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Amazing Decks

Extending the heart of the home to the backyard *page 11*



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Architectural Concrete Design

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Creating beautiful backyard spaces *page 31*

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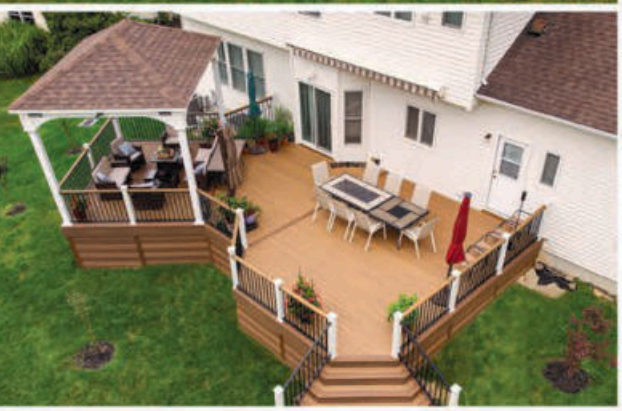
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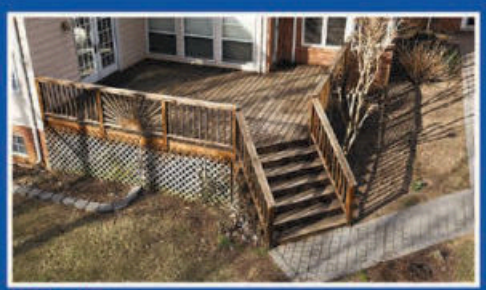




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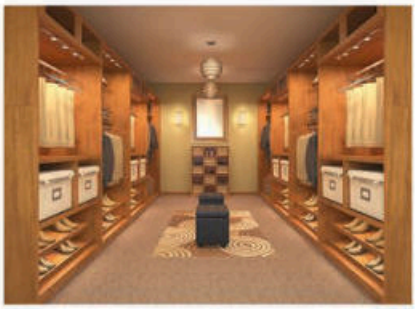
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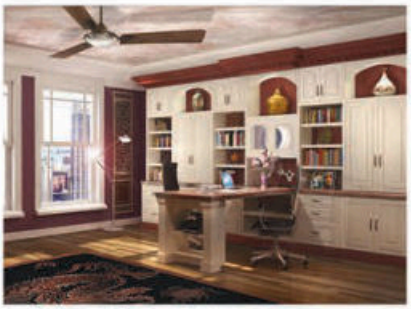
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contents

11 Beautiful Inside and Out
Amazing Decks helps extend the heart of the home to the outdoors

12 Elevated Exteriors
The many ways a deck can enhance your outdoor living space

20 *House & Home* Annual Landscape Directory
Sponsored by Holly Days Nursery

26 Set Up Your Space for Summer
Sequoia Out Back helps turn backyard dreams into a reality

29 Reimagining Curb Appeal
Architectural Concrete Design specializes in a wide array of decorative concrete solutions

31 Passion Projects
ELA Outdoor Living has been a trusted name for more than three decades

34 Dive Right In
The latest trends that are enhancing the joys of owning a pool

SAVE up to $1200 with a New Federal Tax Credit on Energy-Efficient Hunter Douglas Shades

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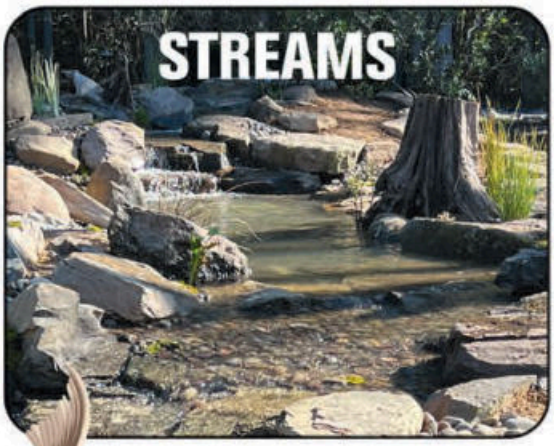
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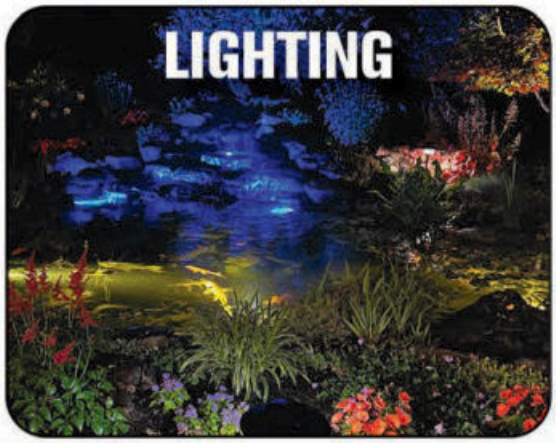
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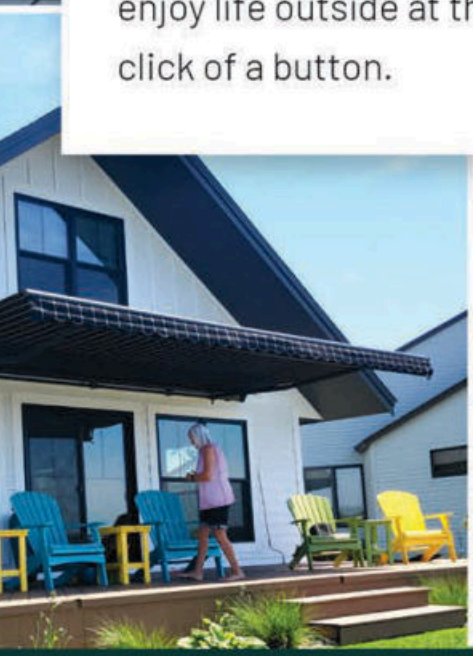


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Beautiful Inside and Out

Using integrated design, the team at **Amazing Decks** can take the heart of the home and extend it to the backyard with a stunning, usable outdoor space.



