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HOME, YARD & AUTO



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Time to Renovate

Reduce your risk of

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Six essentials for a weekend road trip

The open road beckons many people, inspiring everything from extensive adventures to short weekend jaunts. Whether a road trip lasts a few weeks or a few days, certain items should be packed along for the ride to ensure safety and convenience.

Safety items. Trips necessitate planning for the unexpected. When it comes to driving, that means certain maintenance tools and equipment. Some items to keep in a car include:

- jumper cables
- spare tire/car jack
- oil and windshield washer fluid
- flashlight and batteries
- spill-proof gas can
- flares or traffic cones
- plastic funnel
- first aid kit

Important documents. Don't forget to bring along the necessary documents for operating a motor vehicle, including your driver's license, registration and proof of insurance. Be sure that you have valid credit cards, as it may be challenging to find an ATM in some rural areas. In addition, tuck away a paper map, as cell phone signals may not be strong in mountainous areas.

Diversions. Long drives require entertainment to keep passengers occupied, no matter their age. Playing cards, portable video games, books, movies, etc. can be brought along to pass the hours.

Gadgets. Ours is a digital world in which technology reigns supreme. Be sure to bring along various device chargers and GPS devices.

Comfort items. Travel pillows, window shades, a toiletry bag with moisturizer and eye drops, sunglasses, slip-on shoes, and sunscreen are some of the comforts to include.

Snacks. Cut back on the number of stops that have to be made by bringing along snacks. Protein and carbohydrates will keep everyone from becoming hungry on the road.

Reduce your risk of driving distracted to prevent accidents and to arrive safely

The prevalence of technology has ensured that many things are competing for people's attention at any given moment. That includes when people are driving, which has contributed to a dangerous phenomenon known as distracted driving.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that there were nearly 36,000 fatal crashes involving distracted drivers in 2020. Such numbers are sobering, but it's worth noting that handheld cellphone usage by drivers declined significantly across all age groups between 2012 and 2021. NHTSA data indicates such usage declined from 5.9 percent in 2012 to 3.7 percent by 2021 among drivers between the ages of 16 and 24. Among drivers between the ages of 25 and 69, driver handheld cellphone usage dropped from 5.4 percent in 2012 to 2.5 percent by 2021.

But the work isn't done, as the NHTSA notes that a significant uptick of driver handheld cellphone usage among drivers between the ages of 16 and 24 was reported between 2020 (2.8 percent) and 2021 (3.7 percent).

The Ohio Department of Public Safety reminds drivers that, as of April 4, it is illegal to use or hold a cellphone or electronic device in your hand, lap, or other parts of the body while driving on Ohio roads.

With so much to gain from eliminating distracted driving, drivers of all ages can consider these strategies to avoid distractions while behind the wheel.

- Turn off notifications. According to the app industry resource BusinessofApps, the average smartphone user in the United States receives 46 app push notifications each day. Additional sources estimate that figure could be closer to 80 push notifications per day. There's no denying the allure of such notifications, so drivers who find them too hard to resist can turn all notifications off prior to getting behind the wheel. This is quickly and easily accomplished through the settings function on a smartphone.



Accidents involving distracted driving incidents are preventable. Drivers can take simple and more extensive measures to reduce their vulnerability to distractions while behind the wheel.

- Avoid making calls. Hands-free capabilities may make it easier to keep both hands on the wheel, but they don't ensure drivers' minds will stay on the road. Hands-free phone calls and voice-activated messaging apps take drivers' minds off the road. When behind the wheel, resolve to stick to driving and driving alone by avoiding making phone calls or receiving and sending messages.

- Stay focused at stoplights. Red lights present another tempting chance to peruse text messages, emails and push notifications. But drivers can easily be drawn into conversations that continue long after a red light has turned to green. So it's best to maintain your focus at stoplights by waiting patiently for the light to turn and avoiding your phone entirely.



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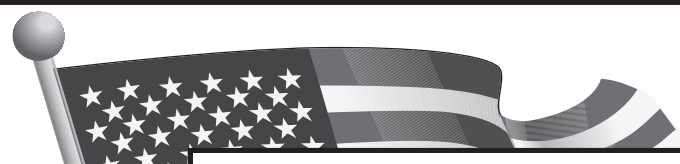
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Five signs it's time to renovate or make repairs

Homeowners renovate their homes for a variety of reasons.

Renovations can increase the value of a property and make homes safer and more comfortable for their occupants. Improvements also can be made to stay current with the times or to give a home a new vibe.

Statista projects \$510 billion will be spent on home improvements in 2024. The home improvement market is generating significant revenue. In fact, nearly a quarter of Americans opting to renovate their homes will spend an average of \$10,000 on their projects.

