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HOUSE BEAUTIFUL HOME REMODELING & DECORATING

SPECIAL OUTDOOR LIVING ISSUE!

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House Beautiful

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Home Remodeling & Decorating

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Hot Tips For Cool Summer Home Improvements

*Ideas and innovations from America's popular
home improvement radio team*

Tom Kraeutler and Leslie Segrete host *The Money Pit*, a nationally syndicated radio show that fields hundred of calls each week from listeners seeking advice on everything from soup to nuts and floor boards to shingles. In this issue, Tom and Leslie respond to some of the most common questions they receive in the summer season.

Q:

My husband hates to run the air conditioner as he says the house gets too damp. Is this normal or is there any way to fix it?

A:

Tom -

It sounds like your air conditioner may be too big. While it seems this might be a good thing, it's not. Air conditioners that are too big don't run long enough to take moisture out of the air inside your house. As a result, they waste energy and leave you feeling cold and clammy, not to mention increase the risk that you could develop a mold problem. We'd suggest contacting a local heating and cooling company to have your house "sized" for the proper size air conditioner. As a rough rule-of-thumb, you generally need one ton of A/C power for every 600-800 square feet of living space.

Another option is to consider

installing a whole house dehumidifier. Aprilaire (see Aprilaire.com) makes one that will remove up to 90 pints of water a day from the air inside your home. Unlike room dehumidifiers that have to constantly be emptied, a whole home dehumidifiers are installed into your heating and cooling ductwork and run automatically. One benefit of whole home dehumidification is comfort. With all the moisture out of the air, you won't need to run your central air conditioner nearly as much and that will save some money in the long run.

Q:

We've been thinking about buying a pressure washer to clean the siding and walks around our home. I've started to look around but the number of options makes it extremely confusing. Can you tell me where to begin?

A:

Leslie -

Pressure washers are a good tool for cleaning a variety of items in and around the home such as cars, boats, patio furniture, decks and sidewalks. To pick the right one for you house, just remember the "Three P's," Water Pressure, Gallons Per Minute and Price.

First, pick a unit with the right water pressure—how much pressure you needs depends on the type of job

you're going to be doing. A basic light-duty pressure washer (1300 – 2000) is 30 times as powerful as a garden hose but a good choice for cleaning boats, cars and siding. Medium-duty machines (2000 – 2600 PSAs) are good for cleaning grease and grime. And heavy-duty (2,700 – 4,000 PSI) work well for stripping surfaces for repainting.

Next, consider how much water it can deliver. The larger the Gallons Per Minute rating, the more surface area a pressure washer can clean. A higher GPM flow rate can clean a larger area faster. Last, consider price. Pressure washers range in price from a low of \$100 to more than \$2,000. If you've decided what pressure and GPM you need for your cleaning jobs, the price range you need to look in will naturally fall into place.

A good place to compare manufacturers, features and prices is pressurewashersdirect.com. The web site sells a wide variety of units and has a comparison tool to make it easy to review pressure washer's side-by-side.

Q:

We just completed remodeling our basement and, when we tore out some paneling around a window, thousands of little insect wings flew out all over the place. It was pretty disgusting. Any idea what these could be?

questions&answers

A: Tom -

Yuck! My guess is termites. Termites live in the soil and build mud tubes to travel in and out of your house for a free meal of luscious floor joists, wall studs or any other tasty morsel that is holding up your home sweet home. During the warmer months, termites grow wings and “swarm”, leaving the safety of their deep soil nests to fly off wreak more havoc on houses. If I’m right, there’s no surprise why you found them near the window. Once these little buggers get airborne, they head right for the light.

Here’s what you’ll need to do: First, contact a local pest management professional and order a comprehensive inspection of your home. Much of the damage termites’ cause may not be obvious to you but a trained pro can spot it a mile away. If termites are confirmed, request a treatment be done



with a new class of high-tech “undetectable” liquid termiticides like Termidor Termite Defense (see termidorhome.com). Undetectable termite treatments are applied to the soil around your home where the termites live. Because they CAN’T be seen, smelled or sensed by termites in any way, termites will pass through the

treated zone and get it on their bodies. Then they transfer this to other termites in the colony and...Viola...The whole termite colony gets wiped out leaving your home officially termite free.

Q:
I love the idea of a weatherproof rug for our patio but the designs are limited. Any ideas?

A: Leslie -

Why not try painting a rug in your exterior room? By painting a rug, you can create an interesting decorative element that stands up to the sun and rain. To do this, you’ll need a good oil-based primer like Kilz (see kilz.com) and concrete floor paint. If the color choice is limited, remember that you can tint concrete floor paint to any color you need.

To create the rug, first prime and paint on your base color and allow to dry well. Then, lay out a design or even just a border using rug stencils or patterns which are available at your local craft shop. Make sure you wipe the stencil between each use and use a brush that is not too wet. For a fun tassel edge pick up a tassel stencil as well. Paint the tassels in a lighter shade first. Allow to dry well, and then use a darker color and off set it from the first round with the stencils. This will create a realistic shadow effect. Be as creative as you like and as colorful as suits your tastes.

Q:
After a couple of months of heavy grilling, my gas grill needs an extreme makeover of its own. Do you have any tips for a mid-season grill cleaning?

A: Tom -

The same char broiling action that

flavors ribs, chick, steaks and burgers you cook on grills all summer long, can really cause problems if you don’t stop and clean the grill once in a while. Here’s what to do:

First, soak the grids in hot, soapy water and clean them with a nylon-scrubbing pad. If they’re really encrusted, use oven cleaner in a well-ventilated area and rinse clean. Next remove the lava rock or ceramic briquettes, clean them with a wire brush and replace any that are deteriorated. Then remove the burner, brush it clean and check carefully for cracks, split seams or holes. If any are found, the burner should be immediately replaced. Lastly, check all the rubber gas hoses for cracks and replace any that show the slightest sign of wear.

Now you are ready to put the grill back together and check all gas connections for leaks. To do this safely, mix a 50/50 solution of liquid dishwashing soap and water. Brush the solution on all gas connections and watch for bubbles. If any are seen, the connection is leaking and should be fixed before firing the grill. ■



Editors Note: Have your own home improvement question? Tom & Leslie can be reached 24/7 by emailing helpme@moneytip.com or by calling 1-888-MONEY PIT. To find a radio station in your area that carries the program, please visit the show’s web site at www.moneytip.com

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