As they approach their 33rd year in business, it would be easy for Amazing Decks co-founders Bill Wilson and Keith Fry to become complacent in their work or to rest on their accomplishments from three decades in the industry.

But anyone who encounters the pair soon realizes that the opposite is true. They continue to be passionate about designing and building backyard oases that their customers can enjoy for years to come, and they can draw on their vast experience to avoid common pitfalls.

"When you've been in business this long, it becomes easy, because we've already made the mistakes and we've learned from them," Wilson says. "We were part of this industry long before it became what it is now. We watched it change from people just having a simple wood deck to now adding a space that can be amazing. It's a lot of fun and we love helping people out."

The philosophy at Amazing Decks centers on the idea of integrated home design. This comprehensive approach aims to extend the heart of the home to the outside, creating a large, livable space that can be utilized for everything from a big graduation party to a simple family get-together.

"There's a fine line between a project that gets used and a project that never gets used," Wilson says. "It would be heartbreaking at the completion to have a homeowner say, 'I wish we would have done this or that.' That's why the design is crucial. It has to be inviting; people want something that feels personal and something that will help them relax."

To achieve this goal, Amazing Decks puts a great emphasis on the planning stage. While some potential customers will ask for estimates over the phone or through email, it is important for the designers to personally visit the site and get to know the homeowners.

They will ask questions regarding the size of their family, how often they entertain, whether they plan to add a pool, etc.

"We're interviewing them just like they're interviewing us," Wilson says. "Our initial meeting is very easy-going. We get to know the client and find out how they're going to use the space. Then we're able to tie everything together and design something in the backyard that they're going to use. It doesn't have to be expensive; it just has to be designed right."

Amazing Decks has often been called upon to fix mistakes by other companies that did not design a backyard space properly. Wilson and Fry are determined to design a space that will not only work now, but in the future, should the homeowners want to add to the space or decide to sell the home.

The many successful jobs the company has completed also tend to stand out in the neighborhood.

"Our designs are unique," Wilson says. "We do a lot of curves—we have the equipment to curve boards, so a lot of our decks are free-flowing curves. We also integrate other materials, like paver patios or bluestone. Maybe the backyard doesn't just call for a deck; maybe it calls for a combination of the two. Even though we're a deck company, we have to be honest with the customer and tell them what will work best.

"We can do patios, walkways, plantings, outdoor low-voltage lighting, grilling stations and fireplaces. Shade is huge as well—every outdoor project should have some sort of roof structure for people to sit under and get shielded from the sun."

As one of the first companies to install maintenance-free composite boards, Amazing Decks has a longstanding relationship with Trex, perhaps the most well-known name in the industry.

"That's not to say we won't work with another manufacturer, but we are primarily a Trex dealer," Wilson says. "We've been using Trex ever since we started the business. They always come out with new products, but the product we're using now is approximately 11 years old, the Trex Transcend line, and it doesn't seem like anyone has ever been able to compete with it.

"I like how durable it is; you can drag a chair across it and it won't scratch. If you spill something on it, you can just wipe it off. Some products will scuff and scratch, but Trex doesn't. If you look at a Trex deck that's five or six years old, it looks like we just installed it."

With the right materials and the right design, a deck built by Amazing Decks can make a major difference, both now and in the future.

"We had a customer who just bought a new house, and we had put the deck on his old house," Wilson says. "There were four other houses on his street for sale, so he was nervous about putting the house up. But it sold within two weeks of hitting the market. He had offers from every person who saw the house, and they all said it was because of the deck. That was a proud moment. It wasn't extravagant, it was just designed right." H&H

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Elevated Exteriors

Exploring the plethora of effective decking options takes an outdoor living space—and the entire home—to new heights.

BY CARLY MURRAY

A stylish and functional deck can be the centerpiece of a memorable summer, and the modern, multifaceted approach to decking allows for an expansion of the home. Traditionally a place of outdoor observation, gathering and relaxation, decks in 2024 often include the additional features of outdoor kitchens, pergolas, gazebos, screens, fireplaces and more. The consistently growing trend of creative customization is no longer limited to interior design or landscaping, enhancing both a space and residents' quality of life.



Deck Aesthetics

Home renovation projects have the best results when they are coordinated with each element of the home, culminating in a harmonious structure with every detail taken into account. When it comes to decking, one should be mindful of the adjacent interior space, the outdoor living space surrounding it and the exterior elements of a home. A property can be like a blank canvas, completely restructured for optimal personalization, but it can also act as a starting point to inspire a deck's look and utility

"Two factors dictate what your new deck should look like—it must be in proportion with the house and property, and it must be built large enough to accommodate the people using the deck," says Jerry Jerminski of Get Decked.

Colonial-style houses are characteristic of the Delaware Valley region, and that built-in historical charm allows for a guideline to help match a deck to the exterior. This is not to say that the preferred aesthetics are exclusively vintage, but rather timeless. When renovating or remodeling a deck, experts and homeowners strive to fuse contemporary and classic elements.

