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Glass replacement windows and doors can save money, update decor

BY VALERIE TUCKER
Correspondent

Glass replacement windows and doors can offer new efficiencies that lower heating and cooling costs year-round.

Angel Paradis, owner of TNT Glass in Skowhegan, explained that they carry replacement windows that meet and exceed the U.S. Department of Energy's minimum standards. She said that understanding Energy Star ratings can help shoppers learn what factors to look for before they purchase windows and doors.

"The window's U-Factor tells a customer how well a product prevents heat from escaping from a home or building," she explained.

U-factor ratings generally fall between 0.20 and 1.20, and the lower the U-factor, the better a product is at keeping heat in during the winter heating season.

Eric Roberts, American Glass' residential glass consultant, explained that older glass windows, whether single- or double-pane, waste a tremendous amount of money by allowing the heat and cold to pass through the glass. Today's efficient replacement windows eliminate that loss, and they also prevent the sun's damaging rays from fading upholstery and drapes.

"Low-E, or low-emittance glass, is a coating that increases the window's ability to transfer heat, which saves on both heat-



ing and cooling costs," Roberts said.

Sandwiched between panes of glass, Argon gas, which is heavier than air, also reduces the transfer of heat and cold air. Today's windows, he said, can be very stylish and modern, while simultaneously keeping dollars in the home or business owner's wallet.

Storm doors can make a dramatic change in a home's

comfort level in winter months. The Harvey line of doors offers several styles, features and options. The convenience of the push-button bottom closer, the ability to withstand high wind speeds and the exceptionally durable finish make the storm doors popular for Maine's weather challenges.

Harvey's Estate Series heavy-duty aluminum storm doors provide maximum protec-

"The window's U-Factor tells a customer how well a product prevents heat from escaping from a home or building."

ANGEL PARADIS, OWNER, TNT GLASS IN SKOWHEGAN

tion against the elements. The unique retractable screen hides in the top of the door when not use, so there's no need to remove the screen in the winter. The Estate Series also can be ordered in custom sizes to fit a variety of openings. They feature concealed installation screws and overlapping double weather-stripping to keep the winter weather outside and the warm air inside. These doors are perfect for do-it-yourselfers, because they are pre-hung for fast and easy installation, according to Angel Paradis.

"They have an adjustable sill expander, so there's no guess work," she said. "We can fit nearly every door size our customers might require."

Harvey's traditional aluminum storm doors have both a glass and a screen insert, allowing the homeowner to swap as the weather changes. The glass inserts also have the same durable wool pile weather stripping for extra protection against drafts. New technology makes the storm doors last longer than those of previous generations. Harvey doors are coated with an electrostatically-applied enamel paint baked to a hard, tough finish that can withstand the elements for years.

Both American Glass and TNT Glass Windows offer expert design and installation of customized mirrors, shower doors, fireplace doors, cabinet doors, desktops, tabletops, glass shelves and sunrooms.

"A shower is one of the first things you notice when you step into a bathroom," said Eric Roberts at American Glass. "A new glass shower door can give your bathroom a fresh and updated look."

Glass shower doors can be clear, etched or coated. They are easy to clean and maintain, because a quick swipe with an inexpensive squeegee can eliminate scrubbing with harsh chemicals.

A frameless glass shower enclosure offers flexibility, because it blends with any bathroom style and adds an elegant touch. Homeowners with tubs don't have to be stuck with shower curtains or the old-fashioned sliding plastic enclosures.

Modern framed glass enclosures are durable and can be customized with hardware that blends with the bathroom's decor. For those looking for design inspiration, websites such as Pinterest and Houzz provide photos of completed projects.

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Picket Fence Courtesy of Pine Tree Fence Company.

Privacy, pets and more: fencing options abound

BY KATE CONE
Correspondent

Wayde Rankin has been putting up fences since 2003 and he does it all.

From a \$25,000 backyard enclosure in Yarmouth to a \$1,500 dog kennel, Rankin, owner of Picket Tree Fence in Litchfield, works with his customers at all price ranges and materials.

"We also get some people who design their own fence, and we help them build it. We make all our own wood panels here, so we do custom building if that's what the job calls for."

From the less expensive chain link, to the high end commercial project, Pine Tree, in business since 1984, even does professional fencing for Home Depot.

"We volunteered to do the fencing and gates for the Travis Mills foundation, which recently completed its retreat house for veterans in Rome, Maine," Rankin said.

Rankin explained that Travis Mills is a veteran who lost all four limbs while serving in Afghanistan: "We made Travis' signature 'TM' in the center of the gates."

As the poet Robert Frost wrote in "Mending Wall: "I'd like to know what I am walling in and walling out," before erecting a fence.

With dogs, an outdoor kennel or enclosure can give pet owners peace of mind that their dog is getting good outside time without the worry of it running

off. That's where the less expensive chain link comes in. "The appeal of chain link is the price," Rankin said. "And with black, vinyl-coated fencing, it blends into the landscape and is much more aesthetically pleasing."

Pine Tree gives free, on-site estimates. If customers have a larger project, Rankin said they can possibly fund it with a home equity loan from their bank, or "sometimes we steer people to Home Depot because they have a financing program."

For commercial projects, such as the new Colby baseball/softball complex and the fence around the Bates College football field, Rankin said: "We use our products, not in-store products, which ensures a high level of quality."

Got privacy? "We have a lot more people coming to us for fencing that gives them privacy," said Jennie Williams, who with her husband, Bob, has been offering fencing options since 2003 at All Around Fence in Belgrade.

"People are regaining control of their yards because they value their personal space," she said. "We have a 6-foot vinyl product that is a best seller in that department."

The Williams welcome customers to come by their Route 27 location to see the fences in person, since choosing a fence can be complicated.

"There are so many styles, material choices and applications that it is easy to get

confused," Jennie Williams said. "Here you can see and touch the fence displays. You can get a feel for the different heights and styles of fences that are available. You can get the pros and cons of the different materials, installation tips, and pricing."

