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Custom designs for your work-from-home lifestyle *page 13*

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Total Access Elevators

Taking you to the next level

page 11

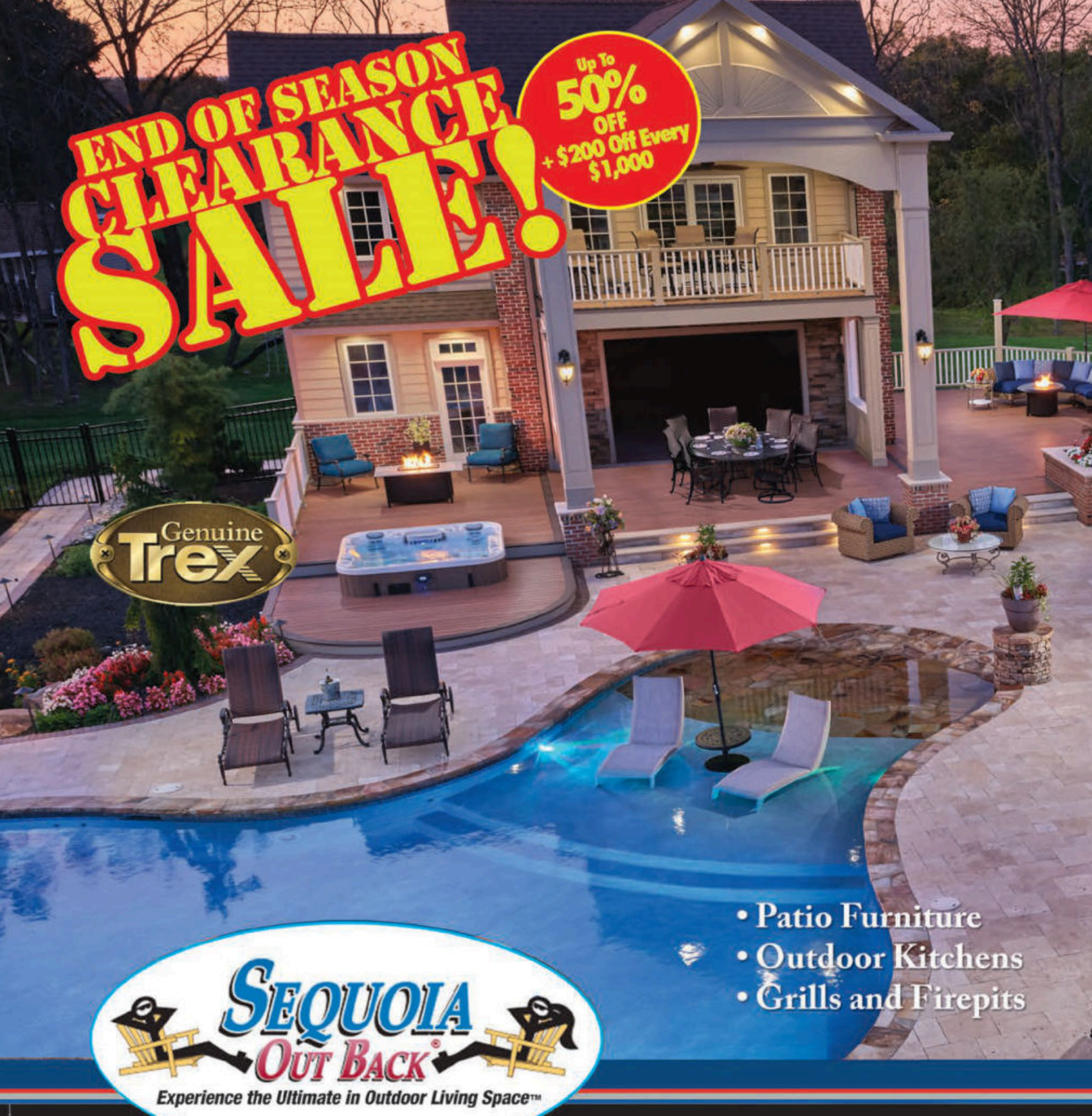
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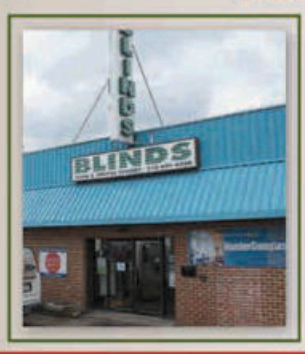
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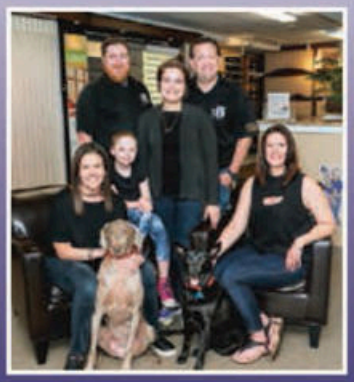
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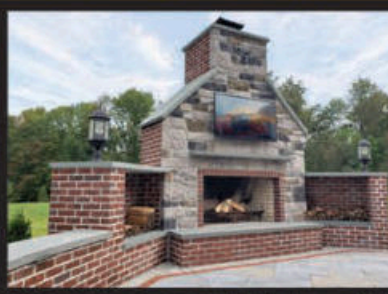
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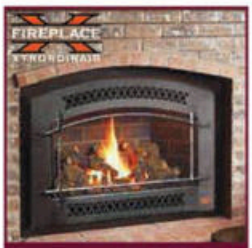


