

2019 A Special Supplement to

TIMES LEADER



Distinctive OUTDOORS

Sunday, May 26, 2019

HOW TO CHOOSE AN IN-GROUND POOL

An in-ground pool is an investment - choose wisely.

Ahhhhh....Your very own backyard oasis. Fun in the sun with your family and friends. Sounds great, doesn't it! You bet it does. But there are so many in-ground choices. Vinyl liner, concrete, fiberglass.

AQUA LEISURE
POOLS AND SPAS

WHAT'S A POOL BUYER TO DO?

Well first of all, a little research; and that's exactly what we've done. We've put together some valuable information designed to help you make the decision as to what might be the best pool for you. There are so many factors to consider, including vinyl liner vs. fiberglass construction, your budget, the size of your lot, how much time and money you want to spend on maintenance and operational costs.

VINYL LINER POOLS

Like a concrete pool, the vinyl liner in-ground pool is another construction project in your backyard. Because the pool is assembled in your yard, this process can take as long as 6 weeks. The contractor digs a hole in your backyard, assembles steel walls, which are lined with a material similar to a shower curtain. While vinyl is a very durable material in relation to chemical resistance, its performance under direct sunlight is all together different. In time your liner will fade, become stained, and tears will form in high stress areas, like the corners.

WHAT ABOUT MAINTENANCE?

The shiny fiberglass pool surface is completely non-porous, making it extremely inhospitable to the growth of algae. Also dirt can't adhere to the smooth fiberglass surface and falls to the bottom where the bottom circulator (main drain) draws it into the filter system, so far fewer chemicals are needed to sustain water quality and maintenance time is reduced by as much as 90% - making your pool more fun and less work. Take note the need for fewer chemicals translates into dramatic savings over the years.

FIBERGLASS POOLS (Read More Why You Should Choose Fiberglass)

Fiberglass pools are quality factory built products, not a project. They are constructed under controlled conditions in a factory, not your backyard. Unlike a vinyl liner pool which can take most of the summer to build, a fiberglass pool is installed in a matter of days. Fiberglass construction techniques have been perfected since fiberglass pools were first introduced over 50 years ago. You will have a durable gel coat surface that will never need maintenance, and best of all - no liner to replace - ever! If you're looking for strength, fiberglass is the answer. Fiberglass is over 17 times stronger than concrete. It will not deteriorate like concrete, tear like vinyl or rust and conduct temperature extremes like steel. Fiberglass is the choice for the discriminating buyer, and it's backed by a 50 year structural warranty.

WHAT IS THE "REAL" COST OF YOUR IN-GROUND POOL?

The purchase price of your pool is obviously important, but what is it going to cost to own this pool over the next 15 years - that's the "real" cost. Over the period of ownership, the fiberglass pool is actually less expensive than other types of pools. How's that? The average vinyl liner pool owner will install two liners during the time of ownership, that's approximately \$7000.00 right there. The fiberglass owner will NEVER replace a liner. Chemical costs are reduced by 60% with a fiberglass pool, heating costs by 12% and electrical costs to run the filter by 18%. Your savings based on a 15 year ownership will average over \$10,000.00! If you look at the initial cost and add the cost of ownership over a 15 year period a FIBERGLASS POOL ACTUALLY SAVES MONEY!!!



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COVERED PORCHES AND OTHER STRUCTURES

Outdoor furniture can be the spotlight for great times during a get together or barbecue, or a serene place to relax after a long day. You can also create a backyard paradise by building a gazebo or covered porch to keep your furniture away from harmful weather elements.



© ADOBE STOCK

If you are not an expert at DIY craftsmanship, don't hesitate to call a licensed contractor. In some cases, you may need special permits if you will be adding on to an existing structure. A quality builder can ensure your new addition will be constructed legally.

Where to Build Your Porch

Constructing a covered porch creates a great escape to hide from the summer sun and remain dry while you watch a passing rain storm. Where you build it requires some strategic planning.

First, you should consider the layout of your yard. Avoid building it in areas where water puddles up during the rain or consider installing an efficient drainage system.

If you will use it as the setting for your outdoor kitchen, make sure the roof is high enough to avoid damage from grill flareups and nearby electrical outlets if your equipment requires a power source.

You should also consider if it will be an independent structure or an addition to a current building. Having a covered retreat right outside your backdoor can create a great point of access to your home.

Will it Have an Open Perimeter?

When creating your porch or gazebo, you should also ask yourself if it will remain open or have rails or screens around the perimeter.

Wood or vinyl railing can create an attractive aesthetic while providing safety for children or pets. Wood can be easier on your budget but requires regular

maintenance to ensure its quality isn't compromised. Vinyl or composite lasts longer with little care but can be much more expensive.

For gazebos or standalone structures, surrounding it with a screen perimeter can offer great benefits.

The area can be a great place to allow small pets to go outside and enjoy the warm temperatures without fear of them running away or becoming injured in the yard. An enclosed area is also effective in eliminating the risk of pesky insect intruders to ruin your outdoor plans.

Consider installing a permanent perimeter or take advantage of modern removable screens that are operated with high-quality zipper systems.

THINGS TO CONSIDER before building a greenhouse

Avid gardeners may be enticed by the idea of a greenhouse that allows them to explore their passion for plants year-round. While it's true that greenhouses afford this luxury, there are important things to consider before erecting a greenhouse in your yard.

Greenhouses require ample time to maintain. Greenhouses are not self-managing; they require heat, water, venting, electricity, and maintenance on the part of gardeners. Individuals need to determine how much time they have to devote to a greenhouse and then consider their options.

Start by choosing the size of the greenhouse. Many experts, like those at the home and garden information site The Spruce, suggest getting the largest one

you can afford and fit into the yard. It is much easier to fill a large greenhouse than try to expand on a small one later on.

Next, consider whether you want to build the greenhouse from scratch or utilize a prefabricated kit that can make easier work of the job. Kits typically contain all of the materials needed, and are easiest for someone who is a construction novice. Look for "grower greenhouses," which are all-purpose op-



tions with adjustable shelving and space for growing plants full-term.

The next step is deciding where the greenhouse will be located. The goal is to have a consistent amount of sunlight year-round. A south-facing locale is ideal, and structures should remain north of the greenhouse so they do not

'GREENHOUSE'

from 2

cast a shadow on it. The building, cars and technology resource Popular Mechanics advises gardening enthusiasts to take into consideration the angle of the sun during all seasons before choosing a location. Doing so ensures that the sun is not obscured in the winter or fall.

Select a spot that also has ample drainage, as you will not want water pooling up along the sides of or underneath the greenhouse. Raise the greenhouse on footings to alleviate flooding concerns.