Kitchens and bathrooms often get the most attention when it comes to home improvement. However, every room and space in a home may need a renovation at some point, and the following are five signs it's time to renovate:

- **Age.** The National Association of Home Builders states that 50 percent of U.S. homes are over the age of 40. That means that age alone could dictate a need to renovate, particularly if some materials are original to the home. For example, asphalt roofs typically last 25 to 30 years, while window frames can last 20 to 50 years, depending on how well they have been maintained.

- **Inconvenient layout.** Some homeowners scratch their heads when faced with awkward floor plan layouts. While one may live with the inconvenience for some time, typically a floor plan that isn't working for the homeowner is a major driver of renovations.

- **Outdated looks.** A home can look dated even if it is a relatively recent build. That's because trends change quickly. For example, dark, cherry cabinets that were popular just a little while ago have now been replaced by lighter color palettes. Homeowners whose homes do not match the looks emulated in design magazines may consider a change, particularly if they're planning to sell soon.

- **Deterioration.** Signs of water, storm



Every home space may benefit from renovation at some point. Is your home giving you signs it's time for repairs or updates?

or structural damage should be addressed as soon as possible. Any deterioration should be a strong indicator that it's time to renovate.

- **Efficiency.** Escalating utility bills could be indicative of an inefficient home. Homeowners can conduct energy audits

and then improve the areas where energy loss may be occurring, such as windows, doors, siding and insulation. Homeowners can renovate their homes when they see fit, but various signs may warn that it's time to consider updating or remodeling a home.

What to do in the aftermath of an auto accident

Car accidents occur every day. According to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, there are more than five million car accidents in the United States every year.

No one wants to get into an auto accident, which can be stressful and even fatal. Knowing what to do in the immediate aftermath of an accident may make such instances less stressful.

Assess the situation. First determine if any of the involved parties suffered an injury. If you are injured, stay put. If not, check on the condition of the other driver. At this point do not admit any fault or reveal any policy limits.

Next, make a call to emergency services to request assistance from the police and an ambulance, if necessary.

Move your vehicle. If possible, pull the vehicle over to a safe location. If the car will cause another road hazard, it is best to move it over to the side and use flashers to alert oncoming traffic.

Gather evidence. Have the police write up an accident report. You should take pictures of the damage to your vehicles and the scene of the accident. If there are any witnesses to the accident, get their names and contact information.

Exchange information. Collect the names, numbers, addresses and email of other drivers and vehicle occupants and exchange insurance information with all drivers involved.

Notify a friend or family member. Even if the accident is not serious, you may want to call a friend or family member to provide emotional support. If you've been injured, a friend or family member can meet you at the hospital and/or arrange to have your vehicle towed or returned home while you get the care you need.

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Watch for signs you might be an aggressive driver

Speeding down the roadway snaking your way in and out of traffic may seem like the only way to get to a destination on time. But such driving can put you and others around you at risk for accidents and injury.

The Insurance Information Institute indicates that aggressive driving is a major factor in traffic crashes and plays a role in a large number of fatal highway collisions each year in the United States.

Drivers may not think they are being aggressive, arguing that they're "simply keeping up with traffic." But the following habits are indicators of aggressive driving.

- Try to beat red lights: This occurs if you're in a hurry all the time and don't want to wait at traffic signals.
 - Failing to yield the right of way to others: This is true of drivers who do not yield to pedestrians or other motorists when merging.
 - Not letting someone into a lane while changing lanes or merging onto the highway.
 - Excessive speeding.
 - Weaving in and out of lanes to improve efficiency and get places faster.
 - Intimidating others by tailgating and flashing your high beams in the hopes they will move faster.
 - Overusing the horn.
 - Communicating angrily with other drivers.
 - Becoming frustrated when people drive slowly, especially if there is a lot of traffic.
 - Failing to signal when making a turn or changing lanes.
- Aggressive driving is a significant safety threat. Curtailing aggressive behaviors can help drivers make the roads safer for everyone.

Noises, pulling indicate brakes may be faltering

Automotive problems are often best left to professionals. Though seasoned car enthusiasts may be capable of diagnosing and fixing car troubles without the assistance of a trusted mechanic, most drivers are better off letting the pros address issues under the hood.

However, drivers can still play a vital role in vehicle maintenance. Learning to recognize warning signs of various problems that can affect cars can prevent breakdowns and potentially costly repairs. And in certain instances, such as when the brake system is not working properly, knowing how to spot problems before they escalate into something larger can make drivers and their passengers safer and potentially prevent accidents.