Building both residential and commercial fencing, All Around Fence now offers the Illusion brand, which has a 20-year warranty.

"We get it out of New Hampshire. We tried to use local companies, but they changed the profiles of how they made the fencing," Williams said. "With this fencing, you don't have to do your whole yard at once, you can do it in stages, because the colors will always match. Illusion's warranty covers any manufacturing issue is covered."

However, Williams added: "We have never had to use the warranty, and we've been using Illusion for 15 years."

For estimates, the Williams use technology to speed things up. Customers often email photos of their space or yard and estimates can be given without a on-site visit.

At ADA Fence in Palmyra, Danielle McGrath and her brother, Allen Hill, run the business their father, Don, started in 1998 after he retired from his job as a school principal.

"We do all of Maine, go to Eastport, Bath, Millinocket, Farmington, all over," Danielle McGrath said. "My



ADA Fence Company

Three rail western red cedar with welded wire fencing for a garden in Concord Township.

favorite part of my job is the people. We get all kinds of stories. Our installers are awesome, down to earth people and they are great with our customers."

The most unusual request ADA Fence ever received?

"My dad once had a woman from the Acadia region who wanted a bamboo fence. It was involved and expensive, but that's what she wanted, and that's what he gave her," she said.

But, McGrath said, most of their work runs between the usual home fencing projects to the many athletic facilities they have built.

"We just did the Wrigley Field baseball field in Waterville," she said, referring to the replica of Chicago's Wrigley Field the city erected for some of their baseball programs.

The people at ADA Fence will also help do-it-yourselfers who come in for

materials and leave with the product and some sound advice for doing a good job on their own.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

PINE TREE FENCE
1174 Lewiston Road
Litchfield
Phone: 588-0600
ptfence.com

ALL AROUND FENCE
590 Augusta Road
Belgrade
Phone: 495-2300
allaroundfencecompany.com

ADA FENCE
1110 Main Street
Palmyra
Phone: 938-2530
adafence.com



Lattice top Illusions fence in Benton, Courtesy of All Around Fence Company.



Two rail vinyl at Aubuchons in Newport.

ADA Fence Company

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Fall and winter gardening in Maine: Containers bring nature inside

BY NANCY P. MCGINNIS
Correspondent

There's already more than a hint of fall in the air as our days grow shorter, temperatures fall and summer garden colors start to fade in central Maine.

But autumn brings with it a refreshing crispness and a new color palette that will see us through to Thanksgiving and the winter holidays that follow with their own festive traditions, bringing touches of nature indoors.

Boynton's Greenhouse in Skowhegan is ready for the seasonal transition with an abundance of asters and mums in fall hues, flowering cabbage and kale—and to set them off, tall Black Majesty Millet and Rubrum Grass.

And in Manchester, Longfellow's Greenhouses also offers a splendid array of fall flowering plants, as well as gourds, pumpkins and cornstalks galore.

At Longfellow's, celebrating its 40th year in business, container design and herb manager Anna Longfellow Brown points out that indoor possibilities include foliage plants, herbs such as basil, parsley and rosemary in sunny window boxes, and attractive terrariums and mixed containers, as well as seasonal indoor bulbs such as amaryllis and Paper Whites.

While most folks want them in bloom around Christmastime, Brown said, the bulbs can actually produce flowers anytime over a span of months, with a growth cycle that is largely dependent upon the surrounding temperature.

"One strategy is to have multiple plants, in order to enjoy a succession of blooms throughout the winter," Brown suggested.

Boynton's, a year-round, full service flower shop and greenhouse, offers cut flower arrangements for all occasions, as well as seedlings and vegetable sets in the spring.

But terrariums and traditional dish gardens and hanging baskets never go out of season, and fairy gardens are a favorite for all ages, at any time of year.

Ellen Withee, who manages this family business that her mother Marsha Granville's parents founded in 1952, says "we always have a few fairy houses made up and ready to take home; and we're also happy to help our customers select the tiny plants, suitable containers, and miscellaneous miniature additions from our stock, and supply the advice they



Nancy McGinnis photos

Longfellow's Greenhouses, Manchester, offers a splendid array of fall flowering plants, as well as gourds, pumpkins and cornstalks galore.

need to create their very own, one of a kind fairy house."

Stop by to ask the knowledgeable professional gardeners at your local greenhouse which outdoor potted plants will also adapt well to the indoor environment as the days inevitably grow cooler and darker.

Pots of Christmas cactus, for example, can be left outside until late fall to take full advantage of the natural diurnal (day and night) transition, which stimulates bud development. If the plant has set buds by the time of the first frost, it will likely be in glorious full bloom for the holidays, Brown said.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the first frost date in central Maine is typically between mid-September and mid-October.

Virtually all of Kennebec County lies in USDA plant hardiness Zone 5; but most of Somerset County is in slightly less temperate Zone 4.

Of course, one way to have potted plants in bloom just when you want them is to purchase them in full bloom from a local greenhouse.

"We're already growing 30,000 poinsettia plants for the upcoming season, including 40 different varieties, from the classic favorites to new and fun ones," Brown said.

Longfellow's will again this year offer a dazzling seasonal array of Christmas cactus, cyclamen and Norfolk Island pines, as well as cut and living Christmas trees and evergreen garlands, wreaths and bunches.

More GARDENING, PAGE 7



Boynton's Greenhouse, Skowhegan, terrariums and traditional dish gardens and hanging baskets never go out of season, and fairy gardens are a favorite for all ages, at any time of year.

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Gardening

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Boynton's will feature beautifully crafted arrangements for table-tops and mantels. For the door, find a beautiful selection of fresh, fragrant wreaths—decorated, or unadorned, for the “do-it-yourselfer”—with lots of ribbon bows and décor from which to choose.

