

BUYER & SELLER

From The Editor

In this month's issue



Your Real Estate Resource

Dear Friends,

Welcome back to *Buyer & Seller*. This month is a great issue. Read about ways to avoid back-to-school clutter and learn five handy home apps for an iphone. Check out green ways to clean the bathroom and see how to win tickets to the Improv Festival. Finally, don't forget to take a look at the website of the month. As always, if you have any questions about real estate, don't hesitate to ask. I'm here to help.

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Inside

iPhone Home Apps	Page 2
Win Improv Fest Tix	Page 3
Bathroom Green Clean	Page 4
Crossword Puzzle	Page 9

Ten Great Ways to Avoid Back-to-School Clutter

By Lisa Kaplan Gordon

When your kids go back to school (insert cheers here), a mountain of stuff comes into your home - clothes, school supplies, and piles of papers from teachers and the PTA.

How can you avoid annual back-to-school clutter and make everyone less depressed (<http://www.houselogic.com/blog/home-improvement/clutter-depression/>) and stressed?

Please see clutter on page 5

Five Home Apps Worthy of the iPhone 5

By Deirdre Sullivan

Like most home owners who love their gadgets, we're eagerly awaiting the release of the iPhone 5. To prepare, we've pinpointed five home apps we can't wait to try on the new Apple toy.

FYI, these downloadable tools will work on your current iPhone too.

1. Take Out the Trash App: iRecycle

(<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/irecycle/id312708176?mt=8>) Cost: Free

Time to clean house? Before tossing your old home and garden stuff, figure out what can be recycled (<http://www.houselogic.com/green-living/recycling-reusing/>). This green-minded tool was created by Earth911.com (<http://earth911.com/>), a non-profit organization responsible for generating the largest and most accurate recycling directory in the U.S. It provides access to over 1,500,000 ways to recycle over 300 materials. Plus, the app provides the nearest recycling and donation centers you can bring your junk to. As a bonus, iRecycle provides updates on the latest green news and upcycling craft ideas.

2. A Magical Measuring App: MagicPlan

(<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/magicplan/id427424432?mt=8>) Cost: Free

For some of us (like me), taking measurements in order to create floor plans is a huge chore. You need to move furniture, have a giant ruler thing-y, plus a pencil and pad. Well, say goodbye to all of that with this insanely smart app that measures your rooms and draws your floor plans just by taking pictures. FYI, we heard the measurements may not always be perfect, but hey -- this is a huge time saver.

3. A Great Garden Guide: iGarden USA (<http://itunes.apple.com/app/igarden-usa-gardening-helper/id319276700?ign-mpt=uo%3D5>) Cost: \$4.99

This app has everything you need to know about growing fruit and vegetables (<http://www.houselogic.com/outdoors/landscaping-gardening/gardens/>) outside and even inside your home. It provides you with the skinny on when to plant and gives you an estimate for harvesting based on your climate zone. Plus, this digital green thumb has the dirt on compatible and incompatible plants, and suggestions for battling garden pests (<http://www.houselogic.com/home-advice/pest-control/backyard-pest-protection/>). We like the handy feature that allows users to take and store notes for reference later.

Please see apps on page 7



Win KC Improv Festival Tickets!

To win, be the first to email the correct answer to andy@andysavesyoumoney.com

At what well-known Chicago improv group did John Belushi get his start?

- A) Second City
- B) Tenth City
- C) Fifteenth City

Who can I help?

Know someone who may need some help with real estate? Let me assist them. I'm always available to answer questions, without any obligations. You can reach me at (913) 375-0135 or andy@andysavesyoumoney.com

Got a question? Contact me.

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Website of the Month

safercar.gov

This is one of several websites operated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that offers information to consumers.

The site has four sections – vehicle shoppers, vehicle owners, vehicle manufacturers and parents central – that provide pertinent information to consumers. For example, videos are in the “parents central” section that show how to properly install a car seat or booster in all types of vehicles. For those of you with teen drivers, there are tips on how to address specific issues that face teen drivers.

A list of recalls, tire ratings and vehicle safety ratings are among the information you can find on the website.

Green Cleaning Products for the Bathroom

By Alyson McNutt English

Inexpensive green cleaning products--both off the shelf and homemade--can be just as effective on your sinks, toilets, and showers as conventional products.

