

CAHI MONTHLY NEWS



Presidents Corner

As I write this month's President's Corner, a nor'easter is bearing down on the state. Just when we thought we saw the spring light at the end of the winter tunnel, we need to brace ourselves for one last hurrah. That's what I get for putting my snow blower and shovel away prematurely. I hope everyone has survived the blizzard of 2017 unscathed.

I am in a LinkedIn type program where the topic of home inspectors deferring to a licensed professional has been hotly debated. I also have heard many Realtors complain recently about the practice as well. It seems that many inspectors are just identifying potential problems and recommending that every defect be evaluated by a qualified contractor before purchase. Then why have an inspection they ask, just bring in the contractors.

The home inspection has evolved tremendously in the years that I have been in business. But the basics have remained the same. Our standards state:

- The inspector shall report on those systems and components inspected which, in the professional opinion of the inspector, are significantly deficient or are near the end of their service lives.
- The inspector shall provide a reason why, if not self-evident, the system or component is significantly deficient or near the end of its service life and the inspector shall provide recommendations to correct or monitor the reported deficiency.
- The inspector shall report on any systems and components designated for inspection in these regulations which were present at the time of the home inspection, unless a written reason is provided as to why any such systems or components were not inspected.

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MONTHLY MEETINGS – Details & Info

CAHI's regular monthly meetings are held at the Best Western located at 201 Washington Ave (RT 5), North Haven. Meetings are free to members. Most meetings are on the fourth Wednesday of the month from 7-9pm. Guests are always welcome! Guests may attend 2 free monthly meetings to experience our presentations, meet our members, and receive a CE attendance certificate.

Joining CAHI may be done at anytime of the year through our Membership Page

Next Meeting!

March 22, 2017

Topic is

Home Automation

Oh yeah, and you were always advised to Cover You're A\$\$\$. Let's face it, by becoming a professional home inspector, one takes on a tremendous amount of liability and there has to be a way to level the playing field, so to speak. Deferring is one way to do that. However, this leaves everything open ended in the eyes of the Realtors. What I am finding out from new inspectors entering our profession is that some of the on line training programs that have been approved by the state are recommending the practice. We must, per the second paragraph above, provide recommendations to correct or monitor reported deficiencies. This appears to meet that requirement. But the Real Estate industry does not like that, and in many cases deflects that recommendation. I have had home buyers tell me that the agents did not allow them time to bring in contractors to evaluate items discovered during the inspection contingency period because inspectors were just covering their behinds. It is hard to get a pro to evaluate something for you in a tight time frame. Let's face it; it is not a money maker for them. I get it. They are not going to drop everything and come running out for anybody. But some Realtors have their favorite "handy man" on speed dial who can fix anything with a tube of caulk, duct tape and a nail and hammer.

Another factor is that over the years, contractors realized that this was not an opportunity for them to get work, but just a means for a Realtor to get a number for negotiations. I have found that most guys are either charging for the visit and quote, which most buyers and sellers do not want to pay, or do not respond if they know it is for a real estate transaction, or just keep driving if they see a for sale sign in front of the home. Now that puts the buyers in a precarious position. Many times they are pushed forward due to time constraints without the proper intel. I think, whenever we can we should be definitive in our call. But sometimes it is necessary to have someone with expertise in a field determine to scope and cost of a repair. What do you think?

On the CAHI front, our board has been active in response to a proposed radon bill and a forming smoke detector bill. We have reached out to legislators and groups who are opposed to these items. I can tell you that the radon bill is going to public hearing on the 20th. If that passes, all radon testers in CT, including home inspectors, mitigators and labs will have to report their findings to the state. The state Realtors Association will be testifying against it. It would be good to have some home inspectors there as well. If anyone is interested, please contact me or any board member.

"Every person is responsible for all the good within the scope of his abilities, and for no more"
— Gail Hamilton (1833-1896), American writer

Stan

Watch Out for These 6 Tax Season Scams



As the April filing deadline approaches, scammers are increasingly on the hunt for your personal information. Here are six of the most common scams to watch out for, according to the Internal Revenue Service.

Phishing: Con artists use unsolicited email and fake websites to lure potential victims into divulging personal information. The IRS does not contact taxpayers via email, text messages or social media channels to request personal or financial information. Report suspicious activity to phishing@irs.gov.



Verification Requests: Don't be fooled by scammers asking you to "verify" your W-2 or personal information. If the IRS needed to request ID verification, they would generally send a Letter 5071C (check the upper corner for the number) in the mail and ask you to verify your identity using the Identity Verification Service.



Phone scams: Scammers impersonating IRS agents may make aggressive or threatening calls demanding money or offering a refund. Sometimes they even alter their caller ID information to appear they're calling from an IRS office. The first IRS contact with taxpayers is usually via mail.



Inflated refund claims: Beware of tax preparers who ask you to sign a blank check, promise big refunds before looking at your records or charge fees based on a percentage of your refund. The IRS offers tips for choosing a preparer.



Fake charities: After disasters, it's common for scammers to impersonate charities. Use IRS.gov to find which ones are legitimate. Don't give out personal information. Don't give or send cash, and don't be pressured into making a decision on the phone.



False tax returns: One of the most common tax scams is usually the result of identity theft that involves filing tax returns using stolen Social Security numbers. Protect your personal data; check your credit report at least annually, and review your Social Security Administration earnings statement each year.



Don't make yourself an easy target. Avoid leaving important paperwork and W-2s in unsecured places, such as offices, common living areas, vehicles and unlocked mailboxes. And use enhanced logon methods, such as biometrics and CyberCode Tokens to prevent hackers from obtaining important tax information.



Repairing Plaster Interiors

BY MYRON FERGUSON

I am often called to repair plaster work in older homes. Typically, it's to repair a cracked ceiling or areas of walls or ceilings where significant reworking of the plumbing or other mechanicals has been done. I've developed some efficient strategies for both situations that don't require rocking over or demolishing the entire surface.

LARGE WALL REPAIR

A difficult repair I did on a customer's plaster wall last summer provides a great example. Some major plumbing renovations had required opening up the wall and demolishing a big section of plaster. On top of that, a drain pipe that had been relocated into the wall cavity couldn't be pushed back far enough and stuck out beyond the plane of the existing plaster surface (1). In this case, as it often is, the door casing and baseboard needed to be left in place, and I wouldn't be able to build up the plaster or joint compound to be too thick along the edges of the trim. All of this meant that I couldn't easily cover the wall section with board material, so I opted for using metal lath instead.