Consult with a gardening or agriculture expert about the best way to heat the greenhouse. Options abound with electric-, gas- and propane-powered heating sources. Some systems will require venting. You also will need to know what is available and legal in your

area. Check to see if you need a building permit for the greenhouse and any accompanying heating elements.

Once the greenhouse is situated, you can begin to add other items, like shelves, additional hooks for tools, and even an automated



Greenhouses can be a great addition to a yard for those who know what to expect

watering or misting system.

Greenhouses take commitment, but the reward is the chance to enjoy gardening all year long.

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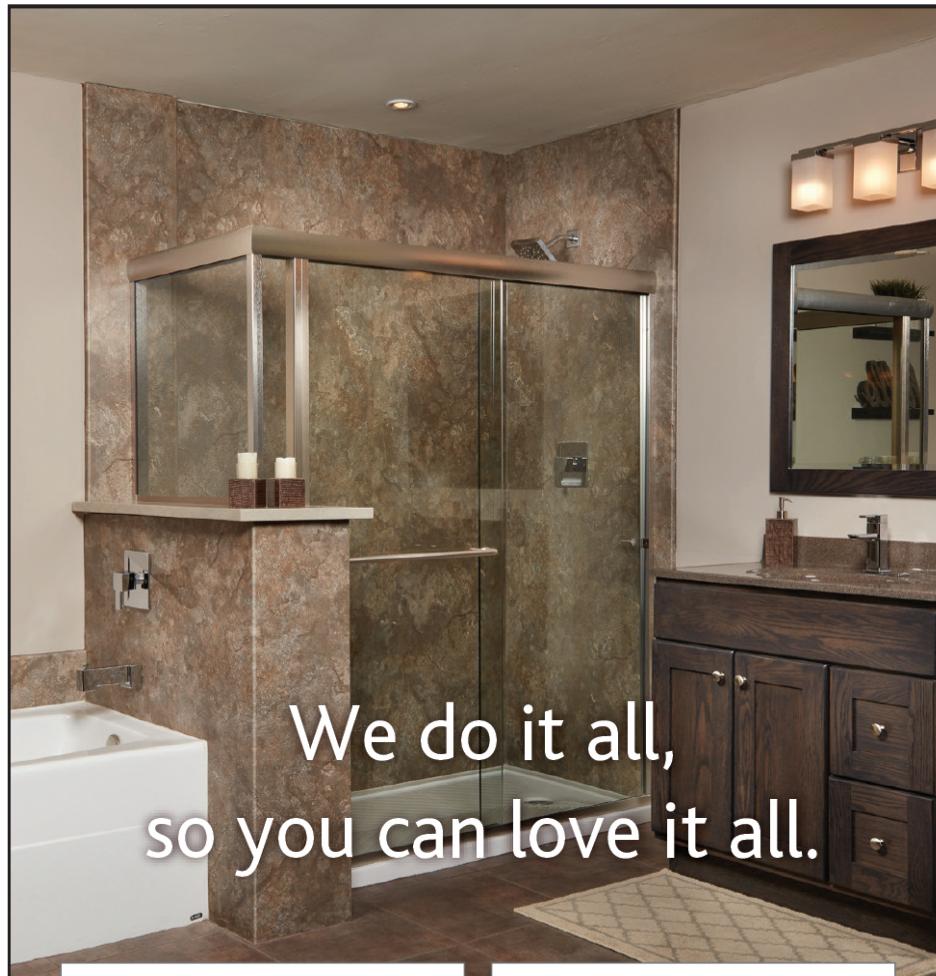
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HOW COLOR

can affect your garden

Flower gardens can add color and awe-inspiring appeal to a property. The National Gardening Association notes that gardeners can find nearly every color of the spectrum in flowering perennials. So whether you prefer soft pink, are partial to bright red or want to relax in a garden and gaze at something deep blue, chances are you'll find a perennial to tickle your fancy.



The NGA offers the following breakdown of colors to help gardeners learn how their gardens can set the mood they're looking for.

Bright colors

A garden full of bright colors like red, orange, magenta, and yellow can provide a landscape with vigor and energy. The NGA notes that brightly colored flowers can withstand especially bright sunshine, meaning gardeners can marvel at their appearance even when the sun might be adversely affecting other plants and flowers.

See 'COLOR' | 5

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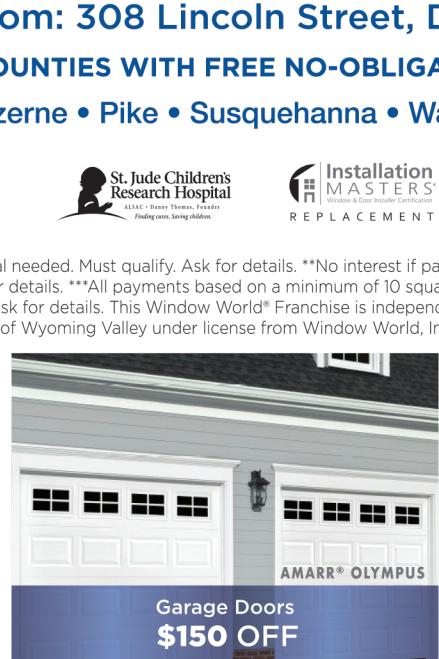


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Insulated 6000 Series

Double Hung Triple Pane

SolarZone™ Glass Krypton Gas

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'COLOR'

