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## Gutters need attention ahead of weather change

PHOTOS SUBMITTED

The team at Custom Cut Gutters encourages residents in northwest Iowa and southwest Minnesota to check their gutters and clean them out ahead of the coming weather change.



BY RANDY CAUTHRON  
NWIA Publishing

When it comes to fall and winter home preparations, gutters lining the rooftop may not be at the top of the priority list, but they should be. Lack of attention could result in non-functioning or damaged gutters come next spring.

"We're busy," said Scott Kramer, longtime owner of Custom Cut Gutters, before he sold the business in 2019. "Fall is a very

busy time for us because people are trying to wrap things up before winter."

Kramer recommended checking gutters know allow time for any repairs and replacement needing to be done. He said the business needs a little lead time based on its current schedule in order to get work done before the weather conditions change making work difficult or sometimes impossible.

"We try to stay a few weeks out," he said. "Depending on the size of the job it could be done soon-

er but we try to stay two or three weeks out. ... We get calls in the middle of winter where people are having problems with their gutter and conditions don't allow us to fix anything because of all the snow and ice."

Custom Cut Gutters has been providing the highest quality gutter installation and service to the region since 1973. Locally owned, it is the only seamless gutter business serving northwest Iowa for over 47 years



# GUTTERS

From Page 1A

under the same name.

The business started in Spencer in 1973 before moving to Fostoria five years later. Todd and Cindy Kramer purchased Custom Cut Gutters in 1998, operating it successfully for 21 years before selling it two years ago to Josh Nelson.

With gutter contracts completed for over 8,000 homes and buildings, the staff are considered local gutter experts as well as a registered and insured company, offering free estimates. The business usually maintains three full time crews with the addition of summer help annually.

Kramer continues serving the company, provid-

ing estimates, scheduling and meeting customers.

"Obviously in fall you've got all your debris coming from trees," Kramer said. If you don't clean them in the fall, they get full and then you get the ice and they expand. Expanding gutters can cause brackets to come loose. If it starts raining in the spring and you have ice, you're gutters don't work when you need them the most."

Serving southwest Minnesota as well, the Fostoria-based business fabricates its gutters, using only 0.032 aluminum and the heaviest fasteners and downspouts available. Additionally the company offers downspouts, gutter covers and leaf protection.

Custom Cut Gutters offers gutter fabrication, assembly, finishing, cutting and design as well as in-

stallation on homes, garages, and commercial and agriculture buildings. They also offer maintenance and repair.

Depending on how the gutters were installed and maintained, with proper care they should have a 15- to 20-year life span but Kramer admits he has seen some much older than that. Gutter should not require a lot of time or maintenance if properly cleaned for leaves and other clogging materials.

"I usually say if you're replacing your shingles it's a good time to look at your gutters," Kramer said. "Replacing your gutters would take place after shingles are installed."

Custom Cut Gutters can be reached at 712-262-1013 or by email at ccgutters@customcutguttersfostoria.com.



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# ISU publishes trio of lawn health guides

BY SETH BOYES  
NWIA Publishing

Iowans are becoming more and more curious about warm-season grasses for their yards, and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach recently published several free guides on caring for both soil and grasses.

The three short guides, entitled “Turfgrass Calendar: Warm-Season Grasses for Lawns in Iowa,” “Turfgrass Biological Soil Health” and “Natural (Organic) Fertilization of Turf” are available as free, downloadable PDFs on the extension office’s website — [store.extension.iastate.edu](http://store.extension.iastate.edu). The guides been available since July and outline

some basic pointers ranging from when to perform tasks like watering and weed treatment to how to promote healthy bacterial balance in the soil.

“All three of these publications help answer the sustainability questions that often get asked about growing warm-season grasses,” said Adam Thoms, one of the authors of the guides, is an assistant ISU professor in horticulture and extension turfgrass specialist. “We are seeing more interest in warm-season grasses and people want to know how to best care for them.”

He said warm-season grasses — such as bermudagrass, zoysiagrass and buffalograss — are becoming more popular in Iowa,

partly because they are more drought-tolerant. The USDA designated eight Iowa counties, including Clay and Cherokee, as primary natural disaster areas in May due to drought conditions during the growing season — farmers in contiguous counties like Buena Vista and Dickinson were also eligible for emergency loans from the USDA. However, while the turfgrasses are more tolerant of dry conditions, information from ISU noted bermudagrass often does not withstand Iowa’s cold winters and, in general, the university said managing warm-season grasses is different than handling cool-season species.