We settled for having the inside corner of the room just a few degrees out of square. To make that work, I began by ripping a piece of 2-by and installing it even with the plane of the pipe (2) to create a solid attachment for metal lath, which I could then roll out from the corner 2x2 over the drain pipe, and blend into the casing.

Fabric and lath. In previous repairs, I had discovered the use of plaster over wire lath that had been backed with rosin paper to help prevent too much plaster from falling through the lath. Instead of rosin paper, I used FibaFuse Wall Reinforcement fabric, which I use regularly for resurfacing ceilings, as I will explain



Photos by Chris Ermides



later in this article. For the wall repair, I stapled the fabric over the opening in the wall (3), and then covered it with wire lath, securing the lath with screws and plaster washers (4). As luck would have it, the opening I was repairing could be covered with a single sheet of lath measuring 8 feet by 27 inches—a common size for wire lath.

Primer and base coat. Before applying the plaster over the mesh and ceiling repair, I first had to apply a plaster bonding agent (5). In addition to helping the plaster bond to a variety of materials, the bonding agent reduces the water absorption out of the plaster, allowing the plaster to cure properly.

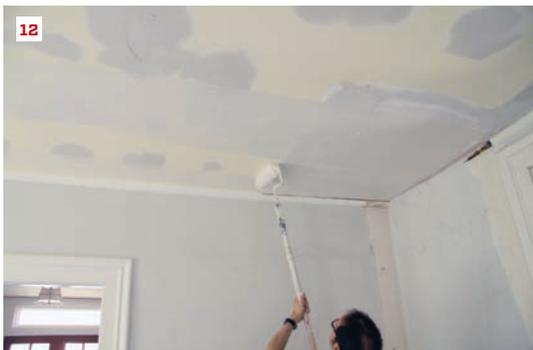
I mixed the base-coat plaster to a thick consistency, and I started applying the plaster along the bottom of the wall (6). Because I used a thick mix, started along the bottom, and had the fabric behind the lath, I was able to build up the plaster to a thickness of

at least 1/2 inch and taper it to nothing along the casing. When I returned the next day, the plaster had set up into a solid surface. The blend-in over the drain pipe already looked good.

For the next coat, I applied a thick coat of setting compound, which set up in about an hour. I then applied a thin coat of lightweight joint compound for the final coat (7). This coat was just a skim coat of compound to smooth and fill in any remaining defects in the surface. When it was dry, I sanded it to a smooth finish with 220-grit sandpaper.

REPAIRING CEILINGS

Large ceiling areas can be repaired with pieces of drywall. On this job, an area of the ceiling above the wall repair had also been demolished, by the same plumber who installed the drainpipe. The plaster and lath was about one inch thick, so I padded out the



ceiling joists with strips of 1/2-inch drywall (8) before installing large pieces of the same material to fill in the hole. Note that the plaster around the perimeter should be well secured with screws and plaster washers, and any small areas of exposed lath should also be secured.

Regular drywall can be used as a plaster base, but it—and any exposed wood lath you want to plaster over—must be treated with a bonding agent (9). Next, I prefill any open joints and the perimeter of the patch with base-coat plaster (10), into which I embed fiberglass tape. When that has set up, I follow with a coat of setting compound and feather in the patch before resurfacing the rest of the ceiling.

RESURFACING PLASTER CEILINGS

Many old plaster ceilings have shallow cracks over much of the surface, and it's time-consuming to apply tape over every crack even when you're using self-adhesive mesh tape. Then all those taped areas have to be concealed with multiple layers of compound. This is before the spider cracks are even considered.

Spider cracks are what I call the fine cracks that are sometimes all over an old plaster ceiling. They appear to just be cracks in the paint, but I was never sure what to do about them. Was it necessary to reinforce each one? Doing that would be difficult and time-consuming and require a lot of mesh tape.

Prep work. You're finishing over an existing surface, so if it's in poor condition, any material applied over it will be compromised. If the base is loose, dirty, or too absorbent, or if it offers poor adhesion or has some other problem, then the new surface may not create the stable, durable finish desired.

To prep the existing surface, I remove any loose plaster or paint and seal any watermarks or stained areas of the ceiling. Often, areas of the ceiling will have separated from the lath, typically because the keys into the wood lath have broken. These areas can be pulled in tight to the lath by using plaster washers.

If the surface is very smooth, first rough it up with a coarse-grit paper (80 grit or coarser). On glossy painted surfaces, I have used paint de-glossers with success, but using a plaster bonding agent, such as Plaster-Weld, is my preferred method.

I suggest V-grooving larger cracks, then filling them with setting compound and covering them with extra-strength fiberglass mesh tape. Areas that are recessed or crowned should be filled or feathered out at this time with a setting compound (11). Using the setting compound allows me to complete the prep work and move right on to embedding the glass mat I plan on using to reinforce the entire ceiling.

Tip: Prior to starting a job, you should prep a test area to make sure that the method you are thinking of using is going to work. That way, when you start the work, you can feel confident that you will have good adhesion.

Resurfacing. To achieve a new, smooth ceiling surface over old plaster, I begin by coating the ceiling with a thin layer of joint compound. This acts as an adhesive for a fiberglass mat, which serves

as a reinforcement to bind small cracks together and create a new, even surface.

My preferred method for applying the joint compound is using a paint roller that has a 1/2-inch nap cover (12). The skim coat could also be applied with a wide taping knife or even with a paint sprayer capable of spraying joint compound. The compound thickness should be about 1/8 inch (3mm). Edges close to walls and ceilings can be coated by applying the compound with a paint brush or taping knife.

I suggest using a heavy-weight all-purpose compound, rather than a lighter-weight compound, because of its greater strength and adhesion qualities.

The reinforcing mat I use, FibaFuse Wall Reinforcement, is a fiberglass mat (not a weave), and because the fibers are not particularly dense, it is quite porous. So it's easy to embed in joint compound, which is the adhesive that holds the material in place.

You should span the entire ceiling with one length. (On a wall, the mat should be hung vertically as one length, as well.) Position the first piece of wall reinforcement along a straight corner or chalked line and press it into the compound with a wide taping knife, working from the center toward the edges (13).