Television shows and movies have lent credence to the notion that brake problems are marked by the sudden cessation of a vehicle's ability to stop. Though that can happen, warning signs of fading brake systems tend to be more subtle.

- Noises. Much like a knocking sound typically indicates a problem with a vehicle's air-fuel ration mixture, certain noises also suggest there are problems with the brakes. The most noticeable such sign is a high-pitched squeal that occurs when drivers apply the brakes, but grinding sounds and noises like scratching and scraping also warrant a visit to a brake specialist.
- Increase in stopping distance. An increase in the distance a vehicle travels before it stops after the brakes are applied indicates that there's an issue with the brakes. This issue may or may not require brake replacement. In fact, it's sometimes indicative that brake fluid levels are low, which can be remedied quickly and easily. However, an increase in stopping distance is significant enough that it should be brought to the attention of a brake specialist immediately.
- Pulling upon stopping. Another warning sign of brake problems is when the vehicle noticeably pulls to one side as it comes to a stop. This indicates that one side of the brakes is malfunctioning while the other is working properly. Like other issues with



Warning signs of fading brake systems tend to be subtle.

brakes, this one requires immediate attention from an automotive professional.

Brake systems should be inspected during routine maintenance visits, but is-

suues with brakes can arise even after such inspections, which underscores how important it is that drivers learn to recognize the warning signs of brake problems.

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Which exterior renovations have the best return on investment?

Remodeling with a return on investment in mind can be a smart strategy for homeowners, whether one is thinking about moving in the next few months or further down the road. Though this approach is an inexact science, in many instances, it's savvy for homeowners to consider what buyers may want when planning home improvements.

Homeowners may be surprised to learn which renovations garner the best Return on Investment (ROI) at resale. The home loan and refinancing company RenoFi indicates that overall home improvement projects provide a 70 percent ROI on average. Many high-ROI projects add functional space and improvement. Following are some exterior renovations that help homeowners recoup the most money at resale, according to Remodeling magazine's "2022 Cost vs. Value Report."

1. Garage door replacement: 93.3 percent recouped of \$4,041 cost.
2. Manufactured stone veneer: 91.4 percent recouped of \$11,066 cost.
3. Siding replacement (fiber cement): 68.3 percent recouped of \$22,093 cost.
4. Window replacement (vinyl): 67.5 percent recouped of \$20,482 cost.
5. Siding replacement (vinyl): 67.2 percent recouped of \$18,662 cost.
6. Window replacement (wood): 66.3 percent recouped of \$24,388 cost.
7. Deck addition (wood): 64.8 percent recouped of \$19,248 cost.
8. Entry door replacement (steel): 63.8 percent recouped of \$2,206 cost.

The majority of renovations on Remodeling magazine's list of the best investments are exterior renovations, making this area of a home a particular point of interest for homeowners. The only interior project that cracked the Top 10 ROI for projects was a minor midrange kitchen re-model.

Exterior renovations perhaps add the most bang for your buck because they are not only functional, but also because they add immediate curb appeal. Much in the



Homeowners should consider all factors before beginning a renovation. Certain projects offer a stronger return on investment than others, and that's a significant consideration for homeowners thinking of selling their homes.

way it has been said people eat with their eyes first – which is why chefs spend so much time on elaborate plating – buyers will

judge a property by how it looks when they arrive, even before they've stepped inside a home. In essence, home buyers often judge

a book by its cover. A worn exterior may indicate to potential buyers that the home was not maintained.

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Getting organized can make spring cleaning more efficient

Spring is a season of renewal. When the flowers are blooming and the trees are budding and the weather is pleasantly warm, people often feel inspired to make changes around their homes. Work may begin with culling belongings and organizing essentials.

There is debate regarding where the practice of "spring cleaning" originated. Some researchers link it to certain religious groups. It has long been an ancient Jewish custom to thoroughly clean a house in preparation for the springtime feast of Passover. The house is scoured to remove any yeast bread, or chametz, from the home. Similarly, members of the Greek Orthodox church celebrate "Clean Week," which is a week of cleaning before Lent. In Iranian culture, families spend days cleaning prior to the Persian New Year, which begins on the spring equinox.

Spring cleaning also has some secular roots. For instance, in the 1800s, Londoners routinely cleared their homes of grime and soot that accumulated over the winter.

Spring cleaning is still a ritual for many today. As people embark on their plans to tidy up, these tips can help them along.

- Tackle one big task a day. Who hasn't started one project only to be distracted into moving along to another room? This often occurs when people discover something out of place in one space and then move that item where it belongs, only to find a new cleaning task at hand in that space. Inefficiency can make you give up on spring cleaning prematurely. Agree to address one room/task a day. Keep a basket or box handy to store errant items until you move on to the next room.