Grimy grout. Moldy showers. Smells you'd rather not talk about. Given its frequent exposure to moisture, not to mention calls of nature, the bathroom needs to be one of the most frequently sanitized rooms in the house. But if you rely on conventional commercial products for your lavatory clean-ups, not only are you paying big bucks but you're also bringing some of the harshest chemicals on the market into this small, often poorly ventilated space. The combination makes the bathroom a prime candidate for a green cleaning products.

Environmentally friendly doesn't necessarily mean expensive, however. While there are many sustainable off-the-shelf options, safe and effective cleaning solutions also can be mixed at home for pennies from common household ingredients like vinegar and baking soda. Here's a tip sheet for transforming your bathroom from chemically contaminated to green and clean.

Showers and Baths

A serious bathroom-cleaning hazard is the accidental combination of bleach and ammonia, common ingredients in different all-purpose cleaners. On their own, each is unhealthy to breathe in and can seriously irritate skin. Combined, however, they can create a dangerous plume of chlorine gas, says Eric Richter, chemist for the Atlanta-based Ecodiscoveries (<http://www.ecodiscoveries.com/>). You can avoid this toxic reaction by staying away from conventional cleaners, or at the very least carefully scrutinizing labels.

Another harmful chemical found in conventional all-purpose cleaners is 2-butoxyethanol. It belongs to a group of grease-cutting industrial solvents called glycol ethers, which are easily absorbed through the skin and have been linked to reproductive problems and birth defects in animal studies. "It's just overkill in a bathroom, where your biggest problems are toothpaste in the sink or soap residue in the shower," says Ali Solomon, director of communications for the environmental organization Women's Voices for the Earth (<http://www.womenandenvironment.org>).

Solomon says you can save the \$4-\$5 you'd spend buying chemical concoctions at the store by making your own all-purpose cleaner for your shower enclosures or baths. Mix equal parts water and vinegar, then heat in a glass bowl. You can also add several drops of a disinfecting essential oil like orange or lemon, she says, to improve the smell and boost germ-fighting power. Food-grade vinegar runs about \$4 for a 64-ounce bottle; that's \$1 per 32-ounce batch of cleaner.

Please see cleaning on page 6

Clutter: Continued from page 1

Andrew Mellen, author of *Unstuff Your Life!* (http://andrewmellen.com/the_book.php), offers his organizational holy trinity:

Designate a Home for Everything: Every backpack, skirt, homework assignment must have its own place. Get the kids in the habit of placing everything where it belongs.

Place Like with Like: All pencils go in one bin; permission slips in one clear envelope; coats on the same row of hooks.

Something In; Something Out: When you buy something new, you get rid of something old. No exceptions!

Here are more ways to escape back-to-school clutter.

1. Make a List: Impulse buying is deadly when shopping for school clothes, supplies, field trips, and sports stuff. Take an inventory, make a list of must-haves, and follow it exactly. If it's not on the list, it doesn't come into the house.

2. Unpack Immediately: Don't pile up shopping bags full of supplies. Unpack and organize as soon as you bring the bags into the house. That way, you'll avoid day-before-school chaos.

3. Create a Mommy/Daddy Binder: Geralin Thomas (<http://metropolitanorganizing.com/>), a pro organizer featured on A&E's show "Hoarders," says parents should make for themselves a three-ring binder that contains kids' immunization records, lists of active medications, pediatrician telephone numbers - the information they refer to and write on forms frequently during the school year.

4. Establish a Homework Zone: Kids' rooms (<http://www.houselogic.com/home-advice/rooms/kids-rooms-storage-solutions/>), dining room table, kitchen counter - just pick a place. Stock the spot with bins, jars, or rolling caddies with school supplies - pens, papers, glue sticks - so kids don't have to hunt for what they need.

5. Color-Code Your Kids: Assign each child a color: Billy's blue, Mary's red. Buy basics - binders, towels, toothbrushes, slippers - in those colors for easy sorting and cleanup.

6. Pick a Staging Spot: This is where kids put their ready-to-go backpacks each night before bed. In the morning, they just grab and go.

7. Give Each Child a Sports Bin: A place in the mudroom or entryway where each kid can put their kneepads, helmets, ballet shoes - all the equipment they need for lessons, practices, and games. Also, tape a checklist for each sport above each bin; i.e., Baseball: cleats, mitt, bat, hat. That way, kids won't forget what they need.

