

Protect your home: Heating dangers

Fireplaces, wood stoves and other fuel-fired appliances are used by more than one-third of Americans to help heat their homes.

Because heating fires account for about 36 percent of residential home fires in rural areas every year, it's important to maintain your fireplace and use it in a safe manner.

Those fires are often the result of a creosote buildup in chimneys and stovepipes, so take the time to perform regular maintenance on your fireplace and wood stoves to keep them running safely and efficiently.

Taking the proper precautions means you'll be able to enjoy your heating system while protecting your family and your home.

Restricting air supply to your fireplace, or closing air inlets on wood stoves, can cause a fire by creating a creosote buildup, so make sure you leave air inlets open and allow air flow to your fireplace.

Keep the area around your fireplace clean — the hearth should be free of debris, decorations and flammable materials.

Only use fire-resistant materials on the walls around your wood stove.

Use a metal mesh screen when using your fireplace, and leave glass doors open if you're burning a fire. Monitor flue temperatures by installing a stovepipe thermometer.



To ensure that your fireplace, wood stove or other heating equipment is safe to use, perform regular maintenance and always follow the proper safety precautions.

If you have a fireplace, burning fuels safely should be a top priority.

Do not use flammable liquids to start a fire, and avoid using moist wood.

You should only use seasoned hardwood in your fireplace.

Do not burn cardboard boxes, trash or debris, and do not leave a fire unattended.

Each fire should be extinguished before you go to bed or leave your home.

Only build small fires that burn completely and produce less smoke, and make sure to place logs at the back of the fireplace on an adequate supporting grate when building a fire.

Ensuring the safety of your fireplace includes protecting your home, both inside and out.

Firewood should be stacked

outdoors, at least 30 feet away from your home.

Keep the roof clear of leaves, pine needles and other debris.

Also, remove branches hanging above the chimney, flues or vents, and cover the chimney with a mesh screen spark arrester.

To protect the inside of your home, install smoke alarms on every level in your home; test them monthly and change the batteries at least once per year.

Make sure your home has the proper venting systems for all your heating equipment, and extend all vent pipes at least three feet above the roof.

And, above all, have your chimney inspected and cleaned annually by a certified chimney specialist. ➔

—Information courtesy of the U.S. Fire Administration.



Along with recovering chairs and sofas at Chesapeake Upholstery, Holly and Floyd Elzey specialize in medical furniture and do caning and rush weaving on wooden chairs.

A question of value

To recover or buy new? That's a decision many are being faced with after choosing to update their furniture.

Story, photographs by
Sean Clougherty



Though one may think that just changing the fabric would be the more economical choice, according to area upholsterers, that is seldom the case.

But, they are quick to add, though you can find a substitute for less money, it won't likely match in quality of construction.



Some of the tools in the workshop at Frank B. Rhodes Furniture Maker may look a bit "medieval," but each has a specific task.

“A lot of the new furniture is frankly disposable in the way it’s made, and most times it would cost you more to recover than buy new,” says Rhonda Gover of Frank B. Rhodes Furniture in Chestertown.

The decision to have a piece recovered often is determined by the connection of it to its owner and the story it tells from generations ago. In those cases, the value of the piece is much greater than the cost of its repair.

“A lot of what we do is: ‘It belonged to my grandparents,’” says Floyd Elzey, who owns Chesapeake Upholstery in Cambridge with wife Holly, relaying what is often said when people come in to have a piece recovered. “I call them bag projects because they usually come in in a bag. I enjoy that kind of stuff because it’s like putting a puzzle together.”

Both Chesapeake Upholstery and Frank B. Rhodes are equipped to do repairs on furniture as well as recovering.

Furniture made decades ago that has survived is a testament to its quality, but Gover said they have newer items come in the store for work now and then.

“They don’t need to be antique. we work on anything, whether it’s antique or not,” she says.

The big variable in furniture — mostly in new furniture but also old — is in how its made and as Floyd says, often times “you don’t know what you’ve got until you look inside.”

The type of springs used, coil or zigzag, the kind of wood and hardware all speak to the pieces quality, but rarely can you tell that



Diane Duke works to recover a piece at Frank B. Rhodes Furniture Maker.

from looking at it in a showroom or catalog.

As a rule, the Elzeys say that weight is a good measure of quality; the heavier the better.

