

# Spring Home Improvement



## **What's hot in appliances**

As people stay in their homes longer, updating a kitchen or improving a laundry room makes long-term sense.

## **The grass needs some work**

Is your next project to get a green lawn again? Here's how to restore a yard without breaking your budget, or back.

# Innovative new appliances ease daily life

## Steam ovens and retractable range hoods gain a foothold in the modern home

By JEAN MURPHY

Americans are nesting. As the economy languishes, homeowners are hunkering down and feathering their current nests with new and improved appliances.

However, they no longer break the bank with purchases they once considered important and now consider frivolous, like warming drawers, wine coolers and trash compactors, said Joe Klett, manager of Abt Electronics in Glenview.

"More and more we see people buying appliances for the long term, so they want something with long-term appeal. That is why the market for colored appliances is diminishing and it is why stainless continues to be so popular," Klett said. "Appliance makers have tried to introduce the next new color. They've tried platinum and charcoal and Jenn Air even tried bronze. But none of them has caught on."

But those homeowners who no

longer want stainless do seem to be gravitating to black, he added.

Once buyers move past the all-important question of appliance color, they find there have not been as many innovations as usual over the past few years because manufacturers tend to hold back during a downturn.

Innovations are still available to those in the market for them, however. For instance, Kitchen Aid has come out with a steam oven that you can use to put more crust on a loaf of bread or to keep the moisture in your fish. The steam gets into the oven through a copper water line, similar to those hooked up to refrigerators for water dispensers and ice makers. The steam oven also comes equipped with an electronic menu that removes a lot of the guesswork when preparing a meal.

Miele has also introduced its Master Chef system with a detachable probe that will monitor your meat and tell you when something will be cooked to the temperature you request. It will even



BOB CHWEDYK/bchwedyk@dailyherald.com

The Miele Steam Oven is connected to a water line, like many refrigerators, and infuses moisture into cooking.

give you a countdown to completion so that you can time your side dishes.

"These new ovens make decent cooks into great cooks," Klett said.

Miele also offers a motorized, retractable cooking hood for over

an island with a cook top. It retracts upward when not in use so it doesn't block anyone's view or pose a danger to tall cooks.

See **APPLIANCE** on **PAGE 6**

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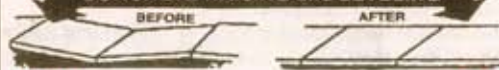
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# 6 **Appliance:** Microwaves can hide in drawers

Continued from Page 4

There is even a built-in steamer available. It is perfect for steaming vegetables; browning fish while keeping it moist and tender; and refreshing leftovers.

The new look for refrigerators is the French door refrigerator. It features a pair of doors on top that open the refrigerator and then one or two pull out drawers on the bottom. At least one houses the freezer. If there is a second drawer, sometimes it also houses a freezer and other times it features a programmable area that can be either a refrigerator to a freezer, depending on what you want to store there.

The other change in the world of refrigerators is the addition of a shallow, cabinet-depth refrigerator available in most product lines. An average refrigerator is about 32 inches deep while a cabinet-depth refrigerator is about 24 inches deep. Klett said these are made to compete with high-end built-in refrigerators, which cost \$6,000 to \$7,000. The new shallow refrigerators, on the other hand, are in the \$1,500 to \$3,000 range while a standard depth refrigerator costs between \$1,200 and \$2,700.

Another improvement to



PHOTOS BY BOB CHWEDYK/bchwedyk@dailyherald.com

**Manager Joe Klett of Abt Electronics in Glenview demonstrates a Samsung French door refrigerator and its easy-to-reach features.**

refrigerators is the fact that most are now equipped with filtered water dispensers so people do not have to buy bottled water or invest in a special filter for their water faucet, Klett said.

Microwaves that pull out like a drawer are catching on for installation under the countertop in kitchen islands and other very open kitchens

where it would be difficult to install one at eye-level.

When it comes to ovens, ranges and cook tops, most people purchase a standard free-standing range with the ovens below the cook top, Klett said. Some, like the GE double oven/range, have replaced the old storage drawer under the large oven with a pull out,



**The Whirlpool Cabrio series washer has a see-through lid, as well as the capacity and low-water capabilities of many front-load models.**

drawer-style secondary oven that doubles as a warming drawer. It also features five burners on top and in the Chicago market, most people choose to cook with gas.

Those who have had a wall oven with a separate cook top, Klett added, will seldom return to a free-standing oven/range.

"Once you have cooked that way, you 'need' to have it. So people who are used to wall ovens and cook tops still buy them," he said.

The laundry room has also seen some changes, Klett said. Front-load, high-efficiency washers are being replaced by top-load washers with the same efficiencies and capacities. They are now more popular than the front-

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Miele makes a motorized island range hood that retracts out of the way when not in use.

load washers because they take up less room and don't involve a door that opens outward into an often-tight laundry room.

Some even come equipped with glass see-through lids and steam features and most have done away with the agitators so their capacity is much larger than the old top loads. They also use half the water of the old-style washer and spin out at such a high rate that clothes are almost dry before they

ever get to the dryer, Klett said.

LG has even come out with a washer and dryer that can communicate to the manufacturer through your smart phone. It can diagnose any problem through the phone so that when a repairman shows up, he already has the necessary part in his truck.

With more people staying put rather than buying new, appliance upgrades are a common way to make older houses feel more like home.

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Bose, a longtime leader in speakers and stereo sound, has adapted its system to TV. Manager Joe Klett demonstrates the Bose VideoWave high-definition TV with surround sound at Abt Electronics in Glenview.

## Bose sound system added to high-definition television

If you are one of those people who only cares about appliances with moving pictures and sound, the innovation you will care about is the new "VideoWave" home theater system by Bose.