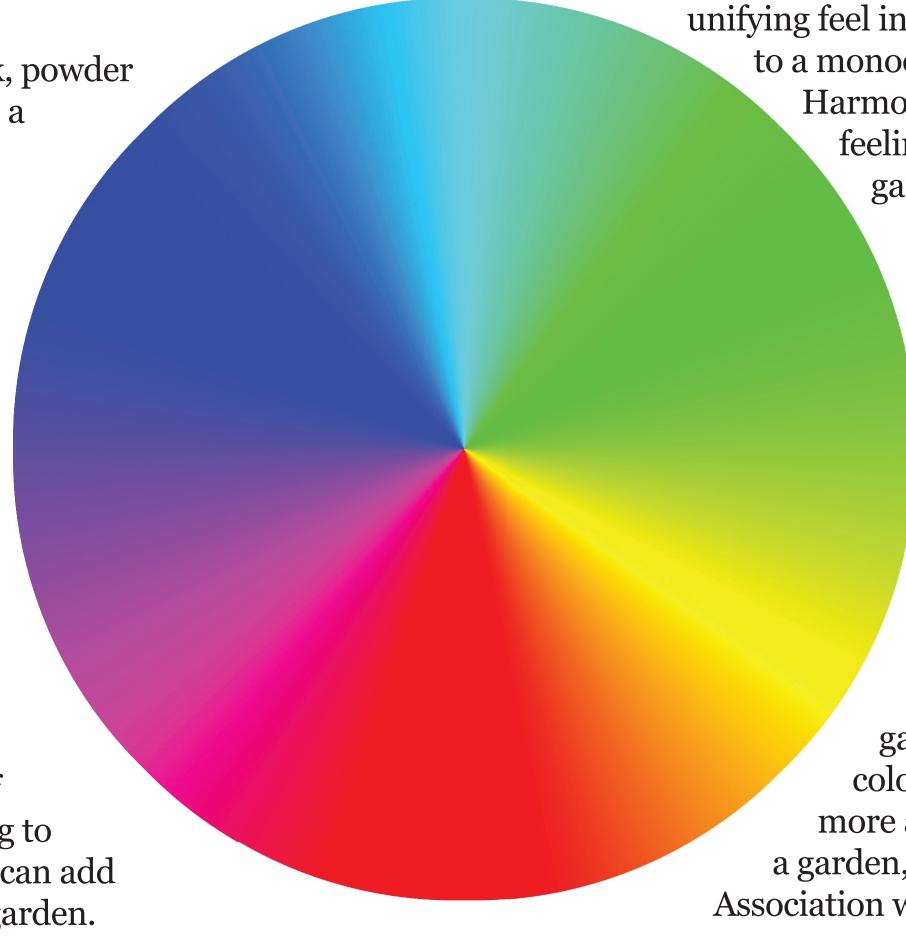
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Pastel colors

Pastels, which include soft pink, powder blue, lavender, and peach, create a tranquil feeling in a garden. This makes pastel perfect for those who want their gardens to be a relaxing, peaceful respite from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. The NGA notes that pastels may look washed out in the midday sun, so they might be best enjoyed early in the morning or late in the afternoon.

Complementary colors

Complementary colors are those that are opposite one another on the color wheel. Orange and blue are examples of complementary colors. According to the NGA, complementary colors can add creative energy and vitality to a garden.



Harmonious colors

These colors are those that are next to each other on the color wheel, such as orange and red. The NGA recommends harmonious colors for gardeners looking to create a unifying feel in their gardens without resorting to a monochromatic color scheme.

Harmonious colors give off a gentle feeling that can make for a relaxing garden atmosphere.

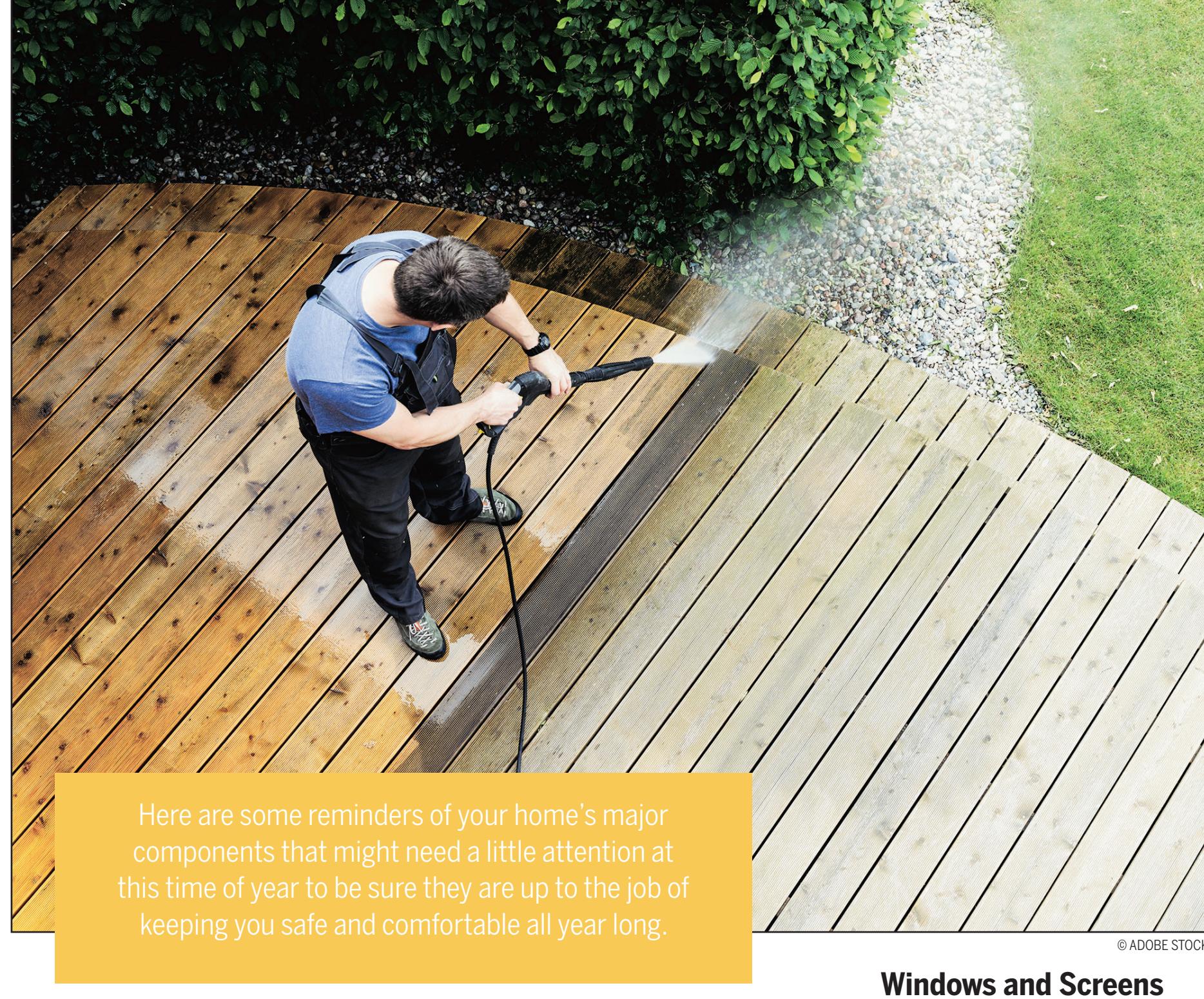
Monochromatic colors

Monochromatic gardens can be awe-inspiring even though they stick to a single color and don't provide an array of awe-inspiring colors. The NGA notes that gardeners with monochromatic gardens make them interesting by using plants of various sizes and shapes.

When planting a garden, gardeners can choose whichever color scheme they prefer. To learn more about the effects of color on a garden, visit the National Gardening Association website at www.garden.org.

EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE

With warmer temperatures comes the opportunity to get outdoors and do some home maintenance. With so much to do, it's easy to lose track of everything that needs attention.



