

Wood Wall Coverings Make a Real Difference



Gone are the days when laminated panels printed with an artificial pattern were the only way to get a “natural” wood appearance on walls. Nowadays, it’s no longer necessary to settle for anything less than real wood, thanks to companies that are selling scrap, distressed, abandoned and reclaimed wood that has been prepared for easy installation at a reasonable cost. By shaving wood planks into thin strips, it is now possible to apply them with self-adhesive or “peel and stick” backing and achieve a truly natural wall surface with the convenience of old-fashioned printed veneers, offered at a more affordable cost than full-thickness barn boards or other traditional wood applications.

How to Reduce Lawn & Garden Water Consumption

Over the summer, the demand for water to maintain lawns and gardens can stress supply and reservoir systems, and increase costs for taxpayers and users. Bearing in mind watering restrictions that may apply in your municipality, consider the following ways to minimize your overall water consumption during extended periods without rainfall. First, check your hose or irrigation equipment for leaks, and position sprinklers so that you’re not wasting water on hard surfaces such as driveways and patios. To apply water more directly to the soil and reduce evaporation, use a soaker hose placed on the ground at the base of plants. Whenever possible, water slowly



to avoid run-off, ideally in early morning – before the heat of the summer sun can cause evaporation. For conservation, direct rainwater from your roof gutters and downspouts to one or more rain barrels, but be sure to use insect screening to prevent mosquitoes from breeding.

Kitchen Cutting Boards Can Accumulate Bacteria

Butcher-block, countertop and portable cutting boards are popular kitchen work areas, but these utilitarian surfaces can be the source of harmful bacteria. To ensure your prep surfaces do not contaminate your food, be sure not to cut fruit and vegetables on the same surface as raw meats, poultry or fish, unless the surface has been sanitized between tasks. Any cutting area, plastic or wooden, will absorb and hold bacteria if its surface has been scarred by a sharp knife. A basic wash is not sufficient to remove the contamination. As a result, sanitizing with bleach or vinegar, and then allowing time for the board to thoroughly dry, is a necessary precaution. Typically, having one board dedicated exclusively for meat, poultry, and fish, and another



for fruit and vegetables, is the most practical solution. For convenience, use a plastic board for the one used for cutting raw meat, so you can pop it in the dishwasher for sanitization.

Keyless Car Entry Signals Can be Compromised

Unlocking and starting a car without handling keys requires technology based on radio-frequency identification (RFID). This system basically extends a “handshake” between your key/fob and car computer system when you’re nearby, thereby enabling the vehicle to welcome you with an unlocked door. This so-called fail-safe mechanism requires a complicated matching of code sequences that is very difficult for most thieves to hack. However, it seems that some thieves have acquired a new tech tool that employs an RFID amplifier, which helps your car identify your key/fob from a greater distance. So, even if your keys are at your bedside at night, in your purse at a restaurant, or on your person at the office, an amplifier can make your car “detect” that you’re next to the vehicle, and automatically open up for the thief. Fortunately, this is preventable if you keep your key/fob in a high-quality “Faraday” pouch to block out RFID signals until you are ready to unlock your car. Furthermore, if



you employ a tried-and-true steering-wheel lock, no one will be driving off with your car, regardless of where you’ve put your keys!