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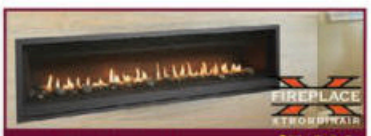
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Total Comfort, Total Convenience

A residential elevator from **Total Access** is the next must-have home appliance.

by **Liz Hunter**

We take for granted the fact that many appliances around the home were not always standard. Automatic washers and dryers were considered a luxury in the 1930s and microwaves didn't even become mainstream until the late '60s—yet we can't imagine life without them. And if you ask Curt Lampe, co-owner of Total Access Elevators & Lifts, residential elevators are poised to become the next must-have appliance in the home.

Lampe incorporated the company in 1991 with his partner Ted O'Neill. The market for residential elevators was still new, but over the past 30 years, Lampe says the demand has grown tremendously.

"In a lot of new construction, especially at the Shore for the multi-level properties, elevators are being put in automatically," he says. "We're also seeing people who want to age in place investing in an elevator instead of moving out of the home where they raised a family. They can install an elevator without the hassles of selling, packing and moving, and they can stay in their home comfortably."





Elevators appeal to people for a wide range of reasons, whether they want added luxury to their property or have mobility challenges. They can also be used to transport groceries, laundry and other bulky items as well, taking the physical burden off of people and encouraging more independent living.

There is a product to fit any lifestyle and budget, says Lampe. One of the most popular styles right now is the pneumatic vacuum elevator (PVE). Using only air, PVEs require less space and less energy than the traditional in-home elevator with a shaft.

"The PVE uses the same technology as when you go to the bank and send your money through the cylinder. One of the best features of this product is that construction is minimal. It doesn't need to be in a shaft, and we don't need to dig a pit in the basement," Lampe says. "Technology has come a long way."

These units are also eco-friendly, only using power when going up. Coming down is all gravity. Lampe says some models can connect to your smart home setup as well.

In areas where water might be a concern, the elevators have float switches and homing devices included. "If the unit comes down and hits water, it automatically shuts off. Also, after you take the unit down to the lower level, a homing device brings the unit back up to the highest level after five minutes in the event water could become an issue. It's safest up at the top," Lampe says.

Additional safety measures include light curtains, which can sense if something is operating incorrectly and stop the unit automatically. Doors must also be fully shut for it to run, and if a unit loses power, it can still lower itself to the lowest level so a passenger could exit.

If the design of a home does not allow for a clear passage for the elevator on the interior, an exterior installation will soon be available, says Lampe. Currently, the company has its first beta test exterior elevator attached to the side of its building, and it's expected to be available for residential installs by October.

Lampe says the time from when the product is ordered until installation is approximately two months, and if it's new construction, the elevator is one of the last things installed.

Throughout the process, homeowners can expect to have any question answered by a knowledgeable team of professionals. "We pride ourselves on the longevity of our employees and sales consultants. Most have at least 14 years' experience each, and both myself and Ted are actively involved in the business every day," Lampe says.