Abt Electronics is one of only a few stores in the nation that is currently licensed to sell it, according to Joe Klett, Abt manager.

This high-definition television comes in both wall-mounted and tabletop versions and is unique because it provides surround sound without any of the wiring or remote

speakers that are usually required. The television directs sound around the room entirely from the main unit and its small control box.

"Bose has been working on developing this technology for the past ten years and we have only had it for about two months," Klett said. "The sound is just amazing."

Currently the VideoWave is only available in a 46-inch size. The wall-mounted version retails for \$5,500 (installed) while the tabletop version costs \$5,300.

— Jean Murphy

## Weather can ruin paint plans

BY MARK J. DONOVAN  
Creators.com

Exterior house painting is one of the most difficult projects to schedule and complete from a weather perspective. To complete the job, you must have an ambient air temperature of between 50 degrees and 90 degrees and low humidity, and there should be little to no wind while you're painting. If you decide to tackle an exterior house painting project outside of these weather conditions, chances are the paint will not hold up well.

Give yourself the best chance of having Mother Nature smile down on your painting project by not starting in an unsuitable climate. In general, July and August are two of the worst

months of the year to paint a house; the house siding is simply too hot to paint. Cold weather causes paint quality issues, and the spring is often too rainy and humid. Therefore, the early summer months, before it gets too hot, and autumn are often your only opportunities to paint.

The do-it-yourself homeowner who chooses to do his own exterior house painting often finds himself tackling it in a guerrilla warfare-type approach — painting portions of the home over an extended period of time as weather conditions permit.

In order to avoid prolonging your painting project, consider throwing a weekend exterior house-painting

See PAINT on PAGE 11

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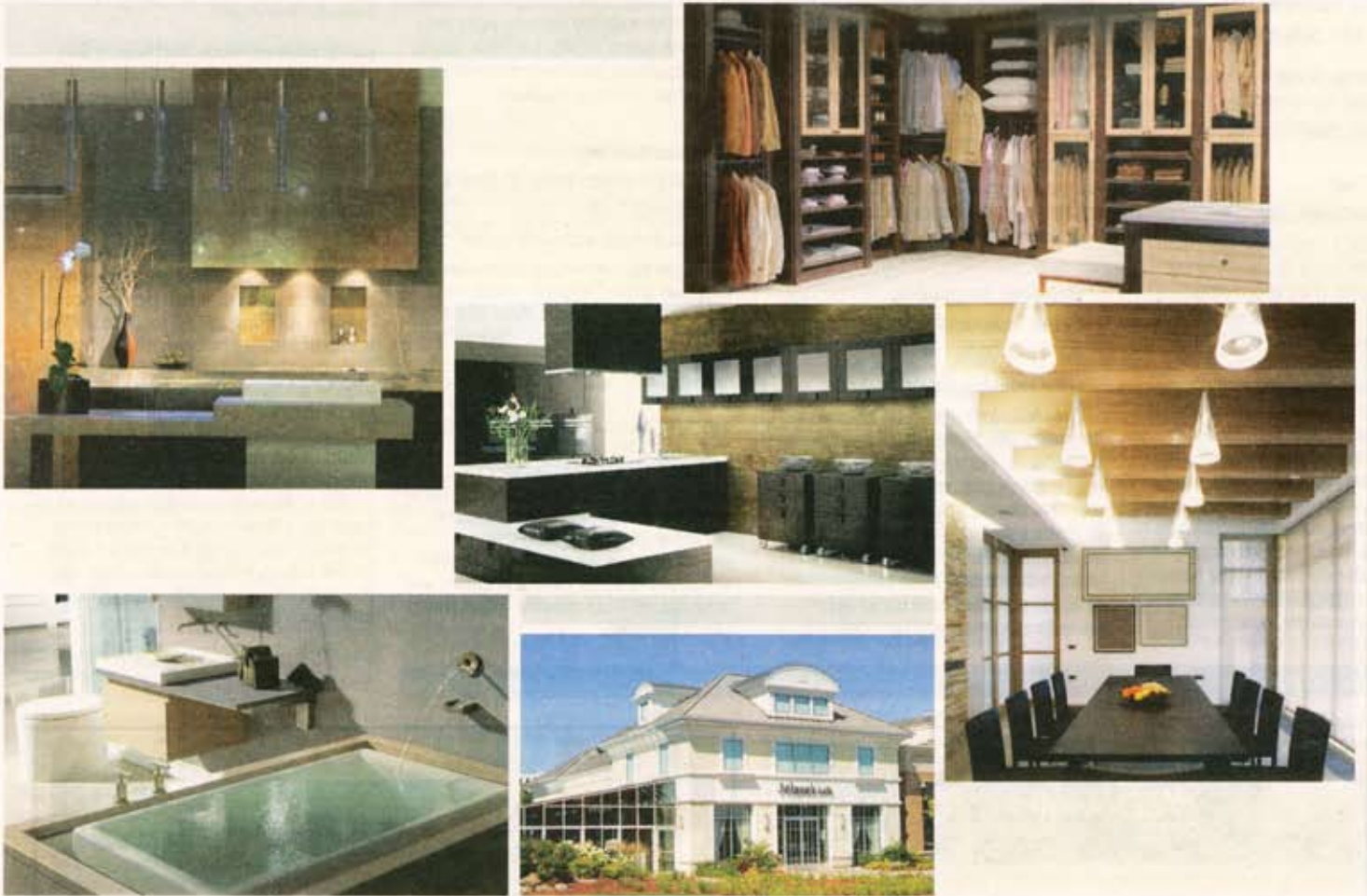
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