And recovering a quality piece will only add quality to it as a

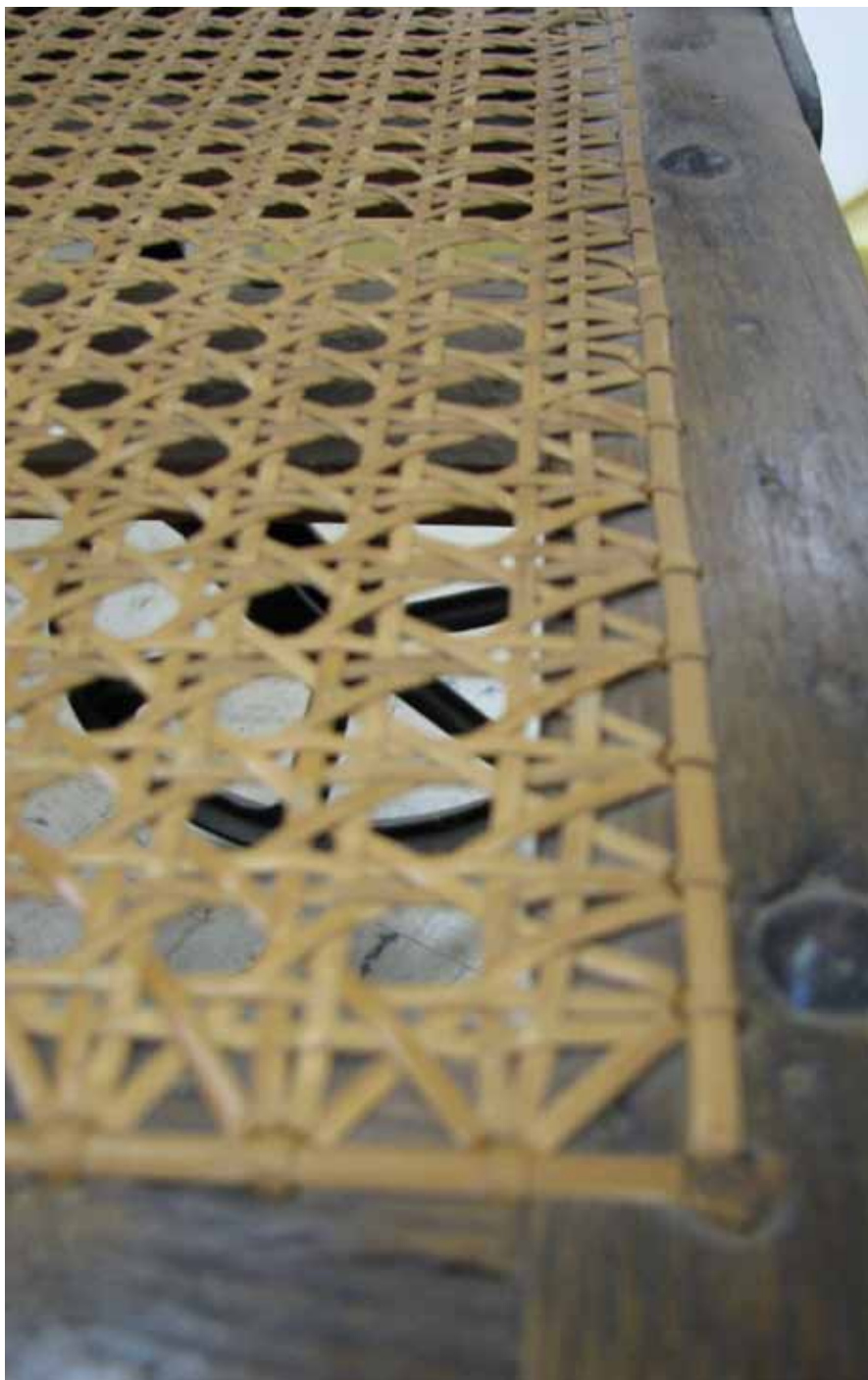
reputable upholsterer will address any weak joints and inspect it thoroughly for problems before recovering it, Floyd added.

The main benefit in recovering is in its customization.

With cost not a limiting fac-

tor, customers can choose from just about any fabric that can be bought on a bolt and if necessary, make special requests as to how the piece is covered.

“They don’t always save that much, but they get exactly what they want,” says Diane Duke, who’s been recovering furniture at Rhodes for about five years.



The “hand cane” technique involves weaving a strand of rattan around the seat to hold the cane in place is more difficult than the “press cane” technique, and almost impossible to find on mass-produced furniture.

“You’re not picking from a group on the floor and making it work as best you can; you’re making it work for your particular space,” Floyd Elzey adds.

A slip cover may seem like a less expensive alternative, but the upholsters say in most cases it costs close to the same as recovering.

“You still need as much, if not more, fabric and there’s a lot of time involved,” Gover says.

Gover said they turn down slip cover requests but the Elzeys say they have done some for customers who like the “sloppy” look it gives.

“Shaggy chic, that’s what they call it,” Holly Elzey says.

Like furniture making itself, mastering reupholstery takes time to learn and a certain amount of innate skill.

“It takes a while because you keep finding things and there’s different ways in doing things. We still come across things that we haven’t done before,” says Duke.