Each adjacent piece of the fiberglass mat is butted to the prior piece. This method is preferred, and I do it by first snapping a series of chalk lines at intervals the width of the FibaFuse roll. Because the mat is relatively thin, it can also be lapped and double-cut, as you might do with wallpaper. Double-cutting is when you cut through both layers with a utility knife and then remove the narrow strips, leaving tight-fitting butted edges.

Excess material along the edges and around cased openings gets cut off with a taping knife. The fiberglass mat cuts easily, so there's no need to use a sharp knife. Continue to embed tightly with the taping knife until the mat is smooth and compound is forced through the face.

Work one length at a time. Within a few minutes of embedding one length of the fiberglass fabric into the compound, apply a second coat of the same joint compound, rolling it on and working it firmly into the surface (14). This process fills any voids in the surface and any dry areas behind the fiberglass mat. Immediately smooth and remove most of this layer of compound with a wide taping knife, leaving only a thin coat of compound over the surface.

Let the compound dry thoroughly—it will most likely take more than 24 hours. At that point, lightly sand with a fine, 220-grit sandpaper.

Coat again. After sanding the base coat, roll on more joint compound (15). (A lightweight compound can be used for this final application). Remove and smooth with a wide taping knife, leaving the surface smooth and tight (16). This process is similar to applying a Level 5 finish (see "Specifying Drywall Finishes," Nov/09). In most cases, no additional sanding is needed.

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To view this article on-line and access all links go to:
<https://www.cnet.com/news/smart-home-buying-guide-home-automation/>

Home Automation Buying Guide

Dreaming of automated smart-home bliss, but unsure of where to start? You've come to the right place.

Home automation is nothing new, but a recent boom in smart-home tech has thrust it straight into the spotlight. Smart-home kits, sensors and gadgets have been a dominating presence at CES for the past two years, with big names like Apple, Google, GE and Microsoft right there in the thick of it. That's not surprising, given that market experts predict that the smart home's market share will be worth tens of billions within the next few years.

All that action adds up to a rapidly growing number of things in the "Internet of Things," along with a variety of platforms competing to control them all. That might make the idea of getting your smart home started a little bit overwhelming, but don't worry. It's actually easier than ever to start automating your home -- provided you know your options.



Tyler Lizenby/CNET

What kinds of 'things' can I automate?

"Smart home" is a pretty broad term, covering a huge number of connected gadgets, systems and appliances that do a wide variety of different things. "Home automation" is slightly less broad, referring specifically to things in your home that can be programmed to function automatically. In years past, those automations were pretty basic -- lamp timers, automated holiday lighting and so on -- but that's fast been changing thanks to the recent sprawl of smart-home tech aimed at mainstream consumers.

The possibilities are immense, ranging from lights and locks to cameras and coffee makers. The common denominator is automation, and a promise that these devices can save you time, save you money or make your life a little easier. An automated lamp might turn on by itself as soon as you walk into the room. An automated thermostat might turn the heat down when it detects you've left for the day, then back on when it thinks you're on your way back.



Start your smart home with these connected gadgets (pictures)

To cut through all of it and figure out what's most relevant to you, imagine a typical day at home. Are there any devices you regularly turn on and off? Do you regularly adjust your home environment depending on what you're doing? Those regular habits and activities are typically the best candidates for automation. Figure out which ones are most important to you, and you'll have a much better idea of what to look for in the smart home space.

Some of the most popular categories along these lines are lighting, home security, climate control and kitchen automation. In the coming weeks, we'll be exploring all of these in greater detail through a series of additional features, so stay tuned for those.



Mind you, those categories are far from exhaustive. With so much competition, manufacturers are getting increasingly creative in order to stand out from the crowd, which is one of the main reasons that the smart home has diversified as quickly as it has.

Shop around, and you'll find gadgets designed to help you sleep better, devices that promise to smarten up your home entertainment system and even connected tools for more intelligent gardening. We've even reviewed a smart-home piggy bank. Sure, some of these devices come with an extra-high novelty factor, but if they're automating something you care about, then they might merit consideration all the same.



This motion detector from Belkin can trigger your smart-home gadgets when it sees you enter the room.

Ry Crist/CNET

How does home automation work?

Think of the automated home as a human body. It needs to be able to sense things, process information and react accordingly. Different smart-home devices do different things, but all of them fall under at least one of those those three functions.

The first function, sense, is arguably the most important, which is why you'll see so many smart-home gadgets with built-in sensors for things like motion and temperature, as well as gadgets dedicated exclusively to monitoring them. These devices are the nervous system of the smart home -- they're able to sense the environment around them in some way, providing vital context for the decisions your automated home is going to make.



You can automate this Lix smart LED to turn on, turn off or change colors.

Tyler Lizenby/CNET

The devices that make those decisions and actually do things are the muscles of the smart home. A motion detector might sense you stepping out of bed in the morning, but it's the automated coffee maker that reacts to that information, starting a brew that'll be ready right as you're getting out of the shower.

Larger, more elaborate setups with lots of different "nerves" and "muscles" might need a separate device or accessory to manage and process all of that information, especially if the different devices aren't able to work directly with one another. Smart homes like these need more than just muscles and nerves -- they need a brain. That's where hubs come in.



A smart hub like the ones from Smart-Things and Wink can serve as your smart home's brain.

Tyler Lizenby/CNET

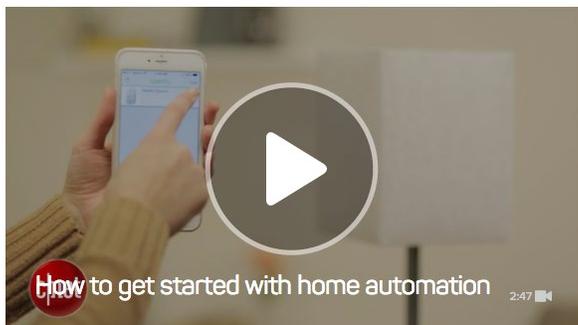
Smart hubs are designed to control multiple devices, even ones from different manufacturers. A good one will integrate every smart thing in your home into a single, seamless home automation experience, and offer consolidated controls within a single app.

Typically, a hub will include multiple radios for popular smart home protocols like Z-Wave and Zigbee -- the wireless "languages" of smart-home gadgetry. This allows the hub to "talk" to everything in its native language, then translate that info into a Wi-Fi signal that you (and your router) can understand and put to use. With the right hub, you'll be able to expand your system dramatically without things getting too complicated.