Here are some reminders of your home's major components that might need a little attention at this time of year to be sure they are up to the job of keeping you safe and comfortable all year long.

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Air Conditioning Service

No one wants to be stuck with a broken air conditioner when it matters the most. Consider having a local heating and air company check out your system and provide service, if needed.

Chimney Service

After a long winter of faithful service, your chimney might need some TLC. Annual inspection is recommended to prevent fire caused by creosote buildup. Depending on how often you use your fireplace, you might not need a sweep each year, but an inspection is crucial. Having it done during the off-season will mean the pros will be less busy.

Clean the Grill

If you like to fire up the backyard grill on a regular basis, it's probably in need of some attention. Empty charcoal grills of all debris. Use a spray grill cleaner, which will help dissolve any grease on the outside that can't be handled with soap and water.

For gas grills, Insurance Hub recommends turning the heat on high for about a half hour, then using a brush to clean the grates. Clean drip trays.

Smoke Detectors

The U.S. Fire Administration recommends testing smoke detectors at least once a month and changing the batteries at least once or twice a year.

Windows and Screens

Use hot, soapy water and a brush to remove debris from window screens. Give them a rinse and put them in the sun to dry before moving on to windows. FreshHome.com recommends a solution of one part hot water and one part vinegar applied with a sponge or squeegee, then drying with a rag.

Porch and Deck

Sweep and mop the porch. Hammer any loose deck nails and check for rotting or areas that need resealing. Fortune Builders recommends spraying the deck with water and checking for areas that stay dark, meaning they've retained water. It's also a good time to pressure wash the deck to remove staining.

HOW TO HELP

flowers withstand heat waves

Heat waves are an inevitable part of summer in many places across the globe. While humans can escape indoors to air conditioned rooms when heat waves hit full swing, flowers planted around a property have no such luxury, putting their survival in jeopardy whenever the mercury rises to especially steamy heights.

Wilted flowers that have succumbed to the summer sun are a sight many gardening enthusiasts can recognize. But there are ways to keep flowers safe and vibrant during periods of extreme heat.

Water at the appropriate times of day

The National Gardening Association notes that it's best to water in the early morning and evening because less water will be lost to evaporation during these times of day than during the afternoon, when temperatures tend to be at their hottest.

Choose the right watering method

It's not just when but also how you water that can affect flowers during summer heat waves. Aboveground sprinklers might be great for lawns, but the NGA notes that such sprinklers can encourage the spread of disease on certain plants, including roses. Many gardening professionals recommend soaker hoses when watering flowers because they promote deep watering that can help the plants withstand the summer heat. If you must use an overhead watering system, set the timer so plants are watered in early in the morning or evening.

Routinely check the soil moisture

Soil moisture can help gardeners determine if their flowers have enough water to withstand the heat. The NGA advises gardeners to dig a 12-inch deep wedge of soil from their gardens to determine its moisture levels. If the top six inches of the soil is dry, water. If that area is still wet or moist, the plants have enough moisture to withstand the heat. Check these moisture levels more frequently during heat waves than other times of year.

Avoid overwatering

Novice gardeners may be tempted to water more frequently when they see wilted leaves on their flowers. But wilted leaves are not necessarily indicative of suffering plants. Plants release moisture to protect themselves from excessive heat, and that release of moisture can cause leaves to wilt as the plants try to protect themselves by providing less surface area that can be exposed to the sun. So long as soil moisture levels are healthy, the flowers should be fine, even if their leaves have wilted.

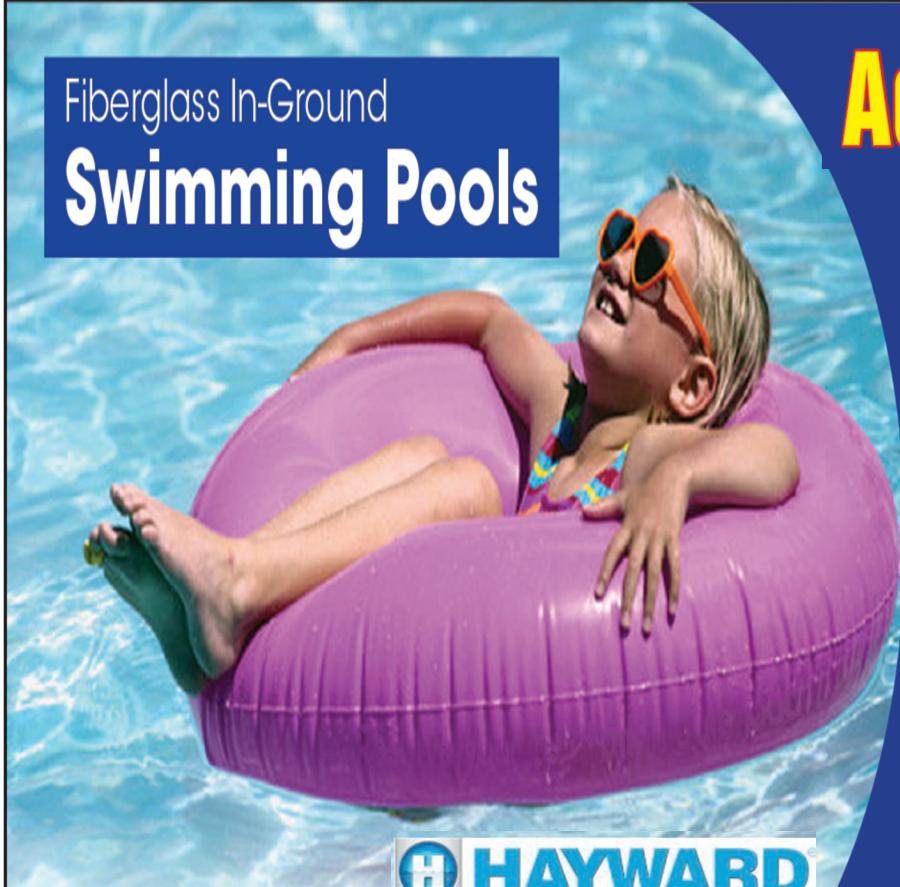
No gardener wants to see their flowers succumb to the summer heat. Fortunately, there are many ways to help flowers survive heat waves.



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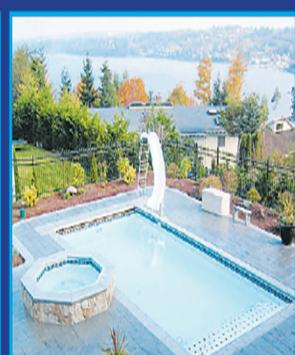


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SIMPLE WAYS

to prevent dog-related lawn damage

Dogs love spending time outdoors. Dog owners with yards know that dogs benefit greatly from some exercise in the backyard. While that time might be great for dogs, it can take its toll on lawns.