If it hasn't already arrived, the first frost of the season in your neighborhood is only a few weeks away. Now is the time to visit your local greenhouse for inspiration and information on how to make the most of the seasonal opportunities ahead.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Longfellow's Greenhouses

81 Puddledock Road
Manchester
622-5965
longfellowsgreenhouses.com

Boynton's Greenhouse, Inc.

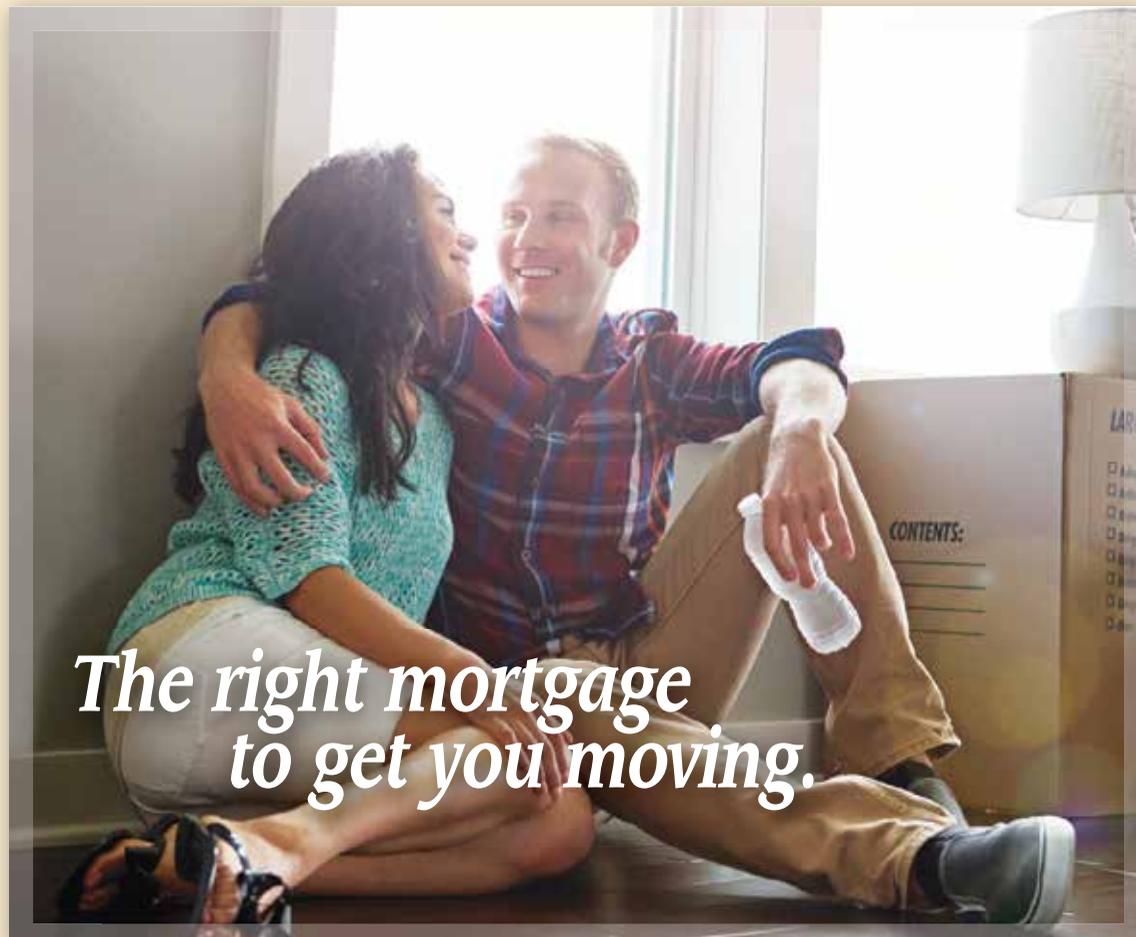
144 Madison Ave.
Skowhegan
474-2892
boyntonsgreenhouses.com



Nancy McGinnis photos

Cactus and succulents, available at Boynton's and Longfellow's for fairy gardens and other inside arrangements.

A colorful array of mums and flowers are still available to add some color to your home.



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Mid Maine Generator, with locations in Winthrop and Wiscasset, features Kohler and Yamaha Generators.

In the dark?

Consider a generator

for emergencies

Systems are available for a variety of needs

BY SUSAN VARNEY
Correspondent

Why get a generator? Remember the ice storm of January 1998?

Two days of freezing rain left Maine with 4 inches of ice coating trees, roads, homes and businesses. Hard to forget if you were one of the thousands of residents coping with trees broken by the weight of ice taking power and phone lines, blocking roads, hitting homes— and it seemed to last forever.

Many people went weeks without power or phones. It was particularly hard on people who had medical support devices that needed power. And it was tough on many who had no back up heat source in winter. Or had a refrigerator or freezer full of food preserved from the garden. It was a state of emergency.

Every winter brings unpredictable weather and it

seems to be getting more so with global warming and weather extremes. Many residents hustled to get generators and found stores sold out. Many people not wanting to go through that again got back-up systems.

Standby power can be the means of staying where you are or moving out. A commercial-grade, residential power system can mean life without interruption the next time the power is interrupted by storms or power outages for any reason.

Lakes Region Power Systems of Rangeley recommends Kohler and Generac for residential and industrial generators. George Poland, owner and operator, has more than 15 years experience working on all generator makes and models.

Based in Rangeley, he focuses his customer base on Maine and New Hampshire and is certified in Kohler, Onan and Generac service

and installation. Get a quote or talk to Poland about your needs at 864-3437 or 520-1957 or lakesregionpower-systems@gmail.com

Mid Maine Generator is a division of Kaplan Electric and has two locations: 1388 Route 202, Winthrop and 360 Bath Road, Wiscasset, with certified technicians, master electricians and licensed propane technicians for a complete installation of a generator for a retail store, nursing home, fire station or just for one's own home.