"A few years back, a lot of what we saw were modern looks. It seems that it has changed a little bit more to traditional, classic looks with a modern touch. [For] example, sleek rails, black railings—but still the classic wood look on the deck. So, it seems like the style is slowly moving toward a modern-classical look," says Ephraim Stoltzfus, designer at Deck Craft Plus.

Bold and bright colors aren't very common, so the general process is to opt for a complementary neutral color for the base and to style it with finishes or other parts of the accompanying outdoor living space. With all of the options available, one can pick the exact shade variation with undertones that are congruent with the rest of the space.

"They've developed a few colors that can fit in with the older architectural stone, and then the beige will come out. A gray will come out if you want to hit that modern farmhouse with a gray. They have colors that will satisfy both at the same time—pretty ingenious," explains Bill Wilson, co-owner of Amazing Decks.

Gray seems to be the top choice, according to decking experts in the region. It is the perfect amalgamation of sleek and futuristic tones with an evergreen and adaptable quality. Warmer and cooler colored accessory pieces further influence the look of the deck as a whole.

"I think gray decking is very popular right now. AZEK has about three or four different gray colors, and it seems like we sell a ton of those. Powder-coated aluminum railing mimicking the old, wrought-iron railing style is [also] super popular right now," adds Ray Ebersol, marketing manager of Decks R Us.

Similar to a primary gray color, black adornments are versatile enough to work well with a multitude of colors and styles. The neutral color also gives more freedom to play around with designs without appearing over the top.

"Our most popular railing color now is the bold, black-on-black design—black cross rails and black Deckorators balusters," affirms Jerminski



Elevated Exteriors


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As every piece is essential to the fully finished project, the base of the deck may influence railing and step options, and steps and railing can impact the inclusion of lighting. Aesthetics can encompass visual and tactile appeal with materials, patterns and colors, but to take it up a notch, consider creating movement. Illuminate chosen visuals by intertwining lighting and guiding the eye to a designated focal point.

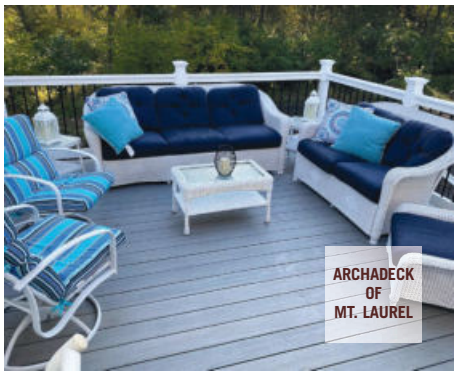
Deck Lighting

Lighting beautifies decking to a new level, and can range from practical to whimsical. Robert Lascelle, owner of My Deck, explains that colored lighting is called RGB lights, and they are increasingly gaining popularity with newer projects. However, practical lighting can still create an ethereal effect with the variety of options and cognizance of placement.

"Our viewpoint on lighting for a high-quality job…Your eyes should not focus on light fixtures, you're looking at the light the fixtures put out and that's what makes quality light jobs," says Lascelle. "Recessed under-rail lights [and] recessed under-stair riser lights are two examples "

Of course, any type of lighting will always require some sort of electrical accommodation. As with any home improvement project, careful planning is not just encouraged—it's a prerequisite. Jarrod Coburn, co-owner and production manager of Archadeck Outdoor Living of Mount Laurel, explains that the most common deck lighting—stair riser lights and rail post cap lights—does not require an electrician to install, but rather utilizes landscape wiring and a transformer with a solar sensor.

"When doing a new deck project or a complete demo and new deck replacement, it's best to decide on your lighting and under deck/skirting options before you start," Coburn says. "Running low voltage wiring to your stair risers and/or rail caps is much easier and cleaner if done before the decking is installed."


ARCHADECK OF MT. LAUREL

Add-Ons

The decision to make a deck an extension of the home demands cohesiveness, but that forethought in the design process is well worth the effort. Expanding the space also expands the realm of lifestyle possibilities. Personalizing a deck for each unique household's lifestyle guarantees that it will be where cherished memories are made.

"Imagine a perfect place for prom or wedding pictures. The multi-level decks cascade around the house towards their backyard with a gorgeous lake view," says Coburn, as he describes one of his most memorable projects.

Whether it is designing a platform ideal for family photographs above a stunning backyard oasis or considering architectural durability for a household with small children, the lifestyle needs of a home's residents are at the forefront. Many of these decisions equate to the idea of accessibility: making sure getting into the house via the deck does not require excessive effort with steep hills or unaligned entrances and adding features that are functional.

Exterior kitchens have made major traction in recent years, as they are highly customizable and add efficiency to the cooking process. When entertaining, a deck can give guests a maximized place to hang out without getting in the way of the food's preparation, and it can also allow for multitasking if cooking multiple dishes.

"You could have 150 people at your house, but they'll all hang out in the kitchen area. We call it the heart of the house. … It's very important that we make our deck an extension of that heart of the house," says Wilson.

Full outdoor kitchens contain almost everything one would expect in an indoor kitchen: sinks, pull-out garbage, refrigerators, drawers and cabinets. Lascelle explains that the main focus is usually a standard grill, but he has witnessed the emergence of outdoor pizza ovens and hibachi-style grills.

