

YOUR HOME

MARCH
2010

TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

LIVING COLOR

The leading expert in color, Pantone, Inc., has made it official: Turquoise is the "it" color for 2010. But before you deck the house from top to bottom in the gemstone hue, consider the other latest color trends.

Behr paint company says neutral is still in — think light colors such as grays, camels and off-whites. Experts suggest buying bigger furniture such as sofas or armchairs in these safe colors, which never truly go out of style. Complement neutrals with aqua and gold tones, but stay away from darker browns, which are becoming passé.

While monochromatic schemes are still versatile and dependable, HGTV says the real winners in the color game right now are bold jewel colors such as ruby red or emerald green, and the brighter the better — especially if it's a purple hue. Experts advise pairing these daring tones with a smoky charcoal or a softer black to give a room a vintage feel.

Going green and getting back to nature is a major trend, too. Earthier tones, such as sand or yellow-greens, are perfect for living rooms or kitchens. But going back to your roots doesn't just mean dipping into Mother Earth's favorite colors. Decorators say Asian-inspired or tribal patterns are adorning decorative elements as consumers look to get the most bang for their buck. Think pillows, area rugs or murals as key items this season.



TOGGA/GETTY IMAGES

APP ORCHARD

Buying or selling your house? There's an app for that. Well, not exactly, but there's plenty of high-tech help available to guide you through the process.

The **iZillow** app gives you access to data on more than 80 million homes, including square footage and an estimate of fair market value. Take a drive around your possible new neighborhood and see home values pop up on your phone with real-time real estate info.

Get real-time mortgage rates from hundreds of lenders nationwide with the **Mortgage Marvel** app. Use it to compare rates and fees — prices reflect transaction-related pricing adjustments, such as loan amount, loan-to-value ratio and property type — and view disclosure information for all rates. When you're ready, you can select a lender, fill out an application and be approved.

The **RulerPhone** app lets you use your iPhone as a tape measure to see if your couch will fit in your prospective new home. Place any credit-card-sized card next to an object, take a picture with the phone and align your image with the card placeholder displayed on-screen. A ruler will be displayed, allowing you to adjust the measurements with the drag of a finger.

The **ExpertVideo: Home Repair** app brings valuable home repair how-to videos to the palm of your hand. More than 20 videos are available, covering how to repair concrete steps, paint kitchen cabinets or patch a drywall hole. Still have questions after watching? A moderated discussion panel gives you the answers.

Keep home improvements and routine maintenance tasks organized with the **Homeowner Calendar** app, featuring a calendar of monthly tasks, such as checking smoke alarms, cleaning air filters or cleaning your gutters. Alerts let you know when tasks are coming up, and the application allows for custom additions.

Find all these apps at www.apple.com/iphone/appstore.



fast fact >> >> >> >>

The Labrador Retriever has held the top spot for Most Popular Dog in America for the past 18 years



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Hidden Treasure

Tax day is just around the corner, and many homeowners forget that they're sitting on a wealth of potential savings — in their home. Tax deductions for homeowners are plentiful, so keep these guidelines in mind as you prepare your return this year.

First, know that if you deduct home expenses, you have to file form 1040 (also known as the long form) and itemize your deductions on Schedule A. While it can be a headache, the rewards might be worth it.

Remember that the mortgage on your home is deductible — at least the real estate taxes, qualifying interest and premiums, for a loan up to \$1 million, according to the IRS. Note that fire or homeowner's insurance premiums and the principal mortgage amount are not deductible. Here's how to calculate what's deductible: Enter your total real estate taxes for the year, and enter the number of days in the property tax year that you owned the property. Divide the number of days by 366, and multiply that number by your total real estate taxes for the year.

Paid off your mortgage early? The penalty you might have received is tax deductible as home mortgage interest, as long as it's not for a specific service performed or a cost connected with your mortgage loan.

You may have heard that home repairs can qualify for tax deductions, but home improvements are the real winners. An improvement is classified as anything that

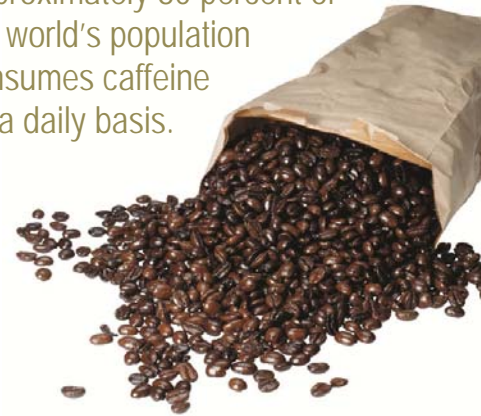
adds to the value of the home — for instance, making a room handicapped accessible or adding a deck to the back of your home. Always keep receipts and records — and remember, if you borrowed money for that improvement, the interest on the loan is tax deductible, just as it is with the mortgage payments.

Another item many homeowners forget is deductions for loan origination fees, better known as "points." One point is equal to 1 percent of your loan. Depending on how many points you've accumulated, you may be eligible to deduct them. There are rules about deducting points, but a financial professional can help you sort through them.

And finally, don't forget that if you upgraded to energy-efficient Energy Star windows, stoves or water heaters, those may be eligible for a tax credit. Check www.energystar.gov to see if your improvements are included.

DID YOU KNOW?

March is National Caffeine Awareness Month. Approximately 80 percent of the world's population consumes caffeine on a daily basis.



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