Mid Maine Generators sell Cummins and Kohler propane generators, and Yamaha portable generators from 1,000 to 12,000 watts for home, RV (recreational vehicle), camp or work that are quiet and efficient. Maintenance agreements include: changing oil and oil filter, checking coolant levels and changing as

More GENERATORS, PAGE 9

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Generators

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

needed, inspecting air filter and changing as needed, inspecting belts and hoses, replacing points, condenser and spark plugs as needed, checking battery condition, adjusting voltage and frequency and also installing software updates as needed. Call for information at 395-8066.

Generators of Maine, 262 Augusta Road, Belgrade, has as its motto “Prepare now for tomorrow!” as they sell, install and service Kohler generators.

Owners Dan MacKenzie and Doug Sawyer state on their website, “When shopping standby home generators, your checklist should include generator size, cost, permits and installation. But don’t worry the dealer will handle all the details.”

On demand generator systems can take the worry out of power outages for homes and businesses and start for under \$6,000, depending on your power needs and installation costs. Staff at Generators of Maine includes licensed electricians, propane installation and services, heating system installation and maintenance

and welding services. Call for more information at 495-2285.

Then there is your favorite hardware store or building supply store, and even *Amazon.com* for you do-it-yourselfers; they may have gas, diesel or propane-powered generators from Siemens, Generac, Square D., Eaton, A-iPower, DuroMax, Honda, Westinghouse, Champion, Briggs & Stratton, Yamaha and others.

A 1000-Watt Sportsman can be had for under \$100. A Generac 1800-Watt gas-powered, portable generator can be purchased for \$350. A DeWalt 4,500-watt gas-powered manual start portable with a Honda engine can be found for \$1,600. A Generac 17,500-watt gas powered electric start portable generator sells for \$2,700. So it’s up to you— what are your needs and how automatic do you want to get?

There are even solar powered generators for travel or camping.

Whatever it is, there is a generator available for your situation: home, business, hobby, tailgating, camp or RV. Call around, visit some showrooms, talk to some dealers and techs, find out what’s available in your neck of the woods and make a considered decision before an emergency hits.



Contributed photo
Lakes Region Power System, Rangeley, focuses on Maine and New Hampshire.

Contributed photo
Generators of Maine, 262 Augusta Road, Belgrade, has as its motto “Prepare now for tomorrow!” as they sell, install and service Kohler generators.



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Proper lighting can make a big difference in design work

Lighting affects the body, mood

BY WANDA CURTIS
Correspondent

A very important aspect of interior design that often gets overlooked is lighting.

Interior design experts report that proper lighting can enhance the aesthetic appeal of a room, create the mood and ambiance of a living space, and affect how large or small a room appears.

Danica Jacobson, showroom and design manager for the Lewiston-based business Lighting Concepts, said that employers now consider how lighting affects their employees' moods when designing lighting schemes. She said that some hospitals are using very white lights today because those have an energizing affect on the staff. She said that yellow lights have a more relaxing effect.

"Lighting definitely affects the body," Jacobson said. Another reason that proper lighting is important, according to Jacobson, is for functional purposes, both in the home and the workplace setting.

"You need to be able to see whatever you're doing," she said. "It's important to be able to see what you need to do in the kitchen or to see how to apply makeup in the bathroom."

About 75 percent of the business conducted at Lighting Concepts' Lewiston location involves residential customers, according to Jacobson. The other 25 percent of the business involves commercial accounts. She said that the company stocks about 4,000 lights in Lewiston.

"Many people have a very definite idea of what they want before they come because they've done their research online," Jacobson said. "If they really have their heart set on something and we don't have it in stock, we can usually order it for them."

Jacobson not only assists

customers in replacing light fixtures in their existing homes, she also helps to design lighting fixtures for new homes that haven't been built yet. She said that in Maine there's a movement now "towards more contemporary, clean lines and sleeker fixtures."

The hours of operation for Lighting Concepts' Lewiston store at 1033 Sabattus Street are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays. The hours of operation at the Portland store at 334 Forest Avenue are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays.

The staff in Portland will be celebrating the first year anniversary of that store with an open house October 17-21. There will be specials, prizes and refreshments, Jacobson said. More details will be available on the Facebook page.

David Johnson, owner of Kennebec Electric and Lighting in Waterville, said that it's important to get the right color lighting not only to create the right atmosphere, but also to blend with the decor of a home. Johnson, who is an electrical contractor, said that he and his wife Cherry made the decision to open the lighting business several years ago. He said that his wife and the other staff are very knowledgeable and are willing to assist customers in selecting the lighting products best suited to their needs.

The store stocks a variety of light fixtures, lamps, light bulbs, and other supplies in its showroom at 3 Seavey St. They sell a lot of lighting fixtures for camps in Belgrade, including decorative moose and deer light fixtures, he said.

According to Johnson, lighting products are much more energy efficient today. He said they sell a lot of LED products

and also sell a lot of recess lighting and outdoor lights.

"One of our biggest sellers is the LED Direct Wire Downlight with a 5-year warranty," said Johnson. "It's easier to install with no recess can."

One difference between their store and some of the bigger box stores, he said, is that he is better able to advise customers about their lighting selections because he's been an electrical contractor for more than 30 years.

Johnson said that while most of their business comes from central Maine, he has had customers from as far away as Lincoln and some from southern Maine. He said that



customers can visit the website and place orders by email. The showroom is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday. They also offer installation services and lamp repair.