Total Access services all of New Jersey and Delaware; Eastern Pennsylvania (out to State College) and Maryland (down to Baltimore). **H&H**



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Creating custom designs to help make work-at-home life easier

Fascella Construction Corporation



by **Amanda Hamm Hengel**

In the construction business, ebbing and flowing trends are typical. What's popular today may not be so popular next year, or even in six months. As a full-service general contracting firm licensed in Pennsylvania and New Jersey with more than two decades in business, Fascella Construction Corporation (FCC) has seen plenty of these trends come and go. But if there's one thing that has seemed to hold steady over the last year and a half, it's the desire to create a desirable space to work from home.

"Homeowners want a nice, clean area to work from that doesn't feel like an office," says FCC Design Coordinator Holly Reinheimer.

To help achieve the ultimate space, FCC creates custom designs for each homeowner's needs. This includes making considerations down to the smallest detail, whether it is a special drawer size for filing or creatively using reclaimed barn siding to aesthetically warm up the space.

The custom design can also help hide equipment, or wires and cords, that are necessary for work from home success, but don't necessarily need to be seen.

Of course, not all homes come with the luxury of a dedicated home office, but FCC can help find the space to make one happen, and one of the first places that is often considered is the basement. It is typically the space that is most under-utilized and sees less traffic than the rest of the house.

While FCC has designed many home offices in basements, a first-floor option that may offer windows and more open space might be more appealing. This may come in the form of converting a formal living room that isn't being used into a space with furniture that can be utilized for office work but still looks great when guests come to visit.

The sitting area in a master bedroom is also a great place to set up a home office, especially since that space doesn't typically get used often anyway.

Whatever space may be available, and whatever requirements may need to be addressed, FCC takes it all into consideration and creates the ideal setup.

And because FCC designs each space to be custom built, there is no worry that the design aesthetic won't fit in with the rest of the house. In fact, many homeowners find custom designs fit better into their homes than other pieces they have purchased.

Naturally, not every homeowner is looking for a home office space to settle into right now. But a finished basement, which adds value to a home by creating more living space, can be just as appealing these days. By simply adding new flooring, drywall and possibly acoustical ceiling tiles to help eliminate upstairs noise, the typical idea of a damp, cobweb-ridden area is completely erased.

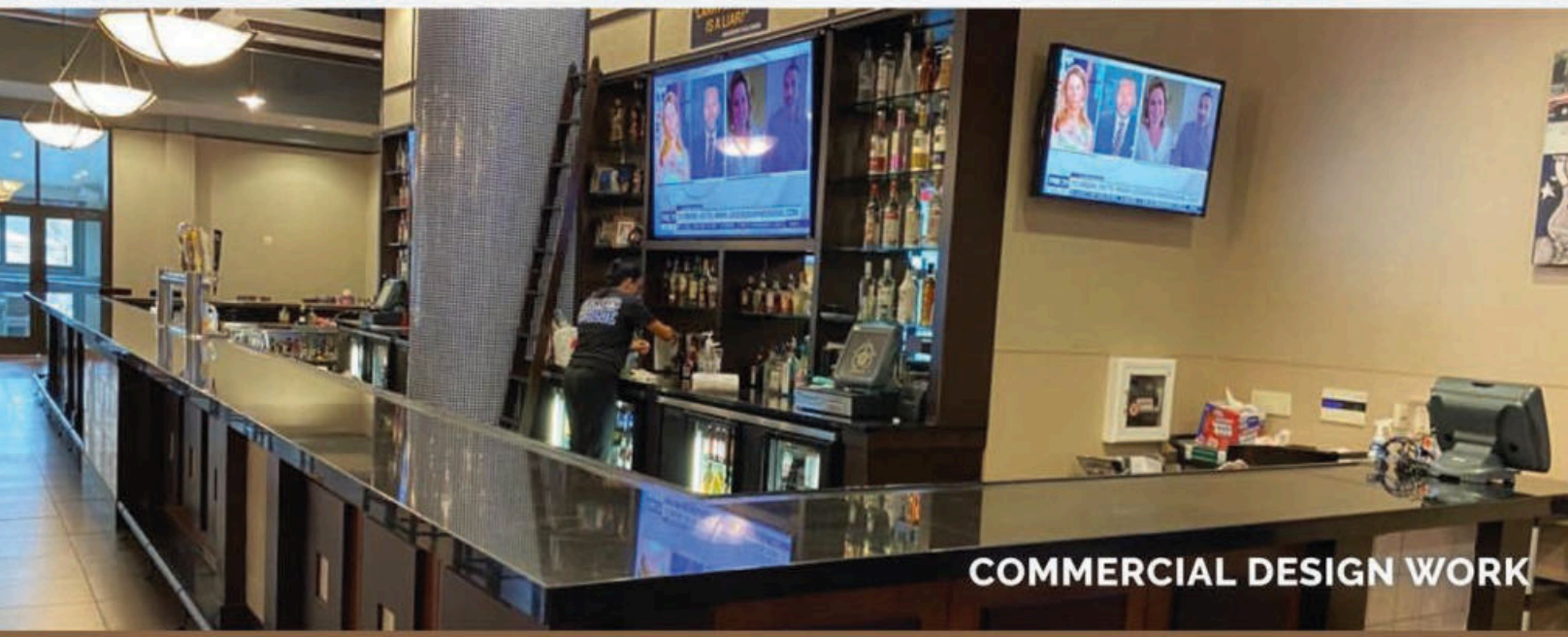
The mechanical systems often found in basements can also be enclosed so they're in a separate room. Storage shelving can also be added to aid with organization, eliminating the common utility shelving and endless piles of boxes often found in basements, and creating a clean, organized space.