Dogs need time outdoors, and homeowners can take various steps to protect their lawns from dog-related damage.

Dog urine and feces can adversely affect the look and health of a lush green lawn. Nitrogen is essential to healthy soil, but only at certain levels. When those levels are exceeded, the result can be lawn damage. According to The Spruce Pets, an advisory site that offers practical tips and training advices to pet

owners, this is what happens when pets frequently urinate on grass. Urine is naturally high in nitrogen, so when pets urinate on lawns, the grass might turn yellow or brown due to the excess nitrogen content. Nitrogen also is present in lawn fertilizers, further exacerbating the problem for pet owners who fertilize their lawns.

In addition to urine damage, dogs can trample frosty grass, contributing to problems that may not become evident until spring, and get into areas like gardens where they wreak additional havoc.

Pet owners who want to let their dogs run free in the yard but don't want damaged grass may be tempted to put their pooches in diapers or confine them to crates when letting them outside. But such an approach isn't necessary. In fact, some simple strategies can be highly effective at preventing dog-related lawn damage.

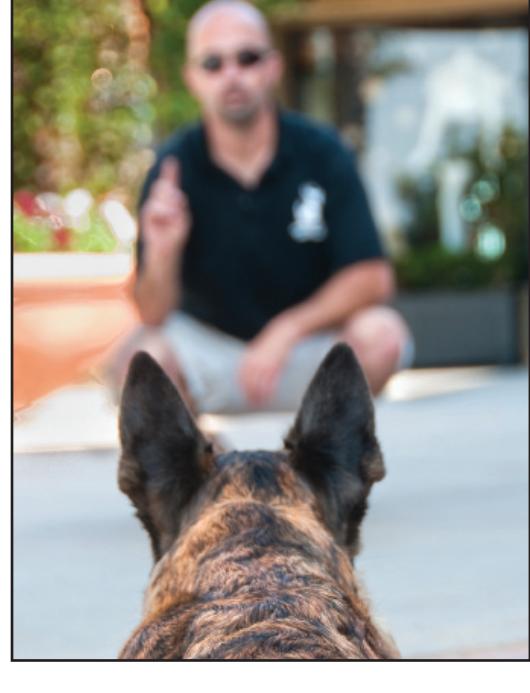
dog damage better than others. Local climate will dictate which types of grass are likely to thrive in a given area, so speak with a professional landscaper about the viability of planting new grass.

Install fencing

Pet owners with expansive yards can install fencing that allows dogs to spend time exercising outdoors without granting them access to the entire property. Large dogs will need more room than small ones, but try to build fenced-in areas that allow dogs to run freely and get the exercise they need to stay healthy.

Work with a dog trainer

Dog trainers might be able to work with dogs so they only urinate in certain areas of the yard, greatly reducing the damage they can cause to a lawn. Trainers also might help curb digging and clawing behaviors that can damage lawns as well as gardens.



Consider hardscaping

Hardscaping might be most effective for pet owners with small properties. Hardscaping does not include grass and can add visual appeal to a property while saving pet owners the headaches of dealing with dog-related lawn damage.

Dogs need time outdoors, and homeowners can take various steps to protect their lawns from dog-related damage.

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TREND ALERT: DARK PAINT

Barely-there gray had its moment, but the newest thing in interior paint color is dramatic, dark tones that are anything but neutral.



Indeed these darker shades are all over design magazines and social media. This trend, however, is not a beginner-level endeavor. There is some nuance to getting it right.



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Moody Hues

“Moody” might not be what you want to hear when it comes to weather forecasts and the stock market, but

See ‘PAINT’ | 9

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'PAINT'

from 8

when it comes to picking a paint color, the moodier the better!" proclaimed Better Homes & Gardens when it surveyed paint manufacturers' 2019 color forecasts. "Rich, dark, and complex colors like chestnut brown, deep burgundy, and charcoal blue are considered moody because of their velvety appearance and complex undertones, which provide layers of rich depth that we don't always see with traditional colors."

Indeed these darker shades are all over design magazines and social media. This trend, however, is not a beginner-level endeavor. There is some nuance to getting it right.

Winning Combinations

A popular way to use darker paint tones is to combine them in ways that create an entirely new vibe in a room. Deep emerald green paired with deep mahogany furniture can create a forest feeling. Real Simple magazine featured a living room that blended multiple shades of black paired with plush fur-

niture and rugs, as well as a jewel-toned room with sapphire walls and gold-trimmed accents. Bold paint makes for bold rooms, so be ready to make a statement.

The Challenges

Dark paint colors are not without their challenges. A dark room can feel smaller, and dark paint can be unforgiving, showing every stroke of the paintbrush or roller. Country Living offers the following tips to pull off this trend with ease.

- Start with small rooms to try out darker colors.
- If you're concerned about a room seeming too small because of dark paint, use lighter furnishings and accents to balance it out.
- Paint the trim the same color as the walls, giving the appearance of added height. Add a mirror for the appearance of more depth.

If you're on the fence about committing to a dark color, HGTV recommends a large-scale trial. "Paint big sheets of cardboard and prop them up in the room in question. This gives you a better idea of what it's going to look like."

POTENTIAL CULPRITS

behind thinning grass

Thick grass is often a hallmark of a healthy lawn. If grass begins to thin, homeowners may feel as though all the time and effort they spent tending to their lawns was for naught.

Thinning grass can be caused by any number of things. And while it might take a little effort to address, thinning grass can be treated if homeowners correctly identify that cause of the problem.



Leaf spot

The Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment at the University of Massachusetts Amherst notes that leaf spot diseases affect both cool- and warm-season turfgrasses.

See 'GRASS' | 10



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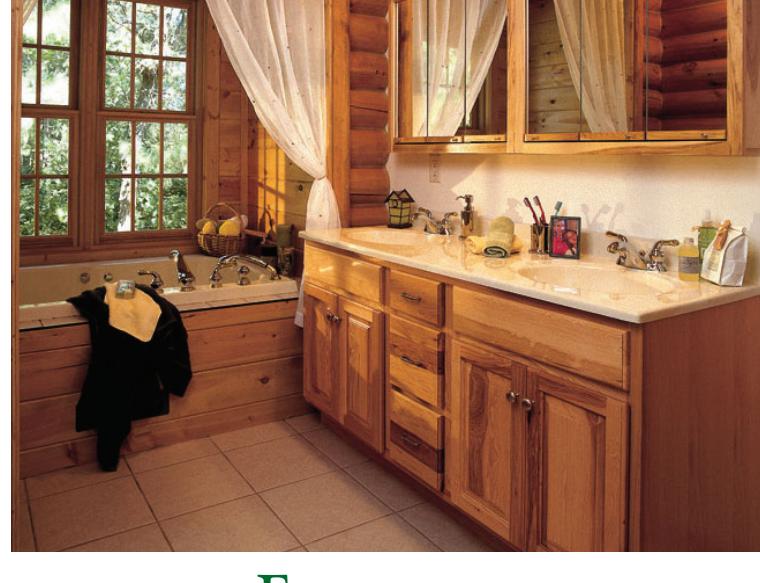
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Did you know when you buy from a craftsman in your area, you're also enhancing the local economy?