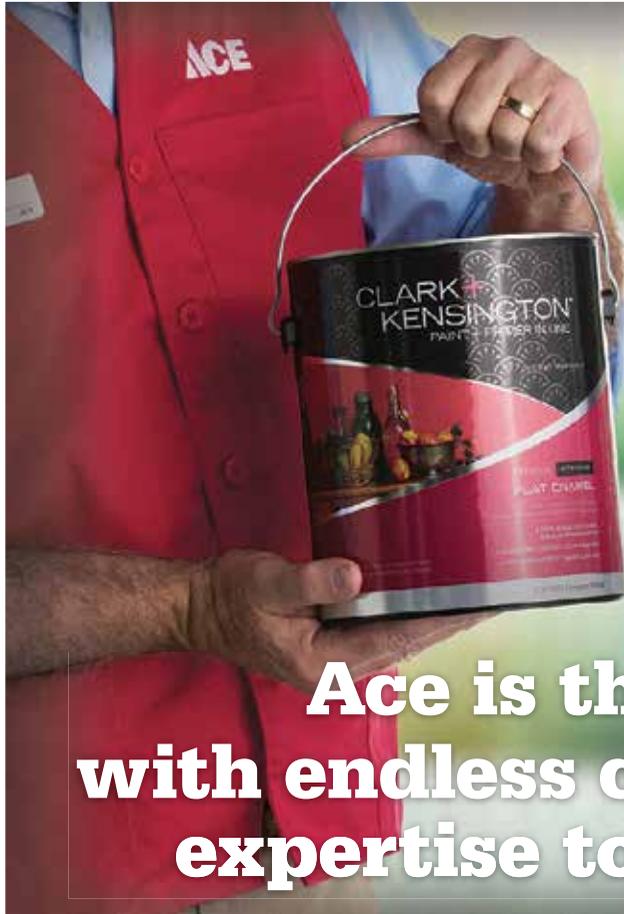
Another group of employees that pride themselves on providing personalized service to their lighting customers are those at Goings Electric at 1060 Farmington Falls Road in Farmington Falls.

Supervisor Kathi Caton said that a lot of their time is spent in explaining the difference between LED lighting and other lighting. She said that while LED lighting is much more energy efficient, many people aren't sure which LED

products to buy. She said the Efficiency Maine program has helped to make LED products much more affordable for Maine residents.

Caton said that Goings did away with its showroom several years ago because so many people were buying online. She said they service not only residential but also many commercial customers.

She said the store in Farmington Falls will place catalog orders for customers. Products can be viewed at www.goingselectric.com, www.kichler.com, and www.progreslighting.com. The hours of operation at Goings are 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday.





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10 tips for a smooth home remodel

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Follow these 10 tips when you embark on an exciting home remodeling project.

1. Establish effective two-way communication with the home remodeler. It's essential to have good communication for a smooth home remodeling project. Does the remodeler listen? Does he or she answer questions clearly and candidly? Can you reach him when you need to? Does he return phone calls promptly? Does he let you know when problems arise and work with you on solving them?

2. Make sure you are compatible with the contractor. You'll spend a lot of time with your remodeler so it's important to have a good rapport and trust in him or her.

3. Set a clear and mutual understanding about the schedule. You and your home remodeler should agree on the schedule up front to avoid conflict and problems later in the project.

4. Request a written proposal. Often, two people remember the same conversation differently. Get the proposal in writing and work with the remodeler to ensure it reflects your wishes.

5. Get a clear and mutual understanding on miscellaneous details up front. There are a lot of little details that need to be settled before work starts. What times of day will they be working? How will he or she access the property? How will cleanup be handled? How will they protect your property?

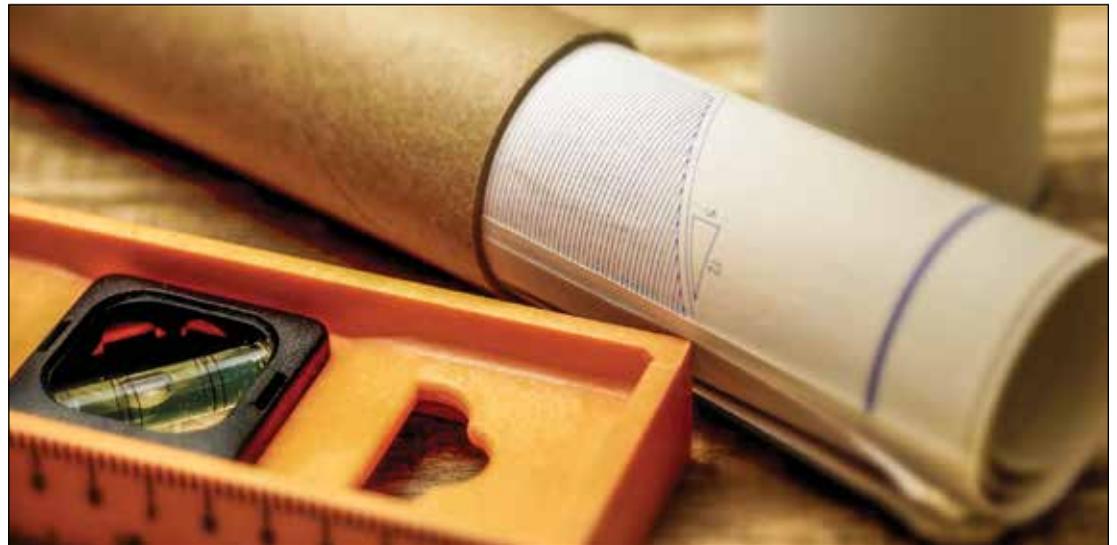
6. Remember to be flexible. Remodeling is an interruption of your normal life. Remember to be flexible during the project so that you can handle the unexpected and go with the flow.

7. Discuss and agree on how change orders will be handled. With home remodeling there is always the chance you may want to change materials or other project details during the job. Before work starts, make sure you agree with your remodeler about how these changes will be handled. Also understand that changes could affect the schedule and the budget, so it's important you have all changes in writing.

8. Agree on a well-written contract that covers all the bases. The contract should include these elements: a timetable for the project, price and payment schedule, detailed specifications for all products and materials, insurance information, permit information, procedures for handling change orders, lien releases, provisions for conflict resolution, notice of your right under the Federal Trade Commission's Cooling Off Rule (your right to cancel the contract within three days if it was signed someplace other than the remodeler's place of business), and details on the important issues (such as access to your home, care of the home, cleanup and trash removal).