Whatever changes a homeowner may be looking for, whether it be a home office integration, basement remodel, kitchen update or bathroom addition, FCC is available to help design the perfect solution. H&H

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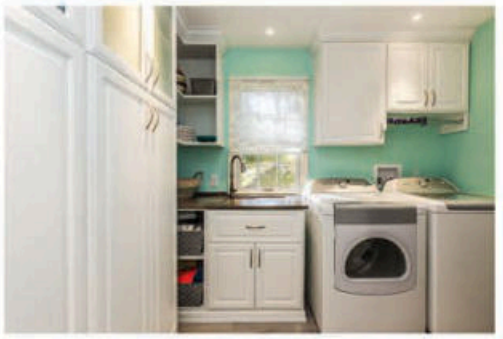
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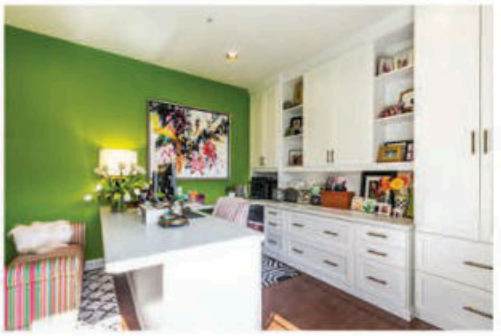
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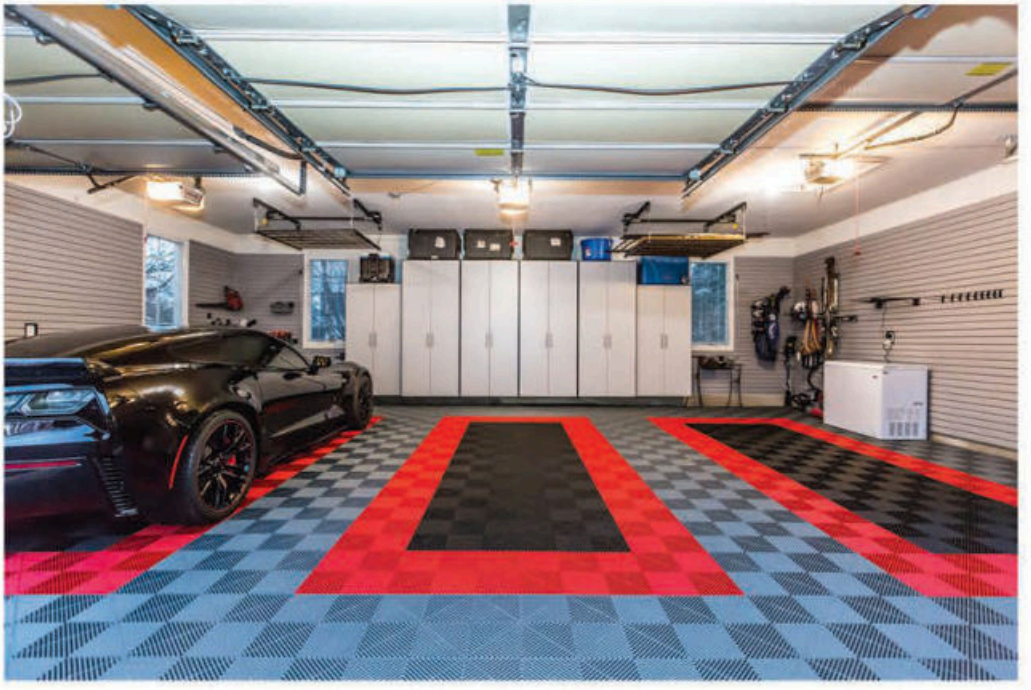
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SUMMER MAY BE OVER, BUT LANDSCAPING EXPERTS SAY THERE IS STILL PLENTY

UNFINISHED BUSINESS



“September and October are much better months [for planting] than April or May, and studies at Rutgers and Cornell have both shown that.”

