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# News ON THE HOUSE

## April

Be sure to talk to your real estate professional on how you can protect your home & budget with First American



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## Spring Time

I hope you enjoy this month's newsletter which is full of tips and ideas for you as a homeowner.

As an experienced real estate professional, I have an in-depth understanding of my clients' needs and challenges. I want you to know that my experience is at your disposal, so please feel free to call me for any of your real estate and/or home warranty needs.

## Easy Ways to Customize Your Home's Exterior



In a country that is filled with suburban developments of similar-looking homes, adding a personal touch to your property might be high on your list of priorities. In the past, the options for customizing the exterior features of a house may have been few and far between. But today, everything from siding to roofing is available in a wide range of styles, colors and designs. If you're looking to customize your castle with ease, concentrate your efforts on a few of the following areas:

- Trim. Exterior trim can give your home a graceful, appearance: Victorian, contemporary or traditional American, depending on the taste of the market at the given time.

- Siding. If you want to give your home a fast and major makeover, consider replacing its siding. Available in a vast array of colors and textures, siding can make your home stand out and increase its value. Vinyl and fiber cement are two materials that are easy to maintain and will last over time.

- Decking. Outdoor living is a hot trend this year and adding a deck is one of the most dramatic ways to customize your home. Since many decks are made with easy-to-clean materials such as weather-resistant composite decking, they're easy to maintain as well.

- Railing. To match a new deck or patio, consider adding a railing where the core is made of a durable composite material, capped with colonial-white or desert-tan PVC for a lasting, freshly painted look. Composite and steel balusters allow you to further customize the look of the railing and decking.

- Roofing. A set of new shingles can add a touch of personality to your home or improve its curb appeal if you're planning on selling it. Since the roof covers the most area of a home's exterior, it makes a big difference in first impressions.

## DID YOU KNOW...

Having **the right home protection plan** helps ensure that **your home & your budget is protected.**

Call your Real Estate Professional today to find out how you can **save time and money** on home repairs.



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## Home Fire Safety Is Affordable With Three-Part System

Popular myth suggests that constructing buildings with maximized protection against fire is an expensive task to undertake. But experts at the National Concrete Masonry Association say that maximum fire protection can be both affordable and simple, as long as it involves a concept of balanced design. And that requires three components: detection, suppression and containment.

Detection is provided by an alarm system that senses smoke and



alerts occupants; suppression is provided by a sprinkler system that serves to extinguish flames; and, finally, containment is provided by concrete masonry wall systems that prevent fire from spreading to adjoining rooms or buildings.

Taking any of these components out of the mix could leave occupants of a building at significant risk. Many home builders feel that using concrete masonry is often cost-prohibitive, but results from a recent study conducted by the Fire Safety Construction Advisory Councils of Pennsylvania, New England, New York and Mid Atlantic demonstrate that this is often not the case. The study revealed that, in many cases, the difference in cost between concrete masonry construction and using combustible materials was between 3-5%, and in one instance the cost for noncombustible concrete masonry construction was actually less.

Balanced design for maximum fire safety is especially important in structures where large numbers of people share walls, such as town houses, dormitories and assisted-living facilities. Fire safety information and report summaries are available through the Fire Safety Construction Advisory Council by calling 866-723-3623 or visiting [www.firesafeconstruction.org](http://www.firesafeconstruction.org).



When colder weather waves goodbye and the warm rays of spring begin entering your home, you may use your newfound energy to give your house a much-needed spring cleaning. But getting down and dirty with the rooms in your home can be overwhelming if you don't have the right tools for the job.

Taking the time to get organized when spring arrives can make all the difference and can make cleaning even the most dauntingly dirty corner a breeze. You don't have to spend a fortune to stock up on necessary supplies either. You'll save both time and money by getting all of your cleaning supplies at discount stores such as Dollar General, which carries many must-have items for the spring-cleaning season. Some items to help you scrub, sweep and sanitize your way to a clean, fresh home for the rest of the year: a mop, a broom, a bucket, a scrubbing brush, a sponge and paper towels. For areas such as the bathroom, keep bleach, toilet bowl cleaner, floor cleaner and wax on hand.

- Plastic storage containers. Make this spring the season to get organized. Plastic storage containers are available in a variety of sizes and are perfect for storing items big and small.

- Laundry items. Don't forget to get caught up on your laundry while spring cleaning. Detergent, spot-treatment and fabric softener are all must-have laundry items.

- Laundry baskets. Give each family member a laundry basket. Have them go through their closet, pulling out clothes that no longer fit or that they no longer wear. Donate the clothing to a local charity. You'll feel good about giving and also enjoy the newfound closet space.

- Trash bags. Stock up on trash bags so you can easily dispose of all the trash created during your cleaning projects.

- Air fresheners and candles. Keep the air in your home smelling clean and fresh year-round with a lightly scented air freshener or candle set.



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## Citrus 101: Add Zest to Your Health with Citrus

If you're trying to get a leg up on good health, there's one tasty food you may want to get hooked on: citrus. Citrus fruits are not only one of the most delicious varieties of fruit, but they are also full of nutritional value. One of the healthiest kinds of citrus fruits is the grapefruit. In season from October through May of each year, tangy, juicy grapefruit complements many other foods, making it easy to pair with other items. Getting its name from the fact that it grows on the tree in clusters, like grapes, grapefruit is known to provide a full day's supply of Vitamin C. But they also provide a plentiful supply of Vitamin A and contain dietary fiber. When it comes to calories, grapefruit will fill you up without packing on the pounds - half of a medium-sized grapefruit contains only 60 calories. When shopping for a good grapefruit, seek out a fruit that is heavy for its size. The heavier it is, the juicier it will be, making your planned grapefruit dish more

delicious. Grapefruit will last for approximately two weeks when stored in a cool place in your home or up to six weeks in the refrigerator.

While many people choose to eat grapefruit by itself, it is also great when combined with other healthy foods.

### Rio Star Grapefruit and Avocado Salad

4 servings

2 Texas Rio Star Grapefruit, sectioned with juice reserved

2 avocados, halved lengthwise and pitted

2 teaspoons fresh tarragon, chopped

1/4 cup fresh lemon juice

2 teaspoons lemon juice

1/4 cup olive oil

3/4 teaspoon coarse salt

Black pepper to taste

Brush two tablespoons of lemon juice over the flesh of the avocados and set aside. Add lemon juice, salt and tarragon to the reserved grapefruit juice and season with pepper. Whisk in olive oil in a slow, steady stream. Add grapefruit sections and toss gently. Place each avocado half on a plate. Top with the grapefruit mixture, dividing evenly. Serve immediately.