"We're doing a ton of exterior kitchens, they're a really big feature that we put on a lot of decks now that people really enjoy," he says. "You can have a full kitchen outside



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Elevated Exteriors

equipped with almost every feature an interior gourmet kitchen may have."

Taking in nature and fresh air is paradisiacal—with the exception of a few factors. Gazebos, pergolas and screens are other common deck embellishments that provide a picturesque quality as well as factors to ensure an optimal outdoor experience. This includes staying shaded, warm or cool in varied weather, and protection from bugs.

"Gazebos are a great way to screen in an area, to spend more time outdoors. Obviously, if it's bug free, this will enhance the experience … [and] makes it more pleasant on hot days to sit inside of the gazebo rather than out in the open, in the sun," says Ebersol.

Regardless of any potential qualms about an outdoor living space, there is typically an inventive solution that can be built into a deck. For example, gazebos can have outlets, fans and tinted windows installed. Additionally, working with the railing and underside of a deck can best maximize the area. Stoltzfus exemplifies this problem-solving approach while discussing a unique project that he worked on last summer: a second-story deck with a fully custom outdoor kitchen and bar underneath.

"We put a dry space underneath, outfitted with lights of course and some ceiling fans. We put stone columns from the ground to railing height, and we put screens in around the bottom of that deck. … The face screens were all electrical screens, and we put a double-sided fireplace under the deck as well," he recounts.

A desired vision is a major first step toward the deck of one's dreams, and previously inconceivable attributes are more accessible than ever. Consulting an expert can traverse imaginative ideals and conceptualize them into reality, guaranteeing a deck you and your family will love. H&H

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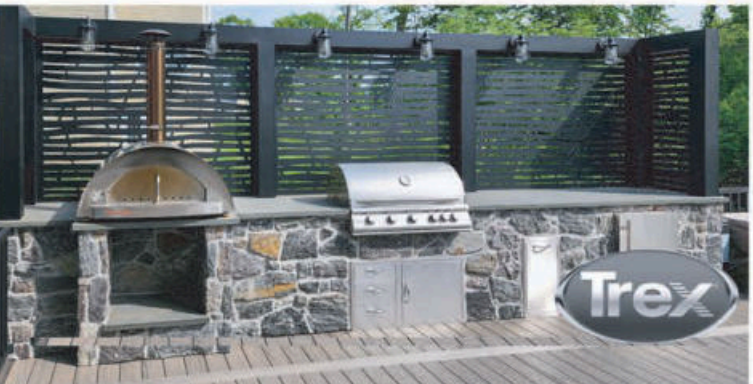
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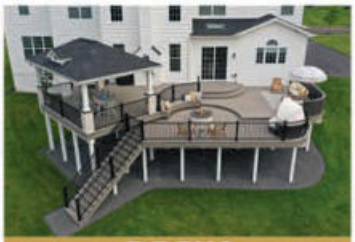
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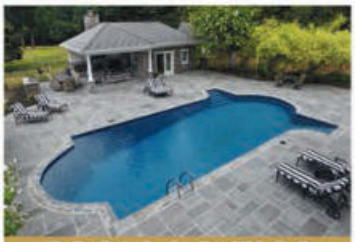
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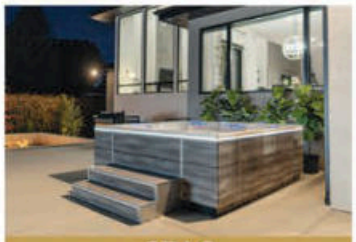





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WITH SPRING IN BLOOM, homeowners across the country are preparing to spend the coming months in their own backyards, and chances are they would like to invest in some updates. Our annual landscape directory connects our readers with local resources to consult on any project related to the outdoors. This comprehensive list includes companies that can create an oasis with a pool, patio or deck, not to mention hardscaping, water features and shade elements; or professionals who maintain landscaping, provide furniture or install fences and much more. No matter what you need, your outdoor space is in good hands.



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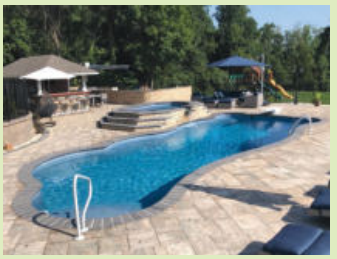
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Set Up Your Space for Summer

At **Sequoia Out Back**, customers can find endless inspiration for their outdoor dreams.



It's safe to say that the pandemic has taught us to appreciate the outdoors even more. While backyard outdoor living areas have been soaring in popularity for years now, for many, the stay-at-home orders and the experience of being stuck indoors for so long have made homeowners absolutely crave these spaces more than ever. They are truly a must-have—a fact that's been increasingly evident at Sequoia Out Back, where owner John Keller says that he's seeing even more people come into the showroom than ever before.

From the moment that homeowners walk through Sequoia Out Back's front doors, the experience is really unlike any other. The 30,000-square-foot showroom has everything you could want for your personal oasis on display so that you can envision it in your own backyard.

When you walk through a typical patio store or a big-box store, items aren't usually set up or paired together the way they would be in your backyard so it can be difficult to visualize your finished space. At Sequoia, you can see an entire outdoor living space the way that you might set it up on your own patio. It inspires so many ideas.

The goal of the showroom has always been to make homeowners feel like they're stepping into a real-life outdoor space. This helps homeowners to make the best choices when it comes to furniture and decking supplies that will work for their own projects.

