

# your home

JULY/AUG 2015

Tips and trends for homeowners, buyers and sellers

## RETURN ON improvement

Are you thinking about selling your home, or do you just want to spruce things up and don't know where to start? If you're working within a strict budget, the thought of remodeling your home can be daunting. It's best to assess your needs and also educate yourself on current market trends before you get started.

The 2015 Remodeling Cost vs. Value Report, produced by *Remodeling* magazine in cooperation with the National Association of REALTORS®, reports that large-scale jobs

aren't likely to return sellers their full cost. Instead, smaller replacement jobs tend to generate a higher return than remodeling projects. The report uncovers that replacement projects showed an average return of 73.2 percent, while the cost-value ratio of remodeling projects showed an average rate of return of 60.8 percent.

Arming yourself with information like this is key before you invest in making improvements. Here are the five mid-range projects that are most likely to recoup the cost of investment.

### Home improvements most likely to recoup cost:



Entry door replacement



Manufactured stone veneer



Garage door replacement



Siding replacement, vinyl



Deck addition, wood

## WATER SENSE

While some regions of the country have been battling severe flooding conditions in recent months, a considerable chunk of the U.S. is struggling with the opposite problem: drought.

Communities across the country face tough challenges to help them maintain a healthy and affordable water supply. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends several simple tactics to help homeowners limit their water use — which averages 260 gallons of water each day per household.

→ **Install water-efficient appliances and fixtures:** WaterSense and ENERGYSTAR®, programs sponsored by EPA, have

identified high-performance, water-efficient appliances, fixtures, water systems and accessories that reduce water use in the home and help preserve the nation's water resources.

→ **Upgrade to a water-efficient toilet:** Toilets are the main source of water use in the home, accounting for nearly 30 percent of residential indoor water consumption. A switch to a high-efficiency toilet can save a family of four \$2,000 over the lifetime of the toilet.

→ **Focus on faucets and showerheads:** Faucets and showerheads account for

approximately 32 percent of all home water use, the EPA says. High-efficiency fixtures, marked with the "WaterSense" label, can provide a huge reduction in a household's annual water consumption.

→ **Landscape wisely:** By using native plants in the yard as part of a greenscape, homeowners will be able to spare the expense and hassle of watering a large swath of lawn. Trees, shrubs and other leafy plants can help absorb rainfall and reduce runoff.



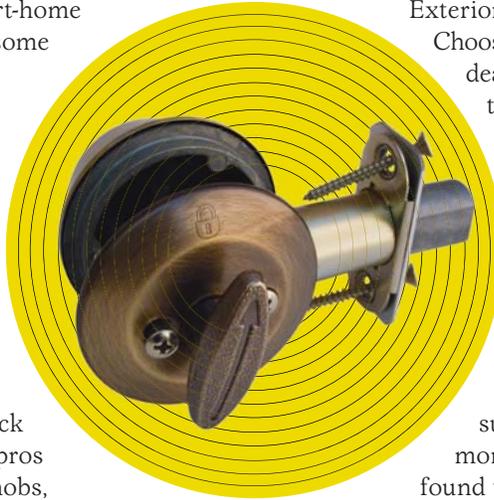
Learn more at [epa.gov/greenhomes/ConserveWater.htm](http://epa.gov/greenhomes/ConserveWater.htm).



# LOCK IT UP

With all the advancements in smart-home security technology and systems, some homeowners may overlook one of the most basic keys to home security — door locks and keys. According to This Old House, nearly 3 million U.S. homes are broken into each year. Locks have come a long way in terms of the protection they provide, and it's a good time to examine some options for improving home security with a simple upgrade of door-lock hardware.

Determining what kind of exterior lock you need is the first step. Consider the pros and cons of various keyed-entry doorknobs, handle sets and dead bolts before you buy. All exterior doors need a dead bolt no matter what kind of knob or handle set you decide on. You can mount the dead bolt and doorknob together or separately, or purchase a set that includes both as one installation.



Exterior locks should be either Grade 1 or 2. Choose locksets with a dead-locking latch bolt or dead bolts that include hardened pins. Install these with a heavy-duty plate and at least 3-inch screws. Prices for the locksets vary from \$25 to over \$300 depending on quality, style and safety rating.

When you're shopping for a new lockset, keep in mind that you want to look for a dead bolt that will withstand door jimmying with a credit card or saw. According to a study by ConsumerReports.org, forcible entries such as door kick-ins are the most common type of home break in. The report also found that the majority of new smart-home locks that are opened by a fingerprint, passcode or key failed their prying/wrenching test. Since technology isn't necessarily the solution when it comes to home security, reinforcing doors with upgraded locks that feature good safety-rated parts will keep your home safe.

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