



*Farmhouse maintenance,
from decorating to rehabilitating*

HOME CLINIC

★ BY CHERYL MORRISON

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LET THE **SUN**SHINE IN



Adding a sunroom to your home can increase and brighten your indoor living space and raise the value of your house. In a sunroom, you can bask in the daylight and enjoy your landscape without suffering the effects of intense heat or cold, swatting at bugs or running for cover when rain clouds darken the sky. A sunroom also provides an environment in which plants can flourish.

An online search will turn up numerous reputable dealers of sunroom construction plans, kits and accessories. Sunroom kits require varying amounts of time and expertise for assembly, depending on the size and design of the room. Unless you're a seasoned DIY remodeler experienced in electrical wiring, hiring professional help is advisable.

If you already have a deck, porch or carport, you might be able to create a sunroom by enclosing it, but



PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE STACON

this depends on the current design. An architect or builder can help you determine if the existing platform is strong enough to bear the weight that a converted sunroom would entail. The additional weight of walls, windows, doors, skylights and other features might overtax a platform built to serve as open space. You may need to reinforce the platform or even tear it down and start from scratch so you don't end up with cracks in the walls (or worse) caused by flex. Check your local building codes for regulations specific to your area, such as a requirement for using tempered glass or a rule that you must build it on a slab or foundation rather than an existing deck floor.

Consider these points for sunroom design and materials selection, too:

WINDOWS Sunrooms are all about windows, so develop your plans around where and when to place them. Relatively inexpensive vinyl windowpanes will shield you from bugs, precipitation and chilly breezes, but insulated glass will ultimately prove more economical if the sunroom is heated or air conditioned. Local building codes may require the use of tempered glass (aka safety glass), which breaks into tiny pieces instead of potentially lethal shards.

SHADES A sunroom might admit too much light during certain seasons or times of day, resulting in glare or excessive heat. Installing shades or blinds gives you the option of blocking the sun as needed. They can also provide privacy, especially after dark.

ROOF A sunroom can have a conventional shingle, tile or metal roof, but for maximum light, consider a roof of glass panels. Tempered glass is the safest choice for a transparent roof, especially if your house has trees nearby—plus, most building codes require it.

SKYLIGHTS If you opt for an opaque roof, skylights make the room brighter and airier. A skylight can be fixed or vented. Fixed skylights—often bubble-shaped to deflect rainfall—are the least costly. Some fixed skylights have small vents for releasing heat, which builds up quickly in a sunroom. They only open a few inches—much less than fully vented skylights. All vented skylights can be opened with cranks, control rods or electronic controls. They can also be fitted with screens.

Check these resources for additional help in planning and building a sunroom:

■ **Chief Architect Home Design Software**

Sunroom plans and software for customizing them
www.homedesignersoftware.com

■ **SunPorch Structures Inc.**

Information about construction options; videos for downloading
www.sunporch.com

■ **National Sunroom Association**

Help in locating sunroom dealers and contractors; illustrated examples of sunroom designs
www.nationalsunroom.org



STEPHANE YOUNG

Freshen Your Floors

Q: My five-year-old hardwood floors are losing their shine. How do I restore their luster?

A: Floors installed that recently probably don't need to be stripped down to bare wood and refinished completely. Instead, you can do a less costly touch-up yourself.

If the floor's finish is in good overall condition, with minimal scratching and no serious stains, you can restore its luster with an electric floor polisher, which you can rent inexpensively. You'll also need a half-dozen extra-coarse steel-wool polishing pads and a gallon or so of a commercial hardwood-floor renewal product (available in building-supply stores). One popular brand is Rejuvenate.



Start by removing the room's furnishings and sweeping thoroughly with a broom and then a vacuum cleaner. Clean the trim and baseboards as well as the floors. Then check the floor for protruding nails, splinters, and cracked or loose boards that might snag the polishing pads. Use an exhaust fan for ventilation while you work.

Apply the renewal product to the floor, following the manufacturer's directions. Allow the product to set for the recommended amount of time; then, use the polisher and steel-wool pads to scrub the floor. Replace the pads as they fill with dirt and old wax or varnish. When you're done, dampen a cloth with mineral spirits, and use it to wipe down the entire floor, removing all debris and residue from the polisher and renewal product. Let the floor dry overnight, then apply a top coat of finish or paste wax.

For floors with heavier wear and tear, you can outfit the floor polisher with a 100-grit abrasive screen to scuff the finish. Make overlapping passes back and forth across the floor, from one end of the room to the other, then sweep the floor with a broom and vacuum. Take a step back to examine the floor: The finish should be dull. If you still see wear patterns, stains or scratches, repeat the scuffing process until they're gone.

Use an orbital sander at the floor's edges where the polisher didn't touch. In corners—which the orbital sander



won't reach, either—you can use a sanding sponge or a rubber sanding block with fine-grit paper, and sand in the direction of the wood grain.

Broom-sweep and vacuum the room to remove all dust; then, use a cloth dampened with mineral spirits to wipe the entire floor. Turn and shake the cloth frequently as you work. Then (with the fan turned off) vacuum the floor again. Take care to run the vacuum cleaner's hose or wand along the floor edges and baseboards and any cracks where sawdust might be hiding.

Use a high-quality sash brush (with the bristles cut at an angle) to apply a 3-inch band of finish along one baseboard, and extend the band about 2 feet along the adjoining baseboards. Then, starting from the band along the baseboards, use a 5-inch brush to apply a 2-foot strip of the finish, using brush strokes that follow the direction of the boards. Cover the rest of the floor in the same manner, applying the finish in 3-inch-wide bands along 2 feet of opposing baseboards, then applying finish to the 2-foot strips of floor between them, until the entire floor is covered.



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STYVENS STONE

Shine On

Q: How can I protect my wood floor's finish to help it last as long as possible without hiding it or refinishing it annually?

A: Use heavy-duty exterior doormats to minimize the amount of grit and other dirt that is tracked into the house, and place throw rugs just inside entrances to catch dirt that the outdoor mats miss. Shake and clean the mats and throw rugs frequently. Place a bench and shoe rack near the main door, and encourage people to remove wet or dirty footwear as soon as they enter.

* Place throw rugs or mats next to the stove, sink, refrigerator, kitchen counters and other high-traffic areas that are prone to spills.

* Vacuum the floors often, and wipe up any spills. If you clean the floors with a damp mop, dry them immediately afterward with a cloth or paper towel.

* Install felt or fabric glides on the legs of chairs, tables and other furniture that can scratch floors. Inspect and clean the glides often, and replace them annually or more often, depending on wear. Use dollies or furniture coasters to avoid scratching or gouging floors when moving furniture or other heavy objects. Keep your pets' nails trimmed, too.

* Use awnings, curtains or other window treatments to protect floors from direct sunlight, which can cause fading and hasten the deterioration of finishes.

Grab a Six-pack

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