

What's hot for the home with experts from the Spring Atlanta Home Show

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The Spring Atlanta Home Show will highlight some of the hottest trends in home improvement and offer the best tips on how to make the most of any budget.

It features exhibits from more than 300 local home-improvement companies, and seminars on many home-remodeling topics. Experts will offer advice on everything from home repair and decorating to energy savings and outdoor living.

The show runs March 20-22 at the Cobb Galleria Centre.

With the tight economy, this year's show is heavily focused on finding strategies to stretch home-improvement dollars. One program highlights the benefits of remodeling during a recession, when bargains abound and contractors are eager for work.

"You're going to get a better deal and you're going to get it done quickly," said the show's director, Michael Schoppenhorst of ICO Productions LLC.

Whether sprucing up a house to sell or updating a home that won't be on the market anytime soon, there are lots of ways to save and make impressive changes.

"If you do the remodeling now, then you will be in a really good position to sell it when the market turns," Schoppenhorst said.

Best Return on Remodeling

It's a great time to take advantage of fabulous bargains, but it's still important to stretch the most of a remodeling budget.

"The primary focus continues to be the kitchen and master bath because they're the best values," said Dan Weidmann, owner and president of Weidmann & Associates Inc.

Weidmann & Associates, which specializes in high-end residential remodeling, has seen more clients looking to update their homes without doing a major renovation. Adding new countertops, backsplashes, lighting and other fixtures creates a fresh look without the cost of a major renovation. "In the current market — with home



values not appreciating or appreciating very little — people are very concerned with getting the most for their money," Weidmann said.

The trend for master baths is to create a spa-like environment, he said.

Overall, it's a great time to remodel.

"It's never been less expensive," said Weidmann, adding that it is crucial to choose contractors carefully in this economy.

Energy Savings

Another hot trend is to cut costs by making homes more energy-efficient.

The Hoots Group Inc., a full-service "green" contractor that specializes in

Weidmann & Associates Inc. updates kitchens by adding features such as countertops and backsplashes, above and left, while creating a spa-like environment in master baths, top right. Bottom right is an example of a bedroom that has been transformed by HGTV personality Tonya M. Williams, who shows people how to spruce up rooms without spending a lot of money.

sustainable design and building, has seen an increasing number of clients seeking help with energy-efficiency. The company offers a home-performance assessment that identifies problem areas and suggests solutions.

There are many inexpensive ways to save money and energy, said Matt Hoots, owner of The Hoots Group. Options include window replacement, HVAC upgrades and additional insulation.

"HVAC is the No. 1 consumer of energy and the water heater is the second-largest," Hoots said.

One of the best saving tips is to install a solar-powered water heater with solar panels on the roof.

"It pays for itself very quickly and then it lasts for about 30 years," Hoots said. "You can save \$15,000 to \$20,000."

There are many green savings ripe for the picking. Some power companies will help subsidize the cost of a home-performance assessment, and there also are federal incentives for going green at home and embracing renewable energy.

Fresh Face

There are some great ways to get a new look without spending a lot of money.

Tonya M. Williams, a real estate expert and host of HGTV's home-makeover show "Designed to Sell," will give a presentation on how to spruce up rooms and add value on a shoestring budget.

"Whenever you have a money crunch, creativity is the key," Williams said. "Just remember that your home is your blank canvas."

The first step is to go "shopping" in your own home and find pieces that can be moved to other rooms.

"You're saving money and you're utilizing what you have," she said. "It really gets your creative juices flowing and you can transform rooms by mixing and matching."

For example, try swapping couch pillows with bedroom pillows. Then, dye an



old throw a different color to accent the new colors on the couch.

"For about \$5, you've now added a new

accent piece and created a different look," Williams said.

Another easy option is moving area rugs into different rooms. Taking a 5-foot-by-7-foot rug and moving it partially under the bed can help give the room depth and make it more interesting, Williams said.

Paint is another great way to inexpensively transform a house. Williams suggests buying a sample size and painting part of the wall to make sure it's the right color.

Get Organized!

Better organization can make a big difference in how a house looks and feels.

The first step is to de-clutter and get rid of unnecessary items around the house, whether in kitchen drawers or bedroom closets, said Allison Carter, owner of The Professional Organizer.

"A house feels much bigger if it has empty spaces and a place for your eye to rest," Carter said.

And here's a good strategy to prevent the clutter from creeping back in: Put kitchen-sized garbage cans in each room.

"It encourages people to throw stuff away," Carter said. [LIA](#)