9. Ask for a written lien waiver from the home remodeler upon completion of the work. If the remodeler hires subcontractors for portions of the work, then it is their responsibility to see the subcontractors compensated. In order to ensure this has been done and to protect yourself, ask for a written lien waiver when the work is finished. This document will verify everyone has been paid.

10. Establish a project plan, covering all phases and dependencies in the work. Plan your big picture goals with the remodeler and discuss your needs. Hire a remodeler who will plan with you, listen to concerns and answer questions. Home Builders & Remodelers Association of Maine 622-7792, info@hbrame.org.



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Lower prices make solar power more affordable

Local companies explain advantages

BY KATE CONE
Correspondent

Now more than ever is the time to think about providing electricity, heat and hot water with a source of power other than the norm.

Prices have dropped dramatically on solar systems and there is a federal tax rebate of 30 percent of the cost. And some solar companies offer financing.

Looking for a way to reduce your carbon footprint and break out of the grasp of fossil fuels? Look no further. Central Maine has several companies waiting to explain the ins and outs of solar power and how it can work for you.

Vaughan Woodruff of Insource Renewables compared paying the electric bill to having a second mortgage: "Without solar, you use electricity and pay a monthly payment that is never going to go away. Once a customer installs a solar system, the payment has an "end game." Eventually, when the system is paid for, the cost recouped, that payment ends and that money is back in your pocket."

Woodruff makes evaluating the properties of prospective customers easy by using Google Earth to look at that locus online, while he's chatting with that customer on the phone. All he needs is the address and he can do a quick, preliminary assessment.

Much more detailed design and consultation comes later if and when it's determined that solar makes sense.

"We don't create problems where the client doesn't have any," Woodruff said. "We sometimes refer them to a contractor who can save them money by doing more insulating in the home."

Insource Renewables has built a solar shed for the Amish community and completed the recent ground audit system at Colby College.

"Energy is a complex topic, a bit overwhelming," he said. "Our goal is to listen and hear what people want. We want them to make good decisions."

Holly Noyes has been

"When you put in a solar energy system, electricity flows into your home and, if you don't need all of it, the extra then flows back to the grid, giving you credits for future use. You are now producing power."

JONATHAN FREEDNER, TECHNICAL SALESPERSON, SUNDG SOLAR



Courtesy Sundog Solar

A 6.6 KW solar electrical system in Lincoln installed by Sundog Solar.



Courtesy Revision Energy

A rooftop solar array on Full Circle Farm's barn in Vassalboro.

working at Revision Energy in Liberty for a year and a half and, in that time the company — established in 2003— has grown from 75 to 200 employees.

"We've been voted one of the best places to work in Maine in 2016 and 2017," Noyes said. "People call us and want to know if solar works, and does it work in Maine. The answer to both questions is 'yes.'"

Revision Energy often asks consumers to add up 12 months of electric bills to see the total kilowatt hours being used, which then tells them how much energy they would need from solar panels. They then schedule a visit to do a free on-site evaluation to determine how many panels are needed and their optimal location, roof or ground.

They offer financing through Green Sky, which finances solar projects.

"We do a lot of educating when we're out in the community on how and why solar works, and take pride

in our customer service," Noyes said.

Solar Power World just ranked Revision Energy No.1 in New England as top contractor for solar, placing it at 131st place out of 500 in the country.

Sundog Solar was formed by father and son team Chuck and Danny Piper in 2009 to make solar energy affordable and available throughout Maine. They have installed hundreds of solar electric, hot water and heat pump systems throughout the state.

Their technical salesperson, Jonathan Freedner, offered a simple explanation of the dynamics of how solar works.

"Before installing solar panels, electricity flows into your home. You are consuming it," Freedner said. "When you put in a solar energy system, electricity flows into your home and, if you don't need all of it, the extra then flows back to the grid, giving you credits for future use. You are now producing power." And saving money.

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Home security systems offer peace of mind

Can be controlled remotely

BY WANDA CURTIS
Correspondent

According to the report "Crime in Maine," published by the State of Maine Department of Public Safety, there were 24,377 property crimes reported in Maine during 2015. One burglary occurred in Maine every 112 minutes and 26 seconds.

Jenny King, vice president of operations at Cayer Security in Waterville, recently said that a home security system can offer peace of mind to homeowners who are concerned about home invasions and burglaries.

King said that some features of new security systems give homeowners the ability to not only monitor what is taking place at their home while on the road, but to also arm and disarm security systems on their own smart phone or computer.

"We have apps that can arm and disarm security systems on smart phones or personal computers," King said. "Also, Honeywell's Total Connect services can add and remove user codes even when a person is away from home."

King offered the example of a repair person needing to get in to turn off the home security system when no one is at home. She said that the homeowner could log on to the total connect app and add a new user code. She said that 30 to 40 percent of their customers opt for this additional feature. "They like the added control," she said.

In addition to other popular features, King said that homeowners can add Z-Wave capability to Honeywell's Total Connect app, which would allow them to remotely control devices such as lights, door locks and even thermostats while away from home.

According to King, the Maine Burglar and Fire Alarm Association has reported a big increase in the demand for burglar alarm systems over the past couple of years.

She said that a little known benefit of having a home security system installed is that many homeowners will receive discounted insurance rates if they have a system that is monitored 24 hours a day from a central station like the one at Cayer Security.

For more information about Cayer's monitoring systems, call 453-9177 or view the website at www.cayersecurity.com.

Another Waterville company

"We have apps that can arm and disarm security systems on smart phones or personal computers."

JENNY KING, V.P. OPERATIONS,
CAYER SECURITY

that offers home security services with apps that allow homeowners to monitor their homes from a distance is Seacoast Security.

Seacoast also offers what is described on its website as the "easy to use" Honeywell touchpad, with which homeowners can monitor their alarm system as well as monitor and adjust thermostats, and lock doors and control garage doors.

Homeowners can perform those actions anywhere from their personal PC, a smartphone, or tablet using Honeywell's Total Connect services, according to the Seacoast Security website. The company's 24-hour central monitoring station is located in Rockport, Maine.