- Stock up on supplies. Prepare all of the cleaning supplies in advance. Put together a tool kit of sorts with the equipment you need, including mops, brooms, rags, cleansers, and the like. Organization can keep you on course.

- Harness your strengths and weaknesses. Some people clean because they



Spring cleaning season has arrived, and certain tips can make the job more efficient and manageable.

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Spring cleaning is still
a ritual for many
today.
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are stressed or angry; others do so to avoid other tasks. Keep personality in mind when establishing a cleaning schedule. For example, clean at night if you're a night owl, or wait until you are feeling antsy before embarking on a "calm down cleaning."

- Tackle seasonal chores first. Some tasks need to get done to prepare for the spring and summer season. These may include cleaning the grill and sorting through outdoor furniture and decor. Spring clean-

ing may involve readying the pool for another year of use, or cleaning out rain gutters to prepare for spring storms. Tackle time-dependent tasks first and then move on to others that are less time-sensitive.

- Spread out the work. Some people like to devote full weekends to spring cleaning, but that can be overwhelming for others. Breaking down cleaning tasks into 15- to 30-minute intervals each day can make the job more tolerable.



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Including native species in a landscape can save time, money

Spring and summer present ideal growing conditions for many plants, making these seasons an ideal time to tend to lawns and gardens. Though it's easy to succumb to the temptation of exotic plants, avid gardeners and eco-conscious planters recognize the significance of native plants.

Novices may not realize that native plants are much better for a landscape and the local ecosystem it calls home. Recognition of the many benefits of native plants can make for healthier lawns and gardens and a healthier planet as well.

- Native plants are built for local climates. One of the issues gardeners who plant exotic plants run into is keeping those plants thriving when weather turns harsh. For example, exotic plants may require extra watering in areas that experience drought or even long periods without precipitation in spring and notably summer. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reports that at least 40 states anticipate water shortages by 2024. Planting native plants can help to combat those shortages by reducing the need to water plants if conditions become dry in late spring and summer.

- Native plants save money. It's also important to note that native plants save homeowners money. Because they're capable of thriving in local conditions, native plants tend to require less watering, which can help homeowners reduce their utility costs. But native plants also require less upkeep, which means homeowners can save on potentially costly, not to mention eco-unfriendly, pesticides and other amendments in order to maintain the look of exotic plants. And though it's not always the case, exotic plants tend to cost more at nurseries than natives.

- Native plants save gardeners time. In addition to saving money, native plants

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Planting season marks a great time to revitalize a landscape.

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don't require as much attention. Though spring and summer is a great time to be in the yard, it's also a great time to be out and about. Because native plants thrive in local conditions, gardeners won't need to spend much of their free time tending to them. Exotics tend to require a lot of extra attention and effort, especially when conditions become harsh.

- Native plants blend in with an existing landscape. Native plants look natural within an existing landscape, adding some instant aesthetic appeal without breaking the bank. When planting exotics, homeowners may feel a need to redesign their entire gardens to create a certain look (think Japanese garden). That can quickly consume a budget and take up a lot of free time in both the short- and long-term.

Planting season marks a great time to revitalize a landscape. Choosing native plants when doing so pays numerous dividends for homeowners and the planet they call home.



Recognizing the many benefits of native plants can make for healthier lawns and gardens and a healthier planet as well.

