

Four feel good ways to save time, money and energy this fall



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Green Living

Question. What do leaves, your yard tools and your thermostat have in common?

Answer. They all present a window of opportunity this fall to save you time, money and energy. Oh... speaking of windows, you can add them to that list as well. Here goes.

One. Leave the leaves. Every fall I marvel at the time and energy my neighbours put into raking and bagging leaves. Think about the process involved.

There's the back-breaking job of raking, or, in the case of one of my neighbours with no sense of the impact they're having on the environment, the multiple times they've spent driving around on their riding mower to blow leaves into a pile.

Then there's the time and personal energy spent bagging the

leaves and putting them out at roadside, while hoping it doesn't rain on the bags before they're picked up.

If you really care about your grass then it's far better to mulch your leaves, providing a natural source of nutrients that contributes to a healthier lawn in the years to come.

An added bonus — as shared by the U.S. National Wildlife Federation — is that mulched leaves also provide a safe haven for butterfly larvae over the winter.

Two. Take charge of your lawn. If your existing gas lawn mower or other yard tools are getting on in age or if you're just tired of breathing in their nasty two-stroke exhaust, now is the time to switch over to an electric mower, blower or trimmer.

My own transition to Ryobi yard tools years ago was hastened by a package deal on all three of the above, powered by the same battery. No doubt similar deals are still around from various manufacturers.

As for how you'll benefit: electric yard tools are quieter, non-polluting alternatives that require less maintenance and cost to run than gas machines.

For the latter, there's also the added time and cost to keep those machines running, having to do your own running — to and from the local gas station.

Three. Lose the leak. As we head into winter, what better time to scrutinize how much heat you lose from around your windows, doors and even through your indoor electrical outlets from air leakage?

For a comprehensive picture of your home's energy efficiency, it's worth fast-tracking an energy audit tied to the Natural Resources Canada (NRCAN) Canada Greener Homes grant — a grant which after getting an audit done, helps offset the cost of plugging those leaks and insulating your home among other upgrades.

Prefer to do the legwork yourself? You can spot air leaks and loss of heat in a number of ways, from feeling for air leakage with your hands to using candles to visually detect air movement to purchasing a laser thermometer gun or an infrared camera to pinpoint cold spots, and from there, grabbing and installing the necessary weatherstripping



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products you need from your local hardware store.

As NRCAN conveys on their website "air leakage is the single most important retrofit activity" for your home, an action that can pay for itself several times over.

Four. Dial it down. Years ago while living in Australia I was surprised by how few homes at the time had central heating (and yes, it does get cold in cities like Sydney during the winter).

Their solution was to use space heaters in the most commonly used rooms while throwing on an extra layer of clothing to keep warm — all of which served to keep heating costs down.

While central heating in Canada is the norm, there's still merit in lowering your temperature an extra degree or two and using space heaters for rooms you're in the most.

And dropping your thermostat overnight will not only help you to

sleep better but is an effective way to reduce your energy bill.

With a smart thermostat, you can automate temperature changes night, day and when you're away.

And some devices will even share with you — as we found with the Ecobee thermostat we purchased a while back — the percentage of savings you can expect on your monthly energy bill, an estimate directly tied to your temperature settings and the size of your home.

Whether you tackle one or all of these actions, not only will you save time, money and energy, you'll also benefit from the feel good factor of doing your part to lower your carbon footprint and help fight climate change on the home front.

Mark Wessel lives in Ridgeway, Ont. and is a passionate advocate for living more sustainably at home and in the greater community. Visit www.markdouglaswessel.com.

Sold on size

Large country estate lots in Claremont appeal to multigenerational households, families

DIANNE DANIEL

Special to Postmedia Network

Last fall, industry watchers were predicting 2023 would be the year of the multigenerational household in Canada as a growing number of adult family members choose to live under one roof.

Strong demand for a new offering of 70 estate homes by Geranium north of Pickering, indicates they may be onto something.

More than half of the homes available in Clarehaven Estates — a new community of country estate lots up to one acre each in the hamlet of Claremont, Ontario — were sold within 10 days of launching, with

several buyers factoring aging parents, relatives, or grandchildren into their decisions.

The success stands out at a time when the real estate market is grappling with high interest rates and sluggish sales, and is due in part to pent-up demand for larger homes on larger lots, says Geranium director, sales and marketing, Stephanie Lane

"Multigenerational living is definitely driving some of that interest," said Lane, adding that quite a few of the early buyers chose the largest floor plans and included optional elevators.

"There's not a lot of availability of large lots these days and I think there



Priced from \$2.3 to \$3 million, Geranium's portfolio of bungalows and two-storey residences range from 2,557 to 5,149 square feet with options for private guest suites, media rooms and offices.

are a lot of people still looking for that kind of opportunity," she added, noting that the builder has also seen interest from single families, including a brother and sister who purchased homes next door to each other.

In its most recent census, Statistics Canada reported that multigenerational households are increasing faster than all other family household types, accounting for 6.4% of the population and found mostly in large cities like Toronto and Vancouver.

Reasons vary from housing

affordability, to the need to care for aging parents, to grandparents assisting with child care. The main benefit is the supportive sense of community family members enjoy.

Though not intentionally designed for multigenerational families, Clarehaven Estates does offer the flexibility required to make the arrangement work. Priced from \$2.3 to \$3 million, the portfolio of bungalows, bungalows with lofts and two-storey residences range from 2,557 to 5,149 square feet with options for private guest suites,

media rooms and offices.

Covered loggias and three-car garages are standard in the three elevations offered, which include: a traditional brick and stone model; a board and batten farmhouse with gabled roof lines; and, a transitional modern design with flat roof lines and matte metal exterior finishes.

Part of the appeal is the quiet country lifestyle of Claremont. "It's in that perfect little pocket north of Pickering, north of the 407 yet south of Uxbridge," said Lane. "Nature is at your doorstep, yet you're so well connected to day-to-day amenities."

The estate lots are close to shopping, golf, hiking trails, ski resorts and equestrian activities, while also providing easy access to daily conveniences. Construction is slated to start in late summer 2024 with first home closings expected to commence in the fall of 2025.

"Our emphasis is on designing and building homes that will stand the test of time, that are comfortable to live in," said Lane, who fielded several calls from interested buyers over the two years leading up to the launch. "When people find something they want, they are willing to wait for it," she said.