

# 4D REAL ESTATE

## How to fight off mold

The issue of mold in homes is a hot topic with the Environmental Protection Agency. How much do you know about this significant and potentially hazardous?

Mold is part of the fungus kingdom (like mushrooms, yeast and puffballs) or division of common characteristics like a multiplying plant. Molds reproduce by means of tiny spores.



ROLAND  
HAWKINS

These tiny spores are invisible to the naked eye and float through the air. Mold generates indoors when mold spores land on moisture surfaces.

While most spores lie dormant for years, given the right circumstances (excessive moisture) spores germinate and cause mold to grow. Mold is everywhere from visible to hidden, provided moisture is present. 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, molds impact nature by breaking down dead organic matter but indoors mold growth should be avoided.

Molds are usually not a problem, unless spores land on a wet or damp spot and begin growing. Molds have the potential to cause health problems. Indoor molds produce allergens that can cause allergic reactions, irritants, and in some cases, potentially toxic substances.

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

You may suspect hidden mold if your home smells musty or moldy, but 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.

If you discover a mold problem, you also 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.

If you have a mold problem 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.

It is impossible to get rid of all mold and mold spores indoors; some mold spores will be found floating through.

Please see **TACKLE/5D**



PHOTOS/ARA CONTENT

## A room of his very own

*It's the ultimate Father's Day gift: A retreat where he can unwind*

ARTICLE RESOURCE ASSOCIATION

It used to be a man's home was his castle.

But then the Decorating Divas swept in and insisted that a house just isn't a home until the duvet covers and pillows match the valance, the walls are painted 'Marigold Sunset' with cream accents, and the TV

is tucked into an armoire. After his comfy old recliner has been banished, where's a guy supposed to sit?

If the king in your home is feeling dethroned, perhaps the ultimate Father's Day gift is his own room, a place where his treasures — and his recliner — don't have to be hidden, a retreat where

dad can hang his favorite hockey jersey or put together the WWII Flying Fortress model he got for Father's Day three years ago. A place where he and his friends can play poker to their heart's content or watch the big game and loudly protest the ref's calls.

Sounds good, but where?

Chances are the space is right under your nose — or your house — because the basement is the perfect place to create Dad's special room.

If your basement looks more like a dungeon than a place to honor the man of the house, it's probably time

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## Basement investment pays off in the end

ARTICLE RESOURCE ASSOCIATION

Can you put a price on peace? Family time? Extra room in your home? What if you could be reasonably certain that the price you paid to upgrade your home to enjoy today would pay dividends tomorrow? Turns out finishing your basement may be just such an investment.

Remodeling Magazine's 2005 Cost vs. Value report puts the average percentage of cost recouped for a basement remodel at 90 percent in the first year, topping popular projects such as a bathroom addition or a major kitchen remodel.

"Homeowners want to feel they're making a solid investment in their home — a good financial decision, and one that will convert a dark, uninviting space into a quiet, comfortable retreat from the hustle and bustle of the upstairs world," says Frank Palmeri, business manager, Owens Corning Basement Finishing System. "Unlike 'traditional' investments, basement finishing will pay dividends immediately."

It's no surprise that basement finishing is one of the most popular remodeling projects, with more than one million finished each year in the continental United States, according to a report from the Tampa-based Home Improvement Research Institute.

The Basement Finishing System experts at building materials manufacturer Owens Corning recently surveyed homeowners about their basements and found that 60 percent of homeowners with unfinished basements say they are likely to finish their basement in the next five years, with head, heart and wallet coming together as they weigh the alternatives.

With stats like those reported in the Cost versus Value report, it's no surprise that two-thirds of those planning to finish their basement say they want to increase the value of their home. These homeowners see it as an investment rather than a cost — money in the bank for the future, and bigger, better living space today.

Among homeowners who have already finished their basement, more than half reported they had received more value than they had expected from finishing their basement, and more than 90 percent had received as much or more value than expected.

However, even homeowners who look forward to the benefits of a finished basement are often daunted by the project, fearing a lengthy and messy process. These homeowners may find the competitive cost and convenient construction process of a finishing system to be a sound alternative to traditional drywall construction for their basement remodel.

The Owens Corning Basement Finishing System, specifically designed for basement environments, consists of insulated and mold-resistant wall components and a drop ceiling. The process takes about two weeks to complete versus the typical multi-month traditional process.