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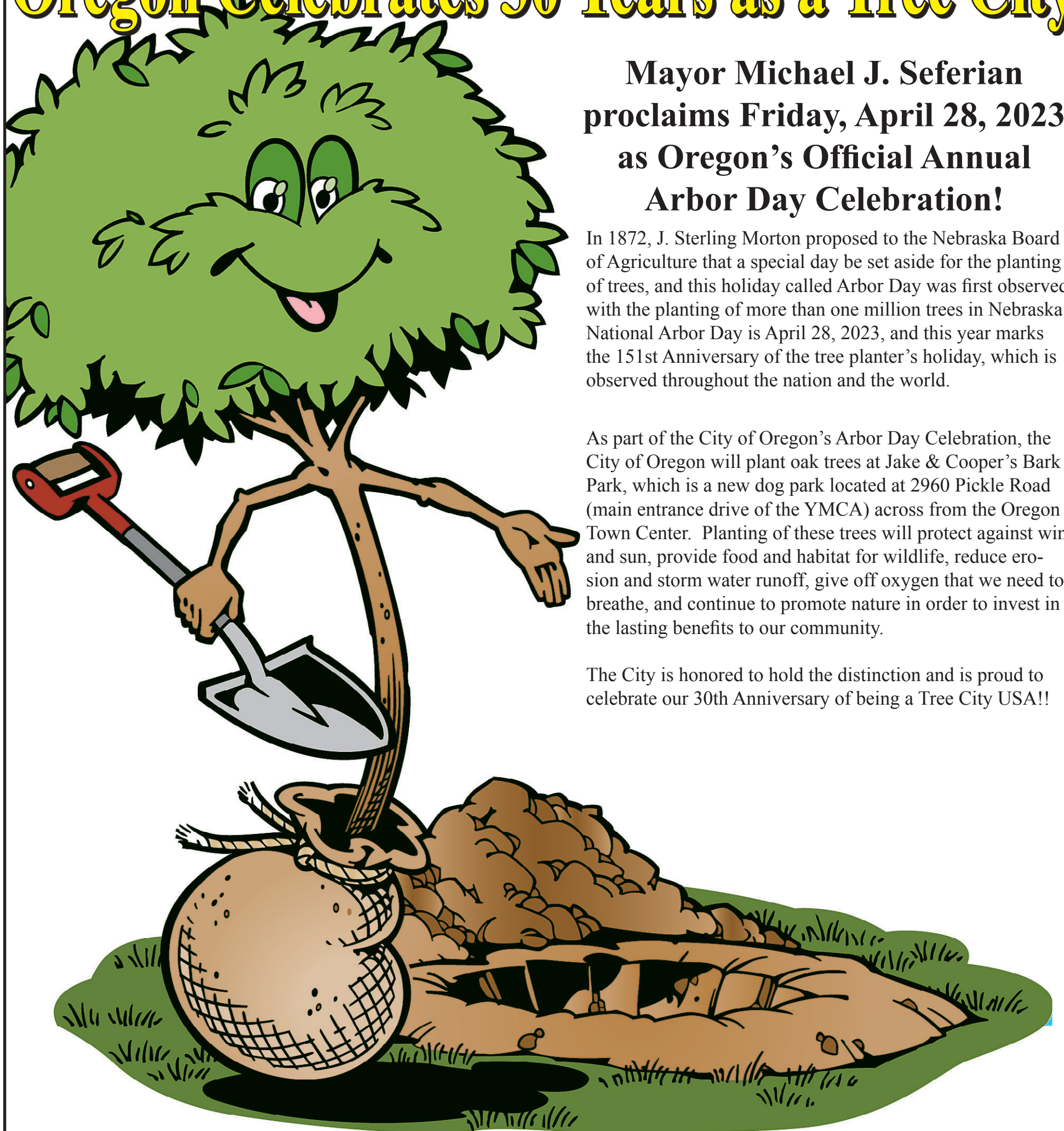
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Oregon Celebrates 30 Years as a Tree City



Mayor Michael J. Seferian proclaims Friday, April 28, 2023 as Oregon's Official Annual Arbor Day Celebration!

In 1872, J. Sterling Morton proposed to the Nebraska Board of Agriculture that a special day be set aside for the planting of trees, and this holiday called Arbor Day was first observed with the planting of more than one million trees in Nebraska. National Arbor Day is April 28, 2023, and this year marks the 151st Anniversary of the tree planter's holiday, which is observed throughout the nation and the world.

As part of the City of Oregon's Arbor Day Celebration, the City of Oregon will plant oak trees at Jake & Cooper's Bark Park, which is a new dog park located at 2960 Pickle Road (main entrance drive of the YMCA) across from the Oregon Town Center. Planting of these trees will protect against wind and sun, provide food and habitat for wildlife, reduce erosion and storm water runoff, give off oxygen that we need to breathe, and continue to promote nature in order to invest in the lasting benefits to our community.

The City is honored to hold the distinction and is proud to celebrate our 30th Anniversary of being a Tree City USA!!

Care Practices & Concerns

Don't prune oak tree branches until late fall or winter. Oak Wilt is a fatal fungal disease. A species of beetle is attracted to the scent from fresh wounds to oak trees and they leave spores of the destructive fungus behind.

Don't leave limb stubs when removing branches. Trim stubs back close to the trunk after cutting the limb a reasonable distance away from the trunk (or main limb) to prevent bark peeling. This allows for the wound to heal and avoid major decay spreading into the trunk.

Attention Oregon Residents:

We "Appreciate" any help from residents and businesses for watering new and young "Street Trees." A weekly slow watering is recommended.

Contact the Oregon Street Division through the City's website, www.oregonohio.org, or call 419-698-7016 for tree questions or concerns including unsafe/hazardous trees.



City of Oregon
Mayor Michael J. Seferian
Keith Henninger, Tree Commission Chairperson