In general, the university said mowing of the grasses

can take place between May and September, so long as the grass is actively growing, and watering should be done as needed between June and August. Seeding and fertilizing can take place within a similar window. Weed control was recommended at several points in the season.

Information from the university said healthy soils help enhance and maintain both water and air quality in addition to plant health. Thoms said soil health is especially important when lawns are new, or when they are created in a previously disturbed environment such as new construction or renovation.

“After the soil is displaced, we need to not



PHOTO SUBMITTED

only rebuild the fertility, but also the biological activity that is required for a healthy turf,” Thoms said.

One of the free guides noted bacteria’s most important role in lawn health is to decompose residues and release nutrients to surrounding plant life. It went on to say some sin-

gle-celled organisms in the soil can reduce diseases which would feed on the helpful bacteria. According to the guide, even some larger creatures living in lawns play an important role in promoting healthy growth — specifically things like earthworms and arthropods.

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PHOTO BY RANDY M. CAUTHRON

**Greg Raper, owner of Greg's Repair in Spencer for 47 years, said snowblower owners need to perform some basic maintenance ahead of the approaching winter conditions.**



# READY. SET. BLOW

**BY RANDY CAUTHRON**  
NWIA Publishing

For 47 years, Greg's Repair has been helping area residents tackle repair needs for a wide variety of home care items. From his humble beginnings in a little shack behind Dairy Queen to his current store location at 325 10th St. SW

in Spencer, Greg Raper's magic hands have allowed homeowners to care for their properties with working tools. Now, with the change to fall and winter on the horizon, it's time to get the cold weather tools ready.

"We ran out of room," Raper said of his original location. "A year later we built a new shop. Any-

thing that would come in the door, whatever people brought to me to get running for them, I would fix. I wasn't doing any new sales at that time. The first year was about survival."

Today he is flourishing with a loaded show floor in the shop. Now, in addition to repairs, he offers lawn and garden products sales and service and is a

dealer for Country Clipper zero-turn mowers, Simplicity, Snapper and Echo products.

"The snowblowers got busier as time went on," he said. "That's where the number game has evolved with more snowblower sales each year."

Raper suggested some basic maintenance will help reduce the need for

extensive annual work. Among the key things to do is keep the fuel fresh.

"Customers can't remember because it's buried in the back of the garage, but try starting it a couple of times during the summer to keep gas running through carburetors to keep it fresh," he said. "Seventy percent of my snowblower work is carburetor repair. Stale gas on cold day with a plugged carburetor, that engine won't ignite on the older fuel. It will start in the warm weather. Run it long

enough to get the old fuel out and start with fresh fuel in the winter."

Raper also encourages to closely monitor the condition of the machine's undercarriage, blades, shear pins and skid plates. Additionally, he recommended, once a season, changing the oil.

"People will be ready to go for the first snow," Raper said.

Should they need repairs or maintenance assistance, call 712-262-4804 or visit [www.gregsrepair.intuitwebsites.com](http://www.gregsrepair.intuitwebsites.com).



# RENEWAL & RENOVATION

Dutfields shore up 1907 landmark home in Storm Lake



PHOTOS BY MICK POLICH  
**Lee Dutfield discovered his dream house came with a few nightmares, but with help from local contractors, the front facade is back in shape.**

BY MICK POLICH  
NWIA Publishing

Renovation of a home is never easy or cheap. Homeowners need to consider their budgets, availability of materials, an ever-evolving timeline and how much progress that they are willing to stand, to get a house in shape. Sometimes, it's concentrating on one thing in need of overhaul, at the home.

For Lee Dutfield and his wife, Sue, of Storm Lake, that one thing was staring at them right when they walked up to their front entrance.

"Our pillars to our porch overhang were tilted and rotting out. It was pretty noticeable, and really needed some attention," Dutfield said.

The Dutfields moved from California to Storm Lake a while back, and fell in the love with the city.

"Kim Kelly, who lives down the street from us, told us about Storm Lake, told us to come out to visit, and we immediately fell in love with the place," Dutfield said.

Their current house was on the market at the time, but wasn't selling due to the amount of work that was needed out front, for the pillars, porch and around the roof area, says Dutfield. The Dutfields, who have four boys between them, were looking for their dream house, in a nice small town, where their kids could come back and visit (all are grown, and out of the house, with son Cooper attending Iowa State). But the house of their dreams needed a lot of outside work, on the front, before it could become their dream house.

