



Tips and trends for homeowners, buyers and sellers



## Create an Outdoor Oasis Without a Full Patio Makeover

You do not need a full renovation to make your outdoor space feel more relaxing. A few thoughtful updates can make a patio, porch or small backyard feel more finished, comfortable and personal.

Start by thinking less about “makeover” and more about atmosphere. An outdoor rug can help define the space and make it feel like an extension of your home. Layering in soft textures through pillows, cushions or throws can also make the area feel more inviting without requiring a major investment.

### Tip:

Choose one feature that encourages lingering, like a hammock, a pair of comfortable chairs or soft string lighting. A single focal point can instantly make the space feel more intentional.

From there, build around that anchor with a few low-lift additions such as potted plants, lanterns or a small side table. Even modest changes can shift the feel of an outdoor area from purely functional to somewhere you actually want to spend time.

The goal is to create a space that feels welcoming enough to use every day, even on a limited budget and scope. Small updates can make your patio feel less like left-over square footage and more like a favorite room outdoors.

## How Much Should You Budget for Home Maintenance Each Year?

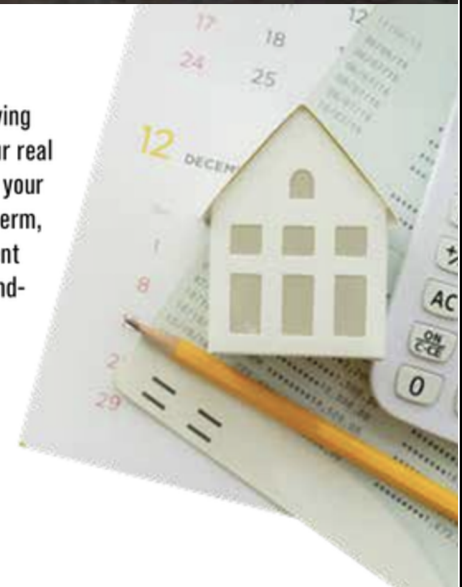
Owning a home means budgeting for more than your mortgage. Maintenance costs can include everything from HVAC service and gutter cleaning to appliance repairs and roof work, which is why setting aside money each year can help you avoid financial surprises.

A simple way to think about it:

- ▶ Set aside a little each month instead of waiting for emergencies
- ▶ Expect bigger costs for older homes
- ▶ Prioritize seasonal upkeep like HVAC, gutters and exterior repairs
- ▶ Keep a separate emergency cushion for unexpected breakdowns

Some homeowners use the rule of thumb of saving 1% to 2% of their home’s value each year, but your real number depends on the age, size and condition of your house. A newer home may need less in the short term, while an older property could require more frequent attention. Repair costs can also rise quickly depending on labor, materials and the scope of the work.

Planning ahead will not prevent every repair, but it can make homeownership feel much more manageable. A steady maintenance budget gives you more flexibility, helps protect your investment and makes it easier to handle both routine upkeep and the occasional surprise.





# How to Pressure Wash Your Home's Exterior Safely

Pressure washing can freshen up your home's exterior, improve curb appeal and help prep surfaces for paint. But using too much pressure or the wrong technique can damage siding, trim and other outdoor surfaces.

## Start here:

- 1 **Prep the area.** Move outdoor furniture, close windows and cover nearby plants or electrical fixtures.
- 2 **Choose the right washer and nozzle.** A lighter-duty setup is usually enough for siding and general exterior cleaning.
- 3 **Test a small area first.** This helps you confirm the pressure is not too strong for the surface.
- 4 **Spray at an angle.** Work with the siding, not directly upward, to avoid forcing water behind it.
- 5 **Keep moving.** Hold the wand steadily and avoid concentrating pressure in one spot too long.

Pressure washers can also be used on decks, patios and walkways, which makes them a useful tool for spring cleanup. The key is matching the pressure and technique to the material you're cleaning.

A little patience goes a long way here. Done carefully, pressure washing can make your home look noticeably cleaner heading into outdoor season and help preserve exterior surfaces at the same time.



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