

Getting Ready for Winter

15 Easy Steps to Efficiency

Start with an energy audit. If you live in a historic house, hire a professional who's well acquainted with the idiosyncracies of older homes. The audit should be done in the late fall or winter and should include a Blower Door Test: Your auditor will mount a fan on an exterior door frame to pull air out of the house and determine how airtight the home really is.

Insulate your attic. Inadequate insulation results in heat loss, and forces your furnace to work overtime. Make certain the attic hatch is as well insulated as the attic floor.

Consider a zoned heating system with separate controls for spaces.

Bleed radiators and clean forced-air registers to ensure proper operation.

Have your furnace serviced for maximum efficiency.

Change furnace filters monthly if possible. A clogged filter reduces airflow, making your heating system work harder and less efficiently.

Install a programmable thermostat to keep your house warm when you're home, but cooler when no one's there.

Insulate ductwork and hot water pipes traveling through cool spaces. Don't forget to install insulating foam inserts in electrical receptacles, which are notoriously drafty.

Close fireplace dampers when not in use. An open damper can let as much as eight percent of the heat in your house escape.

Set ceiling fans to lowest speed. Switch direction of rotation so that blades push warm air down from the ceiling.

Make sure bathroom fans have functioning dampers to prevent cold air from flooding in.

Check every window in your house. Older windows perform extremely well when properly maintained. Don't replace—repair! Now's the time to seal gaps with caulk, apply new glazing compound, replace broken panes, repair loose wood parts, and install weather stripping.

Add storm windows. Qualified storms not only improve energy efficiency and personal comfort, they're eligible for a \$1,500 tax credit. If you live in a local historic district, consult your historic-preservation commission for guidelines.

Decorate for cold-weather efficiency. Use lined draperies, working shutters, and insulated window shades to significantly cut heat loss.

Caulk holes around mail chutes, cable television and utility entrances, and outdoor faucets. Use only exterior-grade caulking outside your house.

Check out the Weatherization Guide for Older and Historic Buildings at PreservationNation.org/weatherization.

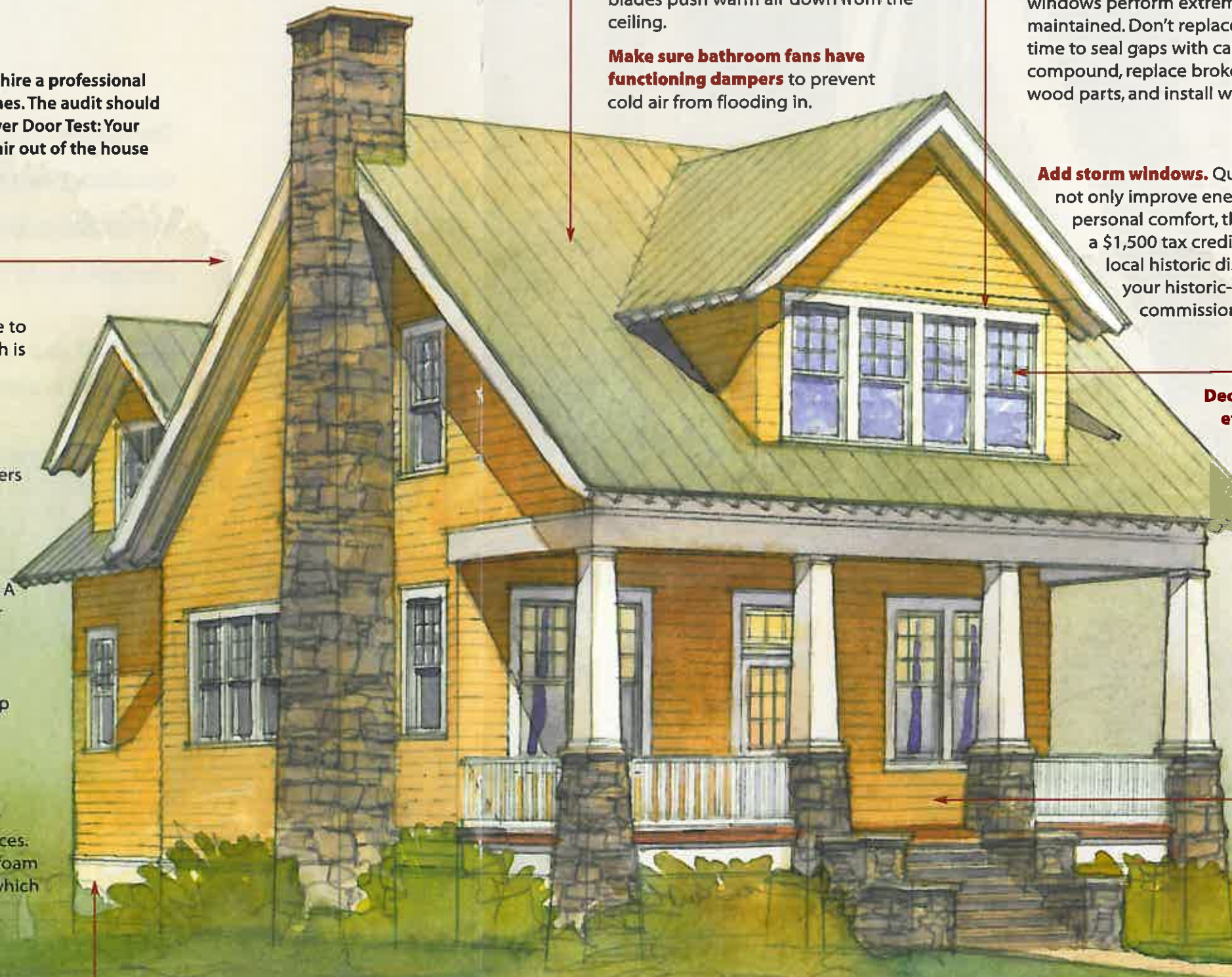


ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHAN HILBERT