Another way to give your automated home a brain is to unite your devices behind a singular software platform. That's what Apple's attempting to do with HomeKit, an iOS-based software architecture that'll let you manage multiple third-party devices through your iPhone, with voice control via Siri. You could also make the case that Google's Works with Nest initiative falls into the same category, with a growing number of devices tailoring their own software to mesh well with the high-profile Nest Learning Thermostat .

One other smart home platform you might have heard something about is IFTTT. An acronym for "If This, Then That," IFTTT is a free service that lets you craft automation recipes that link smart gadgets, web services, and online tools. Select a cause ("if this") and an effect ("then that"), and the recipe will run automatically. A social networking recipe might automatically save your Instagram photos to a Dropbox folder, for instance. Once you start adding smart-home gadgets into the mix things get even more interesting, and more and more are joining IFTTT's ranks all the time.

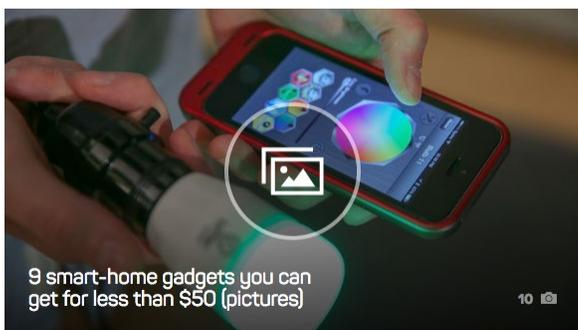


OK...so how do I get started?

Home automation can conjure Jetsons-esque images of fully mechanized, highly intelligent living spaces. That's a fun ideal, but it's not a terribly practical frame of reference as you start smartening up your home. The better approach is to start small, with one or two things that you'd like to automate.

If you've got a specific vision for what you want your home automation setup to accomplish, all that's left is to study your options, narrow them down, and give one a shot. Our smart-home reviews are designed to help you do exactly that (and our Best Smart Home Gadgets list might help you cut to the chase).

If, on the other hand, you're still a little uncertain, don't worry. There are plenty of smart, affordable entry points that offer surprisingly high levels of functionality, making it easy to experiment and figure out what you want from your connected home.

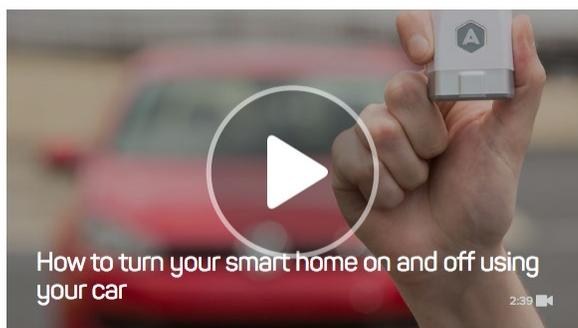


Keep it simple

The majority of home automation boils down to things turning on and off on their own. To this end, a smart switch capable of controlling anything you plug into it makes a very sensible connected home starting point. There are plenty of options available now from names like Belkin , D-Link , Monster and Quirky , not to mention the soon-to-be-released HomeKit-compatible iDevices Switch .

For now, my pick is the Belkin WeMo Switch , which offers a mature, well-developed system, tons of use scenarios, fairly wide third-party compatibility, and best of all, a price point below \$50. Upgrade to the \$80 WeMo Switch and Motion package, and you'll get a dedicated motion sensor, too -- a nerve and a muscle to get you started with home automation.

Automating a lamp is a good first step. In my home, I keep my bedroom lamp plugged into a WeMo Switch, with a WeMo Motion Sensor hidden under my wardrobe. In the WeMo app, I created a rule that turns the light on when it's dark out and the motion sensor sees me walk in. A minute after the motion stops, the lamp turns off automatically.



Once you've got the hang of automating a lamp, you can try automating other things, as well. Coffee makers, desk fans and space heaters all work well with WeMo. You can even plug a power strip into a WeMo Switch, then automate several devices all at once -- a handy way of shutting down TVs, game consoles, and other electronics that can leech power even in the off position.

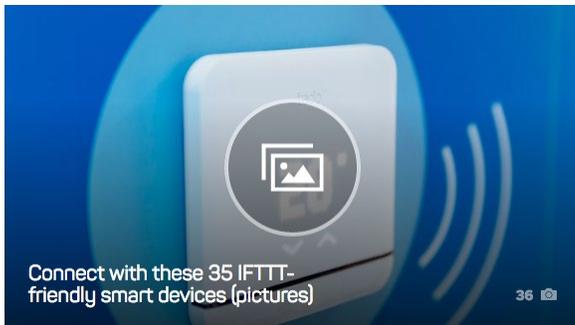
You can also control the WeMo Switch using IFTTT, with recipes that take your automation capabilities to the next level. You could, for instance, craft a recipe that turns your lamp on whenever your phone enters the area around your home. Or, you could set the light to flash whenever the boss emails (just don't tell him about it, lest he decide to troll you at 4 a.m.)



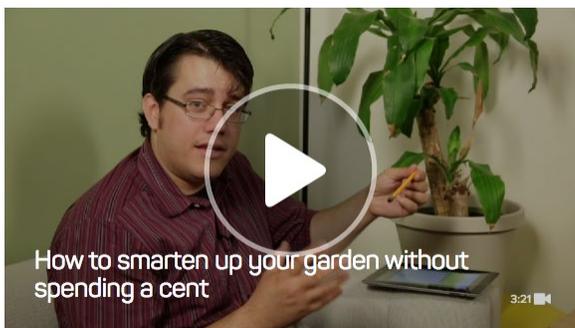
Try something new

Whether it's a switch or something else, there's a good chance that you'll want to build your smart home's starting point into something a little more complex. If you're adding something to your system, the key is compatibility -- you want something that'll play well with the rest of your system, rather than buying into a separate, walled off ecosystem.

Maybe that means buying an additional device from the same brand as your original purchase, but it doesn't have to. In general, smart-home manufacturers see the value in keeping things at least somewhat open, and many go out of their way to embrace third-party hubs and smart-home platforms as a means of providing compatibility with other gadgets. Understand which systems your existing tech works with, and you'll be able to shop for new toys that'll fit right in.