Pair these gorgeous displays with the knowledgeable and helpful team members who are ready to assist—and homeowners can really appreciate the showroom visit



At Sequoia, you can see an entire outdoor living space the way that you might set it up on your own patio. It inspires so many ideas.

experience. Customers always leave Sequoia with a lot of great ideas and information.

Of course, in general, inventory has been a major issue since the start of the pandemic. Homeowners who have tried to purchase furniture and decking may have noticed limited stock. But Sequoia Out Back has been fortunate to be able to keep a lot of inventory in stock thanks to its relationship with manufacturers and its purchasing power, as well as having a large quantity from the start. Even so, with so many people coming through the doors, now is the time to start planning for the spring while inventory is still available.

After all, before you know it, the weather will be consistently warm, and we'll all be spending even more time outdoors. Homeowners want to make sure their space is ready now!

"The sooner you can start planning, the better," urges Keller. "The number of visitors coming to the store right now is higher than ever for this time of year. It's definitely not too early to start thinking about setting up your outdoor space."

As you start planning, Sequoia Out Back has all of the amenities that you might want to consider. This includes fire pits, patio furniture and all of the material supplies including decking and railing and hardscaping. Sequoia works with all of the leading manufacturers including TimberTech, Wolf, Trex, Zuri and Fiberon—all of whom continue to offer innovative products.

Whether you're a do-it-yourselfer or someone who was sent by their contractor to look for materials, Sequoia's showroom can accommodate everyone.

It's all about making the experience as easy and as enjoyable as possible for homeowners. As the true outdoor living experts, Sequoia and its team are ready to help make homeowners' backyard dreams come true.

"Outdoor living has been a trend for a long time but it's hotter than ever," Keller sums up. "I think we're all ready to start spending more time outside." **H&H**

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"Our foundation was built on the principle of blending aesthetics with functionality in concrete designs," ACD's Managing Partner Steve Abel says. "This innovation rapidly positioned ACD as the leading decorative concrete installer on the East Coast. Our journey of innovation continued as we developed custom stamping tools, contributed to industry-standard application techniques, and consistently delivered unparalleled installation quality."

He continues, "What truly sets ACD apart is our unwavering commitment to decorative concrete. Unlike many in the field who might dabble in various construction areas, we focus solely on this specialty. Our team, led by foremen with over 25 years of experience, understands the art and science of decorative concrete."

From its location on New Falls Road, ACD specializes in a variety of decorative concrete solutions: stamped concrete, which can replicate stones, tiles or bricks; exposed aggregate, which creates a textured surface by exposing rocks, pebbles, sand or other material mixed in with the concrete; and colored concrete, which comes in a wide selection of shades. The company also offers comprehensive maintenance services for clients' existing concrete structures.

Decorative concrete is a longer-lasting, easier-to-maintain product that is also more cost-effective than traditional materials. The design options are seemingly endless, too, with sophisticated styles and trendy finishes—or even the chance to create something completely outside the box.

ACD can install its products wherever a client is looking to improve aesthetics and functionality around their property, too. This includes pool decks, driveways, patios, walkways and more. The company strives to showcase its expertise and excellence in every project, whether it's a commercial job or residential property.

"Our approach is meticulous, ensuring the use of superior materials, adherence to optimal curing times and deployment of skilled crews," Abel says. "This dedication to quality, coupled with our 30-year legacy as both a residential and commercial contractor, has cemented our reputation among the region's top builders."

Abel says ACD's philosophy is encapsulated in its motto: "We only have one chance to be perfect, do it right, do it now, whatever it takes." This sentiment is a reflection of the company's commitment to excellence, which it achieves by ensuring top-tier talent, the finest materials and best-practice installation methods.

"Our customer-first mentality is at the heart of our operations. We understand the challenges of transforming raw materials into artistic products under time constraints, and we thrive in this demanding yet rewarding environment," Abel says.

ACD is ready to meet the needs of every client, whether it's a seasoned professional with precise requirements for the project they're envisioning or a brand-new customer who wants to find out how stamped concrete can transform their home.

"We tailor our approach to each client's needs," Abel says. "Our design team plays a pivotal role in this process, helping clients understand the product, market trends, and how these align with their personal preferences and functional needs."

Collaborating in this way ensures a customized project that is going to please the client, according to Abel.

And becoming an ACD client is as easy as giving the office a call or submitting an inquiry through the company website.