Dutfield, who is cur-

rently head of Storm Lake United, decided to wait it out, hoping that the price might drop, or they could put in a reasonable offer, on the Lake Avenue home.

"Just to keep the vibes going, we had a picture of the house on our fridge, back in Cali, just to make sure we could keep the positive thoughts going," he said with a chuckle.

When the time was right, the two put an offer in that was accepted, and the Dutfields got their house. Now, the real challenge began of trying to figure out how to repair the front entrance. When you enter the Dutfields' home, there is a certain amount of cozy class and modern elegance that stylizes the room.

Built in 1907, it has been kept up well internally, throughout the years, as Dutfield stressed the pair didn't need to budget for inside work to be done.

"The house has good bones, so we concentrated our efforts on the front part, outside," Dutfield said. "We called Mike Sanderson to come over and take a look."

Sanderson, who, along with his family, recently moved out west to take a head contractor job, agreed to come over to give an estimate. The first sign that things were going to get a bit complicated with the renovation work, was when Sanderson stepped onto the deck, and his leg went completely through it.

"The wood was that rotted," Dutfield said shaking his head in disbelief.

Dutfield was working remotely for a California-based insurance carrier at the time, so he could work out of the house while the renovations were in progress. One major aspect of

the work they decided on was the choice to use composite and non-wood materials for the rebuild.

"The pillars that we found, through a lot of research, were aluminum, and we liked them for the durability and wear factors," Dutfield said.

Dutfield also asked Sanderson to keep the integrity of the home, by trying to rebuild things in a similar look. For the front foundation, he called Thrasher Basement Systems to come in, for an estimate.

"Thrasher said they could do the work, but there might be a possibility of running into issues with what is supporting the porch and foundation since the structure was built on big boulders," Dutfield said.

Dutfield pleaded with the company, and asked if there was anything that they could do, maybe think outside the box, to solve the problem. Thrasher came up with 16- to 18-foot-long support posts, that would go under the cement portion, to jack up and hold the foundation. Problem solved.

Sanderson and company kept working on the front, using scaffolding to work on the walk-outs on the attic and second story levels. The team also worked at widening the front entranceway, the pillar projects, and getting rid of the rotted wood and rebuilding. The result? A gorgeous renovation that adds to the class and beauty of the rest of the house.

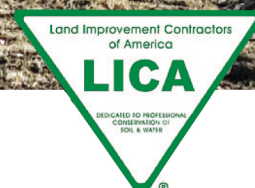
"We were budgeting for a garage, but this project took that financing. It was worth it, because the front of the house is now just as beautiful as the rest of the house," Dutfield said with a big smile.





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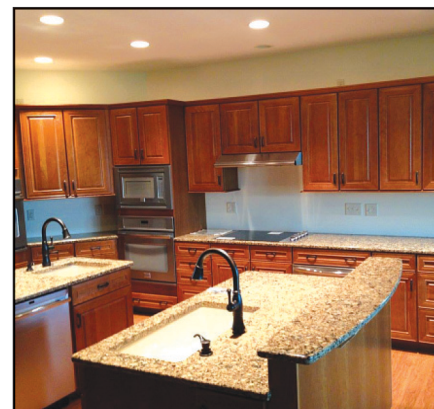
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# Iowa DNR highlights sustainable options from Habitat for Humanity

BY SETH BOYES  
NWIA Publishing

Hobbyists and carpenters in the region might have to drive a ways to get it, but the Iowa Department of Natural Resources said a branch of Habitat for Humanity is offering lumber which once had literal roots in urban life.

“Urban lumber is wood cut out of trees that were grown within city limits for their beauty, shade and to block the wind on a blustery winter day,” the DNR said in a statement. “But when these

trees eventually have to be removed, there is a growing trend to mill this wood into lumber rather than chipping it into mulch or chopping for use as firewood.”

The DNR said urban lumber is a way for homeowners and do-it-yourselfers to support sustainable products. It said the use of such trees can enhance homes or be incorporated into furniture making, flooring, trim work or other carpentry projects — but it’s not to be used as dimensional lumber for structural needs. The trees are processed by sawmills

near their respective locations and available to the general public through Habitat for Humanity’s Restore locations, according to the DNR.

“Using these urban trees for lumber is a way of making the most out of them and is a step toward becoming more responsible stewards of the wood these trees have been making, sometimes for more than a century,” the DNR said.