IFTTT is helpful here, too, as you can sync various gadgets up without needing to spend any extra cash on a hub. Browse the list of supported services and devices -- IFTTT calls them "Channels" -- and you're likely to start getting some fun new ideas for your setup.



You can also find ways of experimenting with home automation that don't cost anything at all. Many smart devices offer demo modes within their apps that'll let you get the gist of things before you buy anything. Taking things for a test-drive can help you decide whether or not the product fits your needs, and it might also inspire a few new ideas for how you can put it to use.

Some devices go even further, offering full-fledged features within their apps that go way beyond demo territory. The video above is a great example of how you can automate your gardening routine without needing to buy anything.



Staples Connect sells starter kits that package the hub with compatible smart devices.

Tyler Lizenby/CNET

Consider a kit

If your automation ambitions stretch further than a single device, you might consider shopping for a smart home starter kit. Most of the major smart hubs offer at least one kit -- some offer multiple varieties designed to meet different needs. If you're already envisioning a smart home with multiple devices, the chances are good you'll want a hub anyway, so these kits can make for an attractive way to dive right in.

Some kits, like the ones you'll find from SmartThings , include a hub and a collection of proprietary sensors. Others, like kits from Wink and Staples Connect , come packaged with the hub and a variety of compatible third-party gadgets. If you're willing to buy in at a much bigger level, you could even consider whole-home automation packages from high-end subscription services like Control4 or Savant. Whichever way you go, you'll have a lot more options right out of the box than you would if you tried to build your setup one device at a time -- just be careful you don't buy more than you actually want or need.



Colin West McDonald/CNET

Automating your home doesn't need to be daunting. On the contrary, the barrier to entry has never been lower. Today's tech is clamoring for mainstream approval, with an emphasis on ease of use. Competition is bringing prices down, and legitimate platforms are starting to emerge. In sum, it's a great time to give home automation a shot.

With a little research and perhaps a bit of trial and error, you can build a fairly comprehensive smart-home setup if that's what you want. That said, there's nothing wrong with just picking one or two devices that make sense to you and leaving it at that -- for now, at least. For many consumers, that sort of simple, scaled-back approach makes far more sense than a larger, more elaborate setup. Understand your needs, find the devices that meet them, and you'll have an automated home that's smart in more ways than one.

The Private Well Class - Webinars



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Have questions about your well?
Get the answers you need in our free webinar.

YOUR INSTRUCTOR:



Steve Wilson

Groundwater Hydrologist

Steve Wilson is a 30-year veteran of the Illinois State Water Survey. Most of his research has been related to groundwater quantity and quality issues in the sand and gravel aquifers of Illinois. He authored the curriculum for our (free!) flagship e-course.



Is My Water Safe to Drink? - Common Questions about Private Wells

Your drinking water well doesn't have to be a mystery. In this free 90-minute webinar training hosted by The Private Well Class you'll learn the answers to common questions, such as:

- How do I get my well water tested?
- What do I need to do to take care of my well?
- Is my well susceptible to contamination?

Next Session: April 24, 2017 at 1pm CDT

What Environmental Health Professionals Need to Know about Private Wells

This free webinar will provide an introduction to groundwater, well construction, water quality, and well care best practices for environmental health professionals and others who serve well owners. Information on how to find local experts and sources of additional free training will be included. We'll also introduce our [upcoming online workshops](#) (4 hours, also free) on assessing well vulnerability and conducting effective outreach. The webinar will be recorded. NEHA CE credits are available for those who attend live.

Next Session: May 8, 2017 at 1pm CDT



The Private Well Conference

National Stakeholder Meeting: May 23-25, 2017

The 2017 Private Well Conference is believed to be the first of its kind, being both national in scope and exclusively focused on private drinking water supplies. This conference will bring together members of the private well community to learn new ideas and share experiences to strengthen outreach, education, and research programs around the country.

The 2.5 days will feature a mixture of oral presentations from invited speakers and accepted abstracts (see call below), as well as panel discussions, a "lightning session", and opportunities for networking. Funding for this conference and the Private Well Class program comes from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP).

CONFERENCE THEMES

Private Well Challenges and Opportunities
Perspectives about Private Wells
Innovation in Outreach and Education
Partnerships for Success

In addition to the 30-minute oral presentations, there will also be a panel discussion featuring drillers from around the country and their view of the private well issues well owners, educators, and regulators face. There will also be a 90 minute "lightning session" where attendees will be given the opportunity to spend 5 minutes describing an innovative aspect of their program.

National Nutrition Month

Department of Public Health

March

DPH Encourages CT Residents to Eat Healthy and Move More during National Nutrition Month

March is National Nutrition Month

In conjunction with the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) is celebrating National Nutrition Month during the month of March. The National Nutrition Month® theme for 2017 is “Put Your Best Fork Forward.” The theme focuses on inspiring and helping individuals develop long-lasting eating and exercise behaviors by making small changes over time.

“We live in a society that wants everything now,” said Marcia Pessolano, a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist at DPH. “The truth is, nutrition is no different than anything else. If you want to live a long and healthy life, you have to work at it each day and practice healthy habits.”

DPH recommends the following ideas to help you get on track:

- One habit at a time: Research shows that if you focus on one habit at a time for 2-4 weeks you are more likely to be successful. Slow and steady wins the race.
- Eat slowly: It takes 20 minutes for your brain to realize you are full, so put your fork down in between bites. Take 20-30 chews per bite and turn off electronics. Instead, enjoy your meal with your family and friends.
- Portion Control: Use a nine-inch plate and fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables. The other half should consist of about one-quarter whole grains and one-quarter lean protein.
- Stay Consistent: Consistency is key! Focus on eating healthy (e.g. whole grains, vegetables, fruits, lean proteins, and low fat dairy) most of the time, but don't deprive yourself completely. Enjoy your favorite foods within reason.
- Practice Mindfulness: Become more aware of your daily routines, habits, and behaviors. Start a journal to help you identify what you are doing well and what you can improve. Take your time and enjoy your food. Savor each bite and eat free of distractions (e.g. television, cell phones, etc.).

To learn more about nutrition and DPH programs visit the Department of Public Health's Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Prevention Program website: <http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3137&q=393114>.

For information about National Nutrition Month®, and to find an expert to help you get started, visit the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website at www.eatright.org.

Below are more interesting videos provided by Storm Water Solutions. Click to enjoy.



