

## 4 affordable ways to create spa-like baths

Our love of a spa-like bathroom experience continues to be strong, with industry watchers reporting that luxurious touches like freestanding bathtubs, separate vanities and top quality materials remain in demand. But if you've delayed renovating your bathroom, thinking that creating the ultimate spa at home won't fit your space, budget or lifestyle, think again. It's possible to create a spa experience that is sensible, space-appropriate and affordable, while still being lavish.

Bathroom renovations remain the most valuable home improvement you can make; a midrange bathroom remodel can return up to 70 percent of your investment at the time of resale, according to Remodeling Magazine's Cost vs. Value report.

Here are four spa-like bathroom trends that are affordable and achievable in virtually any bathroom renovation:

**1. Freestanding tubs** - Freestanding tubs are among the top 10 trends in bathroom design for 2015, according to the National Kitchen & Bath Association's 2015 Kitchen & Bath Style Report.

"A freestanding tub, in addition to a shower, really adds to the bathroom and the value of the house," says Jean-Jacques L'Henaff, vice president of design for American Standard.

While price and size may once have kept freestanding tubs out of smaller bathroom renovations, some of the new options are more size-wise and budget-friendly, and will fit in most bathrooms.

**2. Calm colour palette** - The effect of colour on mood is

well documented. Around the world, the finest spas all boast colour palettes designed to create a calm atmosphere. Earth tones create a soothing backdrop for accents of subtle hues.

In your bathroom renovation, consider the flooring and cabinetry as foundations for your colour scheme and choose neutral, natural tones like creams, tans, light browns or pale greys. Walls, countertops and accessories can then sport a bit more intensity, as long as you choose traditionally calm hues like gentle blues, sea-foam greens, barely-there lavender or even faintest yellow.

**3. Luxuriant lighting** - Few rooms in the house require the lighting versatility needed in a bathroom. Suitable illumination facilitates make-up application and shaving, while softer lighting enhances a luxurious soak in the tub. Sconces or above-the-mirror

lights can provide illumination in work areas. Dimmable overhead canister lights allow you to achieve maximum brightness when you need it, and a softer glow when you want to create a mood. Spas typically have layers of light, so your spa-like bathroom renovation should include multiple light sources.

**4. Leading-edge amenities** - Innovations in bathroom technology often emerge from the spa industry to enter homes. From a television above the soaking tub and multi-jet showerheads, to heated flooring and towel warmers, adding one or two upscale amenities to your bathroom renovation can underscore the spa-like atmosphere.

It is possible to beautifully endow your bathroom with spa-inspired features that enhance the experience of the room as a relaxing retreat, at home and within your budget. (BPT)



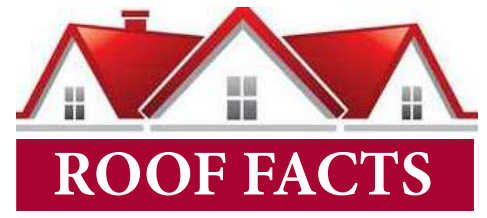
# FALL CHECKLIST for homeowners

As an autumn chill creeps into the days, homeowners should be thinking of getting their homes ready for the winter months ahead. Getting a jump on some of the fall maintenance chores will still leave lots of time for enjoying the remaining days of summer. Here are some of the things that might need to be on your fall job list:

- Make sure your heating system is operating safely and efficiently before the weather turns. Have furnace or heating system serviced by a qualified service company every two years for a gas furnace, and every year for an oil furnace, or as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Check chimneys for obstructions such as nests.
- If it wasn't done in the spring, have windows cleaned in the fall to take advantage of solar heat gain and make your home sparkle inside and out.



- Vacuum electric baseboard heaters to remove dust.
- Many homes lose up to 20% of heat through leaks and poor ventilation. Before the cold weather hits, check caulking and weatherstripping to ensure a snug seal. Check that all doors to the outside shut tightly, and replace door weatherstripping if required. Ensure windows and skylights close tightly; repair or replace weatherstripping, as needed. Draftproofing your home is one of the fastest payback home heating improvements you can make.



Homeservice Club roofing professionals say these are some warning signs that should not be ignored:

**Missing Granules** - Although a certain amount of granular loss is normal, on an aging roof it is an indication that the shingles need replacing. Look for granules in the eavestroughs or on the ground at the drip line.

**Leaks** - The most obvious sign of roof trouble is wet spots on interior ceilings and dampness in the attic.

**Sagging** - If you look at your roof from across the street and the lines and ridges appear to sag, this indicates serious structural problems that should be immediately addressed.

**Curling** - Curling shingles usually indicate that not enough fasteners were used when installing the shingles, or that the fasteners were not long enough. Inadequate ventilation can also be a factor.

**Buckling** - Buckled shingles can be caused by movement in the roof deck, poor ventilation, wrinkles in the underlay or improperly installed shingles.

**Ventilation** - Improving ventilation by adding more roof vents can balance the air flow in your attic and extend the life of your roof.

**Damaged Flashing** - Broken seals along the edge of the flashing and rust spots are warning signs. Have the flashing replaced before moisture seeps in and does its damage.

Take care of minor roof repairs now, and your roof will reward you by keeping you snug and dry this winter.

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