

## Banish Basement Dampness

ne minute the basement could be dry and the next there could be a river running through it. Ignoring a water problem could prove costly and rob you and your family of an otherwise enjoyable place to spend

Waterproofing a basement is a simple job that beautifies a space while protecting it against future damage from water. First, know what properties to look for in a waterproofer. The property that is the most important to look for in a masonry waterproofing paint is the ability to hold back hydrostatic pressure, which makes a waterproofer different than a water sealer and an ordinary house paint. Ordinary house paints merely adhere to the wall surface while masonry waterproofers penetrate the pores of the masonry to become part of the wall.

Most waterproofing paints will go through pressure tests that will determine the Pounds Per Square Inch (PSI) the coating will hold back. It is also important that the coating be tested to withstand wind-driven rain.

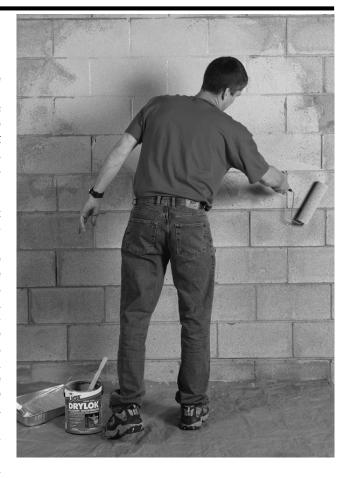
The makers of DRYLOK Masonry Waterproofer developed the specs for hydrostatic testing. They state the PSI should be at a minimum of 4 psi, which is a wall of water 9 feet high. Look for products that have been tested independently on standard grade building materials. Be leery of products that say they will withstand above 15 psi (which is a wall of water higher than 33 feet), as a standard grade building block could never withstand that much pressure. In fact, independent testing facilities will not test products

Once you have selected your waterproofer, it is time

for surface preparation. Examine the surface for loose or broken mortar or any holes or cracks in the surface. The surface should be clean and patched with a hydraulic cement, such as DRYLOK Fast Plug. Be sure there are no signs of efflorescence, which are natural salts leaching from the masonry surface. These salts should be cleaned with an etching solution or DRYLOK Etch, which is a safer alternative than Muriatic Acid. After cleansing, rinse the surface thoroughly.

A waterproofing paint is thicker than house paint, so it will take longer to apply, but its application is just as simple. Most waterproofing paints can be applied with a stiff bristle brush or a roller. Simply work the product into the surface of the masonry, filling the texture with the coating. The thing to remember is that this coating needs to perform a task, so it is important to follow the label instructions. Apply the first coat with a nylon or polyester bristle brush for best results. The second coat can be applied with a brush or masonry roller. Follow directions for application carefully. If the area covered is more than the recommendation on the label, you're spreading the paint too thin. Two coats are usually sufficient to stop seepage. However, if seepage is still present after several days, an additional coat may be necessary.

Whether your plans are for a basement pantry, woodshop, laundry room or even a living room or play room, you have to start with a dry space and the best start is with a reliable, reputable waterproofing paint. Simple step by step instructions on waterproofing your basement can be found at www.ugl.com.



Applying a waterproofing solution is one way homeowners can transform their basement from a damp storage unit into a bright and livable room everyone can enjoy.

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# Funding your next improvement

Maintenance is an inevitable part of home ownership. Beyond routine fixes, many homeowners aspire toward larger projects such as room expansion or a new roof or siding. Funding for these projects may start with a loan from the bank.

A home equity loan or line of credit are common ways to pay for home renovations. A home equity loan can be used for a number of things, including paying education expenses or buying luxury items. Oftentimes, a homeowner chooses to borrow against the equity in the homes to make improvements that will increase the value of the property.

A home equity loan is also known as a second mortgage. Homeowners borrow money by leveraging the equity in their homes. Equity is the amount of ownership value a homeowner has in a property. It is calculated by subtracting the unpaid mortgage balance and other debts on the home from the property's fair market value. It's important to note that some home values decreased during the economic downturn. Therefore, homeowners should do their homework prior to starting any improvements to determine if a home equity loan is a good idea. There are two main types of home equity loans: A fixed-rate loan or a home equity line of credit.