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GEOCELL SYSTEM



GRASS POROUS PAVEMENT

Video



GeoPave Porous Pavement: The Citadel

Porous aggregate pavements reduce storm water runoff for The Citadel alumni parking area.

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The Best Smart Home Devices of 2017

BY ERIC GRIFFITH, ALEX COLON

MARCH 10, 2017

Ready to dive into the Internet of Things to automate your home? Start with the top products we've tested for every room in the house.



How Smart Is Your Home?

What if all the devices in your life could connect to the Internet? Not just computers and smartphones, but everything: clocks, speakers, lights, doors, cameras, windows, window blinds, hot water heaters, appliances, cooking utensils, you name it. And what if those devices could all communicate, send you information, and take your commands? It's not science fiction; it's the Internet of Things (IoT), and it's a key component of home automation and smart homes.

Home automation is exactly what it sounds like: automating the ability to control items around the house—from window shades to pet feeders—with a simple push of a button (or a voice command). Some activities, like setting up a lamp to turn on and off at your whim, are simple and relatively inexpensive. Others, like advanced surveillance cameras, may require a more serious investment of time and money.

There are many smart home product categories, so you can control everything from lights and temperature to locks and security in your home. Here's a rundown of the best products we've tested for every room of the house.



The Echo\$179.99 at Amazon is a Bluetooth speaker powered by Alexa, Amazon’s handy voice assistant. Alexa works with a number of smart home devices directly, as well as with If This Then That (IFTTT) to control plenty of others via “recipes” you can create yourself. It’ll take some work, but you can use Alexa to control most of the gadgets in your house by the sound of your voice. If you already have a favorite speaker, the inexpensive Echo Dot\$49.99 at Amazon can connect to it and add Alexa functionality.

Wink Hub 2



Our current Editors’ Choice for home automation hubs, the Wink Hub 2 works with devices that use Z-Wave, ZigBee, Lutron Clear Connect, Kidde, Bluetooth, and Wi-Fi. It is also for the future. That includes just about everything in the smart home spectrum, from Philips Hue lighting and the Netgear Arlo camera, to Google Home. It’s the most reliable, widely supported hub we’ve tested.

Logitech Harmony Elite



Don’t like talking and prefer controlling things the old fashioned way: by pushing buttons? The Logitech Harmony Elite\$298.00 at Walmart.com is the ultimate universal remote for a reason: it controls a lot more than just TV and stereo. The pricey unit connects with the included Harmony Home Hub to control other Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, ZigBee, Z-Wave, or infrared devices in your house.

Read The Best Smart Home Automation Hubs for more options.

Surveillance Cameras

Netgear Arlo Pro



When we reviewed the Netgear Arlo back in 2015, we loved that it was completely wireless, weatherproof, and easy to install, but were disappointed that it lacked any audio capabilities. The Netgear Arlo Pro \$229.99 at Amazon not only adds two-way audio, it offers sound-triggered recording. Other new features include rechargeable batteries, a base station with a loud siren, and USB connectivity for storing video locally on a USB drive. You don't need to pay a pricey subscription to view recordings that are stored in the cloud, and its wireless capabilities give you much more flexibility when deciding where to place your cameras than most competitors.

LG Smart Security Wireless Camera LHC5200WI (With ADT Canopy)



Indoor Wi-Fi security cameras offer a cost-effective way to keep tabs on your home while you're away, but unless they're paired with a comprehensive security system, it's up to you to monitor activities and call the authorities in the event of a break-in. Enter the LG Smart Security Wireless Camera \$199.99 at Amazon, an indoor Wi-Fi camera that offers 24/7 monitoring via ADT's Canopy service. This camera is ideal for renters, apartment dwellers, and homeowners who want the benefit of professional monitoring without having to commit to a contract or pay for professional installation.

Nest Cam Outdoor



The Nest Cam Outdoor \$180.61 at Amazon is essentially the same camera as its popular indoor model, but with a weatherproof enclosure and power cord. Otherwise it's pretty much identical in features—it uses Wi-Fi to send a full-time video signal (up to 1080p) you can monitor via the Web or mobile apps. It also provides alerts for motion (in zones you set) or audio. Pay for the Nest Aware subscription and you'll get days of video stored online that turn into clips you can watch whenever you like.

Check out [The Best Home Security Cameras](#) for more.

Locks and Home Security Systems

August Smart Lock HomeKit Enabled



The big names in door locks have smart home options, but they haven't pulled it off as well as upstart August. Its easy-to-install, Apple HomeKit-enabled Smart Lock \$205.29 at Amazon mounts over your existing dead-bolt switch to provide connectivity for your door. It speaks via Bluetooth to your smartphone, granting quick access to you or guests. The latest version integrates tightly with Apple devices, but still has support from other services like IFTTT.

See [The Best Smart Locks](#) for more.

Vivint



Vivint Line Up 2016

Vivint used to be APX Alarm Security Solutions, but now has a cool name to go along with expanding beyond security into home automation. We gave an Editors' Choice award to the Vivint Smart Home system \$49.99 at Vivint, which includes subscription-based remote monitoring by pros that goes for \$39.99 to \$49.99 per month. If you want expert installation and an extra set of eyes, Vivint is an excellent choice. It can even be controlled with the Amazon Echo.

SimpliSafe Home Security System



If you prefer a DIY approach to smartening up your home security, check out the SimpliSafe system \$259.95 at SimpliSafe. While it lacks a camera, it makes up for it with reasonable prices and monthly monitoring of a wide range of sensors. It comes in multiple different packages, or you can customize your own so you can get exactly what's right for your home.

See The Best Smart Home Security Systems for more.