With minimal disruption and none of the mess associated with traditional drywall, wasted space is transformed into an additional living area — an investment that will reward homeowners now and in the future.

Please see **CANOPIES/5D**

## Know the real deal behind curb appeal

ARTICLE RESOURCE ASSOCIATION

Most architects and real estate experts agree curb appeal is the most important first impression of a home. The outside — from the home's landscaping to the exterior, to the windows,

front door and outdoor lighting — all impact whether a prospective buyer gets out of the car to take a look or keeps driving.

"When you look at a house, whether it's a cabin or a castle, you can't help but ask,

'Could I see myself living there?'" says Denver, Colo., architect Doug Walter, AIA. "That is the basis of curb appeal — tapping into peoples' inherent sense of good design."

So if your home seems to be giving off distress signals to prospective buyers, it's time to take control and update its curb appeal, an aspect that can truly impact the resale potential. And you won't be alone. The renovation wave is upon us, with about 20 million American households undertaking an annual renovation project, according to a 2005 report on home remodeling from Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies. According to published reports in the Wilmington News Journal, homeowners who are part of the renovation trend tend to fall into three distinct groups:

- Those who remodel for economic investment reasons.
- Those who undertake projects strictly as an aesthetic or lifestyle choice.
- Those who attempt to balance money with emotional needs.

No matter what your renovation rationalization, there is quantifiable evidence that reinvestment in your home can pay significant dividends. According to research conducted by Specpan, an Indianapolis-based market research firm, on behalf of

Remodeling magazine, a window replacement project can result in an average of 88 to 90 percent of the cost being recouped. That's typically more return on investment than an upscale kitchen remodel or replacing the roof.

According to Walter, improving curb appeal should be every homeowner's top priority. "Not only will you enhance your enjoyment of the home, but when it comes time to sell, good curb appeal is like money in the bank. Buyers have choices — inevitably they opt for the more attractive home."

Here are some simple, low-cost and quick fixes from Pella Windows & Doors that can significantly impact your home's curb appeal. Begin by stepping back and taking an objective look at your home from the outside. Take a black and white photo to view your house with a new perspective and determine what updates are needed. Then, consider the options:

Option one — replace the windows. Whether you choose quality wood, fiberglass, or vinyl, window replacement is not only an excellent investment, it adds tremendous aesthetic value. And, the gains from energy efficiency alone make window replacement a worthwhile update. Look for superior weatherstripping, special coatings and glass combina-

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PHOTO/ARA CONTENT

Doors and windows should be at their very best

## Made in the shade: Canopies add value outdoors

ARTICLE RESOURCE ASSOCIATION

Made in the Shade: Canopies Add Value to Outdoor Living Space. Decided to get on board with the movement towards outdoor living spaces? While designing your outdoor environment, keep this in mind: Sun is not always fun. If your patio or deck gets a lot of sun, and you have no "shade management" plan, you could be missing out on hours of enjoyment.

Shade on a patio or deck not only creates a soothing, comfortable environment, it also makes sense. Blocking out the sun during the hottest part of the day can extend the usable hours of your outdoor space, reduce household cooling bills, protect your family's health, and improve your home's overall value.

"Decks and patios continue to be among the top home improvements to add value and enhance enjoyment of

your home," says Dwayne Williams, executive vice president of Columbus, Ohio-based ShadeTree Systems. "But having a beautiful deck or patio that you can't use because it receives too much direct sunlight can be extremely frustrating. More homeowners are turning to retractable awnings and canopies to solve their shade challenges."

Retractable awnings allow you to enjoy the sun during

the hours when it is most mild, and block it out during the hottest part of the day. Available in a variety of designs and colors, canopies and awnings can easily be installed over existing decks or patios. ShadeTree shade systems can be customized to fit any area, no matter the size or location. Have a sun-drenched courtyard or a grassy, sunny spot between two buildings? Create a shade-filled oasis with a

canopy. A retractable canopy is also a great way to turn an unused landscape feature, like an arbor or pergola, into a useful space.

"Many people build a pergola only to find it offers minimal — if any — shade protection," Williams says. "Growing vines or flowers over it may be visually appealing, but they are not very good at blocking out the sun. By