Unlike mass-produced options you find at many big-box retailers, pieces crafted by hand are built with high-quality wood and materials. They are a timeless option that can last for generations.

Did you know when you buy from a craftsman in your area, you're also enhancing the local economy? According to the organization Independent We Stand, for every \$100 you spend locally, \$68 stays in the community.

Finding a handmade furniture builder to support is easy and provides you with many benefits.

Environmentally Friendly

Handmade furniture is typically built from materials sourced from the builder's local economy.

When mass-produced models are constructed overseas, the environment is negatively impacted because of factory pollution and shipping methods.

Buying locally built furniture will also give you peace of mind that the materials are natural and safe rather than importing pieces that may contain volatile compounds or other dangerous substances.

High Quality

Because of the quality materials used to build handmade furniture, it is much more durable than less expensive models. A local craftsman has the expertise to choose the right type of wood for the piece that was commissioned.

While a piece of furniture built with cheaper material may look nice, the key to building a long-lasting model begins

before the first piece of wood is cut to fit. Whether you are hiring a craftsman for a custom table or dresser or buying a quality piece from your local furniture store, you can be sure it was built with durability.

Make it Your Own

When hiring a carpenter for your project, they will craft it specifically to you. The size of the space a piece of furniture will be in should weigh heavily on the design plans.

Give the carpenter accurate measurements to your designer so it will fit your room without being intrusive.

Another cool feature of handmade furniture is when the carpenter adds a custom etching to your specifications. For instance, when commissioning a gift, you can create a special but concealed message or signature that your loved one will appreciate.

'GRASS'

from 9

Various fungi can cause leaf spot. Symptoms and the timing of the appearance of leaf spot will vary depending on which fungi is causing the problem. For example, *bipolaris sorokiniana*, which affects grasses in warm, wet summer months, produces small spots that are dark purple to black. *Dreschslera poae* is another fungi that causes leaf spot, and it also produces dark purple to black spots. However, it tends to appear in the spring when the weather is cool and moist. Understanding the different fungi and when they typically strike can help homeowners identify what is causing their grass to thin. In such situations, professional landscapers can be invaluable resources as well.

Stripe smut

The University of Maryland Extension notes that stripe smut primarily poses a threat to Kentucky bluegrass that is

older than three years. Pale green streaks that run parallel to the veins in the leaves and leaf sheaths are symptomatic of stripe smut, which tends to be noticed in spring and fall, when weather is cool. As the disease progresses, stripes turn black or a silvery gray, causing the leaf blade to shred and curl. After the blades have shred, they turn brown and die. The grass thins because stripe smut makes it vulnerable to problems like drought.

Ascochyta leaf blight

Lawns suffering from ascochyta leaf blight will become straw-colored. According to the lawn care and pesticide experts at Ortho®, when a lawn is affected by ascochyta leaf blight, its healthy grass blades will be mixed in with diseased grass blades. Most prevalent in the spring, this disease can affect grass at any time during the growing season. That's because the asco-

chyta fungi invade leaf blades through wounds, such as those that can result from mowing. Ortho® notes that dull lawn mowers can contribute to the disease, which might disappear on its own and can even return after it's seemingly been cured.

Various issues can cause grass blades to thin. Working with a landscape professional is a great way to combat such issues before they compromise the look of a lawn.

IDENTIFY AND TREAT

a garden mole problem

Lawn and garden enthusiasts often must address unforeseen issues when tending to their lawns. Weeds can be a blight, and drought can compromise the look and integrity of a lawn.

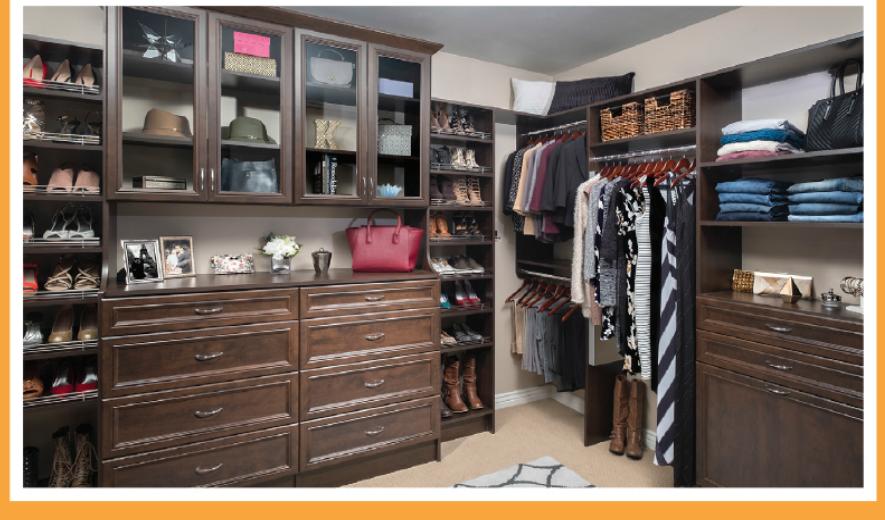
Another, more deceptive potential adversary is moles. After a spring and summer spent tending to their gardens, no homeowner wants to have their hard work compromised by moles.

"The Old Farmer's Almanac" says that moles are ground-dwelling insectivores that feast on insects in the soil. Moles grow to be roughly six to eight inches long and have gray or black, velvety fur. Their snouts are slender and hairless, and they have very small eyes and ears. Their large front feet have long claws that scoop dirt out of the way like a garden hoe.

Even though moles are more likely to snack on grubs, worms and beetles than plants, they damage gardens and lawns because of their underground tunneling behavior. Moles make subterranean channels throughout the yard in search of food. Some of the telltale signs include sprouted mounds of displaced soil, holes and raised burrows and hills. Tunneling can separate roots from soil, eventually killing vegetation in the process, according to the home and garden experts at BobVila.com.

There are various ways to address mole problems in a lawn or garden. Some professionals may recommend fumigants, home remedies and repellents. But these methods are not always effective, according to Better Homes & Gardens. Using insecticides can rid the lawn of some of the foods that moles dine upon, ultimately discouraging them from coming onto a property. However, many experts agree that trapping is the only reliable means of stopping these creatures.