Seacoast Security also offers other monitoring systems for residences and businesses, including a carbon monoxide monitoring system.

Stephen Haynes, vice president of Seacoast Security, reported, on the Seacoast blog page that a Seacoast Security carbon monoxide home monitoring system recently helped to save his life and the lives of his family members when a faulty furnace vent caused high concentrations of carbon monoxide to leak into their home.

"The only hint of danger came from the alarms," Haynes said. He explained that carbon monoxide is often called a "silent killer" because it is a colorless, odorless gas that's difficult to detect.

"As per procedure, Seacoast Security received an alarm from my residence indicating the presence of high concentrations of carbon monoxide (CO) gas inside my home," wrote Haynes. "The monitor called to check on us and to let me know they had contacted the fire department who arrived within 15 minutes."

For more information about Seacoast Security's monitoring systems, call (800) 654-8800 or view the website seacoastsecurity.com.



Features of new security systems give homeowners the ability to not only monitor what is taking place at their home while on the road, but to also arm and disarm security systems on their own smart phone or computer.

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Heat pumps touted as economical option

Ductless alternative may improve air quality

BY VALERIE TUCKER
Correspondent

As cooler temperatures move people indoors, the cost of heating a home or business becomes an important concern.

Pellet stoves and traditional wood stoves are popular choices, but not everyone has the time and physical ability to tend them regularly. Oil prices rise and fall unpredictably, so what are some economical and low-maintenance alternatives?

Dave Shepherd, manager of The Major's Furniture and Appliances in Farmingdale, said ductless heat pump systems are perfect for year-round heating and cooling, especially during the shoulder seasons. The savings, he said, are based on the average size of the home and the number of rooms that have to be heated, but customers tell him they wish they had converted from their expensive oil furnaces years ago.

"Think about how much it costs to start your furnace during the fall and spring," he said. "I do surveys of my customers to find out what they actually have paid after they install a ductless heating system, and they tell me it's an average of \$50 a month. How much oil would you get for that price?"

Traditional heat pumps and central air conditioning systems send air through ducts in the building. A ductless pump system sends the heated or cooled air into zones from a small outdoor unit and one or more indoor units. The system can replace old, noisy and expensive air conditioners, electric baseboard heaters and other inefficient systems.

Often times, the quality of indoor air can actually be lower than the quality of outdoor air because of the dust and pet dander. With traditional HVAC systems, air ducts must be professionally cleaned on a regular basis, and even after cleaning, debris is left behind. Heat pumps, on the other hand, offer multi-stage filtration that can drastically reduce dust, bacteria, pollen, allergens and other particulates in the air, according to Lorrie Farewell, owner of Simple Efficient Pumps in Pittsfield.

"People are breathing clean air inside their homes, and that's an extremely important benefit of heat pump systems," she said.



A ductless system uses less electricity than older forced-air systems, and the properly heated or cooled air goes into a home or office space with the greatest possible efficiency. With a zoning design, unused spaces don't have to waste energy.

Larry Boulette, owner of Boulette's Electrical Solutions in Skowhegan, sells, installs, services and cleans heat pump systems and says customers love them.

"I can say that heat pump systems are a third of the cost of oil heat to run," he said. "People really like the efficiency and low maintenance, too."

Dawn Marin, manager of Central Maine Heat Pumps, said the ductless systems are a revolution in technology. Systems, depending on zones and units required, can be installed in as little as a day.

"They are so quiet and efficient that they truly change people's environments and their lives," she said. "With the price of gas and oil increasing, it's an incredibly cost-efficient way to heat homes."

Randy Pellerin, estimator and project manager at Houle's Plumbing, Heating, Cooling & Electrical in Waterville, said today's smaller heating systems

can be adapted to spaces such as camps. The Rinnai ductless wall heater is a perfect option for those who like to snowmobile, snowshoe and ice fish and need a way to stay comfortable in cold weather. He also installs the newest "smart technology" water boilers that cut the cost of heating nearly in half and require less maintenance.

"People don't want to buy something they'll have to replace in 10 years," he said. "Today's motors and pumps have what we call smart controls, so the equipment doesn't just run all day, and the extra heat doesn't go to waste."

The cost to change to a new heating and cooling system can be a daunting challenge. Efficiency Maine offers tax credits or utility rebates for the year a property owner installs energy saving improvements and upgrades. As the independent administrator for state-backed energy efficiency programs, they offer rebates of \$400 to \$3,000, combined with affordable financing options. Call (866)-376-2463 or visit www.energymaine.com to learn about specific energy options and licensed contractors who meet strict state-approved standards.

"They are so quiet and efficient that they truly change people's environments and their lives," she said. "With the price of gas and oil increasing, it's an incredibly cost-efficient way to heat homes."

DAWN MARIN, MANAGER OF CENTRAL MAINE HEAT PUMPS,
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- Downeast Energy, 95 College Ave., Waterville, (800)773-3050, www.downeastenergy.com
- Houle's Plumbing, Heating, Cooling & Electrical, 19 North St., Waterville, 872-6762, www.houleshpac.com

HEAT PUMPS

- Boulette's Electrical Solutions, 94 E. River Road, Skowhegan, 399-9405, larry.boulette.bes@gmail.com, Facebook
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Insider hints for design on a budget

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Don't have a big budget but want to make some big design changes to your home?

Well-designed rooms don't always have to come with a huge price tag; in fact, designing on a budget may be easier than you think.

Many times, by changing small elements, you can give a room an entirely new personality. Sometimes adding a few colorful pillows or picking up a paintbrush is all you need to do to make your room look like something out of the pages of a magazine.

The Power of Paint

One of the most common fixes for a boring room is color. "Color is easy to do and inexpensive," says Kathy Browning, owner of Design Consultants, a design firm in Virginia Beach, Va. Updating the color of just one wall in any room will give it an entirely new feel.

