

# Spring Home & Garden

## Green ways to freshen outdoor spaces, without breaking the bank

(ARA) – Sprucing up outdoor spaces doesn't have to cost a lot to create a big impact. Rather than buying new, consider refreshing or upgrading furnishings, equipment and features you

already have. You will save some green and give new life to items that might otherwise wind up in the trash - and ultimately in the landfill. Here are some summer spruce-up ideas:

### Reviving patio furniture

Time, use and weather can leave outdoor furnishings looking withered and faded. Whether your patio set is wooden, painted aluminum, cast iron or even wicker, you can make it look new again with a fresh coat of paint. Gentle sanding and the right type of paint will have your set looking new in no time. Add in new cushions in bright colors and you've created a whole new look at a fraction of the cost of buying new.

### Winning water features

Water features can add a splash of beauty and relaxation to an outdoor environment. Consider repurposing a flower pot or large colorful vase into a fountain by waterproofing it and adding a pump. Or if you bought a fountain a few seasons ago and it's sitting there unused because the original pump has burned out, it's actually simple and cost-effective to get it going again with a replacement fountain pump found at your local home improvement store.

As the weather heats up and evaporation causes water levels to drop in fountains, traditional pumps can burn out

from too-low water levels. smartpond's Fountain Pump with Low-Water Shut-off, found at Lowe's, automatically turns off the pump when water levels dip low in your fountain, and automatically turns back on when you add water. The energy-efficient pumps are ideal for small- to medium-sized fountains and come with or without a light for evening enjoyment.

### Fences and decks

Large surface areas such as fences and decks are the first to get noticed. Improve the aesthetics of worn, neglected surfaces with a new coat of waterproofer and stain. First, inspect for damaged boards and replace with appropriate materials when necessary. Check to be sure deck fasteners are secure and tighten them if they've come loose over the winter. If a fastener can't be tightened, you may need to replace it. Next, power wash and waterproof (either in clear or stain finishes) decks and fences.

You can also spruce up decks by making small changes, such as adding decorative rails or post caps. Lighting, decor and accessories can also freshen the look of an existing deck.

With a few cost-effective upgrades, it's possible to spruce up the outdoor equipment you have, so you can enjoy it - and the savings you'll reap - for another season.



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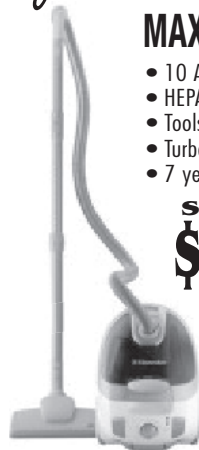
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