many will include energy savings measures that help cut costs and keep the entire household working more efficiently.

New siding: a wise investment that yields wide range of benefits

New siding can rejuvenate a home's aging exterior. But, it should offer more than a quick "facelift." It should reduce maintenance and upkeep costs, provide protection against the elements, and add to a home's curb appeal.

Today's popular sidings include aluminum, solid vinyl, prefinished mineral fiber, hardboard, factory finished steel, and any of several wood sid-

ings.

With the wide variety of sidings on the market, finding one that suits your needs and fits your budget shouldn't be a problem.

Since siding plays a vital role in a home's overall exterior appearance, select the style that best enhances its architecture.

Depending on the choice of color, texture and style, siding

can impart a modern or rustic look to your home, or even make it appear taller or wider. Be sure the color you select is one you're willing to live with for many years.

When deciding to install new siding, the National Home Improvement Council advises homeowners to consider insulating the walls.

NHIC notes that the cost of insulation can be reduced con-

siderably if done in conjunction with siding. Discuss this option with your contractor.

Unless you're a competent handyman, the job of residing might better be left in the hands of a professional contractor. Most chapters of the National Home Improvement Council, listed in the telephone book, will provide names of reliable contractors.

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Greatly inflated home heating bills are a painful reminder that the world's fuel supplies are limited. Although there is little we can do to keep the price of fuel from going up, there is something all of us can do to keep costs down while remaining comfortable in our own homes.

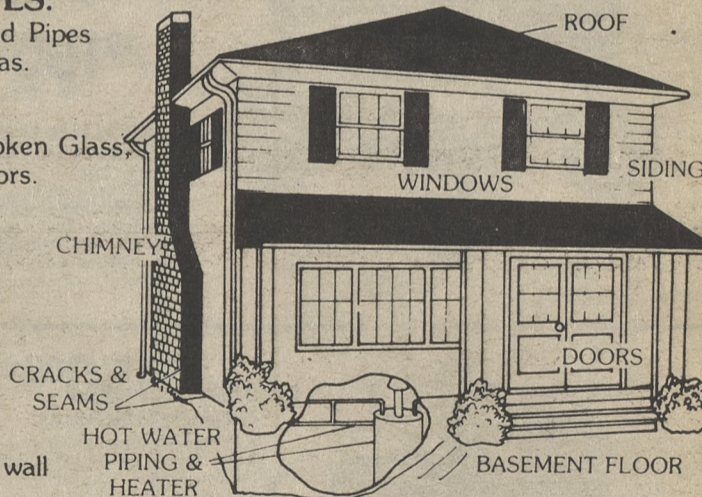
Because very few homes have been constructed with serious energy conservation in mind, proper weatherproofing can reduce heat loss (or heat gain in summer months) by an extreme amount.

That's where the expert Energy Conservation Consultants from Gentle Warmth Enterprises can save you a bundle.

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