Duke adds that knowing how to sew helps, as does training the eye to fit things together from a construction point of view, but it’s not always a guarantee.

“It’s a different discipline. Like a track athlete — someone who does the 50-yard dash but doesn’t run the 440,” Duke says.

For Holly Elzey, the trade runs in the family. Her mother had an upholstery business and Holly started working for her while in high school.

Floyd handles repairs and reproductions of the furniture parts, but also does caning and rush weaving on chairs, a craft he learned growing up on Hoopers Island.

“My theory is you learn things out of necessity. If it was broken, you had to fix it yourself,” he said.

And like other trades, upholstery has its own set of tools to get the job done.

Along with mallets, pliers and knives, there’s the air stapler, staple lifters, the webbing stretcher — a handled block with metal spikes to grab hold of fabrics — and a spring clincher that connects springs to fabric or webbing.

All can do a fair amount of damage to the furniture and the upholsterer when not used carefully.

“There’s a reason we have to get tetanus shots more often than most people,” Gover says, smiling but serious.

Even with the potential hazards, the work has its rewards for



Rhonda Gover, of Frank B. Rhodes Furniture Maker, finishes up on recovering a couch with getting the seat cushions filled out uniformly.

the upholsterer and the customer.

“There is an element of creativity involved. I like taking a ratty old piece of furniture and bringing

it back,” Duke says.

“It’s really nice to have people come pick their furniture up and be happy with it,” says Gover. ➤

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(FROM PAGE 8)

case, it is time for them to go.

After dividing clothing and accessories by season and getting rid of unused items, the next step is to look inside your closet and determine what it is that is causing disorganization.

This could vary depending upon the person.

Aside from clothing, this could be shoes, purses, ties, belts or scarves.

Determining the cause of the disorganization will help you decide the best system for the closet.

Many closets, including older homes, only have one 62-inch high horizontal pole for hanging.

This is far from efficient.

For women, clothing this height is only good for storing about 10 to 20 percent of clothing.

For men, this height is not needed at all with the exception of an over coat.

A good solution for a closet

with this design is to “double up.”

Doubling up does exactly that. ... It doubles your hanging space by utilizing the unused area below where clothing is hung, so essentially there are two areas for storage.

If clothing is where your storage needs are, you could use this area to install an additional hanging rod.

Other better options for this area are systems under the hanging area that house drawers and/or shelving systems for clothing or shoe organization.

Aside from clothing, depending on which items you have the most of will determine how to arrange your closet.

There are both solid wood and wire systems available that include shelving, drawer units and shoe organizers that fit into a standard-depth closet — including closets with a single, 62-inch high horizontal pole for hanging.

There are also single four-drawer wire units available that are relatively easy to install.

Two of these units stacked one on top of the other will fit into a closet under the 62-inch-high horizontal pole. This will provide eight drawers total, more than a standard chest of drawers.

The wire drawers help with visibility of the items, which sometimes can get lost or forgotten when concealed by a closed drawer unit.

Other tips are to store special occasion items in an alternative place.

Then sort your closet by style, for example, formal, casual, etc.

Also, you will be amazed at the efficiency of your closet if you sort by color.



If you have not worn or used any clothing, shoes and accessories within a year, chances are that you never will.



Lastly, make sure to use every available space.

After you have located the best place for drawers, shelves and shoe organizers, take every other available space to install belt hangers and hooks.

Hooks are great for storing just

about anything. Purses, hats, belts, scarves and even jackets work great with hooks. There are many affordable options available to assist you with your closet design.

Consider consulting an interior redesigner or closet organizer to ensure that you have made the

best use of your space that suits your personal needs. ➡

(Editor's Note: Marianne De-Tar, a certified Interior Redesign Industry Specialist, is the owner of Space Lifts, a business dedicated to interior redesign, decorating and real estate staging.)

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(FROM PAGE 17)

the leaves emerge directly from the roots with very little stem.

These very early spring blooming plants prefer moist shade and the flowers come in white, pink and red.

There are also some sun-loving evergreen perennials that brave the cold and winds of winter.

Iberis sempervirens or Candytuft is a low growing plant with very dark green thin leaves that loves our sandy soils and thrives in the full sun and heat and humidity of our summers.

After the winter weather warms up to spring, the Candytuft sends out bouquets of pure white flowers with a wonderful sweet fragrance.

There are new cultivars like "Autumn Beauty" that bloom in the spring and re-bloom again in the fall.

A native plant, *Phlox subulata* or Moss Phlox, loves the sun and our sandy soils as well.

The foliage on this ground hugging plant is short and stiff, and in the winter is a soft yellow green.

It's a wonderful plant to place on steep slopes or gentle hills and in



The autumn fern is very tolerant — once established — of the dry shady soils that are so prevalent on the Eastern Shore.