Homeowners can trap moles humanely by catching the mole in the act. This involves waiting for a mole to start channeling, then using two shovels to block egress on either side of its path. The mole can be removed to a box and relocated. There also are various mole and gopher traps available for sale that operate with spring-loaded snares. Individuals should check if trapping moles is legal where they live. For more information regarding moles, visit www.almanac.com or www.bobvila.com.



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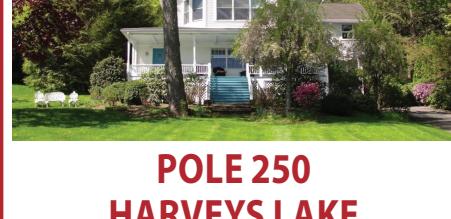
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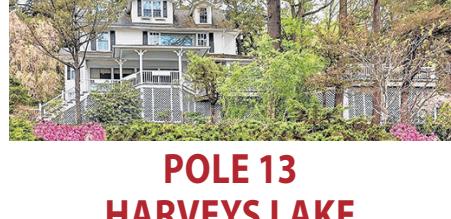
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POLE 199 HARVEYS LAKE

Home is situated right on Lakeside with 220 feet of lake front. Spacious throughout. 2 additional rooms on third floor could be used as sleeping areas. Outstanding views of the lake from most rooms and from 1st & 2nd floor decks. The landscaping features a variety of trees and fine sculpture pieces.

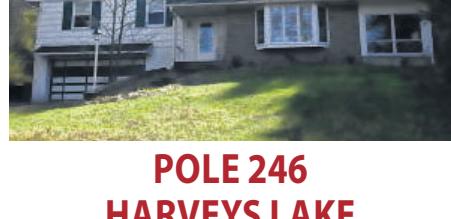
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Beautiful traditional home in sought after Harvey's Lake. An expansive wrap around deck offers a panoramic view of the lake. Fifty feet of lake front and boathouse great for outdoor activity. Impressive entertaining spaces both indoor and out. A stone patio features a fireplace and pond. Windows across the formal living room and large family room expose the fabulous view of the lake.

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POLE 246 HARVEYS LAKE

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POLE 269 HARVEYS LAKE

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POLE 130 HARVEYS LAKE

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EXTERIOR DESIGN TRENDS

When updating your home's exterior, a classic aesthetic is always a winner. If you're looking for something a little more on-trend however, there are ways to achieve a modern look, from the paint to the siding to the accessories.



© ADOBE STOCK

Here's a roundup of what's in when it comes to outside your home.

Dark paint colors

Just as with indoor paint colors, exterior paint is going darker. Popular shades include deep-sea blues, deep burgundy, dark gray or even black on black. Black also is having a moment as an accent color on home exteriors, and not just for the shutters and front door but for larger sections of siding and trim. Bonus: A 2018 study by Zillow found that homes with black or charcoal front doors sold for about \$6,271 more than expected.

While a dark exterior is modern and dramatic, there are some drawbacks. Dark paint can show the inevitable dirt and stains a home will develop more

easily, and the increased sun absorption could increase your cooling bills in the summer. Keep these drawbacks in mind when choosing these paint colors.

Siding shakeup

While vinyl remains a popular siding choice, homeowners are increasingly choosing to mix up various types of siding on their homes. This includes stone, brick, steel, aluminum, wood, vinyl and fiber cement. It's not uncommon to see homes covered mostly with vinyl siding, with accents of shake or stone, often near the entrance. This allows these more expensive materials to have a big impact.

Bringing the indoors out

When it comes to decorating your

small patch of outdoors, what could be more comfortable than the same furniture that's comfortable indoors? Sofas, loveseats and recliners are just the thing to set a comfortable scene on your patio. The trick, according to the San Antonio Express-News, is solution-dyed acrylic fabric. "This means the threads used to make the cushions are dyed throughout so they won't fade in the sun," explains the Express-News, noting that popular brands include Sunbrella and Outdura, among others.

Another popular trend is to extend your interior color palette and decorating style to your home's exterior, making the space seem to flow seamlessly from indoors to out. For more indoor-outdoor blur, use fabrics such as curtains in outdoor spaces like patios and beneath pergolas.

JOIN THE LED REVOLUTION

If you haven't switched your home light bulbs over to LEDs, there's no time like the present to start saving money and energy.

Ninety percent of the energy used by an incandescent light bulb is wasted heat and only 10 percent is used to deliver light, according to EnergyStar. The result, says EnergyStar, is "essentially lighting homes with small heaters."

There are now three more efficient bulbs that are widely available, according to EnergyStar: incandescent halogen, which is about 30 percent more efficient than incandescent; compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs), which are about 75 percent more efficient; and light emitting diode bulbs (LEDs), which are about 90 percent more efficient. For specialty products, traditional incandescent bulbs can still be found.

LEDs: Leading the Way

While LEDs had long been too pricey to be

See 'LED' | 13



© ADOBE STOCK

'LED'

from 12

practical for many homeowners, they are now much more affordable and widely available. The result has been widespread adoption of these much more efficient alternatives to incandescent and fluorescent bulbs. Bulbs equivalent to 40- and 60-watt incandescent bulbs commonly used in homes cost about \$2 or less.

The first LEDs to hit store shelves back in 2007 were not ideal replacements for incandescent bulbs, with dim, cool blue light that disappointed consumers, according to EnergyStar. But today's bulbs come in brighter, warmer colors that are indistinguishable from incandescents when used in homes.

In a trend Goldman Sachs calls "one of the fastest technology shifts in human history," the global research firm expects LED bulb sales to jump from 1 percent of the market in 2010 to 95 percent by 2025. That number was estimated to hit 69

percent in 2020.

A Department of Energy report titled "Energy Savings Forecast of Solid-State Lighting in General Illumination Applications," was more conservative, forecasting that by 2030, LED lighting will achieve a market share of 84 percent of the general illumination market. Even that scenario would save over \$26 billion at today's energy prices, the equivalent to the total energy consumption of nearly 24 million U.S. homes, according to the DOE.

Look for Rebates

In order to spur consumers to adopt LED bulbs, utilities across the country began offering rebates or subsidizing the cost of bulbs at local retailers. Check with your local utilities about the programs they offer to help offset the costs.

EnergyStar also urges consumers to think about the long-term savings they can achieve with LEDs. While a 60-watt EnergyStar-certified bulb might cost \$2 upfront, it can save \$6.15 in energy costs in one year of use, meaning it pays for itself in less than four months of use.