Heating and Cooling

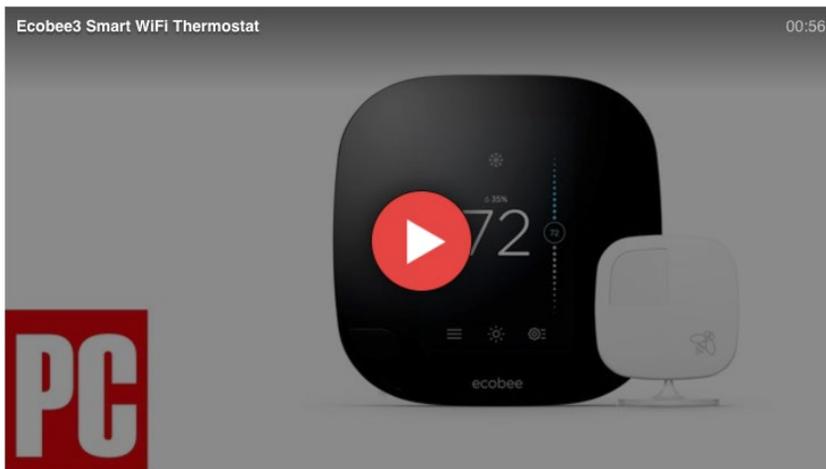
Nest Learning Thermostat (3rd Generation)



The Nest Learning Thermostat \$246.99 at Amazon has built-in Wi-Fi so you can remotely control the temperature from phone, tablet, or PC. This latest generation also has a larger display and a few more sensors than its predecessors, in addition to geofencing support and a furnace monitor.

For more, see [Nest Tips to Help You Take Control of Your Smart Home](#).

Ecobee3 Smart WiFi Thermostat



As nice as the Nest is, it's not our only top pick. The Ecobee3 Smart WiFi Thermostat \$269.00 at Amazon is another stylish device you can control remotely. It's not dependent on just monitoring home temperature from one spot—it checks multiple sensors in multiple rooms.

Lighting

Philips Hue Bulbs



Want complete wireless supremacy over the lights in your home? The Philips Hue line delivers with bulbs that let you control not only the intensity of the light, but also the color. It can get pricey, to be sure, but the Hue ecosystem has been around long enough that it works with just about every other system out there, from Alexa, to IFTTT, to Siri (using the Philips Hue Bridge 2.0). Not interested in colorful lights but still want that incredible granular control over an all-white bulb? Philips has the Hue White coming in at an almost bargain price, at least for smart bulbs.

Check out [The Best Smart Light Bulbs](#) for more connected lighting options.

Cooking

Anova Culinary Precision Cooker Wi-Fi



If you're interested in sous vide cooking—where food sealed in plastic is immersed in a hot bath to cook to perfection—you need an immersion circulator to get started. The Anova Culinary Precision Cooker \$179.00 at Amazon uses Wi-Fi connectivity so you control it from anywhere, even when you're not home. A big dial lets you set the desired temperature to within a tenth of a degree, display shows the set and current water temperature, and an app keeps you notified of the cooking process every step of the way. It makes cooking sous vide as simple as can be.

Char-Broil Digital Electric Smoker with SmartChef Technology



When it comes to smoking ribs or other meats in the backyard, you've typically got two choices, charcoal or gas, and neither is perfect. It's possible that the Char-Broil Digital Electric Smoker \$254.97 at Amazon is, since you control the temp remotely, using apps for iOS or Android. You just wait for the app to tell you when the food is ready. Inside there is 725 square inches of cooking space on four chrome racks that are easy to clean. Fill the smoker box with wood chips and it will work for nearly seven hours without a refill.

Check out The Best Gadgets for High-Tech Grilling for more.

Perfect Bake Pro



The Perfect Bake Pro \$99.99 at Amazon takes out the guess work and risk when baking. It's a baking scale connected to an app to help newbies (and seasoned bakers alike) get everything just right when it comes to kitchen chemistry. Just follow the app as the scale measures everything you add. As long as you can tell salt from sugar, you're probably going to be just fine

Cleaning

Neato Botvac Connected



Robot vacuums are smarter than ever. Neato's Botvac Connected \$629.99 at Amazon has a laser-guided navigation system that can't , and its U-shape design means it can get into tight corners and against walls in a way circular robots can't. It also features built-in Wi-Fi for app control with your smartphone, so you can turn it on no matter where you are and come back to a clean home.

iRobot Braava Jet 240



A vacuuming robot isn't enough these days. Don't you want your floors mopped clean as well? iRobot's relatively inexpensive Braava Jet 240 \$162.55 at Amazon will do exactly that. It's small, quiet, and perfect for apartment dwellers without a lot of floor space or time to clean it when they get home. It sprays a jet of water to clean deep, and can even do damp sweeping, like a Swiffer. Read [The Best Robot Vacuums](#) for more.

Health and Fitness

QardioBase Smart Scale



Using technology at home to make you healthier just makes good sense. For tracking fat, BMI, water, muscle mass, bone composition, and even pregnancy, look no further than the QardioBase Smart Scale \$118.99 at Amazon. It shares the info it reads with a smartphone app for your easy access. Plus, it just looks great.

See The Best Smart Bathroom Scales for more.

Outdoor



Rachio Smart Sprinkler Generation 2

The second-gen Rachio Smart Sprinkler Controller \$239.99 at Amazon gives you control over eight or 16 zones depending on the unit you get, with a master valve terminal for systems that have one. It won't water the lawn if it's raining, and you can turn it on and off remotely with your phone. Plus, it integrates with lots of other services and devices like Amazon's Alexa, IFTTT, and Nest products.

Robomow RS622



Robot lawn mowers don't come cheap, but they definitely come in handy. Check out the Robomow RS622 \$1,699.00 at Amazon or one of its siblings for different sized lawns. This model is good for handling up to 23,000 square feet—once you go through the process of setting up a perimeter to let the mower go on its automated cutting pattern. Its dual two-season cutting blades spin at 4,000 rpm, mulching grass back into the soil so there's no need for cleaning up or dumping bags of grass.

Groundwater Awareness Week

Department of Public Health

March

DPH Recognizes National Groundwater Awareness Week: March 5-11

In conjunction with National Groundwater Awareness Week, March 5-11, 2017, the Department of Public Health asks Connecticut residents with a private well to take some time to locate their well, inspect it for structural problems, protect it from contamination, and most importantly, test the well's water quality.

Thousands of Connecticut residents rely on groundwater supplies every day: Approximately 23% of Connecticut's population is served by their own private residential well, that's over 820,000 people!

Homeowners with private wells use groundwater every day for drinking, cooking, bathing, cleaning, agriculture, cooling and heating. Water plays an essential role in everyone's life but, many are not aware how much of their water comes from the ground. National Groundwater Awareness Week is an annual observance sponsored by the National Ground Water Association (NGWA) that stresses how important groundwater is to the health of all people and the environment.

For more information on what to look for when inspecting your well, what you should have your water tested for, how often to test, common well contaminants and water treatment options, please check out the State of Connecticut, Department of Public Health's Private Well Program website at: www.ct.gov/dph/privatewells.