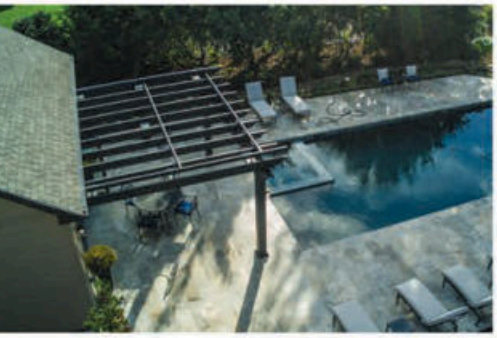
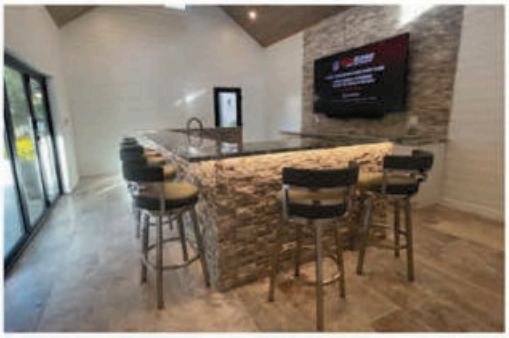
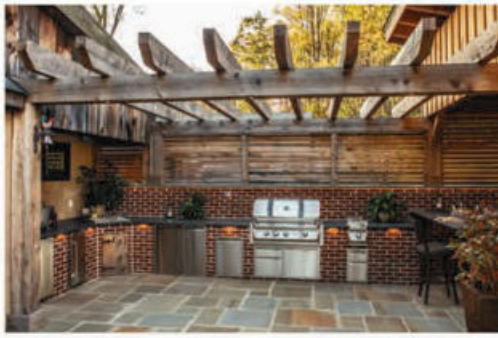
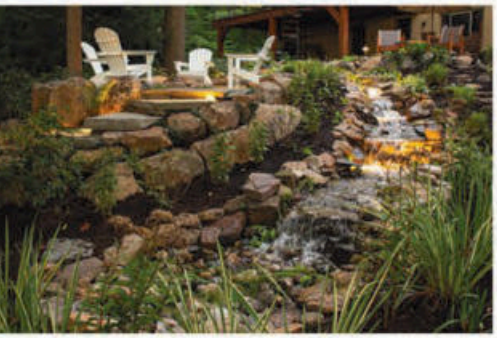
"We welcome everyone, from homeowners exploring decorative concrete options to ready-to-proceed customers," Abel says. "Our team is passionate about what we do and eager to assist clients in making informed decisions." **H&H**

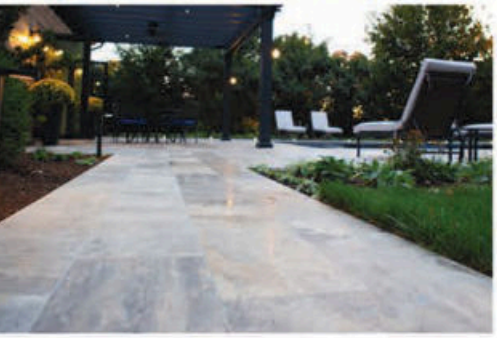


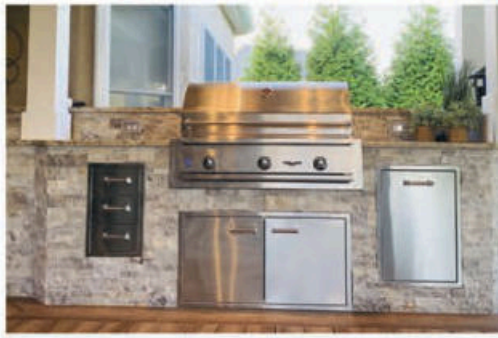
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Passion Projects

For more than three decades, **Keith Frederick and his team at ELA Outdoor Living** have been creating beautiful backyard spaces for clients that combine all of the desired elements in a comprehensive way. by **MATT COSENTINO**

Now in his 35th year as the owner and president of ELA Outdoor Living—and with experience in the industry that dates back even further, to when he was a teenager—Keith Frederick would be perfectly justified in taking a step back and letting someone else handle the bulk of the responsibilities in his thriving business. That has never even been a consideration, however, because his desire to create resort-style outdoor spaces right in customers' backyards has never waned, not for a second.

To this day, Frederick meets every client and oversees design from the very first consultation, incorporating all of the items on their wish list in a holistic way.

"My thumb is on the pulse of everything in the company," he confirms. "All of my clients have my cell phone number and they can call or text me 24/7. Some people say it's just business, it's not personal, but it's personal for me, and I live and breathe it. If someone needs me on a Sunday, they can call me—that's the type of service we provide. If someone is making a large investment, you want them to feel comfortable, safe and well taken care of, and that's what we do here."

Born and raised in Bucks County, Frederick is a Perkasie native and graduated from Pennridge High School before moving on to Delaware Valley University, where he studied ornamental horticulture and environmental design. He started ELA in 1989 and has seen the outdoor living industry grow by leaps and bounds since then.

In addition to personalized, concierge service, ELA specializes in elaborate spaces that seamlessly blend an array of stunning elements together. Frederick's familiarity with Bucks County style, along with his and his team's expertise in all of the outdoor features a customer could want, make ELA the perfect partner. Rather than a homeowner acting as a general contractor and relying on a separate company for the pool, the patio/deck and the landscaping, all of those components are overseen by the same design/build firm.

"The fact that we're combining the element of horticulture with building and architectural design that can make these outdoor living spaces feel like an extension of the home is so important, whatever the style is, and we work with all kinds of styles," Frederick says. "There's not too many folks out there who can pull it all together and make it cohesive."

ELA welcomes clients to its design and showroom center, where they can better visualize their project with 3D software, ask detailed questions, and get introduced to different building materials and plant selections.

"They can become educated on building design, building products, new trends on the market and different plants not normally seen at a retail garden center," Frederick says.

Each project typically includes a floor, like a deck or stone patio, with walls in the form of plants, fencing or masonry stone. The ceiling can be a solid roof or a pergola, or even an aluminum motorized louvered roof, with louvers that can be open to let in light or closed when it's raining or too hot. ELA has a separate entity, The Louvered Roof Company, run by Frederick's wife Karen, to focus specifically on this in-demand specialty item.

