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do-it-yourself home improvement education

by lisa brittain-vasquez

A FEVER IS SPREADING THROUGH HOMES IN FRISCO.

Clinically defined as the “Home Improvement Bug,” the infection usually strikes homeowners and begins with symptoms such as paint on fingers, a sudden surge in number of tools in your garage, and thirst for episodes of TLC’s “Trading Spaces.”

What’s the cure? Perhaps a healthy dose of demolition, renovation, and curb appeal followed by a chaser of interior design, gardening and energy efficiency.

The popularity of home improvement is growing faster today than broadleaf weeds and homeowners are discovering that they can save a bundle by doing it themselves. Representatives from one retailer say the surge may be because homeowners consider the home a good investment, particularly in a slumping economy.

According to the Lowe’s Home Improvement “Trendex” report, homeowners nationwide are investing in their homes, spending an average of \$3,700 + on home improvement projects each year. In fact, 81% of homeowners say they consider their home to be a better long-term investment than the stock market.

Realtors agree. Mary Milford, head of the real estate department at Collin County Community College, says a well-maintained home sells faster than a house in disrepair. “One of the first things we tell a seller is to get their home in the best possible shape before putting it on the market. A home in bad shape invites a low offer.”

For many, laboring on their “home sweet home” is more than just an investment. More than half of homeowners surveyed, 58%, said they actually enjoyed home improvement projects, and only one third said they break out the tool belt because they have to. The average American homeowner is planning 2.1 projects for this summer.

So as summer approaches, unfamiliarity shouldn’t holster anyone’s enthusiasm. There are plenty of nearby classes and clinics to demonstrate the most popular do-it-yourself projects.

For instance, Lowe’s has posted a slate of classes every Saturday

in March including how to paint an interior room, install an exterior door, and replace a faucet. They also offer a special class for the little do-it-yourselfers called the “Build and Grow Kids Clinic.” About 200 local children typically show up for Home Depot’s free class to learn how to make toolboxes, bug catchers or bookends.

Since 1997, more than 7.3 million projects have been built at kids’ workshops nationwide.

Home Depot also offers a full slate of classes for the grown-ups. If you would like to learn how to install ceramic tile, check out their how-to clinic on Saturdays. Another very popular class is the “You Can Apply Faux Paint Techniques” every Sunday.

According to Greg Feldberg, Frisco resident and Home Depot employee, painting projects are a very cost effective way to make a big splash. “Paint is probably the most inexpensive and makes the biggest difference,” he said. Painting an average room can cost as little as \$50 for paint, brushes and a drop cloth.

This time of year, North Texas do-it-yourselfers tend to be gearing up for the brilliant sunshine of spring and summer. Feldberg says many customers are already planning for patios and outdoor living. They also are wrapping up their winter organization projects, such as remodeling closets and working on attic decking to make a home for all those holiday decorations.

There are terrific websites offering how-to advice for every kind of home project under the sun. Home and Garden Television has an interactive website (www.hgtv.com) with tips on decorating, remodeling, gardening and crafts. Another popular site is www.doityourself.com, which features helpful instructions on building, decorating, electric, exteriors, gardening, hardware, plumbing household concerns and real estate. Another site, www.hometips.com, covers do-it-yourself topics such as electric, plumbing, home climate, kitchen, bathroom, walls, windows, siding, roofing, doors, flooring and safety. A couple of other great resources are

www.diy.net, houseandhome.msn.com, and www.hometime.com’s do-it-yourself project help. There are thousands, but these have some excellent tutorials.

If shaking off the winter blues means giving your home a face-lift, local clinics and websites are just the beginning of the how-to

classes and resources available in your own backyard. New classes and listings are added regularly, so be sure to call or visit for the latest listings and tips to take your space from bland to grand!

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