Painting, when approached correctly, can be an enjoyable experience with instant rewards. Lauren Warnock, an interior designer based in Chicago, reminds home owners that warmer colors can make a room feel cozier and more inviting. Cooler colors like grey or "stark white," on the other hand, may give a room a more industrial feeling. "Light airy colors open up a space, while deep, darker colors can make a room appear smaller," Warnock said.

Connie Edwards, director of design for Shenandoah Cabinetry, has her own advice when it comes to color, particularly if you are looking at the kitchen. "You

can never go wrong with neutrals, but color is hot now," Edwards says. "Not necessarily vibrant colors — although for the right space, they can be fabulous — but think along the lines of buttery yellows, soft sage greens and nearly neutral blues."

Accessories Pack a Punch

Adding accents to pieces you already own can also make a large difference. For instance, if your couch is not as exciting as it once was, try throwing a few fun accent pillows on it. Remember, throws and cushions, when selected as accents, can really bring new life to a tired piece of furniture.

"The use of pillows, throws and draperies in living spaces enhances a room in many ways," Warnock says.

Fabrics also can add beautiful softness to a room and allow additional patterns and textures to be brought into a room.

Rethink Your Artwork

Another budget-friendly change is to rotate the artwork in a room. Using the same frames but changing the images can easily create a new theme or mood, and combining several different frames in different finishes and sizes can achieve different looks.

Love Your Lighting

Often overlooked but strikingly effective, updated lighting can work wonders. "Lighting will dramatically change the mood of a room," Warnock says. Try installing a new fixture or simply swapping out the shades on current fixtures. Installing dimmer switches is another simple change that can transform any room.



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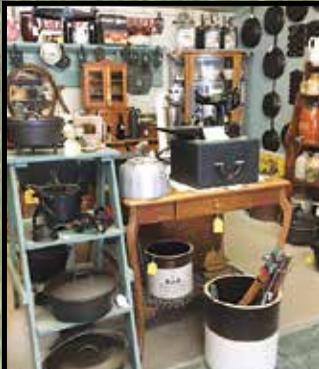
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Kick off home improvement season with easy maintenance projects

As the days get longer and the weather improves, this is the time to make sure that our homes or rental properties are well maintained. Here are a few do-it-yourself projects to keep your home in tip-top shape:

- Top up your attic insulation. Topping it up will help reduce energy consumption and keep your house cooler in the summer months.
- Inspect your roof and make minor repairs. Look for ice, hail or water damage. Replace any cracked or missing shingles and clear any debris.
- Clean your gutters. Consider installing gutter guards to ensure your gutters remain functional and free from debris.
- Inspect windows and doors and re-caulk where necessary. Because a proper seal is essential in both heating and cooling seasons, this job should be performed twice a year to protect against drafts and moisture, and to keep insects out. Worn weather stripping should also be replaced.

Other simple jobs include fixing leaky faucets, repairing and resealing decks, inspecting the foundation and scheduling a checkup for your HVAC system. The key is being honest about what you can handle and, when in doubt, call in the pros.



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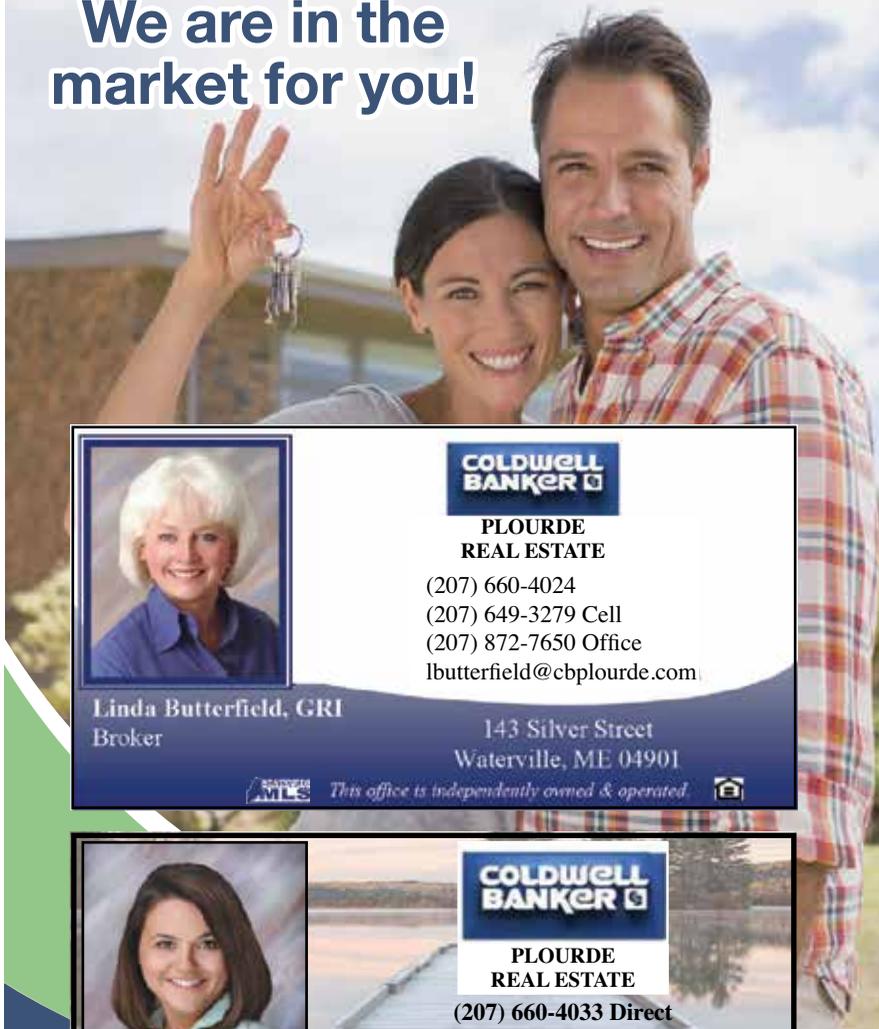
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