Other popular amenities include fire features and outdoor kitchens that range from simple built-in grills to decked-out spaces with sinks, refrigerators and bars. The centerpiece of the project is often a swimming pool, and ELA is an independent dealer and installer of Imagine Pools, one of the world's largest manufacturers of fiberglass pools.

"The difference between a concrete pool and a fiberglass pool is basically that a fiberglass pool does not need long-term maintenance," Frederick says. "Eventually over time, a concrete pool is going to need to have the plaster redone, it's going to need to have the waterline tile redone, it's going to need the coping redone, because of freezing and thawing. With a fiberglass pool, there is no plaster, there is no waterline tile, and there is quite often a cantilever coping. They also go in very quickly and there's a lifetime warranty on the shell."

Outdoor living spaces are no longer just for spring, summer and fall, either. With the addition of motorized screens to the outdoor "rooms" and heaters to warm the space, customers can use them almost year round.

ELA handles each aspect of the project without subcontractors, since its staff includes experienced landscape architects and experienced building contractors. Most employees have been with the company for 15-plus years and, like Frederick, are local to the area. Plus, with an owner like Frederick leading the way, it's easy for his love of the work to catch on with everyone else at the company.

"The ability to pull all of this together is difficult for some folks, but we have a great team that's been doing this for a long time together," he says. "Everybody has a God-given gift, and for some reason this is my thing. I'm passionate about it and I care about it, and I care about the customers. It's not just a job—after a lot of these projects, it develops into a friendship." H&H

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DIVE RIGHT IN

From the lifetime of memories it can provide to increasing property value and more, the benefits of installing and maintaining a pool are innumerable.

by **Chelsea Valcourt**

In recent years, the backyard has become the focal point of many homes. With quarantine limiting travel, folks were left in the confines of their homes—leaving many with plenty of time and reasons to finally conquer their long-desired home improvement projects. For many homeowners, desperate to regain some semblance of normalcy and life outside their four walls, these projects focused on making their backyards places of happiness, beauty and relaxation. People wanted a way to vacation without leaving the house, a way to exercise without going to the gym and eventually, a place to host guests once the pandemic sub-





sided. The solution? Pools.

From installing new and improving existing pools to building up the space around their pools with hardscaping and landscaping, homeowners have taken a renewed interest in elevating their space. After all, who wouldn't want to watch the sunset by the pool after a long, hot day?

With new customization options and rising design trends, it's easier than ever to achieve the pool space of your dreams. Working with experienced pool professionals can even help to combine both design and cost-saving measures—making those dreams a reality while keeping costs to a minimum.

House & Home spoke with some of the area's leading pool companies to solicit their advice on the best way to start the process, to maintain your pool and to turn your simple pool into a hosting space everyone will love.

When is the best time to get started on a pool project for it to be summer-ready?

"The best time to get started on a pool project is in the fall or winter, since the permit process could take four to six months with engineering and zoning. If the customer is installing something other than a fiberglass pool, which can be installed in one day, the customer can plan for a two-to-six-month installation, which would eliminate the entire swimming season. If a customer began the process now, and purchased a fiberglass pool, it is still possible to have the pool in toward the middle of the summer."

— Derek Blasker, president, Pool Designs

"It's best to start as soon as possible. Like any home improvement project it takes time to plan, design and build. Coming up with a design plan and then finding the best contractor to make that vision happen is a process. You have to give yourself ample time to research, interview prospective contractors and allow for a realistic time frame to accomplish the work."

— H.P. Wertman, director of operations, Premier Pool Renovations

When is the best time to open a pool?

"If a pool owner has a gas heater for their pool, they can open the pool as early as they are ready, but the size of the gas bill may prohibit such early openings. The pool owner should generally plan for at least two to four weeks to get the pool in swimmable shape, but a good closing and cover can cut down on this time frame. If the pool owner has a solid or tightly woven mesh safety cover, it is likely that little to no debris will be in the pool and the water quality will be substantially better than a standard mesh safety cover or tarp cover."

— Derek Blasker, Pool Designs

How can design elements come together to make your pool feel like part of the yard?

"This all starts with the design process. The placement of the swimming pool, terrace and the different features of the project are imagined by our architects and designers to create an amazing and functional outdoor space."

— Sam Waddell, president, SLS Landscaping

"Swimming pools used to be a separate item in your yard, completely disconnected in most cases from the design elements of the house. Now, many people want a pool and surrounding area that is used for entertaining and is completely integrated with the home itself. Continuity is easily maintained by choosing materials and elements that flow from the pool to the outdoor entertaining areas and even to the home itself. This is best achieved by utilizing similar surfaces, color palette, design elements, lighting and finishes throughout which will make the pool area seem very connected to the home. If your goal is to have your outdoor entertaining spaces and pool area feel very warm and inviting, then they need to be an extension of your particular design taste."

— H.P. Wertman, Premier Pool Renovations

What are some of the more unique pool elements folks could incorporate to take their pool space to the next level?

"We have created many unique and amazing swimming pools and environments over the years—

Image top left, courtesy of Premier Pool Renovations. Image far left courtesy of Pool Designs. Image at left courtesy of SLS Landscaping





including elements such as fire bowls, waterfalls and sheer descents, grottos and spas, and swim-up bars, to name a few.

— Sam Waddell, SLS Landscaping

"A lot of people are going with sun shelves where it's 18 inches deep and you can put chairs in there. LED lighting allows people to change colors for ambiance and has become very popular. In addition, a lot of people are going over to salt generators for sanitation. Installing a salt generator means your chlorine is always the same and you never have to buy pool shock or anything ever again, so it's a money saver."