With a fixed-rate loan, a lump sum is provided to the homeowner, which is then repaid over a set period of time with a fixed interest rate that is agreed upon by the lender and the lendee. The payment and interest rate remain the same for the life of the loan.

When homeowners choose a home equity line of credit, or HELOC, it is like they are using a credit card linked to their home's value. Borrowers are pre-approved for a set amount against which they can borrow. Monthly payments may vary and the interest rate is based on the current interest rate, meaning it can fluctuate.

Home equity loans typically offer interest rates that are

lower than those linked to credit cards or offered with other types of loans. The interest paid on these loans also may be tax-deductible. Home equity loans are a good choice for responsible homeowners who have the means to repay the loan. They can be a pitfall for borrowers who overspend and need creative financing methods to pay off outstanding debt.

Using a home equity loan to make a home improvement should be done carefully. Financial experts say that the loan should only be taken if the renovation will add value to the home. Cosmetic changes and personal additions, such as a swimming pool, may not justify the cost of the loan.

Individuals can talk with a personal savings bank, the company that holds their mortgage, a credit union, or another financial institution to determine if a home equity loan is the right choice in this current market.



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# 12 green home improvements

There are numerous jobs that a person can do that fit with a green lifestyle. These improvements help protect the planet and help keep a few extra dollars in your wal-

- 1. Conserve water. Turn off the tap between brushing teeth or rinsing off dishes. Better yet, install low-flow faucets, showerheads and toilets that reduce the consumption of water in the household.
- 2. Motion detection: Lights will automatically turn on and off depending on the activity in the area, reducing the

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chances of a light being left on inadvertently and wasting money and energy.

- 3. Solar panels: They can be installed on the roof or in the vard to power various components of the household, like lights during a traditional power outage or the swimming pool filter. Today it is possible to buy used solar panels, many of which still have a lot of life left to them and are considerably cheaper than new ones.
- 4. Aluminum-clad storm door: Insulate the entryway of your home with a storm door to buffer against harsh

weather. Caulk around win-

dows and doors.

5. Replace air filters: Your HVAC system likely has filters. Replacing the filters leads to cleaner indoor air and helps the unit run more efficiently.

6. Power strips: Stock up on power strips and plug all of your peripherals and computer equipment into these strips. This way when you want to power down everything completely, you simply turn off the power button on the strip. This ensures no devices are drawing power even in the

off position, which many do.

- 7. Install fans: In the winter, the blades can be set to rotate in the opposite direction and help draw warm air into the room, heating more efficiently.
- 8. Rainwater barrels: Set up rainwater barrels at the downspouts of your home's gutter system. These barrels collect water that can be used to water indoor and outdoor plants, or even wash the car. Some feature a spigot to which you can directly connect a garden hose.
- 9. Plant trees: Trees produce necessary oxygen for life and offering food and living areas for wildlife. Trees can shade a home in summer reducing energy consumption.
- 10. Glass fireplace doors: Install glass fireplace doors, which are safer than fireplace screens. They'll also help protect against heat loss up the chimney when there isn't
- 11. Buy a solar cover. A solar cover helps keep debris out of the water, too. Solar covers reduce the need to fire up the heater to warm the water.
- 12. Dog waste composter: Create a method to safely dispose of dog waste without having to toss it in plastic bags in the trash. There are devices that can be buried into the ground to serve as a dog waste receptacle. Or you can make one of your own by placing a container with a lid that seals on top but has an open bottom. Sprinkle a natural bacteria septic tank product, such as Rid-X, down the hole routinely and it will break down the waste and turn it into soil fertilizer.

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## Three simple fixes to help save money and winterize around the house

There are numerous, simple projects at homeowners' fingertips that can conserve energy in a home and keep money in the bank. Although windows, doors and siding are the biggest opportunities to conserve energy and reduce costs, not every project has to be a major one. When it comes to improving energy efficiency, every little bit

Garage doors are usually the single largest entry point into a home and are rarely insulated, leaving a large area where air can seep in. Rubber thresholds, found at any hardware store, can be easily and quickly installed underneath the garage door to help keep the cold at bay. Since most garage doors are aluminum, it is best to use a two-part epoxy like Gorilla Epoxy to secure these two different materials together. Epoxy fills any surface gaps, creating a lasting, water-resistant bond. The pressure and weight of the door then helps seal the garage when the door is closed. A similar type of seal can be made with a rubber gasket on exterior doors as well.