Carpenter Ants



Founded in 1875

Putting science to work for society

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Carpenter ants, (*Camponotus* sp.)



Catina Ratliff, Extension Entomology, Purdue University

In Connecticut, three carpenter ant species often establish colonies in buildings. They are the black carpenter ant, *Camponotus pennsylvanicus*, (the most common building infesting ant), a smaller species of black carpenter ant, *Camponotus nearcticus* (which usually nests near window and door frames), and the red carpenter ant, *Camponotus ferrugineus* which has a reddish-brown thorax.

Description: The black carpenter ant (*C. pennsylvanicus*) is one of the largest and most common ants in New England. Workers range in size from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ " in length, while the winged reproductive

adults range in size from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ ". *Camponotus nearcticus* is much smaller and is not as common. Between these two in size, is the red carpenter ant.

Ant reproductives are known as "swarmers." Citizens often confuse ant swarmers with termite swarmers. There are differences. Ant swarmers have constricted "wasp waists," their wings are brown, and the front wings are bigger than the hind wings. Termite waists are not narrow, their wings are clear to whitish, and all the wings are the same size. Additionally, termites swarm only in the spring, while ants swarm from late spring through the summer into fall. Rarely are there exceptions.

Biology: A carpenter ant colony is populated by a queen and workers. The queen lays eggs and the workers tend to the eggs, larvae, and pupae, forage for food, excavate, clean, and protect the nest.

In establishing a colony, a fertilized young queen selects or excavates a small cavity (gallery), usually in moist or decayed wood, and lays 15 to 20 eggs. She guards the eggs until the workers

hatch. The queen's behavior then switches to egg laying, and the workers begin colony activities. As the population increases, workers often need to make more room and so they will excavate galleries into adjacent wood (and/or other materials such as insulation) especially if it is softened by water or wood rot. The coarse sawdust produced is deposited outside the nest as a "dump." Galleries are irregular in shape, usually following the grain and softer parts of the wood. Occasionally satellite/secondary colonies without the queen may establish, when environmental or physical conditions stress the primary nest. The workers in these colonies perform the same activities, as in the primary nest.

Established colonies are considered mature when the numbers of ants reach approx. 2,000 individuals. Colonies take three to six years to mature. At this time, adult reproductive winged male and female swarmers, are reared. Swarming and mating occur from late spring to mid-summer. Male carpenter ants die shortly after they mate. Only one in a thousand of young fertilized queens will successfully establish a new colony. Carpenter ants are active during the warm weather months. During onset of winter, they convert their body fluids into a natural glycol to prevent tissue freeze damage and enter hibernation.

Indoor nests: Buildings located near outdoor nests, are more likely to become infested with carpenter ants. Carpenter ant nests can be found in various locations, such as cavities of un-split firewood, hollow-core doors, walls, ceilings, attics, and areas behind window frames and sills. In buildings, nests often associate with areas that have moisture issues. These locations often favor development of wood rot fungi. Such areas include attachment points of porches, chimneys, garages, and decks. Nests may also be found in and around bathrooms, more particular behind tile covered walls surrounding bathtubs, and flooring surrounding tubs and toilets.

Outdoor nests: In the natural environment, carpenter ants may be found nesting in decaying cavities of both live and dead trees, fence posts, and tree stumps. Queens usually establish nests in moist locations, but may use cavities that are structurally sound and dry. Workers can forage for food from 65 feet up to 100 yards from the nest. They feed primarily on honeydew excreted by aphids and scale insects. Other food sources may include insects (dead or live), other small invertebrates, and plant material.

Activity: Carpenter ants forage both inside and outside buildings. Nests can establish in buildings with foraging only outside making detection difficult. Foraging trails may be over foundation walls, along clothes lines, telephone or electrical lines, railings and/or tree branches that touch buildings. Foraging indoors is often seen in the kitchens, pantries, around sinks, dishwashers, and refrigerators. The ants will readily feed on many household foods. They prefer sugary foods such as jam, honey, sugar, and fruits (especially overripe fruit.), but will forage on bread crumbs, grease, and fat. Carpenter ants are generally nocturnal, and any observed daytime activity are scouts looking for sources of food.



Steve & Michele Fargan (Loloville)

Management. Control of established carpenter ant colonies, either in a building or adjacent to a building is variable depending on conditions and location. The location of a colony will determine in part, the steps taken to control the ants, even when a nest is not found.

Finding a nest: Conduct an inspection when carpenter ants are most active. This is generally late evening during spring and early summer.

- Look for sawdust “dump” piles deposited outside nests, especially in damp areas.
- Watch for ant trails and if feasible, follow these back to the nest.
- Nocturnal scratching noises in walls or voids may indicate a nest.
- Pest management professionals may flush out ants from suspected nest sites with small amounts of aerosol insecticide.

Control: The two methods for control are structural and chemical. Chemical control may be directed at either foraging ants or the nest.

Structural: Reduce potential nest sites by eliminating moisture problems. Replace and/or repair water damaged wood, leaking gutters, chimney flashing, porches, damaged roof shingles, and so on. Grade the ground to prevent any direct wood to soil contact in areas such as garages, decks, and porches. Provide adequate ventilation to enclosed areas such as crawl spaces, attics, basements (especially those with dirt floors and field stone foundations), and under porches and decks. Firewood or hollow-core doors may conceal nests, so these should be examined and if a colony is found, remove from a building.

Chemical - Baits: Baits are a combination of an attractive food mixed with a pesticide. Foraging workers carry this food back to their nest to feed other workers and the queen, eventually killing them. There are several baits registered for general ant control. These include Combat, Terro, Hot Shot, and Raid. Activity should lessen and stop after in approximately one week. Baiting ants is most effective during the spring.

Chemical - Sprays: Spraying a pesticide directly into a nest is the most effective way of managing a colony. Ready-to-spray formulations of several pyrethroid insecticides are available for use by citizens. However, some nests may be difficult to reach. If there is a hard to access nest, use the services of a licensed pest management professional. Additionally, pesticides may be put down around building foundations to repel the ant.

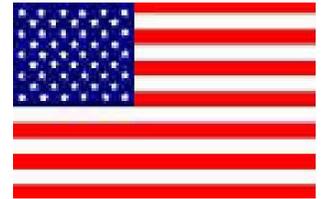
Before using any pesticide, please read and carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions and precautions.

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