— Walter Beyer, owner, Stardust Pools

What are the best ways to take care of your pool?

"The best way to take care of your pool always starts with maintaining your water chemistry. If your pH is off balance or your sanitizer is low, the water will turn quickly and you will spend your free time testing, balancing, retesting, rebalancing, and testing again. Similarly, alkalinity and calcium hardness need to be balanced to not only maintain water quality, but the quality of your pool surface. In addition to balancing your water, pool owners need to be diligent with cleaning the pool floor and walls. If you leave debris on the floor for prolonged periods of time it can lead to stains that may not come out easily or may be permanent. If the pool owner has the financial capability to afford a robotic cleaner for their pool, it will greatly reduce the amount of work required to keep the pool surface clean and the filter on the robot will also aid in cleaning the water."

— Derek Blasker, Pool Designs

How can pool owners transform their space to accommodate for hosting?

"A pool and surrounding area is a great place to lounge or relax with guests but it needs to be so much more. This is achieved by having seating areas that have plenty of shade and protection from the ele-

Images courtesy of Stardust Pools





ments; large market umbrellas, pergolas and pavilions are great at accomplishing that. Having fire pits, fire tables and fireplaces is key in having inviting areas that can be used at night and even when the pool season is over.

Outdoor kitchens, grill areas and pizza ovens are a big trend in outdoor entertaining. Much like the kitchen is the main congregation point in the home, this can be the same outside.

Gaming areas are also now a huge element in the outdoor entertaining space. Having designated areas for games such as cornhole, horseshoes and ring toss is a great way to get adults and children alike participating in fun activities. Music is a huge part of any entertaining space and now with ever-improving technology there are more choices than ever to make this happen anywhere in your yard. Wireless speakers, or even waterproof underwater speakers in the pool are all great ways to get the music anywhere you are active."

— H.P. Wertman, Premier Pool Renovations

What are some things pool owners should be mindful of?

"When somebody's going to shop for a pool, they should see how long the company has been in business, if they're registered with the National Pool and Spa Institute and check with the Better Business Bureau. They need to do their homework these days because times are different. There's a lot of companies opening up and working out of their garages with no insurance. You want somebody that's been around a long time, has plenty of references and is abiding by all of the National Pool and Spa Institute rules that are out there."

— Walter Beyer, Stardust Pools

RESOURCES

Pool Designs
Yardville, N.J.
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PoolDesignsInc.com

Premier Pool Renovations
Doylestown, Pa.
(610) 825-8808
PremierRenovations.com

SLS Landscaping
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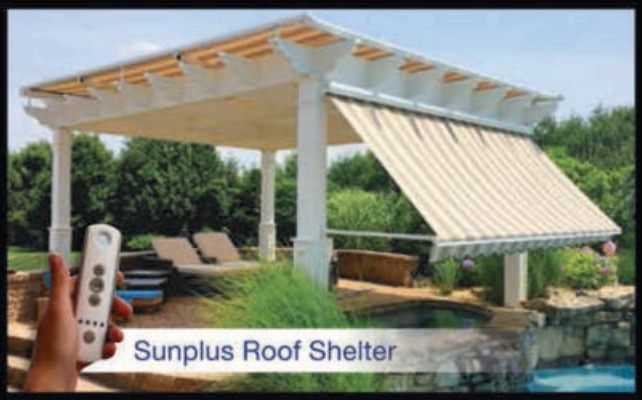


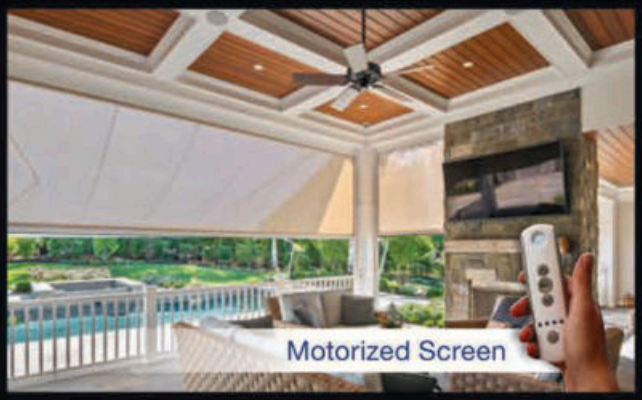
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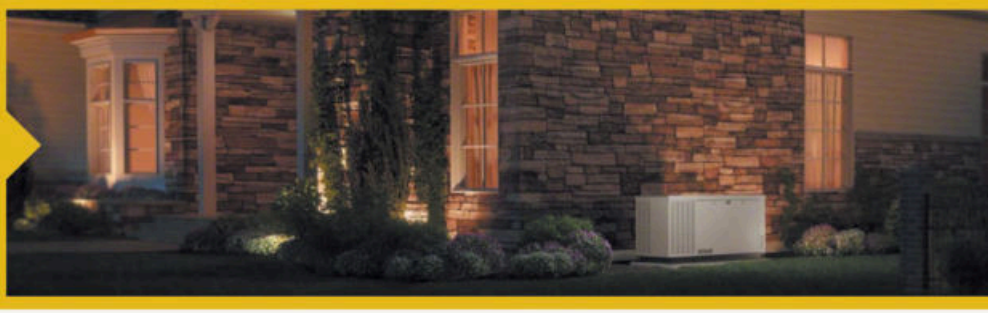
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