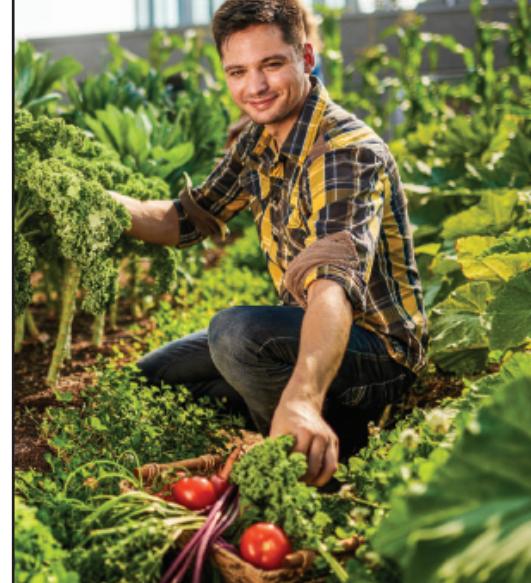
HOW URBAN GARDENERS CAN

lower the risk of contact with soil contaminants

City dwellers may once have thought that gardening was a hobby for suburbanites or those living in rural areas. But urban gardening has grown in popularity as more and more city folk have looked for ways to increase their access to healthy, low-cost produce.

Urban agriculture may seem like a relatively new idea, but National Geographic notes that it actually dates back to the 19th century, when Detroit mayor Hazen Pingree devised a plan to help the city's unemployed laborers during a period of economic crisis. Mayor Pingree developed an idea to use acres of vacant and idle lands throughout the city to create subsistence gardens. Begun in 1894, the program would peak in 1897 with the participation of more than 1,500 families. The program would taper by 1901 as the economy improved, but there's no denying the relative success of the mayor's program.

Urban gardens can be just as beneficial today as they were in Detroit in the late 19th century. However, the Environmental Protection Agency notes that some sites that are now home to urban gardens were once occupied by industrial and commercial operations. That's a significant concern for those who want to start urban agriculture programs in their cities, as the soil might be contaminated. But the EPA says the possibility of contamination should not keep prospective urban gardeners from going forward with their plans. Rather, the EPA recommends gardeners take various steps if they determine the soil where they hope to plant an urban garden has been contaminated.



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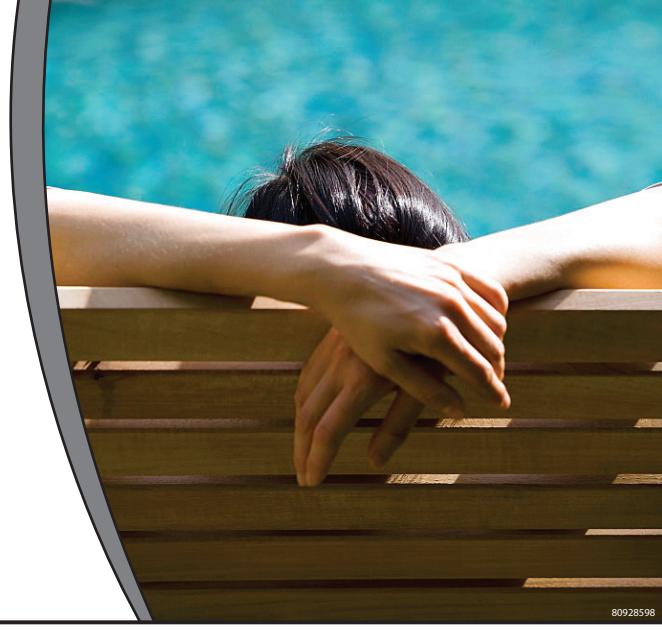
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GROW YOUR OWN HERBS

If fresh basil for pesto or cilantro for guacamole sounds like heaven, it might be time to plant your own herb garden.



© ADOBE STOCK

You can tend a small raised bed or grow your herbs in pots with other plants, and they're relatively easy to grow.

It's no secret that cooking your own meals can save you money. According to Forbes Magazine, it's five times more expensive to order takeout and three times more expensive to use a meal kit service. So if you're already tying on an

apron to save money, why not

save a little more by growing your own herbs — not to mention kick up the flavor of your dishes?

That doesn't mean you have to dedicate a patch of ground to herb gardening and spend your days tilling, weed-

ing and pruning. You can tend a small raised bed or grow your herbs in pots with other plants, and they're relatively easy to grow.

The Gardening Basics

As with any plant, you'll want to consider an herb's need for sunlight, soil and water. For this reason, The Spruce

See 'HERBS' | 15

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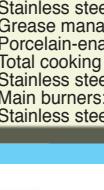
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'HERBS'

from 14

recommends planting herbs in pots or in flowerbeds with plants that need similar conditions.

Here are some tips from The Spruce for basic herb gardening:

- Aside from flowering herbs, most require basic soil without a lot of fertilizer or amendments;
- Most herbs prefer full sun — at least six hours a day;
- Water your herbs well, but be sure they have good drainage to prevent the roots rotting or becoming diseased; and

Pest Control

The scent herbs produce helps keep them relatively safe from pests. Some herbs, in fact, can attract beneficial insects. For example, fennel, anise and dill attract lady bugs, dragonflies, lacewings and spiders. These predators kill garden pests such as mosquitoes, aphids, mites and mealybugs, according to the blog *Redeem Your Ground*.

Harvesting

Herbs should be harvested just before their flowers begin to unfurl, and an ideal time is in the morning, when their essential oils are most concentrated,



according to *Redeem Your Ground*. The blog recommends, for most herbs, cutting up to one-third of a stem at a spot just above where two leaves are growing. This also serves to prune the

plant and encourage growth. If you find that you aren't cutting your herbs often to use them, be sure to prune them occasionally to encourage growth, *The Spruce*.

'URBAN'

from 13

Consult your local and state environmental agencies. Local and state environmental agencies can help would-be urban gardeners connect with professional site cleanup specialists. These specialists can recommend various ways to reduce high levels of contaminants.

Build raised garden beds. The EPA notes that raised beds are the

most common way to reduce the risk of coming into contact with soil contaminants. Raised beds use clean soil that couples with materials necessary to build the beds that serve as physical barriers between the plants and potential contaminants in the ground soil.

Employ soil amendments. Soil amendments can be used to bind contaminants so they are no longer mobile or bioavailable. A thick layer of organic material also serves as a barrier against potential contaminants.

Replace contaminated soil.

Replace contaminated soil with soil that has been tested and confirmed as contaminant-free.

Phytotechnologies are another way to clean up contaminated soil, though the EPA notes that this approach can take years and won't necessarily prove effective against every contaminant.

Urban gardening gives city dwellers a chance to enjoy a wonderful hobby. When soil contaminants are effectively addressed, city residents can enjoy access to fresh, affordable produce grown right in their communities.

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