Please see clutter on page 7

Cleaning: Continued from page 4

Toilets

The commercially available cleaners for your porcelain throne contain some of the nastiest stuff you can buy. Mary Findley (<http://www.goclean.com>), author of "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Green Cleaning," says you can skip chemicals like bleach, ammonia, hydrochloric acid, and naphthalene, and still score a white, clean toilet.

Add about half a cup of a green all-purpose cleaner like Biokleen's (\$5 for 32 ounces) to the toilet, then sprinkle baking soda into the bowl. If you want extra bleaching power, substitute hydrogen peroxide for the all-purpose cleaner. The one-two punch will transform your toilet for pocket change compared to the \$3-\$6 you'd shell out for a bottle of the conventional stuff.

Drains

Put away the \$6 you'd spend buying industrial-grade acids when you're trying to dislodge a hairball. Instead, pour a half-cup of baking soda down the drain, and follow with a half-cup of vinegar. Cover and let it set for at least 30 minutes, then flush with boiling water. If that doesn't work, try an enzyme-based cleaner like Nature's Miracle (<http://www.naturemakesitwork.com/home/index.php>), which contains eco-friendly microbes that eat away at clogs, or buy a \$5 plunger and dislodge the clog manually.

Sinks & Vanities

Many sink problems, from leftover toothpaste to stray makeup splotches, can be cleaned with hot water and a natural dishwashing soap like those from Mrs. Meyer's (\$4.50 for 16 ounces). If you want to disinfect, try Women's Voices for the Earth's green all-purpose cleaner recipe, or what Solomon calls the "Creamy Soft Scrub." (<http://www.womenandenvironment.org/campaignsandprograms/SafeCleaning/recipes>) It's a mix of baking soda, castile soap, and essential oils that will foam up and clean away dirty sink and vanity problems. Castile soap retails for about \$15 for a 32-ounce bottle. You can use the soft-scrub mix all over the house, and castile soap can double as a body wash or shampoo.

Mirrors & Glass

Pour on the vinegar to clean glass and mirrors, Findley says. Add a quarter cup of vinegar to a 32-ounce spray bottle, and fill the rest of the way with distilled water. Spray on and wipe with an old newspaper rather than a cloth or paper towel to prevent stray threads and towel bits from remaining on your glass. Your mirrors will be streak- and particulate-free, and for significantly less money than if you'd shelled out the \$5 for a regular glass cleaner.

Please see cleaning on page 8

Clutter: Continued from page 5

- 8. Update the Family Calendar:** Update your trusty wall calendar daily. Make sure your schedule is on the calendar too, so kids know when you're available for conferences and carpools.
- 9. Digitize the Family Calendar:** Your computer calendar has all kinds of digital features that will help keep everyone on schedule. Sync your computer calendar with cell phones so everyone knows where they need to be.
- 10. Sign and Return Permission Slips Immediately:** If slips hang around, they become clutter and disappear. Get in the habit of signing and returning the next day.

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Apps: Continued from page 2

- 4. Get to Know Your Stuff App:** Nest Egg (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/nest-egg-inventory/id431188993?mt=8>) Cost: \$2.99

This home inventory (<http://www.houselogic.com/home-advice/home-inventories/home-inventory-for-insurance/>) app is not just for insurance (<http://www.houselogic.com/protect-your-home/home-insurance/>) purposes. Once you enter an item's information via barcode, photo, or serial number, it becomes a snap to manage warranty and expiration dates, track stuff you borrow and lend, avoid making duplicate purchases, and more.

We especially love the online price check feature that helps users get the finest deals out there for future purchases -- plus, when it's time to reorder, you get a list of the best web prices.

- 5. An App that Picks Color Perfect Paint:** Paint Tester Pro (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/id388042074?mt=8>) Cost: \$1.99

Have you ever regretted a paint color (<http://www.houselogic.com/home-topics/paint-colors/>) you picked? Well, this simple app allows users to pick final interior colors with confidence if you follow their trick for getting the best results. Just tape a color sample to the wall you want to paint and take a photo. Using the app, open the image you took and add the color sample to your paint bucket. The app will paint the walls in your photo the same color as the swatch.

Since the wall and paint sample were shot at the same time, you won't have to guess how the color will look in a room's lighting. The best part: You can even check multiple shades at the same time.