(Photo by Ginny Rosenkranz)

the spring, the inner plant becomes covered with lovely star shaped flowers in pure white, shades of lavender and pink.

Another wonderful evergreen to have in a winter garden is the Cheddar Pinks (*Dianthus gratianopolitanus*).

The plant grows in a compact tussock and is a soft blue-green during the winter months.

It thrives in full sun and sandy soils, and some of the newer cul-

tivars like "Firewitch" will bloom with fragrant pink flowers consistently in the spring and sporadically during the summer and fall months.

The weather may be dreary and bleak in the winter, but with all the wonderful evergreen perennials, the winter garden will look welcoming and wonderful. ➤

(Editor's Note: Ginny Rosenkranz is a commercial horticulture specialist with the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension service.)

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(FROM PAGE 6)

instances down that road!

So, why shouldn't these fledgling cultures have invented a deity with two faces, right? ...Whatever lets you sleep at night, I say.

But, back to the task at hand: Resolutions.

I haven't made a list since grade school. Frankly, I'm pretty comfortable in my own skin — I have none of the trademark vices of society, like smoking or drinking.

Sure, I could stand to lose a few pounds, and I probably watch too much television — though chasing after 1-year-old and 3 1/2-year old sons may take care of those two shortcomings.

Besides, who's to say I should be different than the vast majority of the population?

Research over the years has concluded that about 80 percent of all New Year's resolutions are broken by Jan. 31, and if that vow had something to do with health and fitness, 90 percent will be history by Jan. 15.

By the end of the year, less than 5 percent of us will have persevered with our resolutions intact. It's easy to see why so many people don't take this annual ritual seriously to begin with — me included!

With some self-evaluation, I think my problem is that — unlike my darling wife, my yin to her yang — I've never been a long-range planner.

Even back in high school and college, whenever someone would ask me what I would be doing in five or stumped. I

flow kind of guy — you know, take things as they come.

Not exactly the mark of a business tycoon, I know, but I've always been much more competent focusing on what's on my plate right now — not what's in the pantry that might be supper next week.

There always seems to be an unanticipated curveball.

My way has worked for me — I'm not saying it's right for you, so if lists are your thing, go for it.

But if you get a chance, drop me a note — I'd love to know the success rate of our readers' lists — and let me know what's on your "I resolve to ..." lists. Good luck! ➔

(Editor's Note: Kevin George grew up on Kent Island and now lives with his family in Easton. He

HOME HOW-TO

Moisture Control

Taking a shower, cooking, washing and other similar activities add lots of moisture to the air. The most important step in solving moisture problems is to limit moisture sources.

WAYS TO PRODUCE LESS MOISTURE

- Be sure that louvers in attic or basement crawl spaces are open and that they are large enough to allow moisture to escape.
- Ventilate kitchen and bathroom with exhaust fans and consider installing a laundry room exhaust fan.
- If you have a furnace humidifier or other humidifying device in your home, be sure it is adjusted to produce the proper amount of humidity.
- Cover pans and don't leave kettles boiling.
- Do not hang up wet laundry indoors.
- Correct drainage problems.

MOISTURE TEST

To help determine the sources of moisture in the basement, use duct tape to fasten squares of aluminum foil to walls and floors for several days.

- Droplets forming on the underside indicate seepage penetrating the masonry from outside.
- Droplets forming on the top indicate condensation.

Source: www.fcs.uga.edu Creators.com/

I THOUGHT I WAS TIGHT WITH MY MONEY. NOW I'M AIRTIGHT.

All it took was a tube of caulk and half an afternoon. Now, I'm saving \$212 a year by sealing a few cracks around the house. What can you do? Find out how the little changes add up. Go to choptankelectric.coop and click TogetherWeSave.com.

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Wrap it up ...

Wrapping paper and shopping bags account for about 4 million tons of trash each year in the United States.

Looking for ideas to reuse all that shredded wrapping paper from the holiday season? Here are a few tips to lessen your holiday footprint on the environment.

- **Recycle:** *Materials used to make wrapping paper (i.e. dyes, lamination, glitter, gold and silver coloring) might be non-recyclable. Some cities and organizations do recycle wrapping or hold large collections annually, so look around your area.*
- **Compost it:** *Shredded paper is a great starter component for vermicompost.*
- **Stuffing:** *Shredding your wrapping paper can make a great packaging tool, whether your mailing a delicate gift or refilling your bean bag chair.*
- **For your pets:** *Mincing wrapping paper into tiny bits works well as bedding for small pets. Keep in mind that it does not contain deodorizers, so the paper will need to be changed more frequently.*

Information courtesy <http://www.inhabitots.com/2008/12/26/the-wrap-up-on-holiday-wrapping-paper/> and <http://earth911.com/paper/wrapping-paper/facts-about-recycling-wrapping-paper/>