When the weather dips below freezing, there is a good chance that copper pipes will freeze. While it might be harder to get to the pipes behind the walls, exposed pipes in the basement can be wrapped without difficulty. Flexible foam with a split-sleeve. purchased from any hardware store, will slip right over the pipes and can be easily secured with Gorilla Tape. This heavy duty tape contains twice the adhesive as most duct tapes and outperforms standard duct tape in these tough situations.

Attics, are a major source of lost heat. Don't forget to insulate the access door to the attic. For this project, it is best to use rigid foam insulation with a radiant barrier. Cut the insulation board to the door's dimensions. (It is best to cut the piece a tad smaller than the door's exact size to ensure that it does not interfere with hinges or where the door seats into place.) Once cut, affix the insulation board using polyurethane glue. Gorilla Glue can glue foam to a wood or metal attic door without melting the foam. Remember to wet one surface prior to gluing and clamp the project by weighting it down with some heavy items. This polyurethane glue expands into the surface of the insulation and creates a tight bond ensuring the insulation will stay in place for the life of the home.

#### Reduce, reuse...recharge!

Batteries power all of our portable devices, and without them, we are powerless to use them, quite literally. Standard alkaline batteries may last a long time, but we constantly need a supply of them on hand and they can be expensive. When you stop to add up how many AA or AAA batteries a standard home uses (all those remote controls, wireless keyboards, mice and game controllers, etc.), the hidden cost of replacement batteries can surprise you. Luckily, there's a solution that's more efficient and costs less over time. Rechargeable battery technology has improved in the last five years that gets rid of many of the questions of using rechargeables.

One example of these batteries is the 'eneloop,' a pre-charged rechargeable battery that you can use out of the package and recharge up to 1,500 times, made by SANYO. It also keeps its charge, up to 85 percent after two years of non-use. Because the eneloop is ready to use and has low self-discharge (meaning that it holds its charge for a long period of time), they are more cost-effective than ever before. We know rechargeable batteries are convenient for our cell phones, music players and readers, but we don't usually stop to think about them for other everyday items.

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# The art of gardening war

By Reggie Maher

Ah, fall...a time of revolution in the garden, when weeds rise up and with the help of their ally, the wind, shoot seeds everywhere. Next summer's enemies have been sown! So how does one win this battle? Do you become a weed warrior-digging them up until your flower beds resemble a mine field? Although that does work and is a necessary part of the battle there is an additional, less aggressive approach to weeding as well.

I have adopted my own strategy, a long range war plan. Chop off their heads, seed heads that is, and bag up every seed and throw them away in the garbage. The plan is, minus their seed heads, annual weeds will die off over the winter and pop up less and less each year.

Burning them in a fire pit on a windless day could work, as well as burning off some of your weed aggression. But beware of composting them. Weeds that have gone to seed could become a virtual Trojan horse – if all the seeds don't "cook" during the composting process you will unwittingly aid the enemy in the spring when you integrate the compost back into your garden.

So that's my weed war plan-a battle that may never truly be won. But then again, for gardeners, the battle can be half the fun.

here's little escape from stink bugs that have been increasingly showing up in yards and homes.

A stink bug feeds on many plants by piercing the host plant and sucking out juices with its proboscis. The penetrated area can develop necrosis and damage affected plants in many ways.

Stink bugs get their names from the scent glands

on the underside of the thorax between the first and second pair of legs. If the bugs are squashed, they can emit a foul smell.

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Homeowners should keep in mind that stink bugs pre-

fer to overwinter inside and hibernate. That means that come the fall season the bugs will seek entry to homes and buildings to beat the cold until they can venture out the next season.

To prevent stink bugs from entering the home, homeowners can seal any openings to the outdoors as much as possible, caulking around windows and doors. Stink bugs can live up to a year or more and may reproduce several times if the weather conditions are right. It may be difficult to completely eradicate all pests.

Stink bugs do not bite or sting. If one is found inside or too close for comfort, the best idea is to have it walk onto something, like a piece of paper or fly swatter and move it outdoors. Crushing the bug can cause it to emit a foul odor, although one bug alone is not enough to stink up a home.









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