

# Home Auto Garden

## Spring Cleaning Pointers

Spring is a season of renewal. When the flowers are blooming and the trees are budding and the weather is pleasantly warm, people often feel inspired to make changes around their homes. Work may begin with culling belongings and organizing essentials.

There is debate regarding where the practice of “spring cleaning” originated. Some researchers link it to certain religious groups. It has long been an ancient Jewish custom to thoroughly clean a house in preparation for the springtime feast of Passover. The house is scoured to remove any yeast bread, or chametz, from the home. Similarly, members of the Greek Orthodox church celebrate “Clean Week,” which is a week of cleaning before Lent. In Iranian culture, families spend days cleaning prior to the Persian New Year, which begins on the spring equinox.

Spring cleaning also has some secular roots. For instance, in the 1800s, Londoners routinely cleared their homes of grime and soot that accumulated over the winter.

Spring cleaning is still a ritual for many today. As people embark on their plans to tidy up, these tips can help them along.

### Tackle one big task a day

Who hasn’t started one project only to be distracted into moving along to another room? This often occurs when

people discover something out of place in one space and then move that item where it belongs, only to find a new cleaning task at hand in that space. Inefficiency can make you give up on spring cleaning prematurely. Agree to address one room/task a day. Keep a basket or box handy to store errant items until you move on to the next room.

### Stock up on supplies

Prepare all of the cleaning supplies in advance. Put together a tool kit of sorts with the equipment you need, including mops, brooms, rags, cleansers and the like. Organization can keep you on course.

### Harness your strengths and weaknesses

Some people clean because they are stressed or angry, others do so to avoid other tasks. Keep personality in mind when establishing a cleaning schedule. For example, clean at night if you’re a night owl or wait until you are feeling antsy before embarking on a “calm down cleaning.”

### Tackle seasonal chores first

Some tasks need to get done to prepare for the spring and summer season. These may include cleaning the grill and sorting through outdoor furniture and decor. Spring cleaning may involve readying the pool for another year of use or cleaning out rain gutters to prepare for spring

storms. Tackle time-dependent tasks first and then move on to others that are less time-sensitive.

### Spread out the work

Some people like to devote full weekends to spring cleaning, but that can be overwhelming for others. Breaking down cleaning tasks into 15- to 30-minute intervals each day can make the job more tolerable.

Spring cleaning season has arrived and certain tips can make the job more efficient and manageable.




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# HomeAutoGarden

## Three Simple Maintenance Strategies That Can Keep Cars Running Longer

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less efficiently.

3. Change oil more frequently as the vehicle ages. It's true that modern vehicles no longer require oil changes for every 3,000 miles driven. However, as vehicles age, drivers and their vehicles' engines may benefit from more frequent oil changes than the owner's manual necessarily recommends. Oil changes remove dirt and metal particles from the engine, potentially contributing to a longer life expectancy. More frequent changes can be especially beneficial for vehicles that are routinely driven in stop-and-go traffic.

Rising vehicle costs have compelled many drivers to keep their cars longer than they initially planned. Some simple strategies can help drivers achieve that goal.



### Revitalize Your Landscape on a Budget

Many homeowners think they must spend tons of green to get green in their landscape but that isn't necessarily so. Homeowners can improve

their landscapes without digging themselves into financial holes. These strategies can help anyone save some cash and still end up with attractive gardens and more.

- Use stones or gravel for a walkway.
- Remove some lawn.

- Look for free mulch.
  - Repurpose old items into planters.
  - Invest in plants that are easy to propagate.
  - Shop end-of season sales.
  - Pool your resources.
- Some handy ideas can help homeowners transform landscapes without spending too much.



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# HomeAutoGarden

## How to Make a Backyard Safe for Dogs

Dogs, particularly puppies, can be full of boundless energy. Channeling that energy into exercise with long walks or play sessions can help stem dogs' propensity to get into trouble around the house as they burn off extra adrenaline. Pets who don't have an energy outlet may chew off-limits objects or get into other mischief.

According to the American Kennel Club, the amount of exercise a dog needs depends on the animal's age and breed. For example, border collies or Siberian huskies may require much more exercise than English bulldogs, simply because the former are working breeds. Pet owners with large backyards often find those outdoor spots are ideal for when their dogs get the "zoomies," something that tends to be a daily occurrence. Letting their dogs run around yards, whether on their own or chasing tossed tennis balls, is an ideal way to provide exercise and tire out pups. In such scenarios, it's vital that pups have a dog-friendly yard in which to play.

### Use safe lawn care products

An expanse of grass is the perfect place to frolic or enjoy some sunbathing — for people or pets. But contact with chemically treated lawns can cause several health issues for dogs, such as allergies or intestinal upset.

Switching to native grasses can reduce the need to use chemicals to get lush lawns. When supplementation is needed, homeowners can switch to organic products or natural compost as safer alternatives than chemical-based products.

### Fence off the yard

Off-leash running and bounding through the yard will make any dog smile. However, a fence is a must-have to ensure a dog doesn't become an escape artist. Be sure the fence is high enough so that the pup cannot jump over it. Burying chicken wire in the dirt beneath the lower edge of the fence also can help prevent dogs who like to dig from exiting by crawling underneath the fence.

Consider installing a lock on the fence gate so that no one can wander in and surprise the dog, which may startle the animal and prompt it to defend the property. A lock also helps prevent dog theft.

### Keep the yard tidy

Maintaining a clean yard also is key to safety. Inspect the yard regularly to make sure nothing is around that can prove harmful, whether it's poison ivy, felled branches or broken fence panels. Also, keep shrubs and grass trimmed to reduce flea and tick populations on the property.

### Avoid poisonous plants

Certain plants can be dangerous if they're consumed by curious pups. Chrysanthemums, peonies, irises and hydrangeas are some plants that can be poisonous. For a full list of poisonous plants, visit the ASPCA website ([aspc.org](http://aspc.org)).

### Keep an eye on animals

Dogs can spend some unattended time in the yard but check in from time to time. Should wildlife get into the yard, dogs may get hurt by tussles or bites. Birds of prey, such as owls, hawks and even vultures, may attack small dogs in a yard. According to Pat Silvosky, director of the Milford Nature Center in Kansas, some birds can be territorial. While they might not view a dog as an easy meal, they could swoop down and attack to defend territory. The same may occur with other wild animals.

A dog-friendly yard may require a little effort to create, but it's worth a little sweat equity to keep pups safe.



## Spruce Up Your Outdoor Living Space

Homeowners frequently enhance their outdoor living spaces with attractive plants and trees. When that greenery also produces food, the results can be both beauty and bounty.

People who plant vegetable gardens and fruit trees in their yards can be blessed with an abundance of fresh pickings once it's time to harvest. In fact, many home gardeners may have visions of warm evenings pulling vegetables right out of the garden and tossing them on the grill or in salads. But insects and animals enjoy fresh produce just as people do. The joy of harvesting from a garden can be diminished when unwanted guests have gotten there first.



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