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Cleaning: Continued from page 6

Tile & Grout

Tile grout's prickly texture tends to invite dirt, mold, and scum. The soft-scrub mix is a good option, Solomon says. To mop tile floors, whip up a batch of water and vinegar-based all-purpose cleaner. In the shower, if you're dealing with moldy grout, try borax. A 76-ounce box costs about \$6.50. One cup of borax in one gallon of water with a stiff-bristled sponge should help scour mildew from your shower grout.

Odors

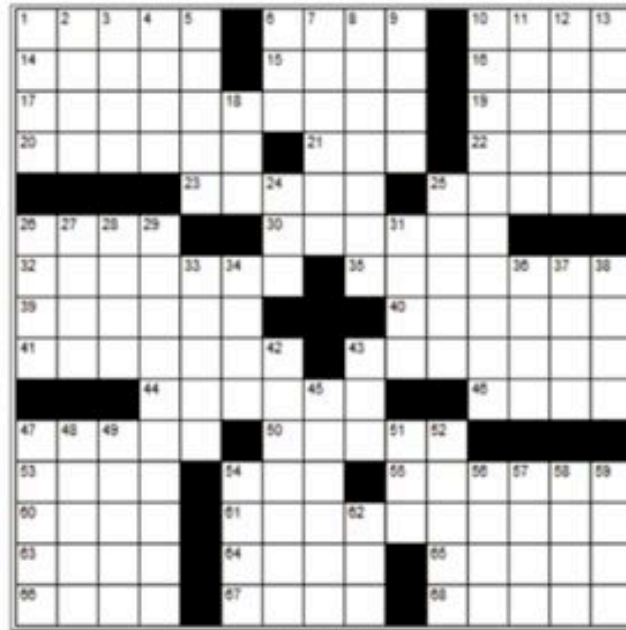
Very few synthetic fragrances found in cleaners and air fresheners have been tested for human toxicity, Richter says. You can avoid the risk (and the \$3 a spray air freshener will cost) by simply using common sense and ventilation. To freshen a stinky bathroom, turn on outside-vented fans or open windows, when possible. Otherwise try the age-old trick of sticking an open box of baking soda in your lavatory. It costs less than \$1, and it sucks unpleasant smells right out of the air.

Alyson McNutt English has written about the joy of green cleaning for publications like *Pregnancy*, *Conceive*, and *BobVila.com*. She buys her baking soda and vinegar in bulk and uses them liberally for everything from disinfecting laundry to soaking up her kids' food stains.

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ACROSS

- 1. Catkin
- 6. Volume
- 10. Soil
- 14. Pertaining to the Sun
- 15. Nameless
- 16. Bright thought
- 17. Pirate written material
- 19. Dribble
- 20. Detects
- 21. Behold
- 22. Cover with asphalt
- 23. Beauty parlor
- 25. Models
- 26. Gossip
- 30. Cherubim
- 32. Freedom
- 35. Stretchable
- 39. Boulevard
- 40. Mountain range
- 41. Joining together by heating
- 43. Stress
- 44. Withstand
- 46. Male offspring
- 47. Smells
- 50. 9 9 9 9
- 53. A soft sheepskin leather
- 54. Not on
- 55. Not digital
- 60. Initial wager
- 61. Journey
- 63. Foot digits
- 64. District
- 65. Keepsake
- 66. Makes a mistake
- 67. Not more
- 68. Shooting sport



DOWN

- 1. Vipers
- 2. Infiltrator
- 3. Distinctive flair
- 4. Badgers
- 5. Attempts
- 6. Tavern
- 7. Occurring together
- 8. Tablet
- 9. Leg joint
- 10. Deprive
- 11. Notions
- 12. One of the Canterbury pilgrims
- 13. Cassettes
- 18. An Old Testament king
- 24. Nonclerical
- 25. Featureless
- 26. Talon
- 27. Apiary
- 28. Cain's brother
- 29. Affection
- 31. If not
- 33. Wreckage
- 34. Care for
- 36. Threesome
- 37. Weightlifters pump this
- 38. Tins
- 42. Shots
- 43. One more than nine
- 45. Shoulder firearms
- 47. Give a speech
- 48. Giver
- 49. Cowboy movie
- 51. Hearing organ
- 52. Piques
- 54. Iridescent gem
- 56. Out of control
- 57. Body of water
- 58. Curved molding
- 59. Lady's escort
- 62. Petrol



July Answers