

4D REAL ESTATE

Get to know your mold

The issue of mold in homes is a hot topic with the Environmental Protection Agency, but how much do you know about this hazard?

Mold is part of the fungus kingdom (like mushrooms, yeast and puffballs) or division of sponge with common characteristics like a multiplying plant. Molds reproduce by means of tiny spores. These tiny spores are invisible to the naked eye and float through the air. Mold generates indoors when mold spores land on moist surfaces.



ROLAND HAWKINS

How mold grows
Mold growth does not require the presence of moisture; mold can grow when the relative humidity of the air is high. The ability of air to hold water vapor decreases as the temperature falls. Maintaining the relative humidity between 30-60 percent will help control mold.

While most spores lie dormant for years, given the right circumstances (excessive moisture) spores germinate and causes mold to grow. Mold is everywhere hidden or visible, depending on the presence of moisture. These fungi can be seen on trees outside your home or in your refrigerator on old food.

Molds are part of our natural environment. Outdoors, mold impact nature by breaking down dead organic however, indoors mold growth should be avoided.

Molds have the potential to cause health problems. Indoor molds produce allergens, irritants, and in some cases, potentially toxic substances that can cause allergic reactions.

Some people are very sensitive to mold. For these people, exposure to mold can cause symptoms such as nasal stuffiness, eye irritation, wheezing, or skin irritation. People with serious allergies however, may have more severe reactions which may include fever and shortness of breath.

You may suspect hidden mold if your home smells musky or moldy, even though you cannot see the source and you know there has been water damage. Undetected mold can be hidden in places such as the back side of dry walls, wallpaper, or paneling. Most hidden mold problems can frequently be found in ductwork, damp crawl spaces, the underside of carpets and pads.

Moisture = mold

If you discover a mold problem, then you have a moisture problem. There is no practical way to eliminate all molds and mold spores in the indoor environment. However, the way to control indoor mold growth is to control moisture. Therefore, fix the source of water problems and leaks to prevent mold growth before mold growth starts.

The first thing you need to do is eliminate the water source creating the problem. Next, you must evaluate the severity of the affected area prior to applying solution.

If you respond promptly (within 24-48 hours) to a moisture problem, you have a good chance of controlling a potential mold problem. Promptly clean mold off hard

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PHOTO DECKORATORS

Deck out your home with enhanced living space

ARTICLE RESOURCE ASSOCIATION

Home improvement has become one of the nation's favorite pastimes. Every day millions tune in to watch T.V. gurus work their magic - sometimes to extremes.

But when it comes to real life, most Americans operate within a budget and evaluate their home improvements based on cost-effectiveness. One growing trend is an emphasis on outdoor living spaces, where families find usable space and a new venue for decorating and design.

"A nice deck or patio doesn't cost nearly as much as adding indoor space and yet it's a great addition to a home," says Chelsea Gardner, a landscape designer who writes

about outdoor decorating and entertaining.

"I'm seeing more homeowners who want improvements that enhance their lifestyle, and decks give you great options for entertaining, relaxing, and spreading out. With today's wide range of deck and patio products you can add on a signature environment using creative design and interesting accessories," says Dave Bielicki, owner of Decks Atlanta.

Bielicki notes that today's decks have become much more than wooden platforms attached to the back of a house. They are designer-inspired living spaces, where comfortable furniture, functional lighting, and decorative balusters make them an

attractive, multi-purpose area for families.

Kelly Jones, founder of Deckorators, a leader in deck rail options and accessories, says their newest items appeal to the homeowner who wants more than just place to plop the charcoal grill and lawn chairs.

Included on his list of best sellers are stylized baroque balusters of maintenance-free aluminum and view expanding options made of glass. The company's "Scenic Series" of glass balusters comes in two styles - the Frontier, a simple rectangular design with beveled edges, and the Contour, a curvaceous figure-eight design. Both are available in clear or tinted versions.

"When you sit on your deck, you're

actually at eye level with the rails, so it makes sense to make the balusters a focal point," Jones says.

Even if a new "designer" deck is not in the budget, adding balusters, postcaps, or centerpieces can give a tired deck a brand new look. New balusters are so easy to install that do-it-yourselfers can make dramatic upgrades in their existing decks over a weekend. Jones says virtual design tools, like the one on the Deckorators Web site (www.deckorators.com), make it possible to see just how different a deck can look with some dramatic updating.

Sometimes even the "perfect home" with lots of interior space feels different when the weather

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Looking for luxury



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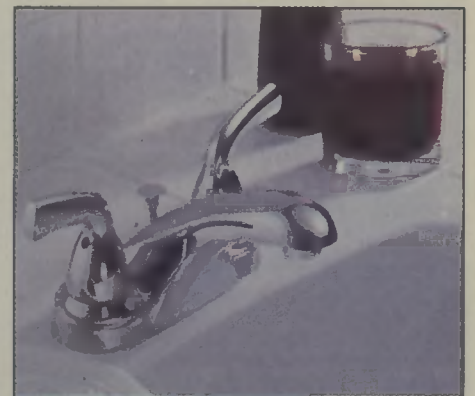
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Maybe it is the television shows focusing on celebrity lifestyles, or maybe it's a sign of a healthy economy. Whatever the reason, there is a noticeable trend toward "trading up" in the American consumer market that's having a big impact on a wide range of products - not to mention on home decor around the country.

The trend ranges from trading up to sit-down restaurants and cafes instead of fast food eaten

in the car for lunch to upscale kitchen and bath products at home. Consumers want to pamper themselves with luxuries like 300-thread count sheets and professional grade cookware - even if they never cook. Publications like Dwell and even O, Oprah's magazine, have introduced consumers to a range of high-end consumer goods that were formerly available only to the rich and famous.

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PHOTO/ARA CONTENT

Peerless offers consumers an easy, stylish upgrade to the kitchen and bath.

Upgrade your kitchen or bath with easy faucet installation tips

ARTICLE RESOURCE ASSOCIATION

Changing a faucet is one of the best ways to update a kitchen or bath without the time, expense and inconvenience of a full-scale renovation. Faucets serve as a focal point in the kitchen and bath, and stylish new fixtures with matching accessories can give these important rooms a refreshing new appearance.

Many people who recognize the benefits of upgrading their faucets are intimidated by the thought of tackling the task on their own. But they don't need to be, says Christine Rasche, associate product marketing manager for Peerless. "With a little forethought and preparation, installing a stylish new faucet can be relatively simple."

While many consumers want to infuse their kitchens and baths with more style, they don't want to break the bank doing so. Manufacturers such as Peerless now offer a full line of stylish products at an affordable price point. These products are easy to maintain, and offer consumers the style and dependability they want out of their kitchen or bathroom makeover.

Please see UPGRADE/5D