Information from Habitat for Humanity showed the nonprofit has Restore locations in Sioux City, Mason City and Fort Dodge as well as Mankato, Minnesota, and Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

“The items they sell are available to the public and similar to what you may see in other home good stores, such as a brand



PHOTOS BY SETH BOYES

new box of tile you’ve been needing for your bathroom project or a vintage treasure you won’t find anywhere else,” Habitat for Humanity said on its webpage.

Most Restore locations carry new and gently used building materials, appliances and furniture, but stock varies depending on the donations each location receives. The Iowa

DNR highlighted Restore locations in both Des Moines and Iowa City as stocking urban lumber, and the Sioux Falls Restore listed anything from ceiling fans to plumbing fixtures and roofing materials in its inventory.

The donated materials may be sold at a discount to community members in need — which the nonprofit also noted keeps

unused or unneeded items out of the landfill. The profits from the various Restores are put toward both local and global causes, according to Habitat for Humanity.

In addition, a number of Restore locations offer workshops for DIY enthusiasts, teaching attendees how to upgrade, restore or up-cycle items they may find in their local Restore.



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# Fall kitchen and bathroom trends: Streamlined, colorful



PHOTOS BY MICK POLICH  
**Kevin Raasch,**  
sales manager at  
Marcus Lumber  
in Storm Lake.

**BY MICK POLICH**  
NWIA Publishing

Arguably, the two most important areas of a home are the kitchen and the bathroom. Thus, when it comes time for updating, those particular areas get the spotlight put on them for modernizing. The future for updating kitchens and bathrooms looks to streamlining, taking away the clutter and implementing smart technology. What's gone, or out of date, for these areas? Hollywood-style bathroom lighting, which are big bulbs around the perimeter of a mirror. Farmhouse sinks and hanging pot racks,

which add to clutter and have a tendency to distract. Chandeliers, distress cabinets and open bathroom shelves with towels or bath products on display are out too. The trends look to go less bulky in bath/kitchen concepts, with smaller, thinner fixtures and lighting that doesn't attract attention to itself.

Color blocking, by definition, is the use of strong blocks of contrasting colors, typically bright, to create accents in rooms. This type of design takes opposites on the color wheel, and forces them together for a bold statement. Color blocking in kitchens could be having cabinet fronts of red, white, yellow and

violet mixed together, as well as having chairs with backs of different colors. It's a risky experiment that can reap big rewards for homeowners that want to make a definite statement. As far as trending colors, grays and sharp blues look towards kitchen color revamps. Integrated devices, such as microwaves in islands, and concealing the bulkiness of refrigerators with cabinet panels, looks to streamline kitchen areas even more. As kitchen sink designs change, the use of quartz for counter tops has found favor in many remodeling projects.

Kevin Raasch, sales manager at Marcus Lumber in Storm Lake, agrees



that quartz has been the recent go-to for counter top use by people looking to renovate.

“Quartz is durable — you can cut on it, if needed, and it holds up to wear and pressure,” he said. “Quartz continues to be a popular sales item, and goes with a lot of design plans.

He also cites that people are looking at streamline kitchen designs, for ease of movement, clean up and function.

“We are seeing a lot of folks looking to clean up their kitchen designs, not just for looks, for being functional,” Raasch said.

Some kitchen designs might not include an island, or a large space for dining, just to keep within the vision of having a good flow to work with.

Raasch also cites that wood is making a strong comeback, but in a different manner.

“Rather than the traditional looks of the past, more dynamic wood grains and textural surfaces are now popular,” Raasch said. “Painted finishes are often paired are often paired, with show-stopping colors, and finishes that can look astonishing.”

Raasch also backs up the statement that strong colors, such as blues, greens and blacks, are of-



Examples of popular bathroom and kitchen designs in the showroom.

fering an alternative to the recent domination of gray hues.

Sales of eco-friendly and sustainable options, in bathroom remodeling, have been up.

“Consumers want a spa-like environment for their baths, utilizing such features as music and the flexibility of fixtures, which can allow all family members to create their own experience, to relax and reju-

venate,” Raasch said.

All in all, as we move toward 2022, consumers looking to renovate their living spaces are moving toward streamlined looks, but are set to be conscientious of what materials that they used, and how they use them, in regards to not just their family’s future, but the future of how we produce and manufacture said materials, from the earth.



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