—Richard Cording Sr., CLC Landscape Design

By Matt Cosentino

EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD HAS THOSE RESIDENTS WITH A GREEN THUMB WHO TRULY ENJOY THE PROCESS OF WORKING ON THEIR PROPERTIES AND CREATING A PICTURE-PERFECT LANDSCAPE, AND THEIR YARDS DESERVEDLY RECEIVE COMPLIMENTS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

Others see it as a chore they must tackle every weekend, but nevertheless recognize that a little effort will go a long way toward boosting curb appeal.

No matter which camp you belong to, know this: The arrival of Labor Day does not mean it is time to lock away your lawn mower and gardening tools for the year just yet. Spring may be the season that the average homeowner most associates with landscaping, but fall is actually a crucial period when it comes to lawn renovations, plantings and maintenance.

“Fall is the time of the year where a property should be evaluated to see what stresses negatively impacted turf and plantings throughout the spring and more likely the summer,” says Michael Pasquarello, degreed landscape architect and vice president of Elite Landscaping. “Proper actions taken now will allow your plants and lawn to have a comfortable winter slumber, ready to explode in spring once the weather breaks.”

House & Home spoke to several area experts to learn more about the important steps to take now to lead to a lush landscape next spring and summer.

Prime time for planting

There are a number of factors why fall is an ideal time for new plantings of all varieties, most notably the weather.

“Most people don’t realize it but September and October are much better months than April or May, and studies at Rutgers and Cornell have both shown that,” says Richard Cording Sr., registered landscape architect and owner of CLC Landscape Design. “The reason is that soil gets cooler, the roots grow deeper and because of the presence of dew virtually every morning and then sunny days and cooler nights, it’s perfect growing weather for lawns, trees and shrubs to set their roots. Also, for new trees and shrubs, it’s less stress going into the winter than it is going into a hot summer because they go dormant.

Top image courtesy of CLC Landscape Design

If you plant a tree in May and then in June we get five 90-degree days in a row, the stress on that plant is way worse than sub-zero temperatures when the tree itself is dormant."

Chris DeMato, owner of Rock Bottom Landscaping & Fencing, adds that the cooler temperatures make transplanting plant material much easier than in the middle of July.

"You can plant at any time, however the biggest concern is transporting plant material from a garden center on a hot summer day," he says. "It burns the foliage in the travel. In the fall season, it's a bit cooler so you don't have to worry too much about that. Also, it's less work on the homeowner's part to water the plant material. So I think generally it's a great time to plant all plants. Garden centers and nurseries are usually re-stocking in the late summer for another burst of business in the early fall, so you get some nice new plant material as well."

For those looking to add bulbs like tulips and daffodils to their flower beds, now is the time to do so, says Cording, so they can get into the ground before it freezes and have the winter to develop strong roots and begin the flowering process for spring. Sam Waddell, owner of SLS Landscaping, agrees and offers other helpful hints for a beautiful garden. "The avid gardener will also start planting chrysanthemum and aster that will offer that splash of color for the fall," he says. "A little bit later into the fall, winter pansies will make an appearance and provide color late in the season and another big push in the early spring."

Caring for the lawn

The hum of lawn mowers and weed wackers is usually part of the soundtrack of summer, but it is recommended to keep up with regular lawn maintenance in autumn as well. The weather will usually dictate when it is time to stop for the year.

"It's important to keep it regular and do not cut it short before the winter," Cording says. "When I was young my dad always had me cut it real short before the winter but that's the worst thing you can do because it robs the plant of all its nutrients, which are in the green part of the plant. So cut it at the same height through Thanksgiving."

He adds that renovations to the lawn during the fall produce the best results because of the weather and also less competition from weeds like dandelions and crabgrass. Experts suggest thatching, aerating and seeding be done in the early portion of the season.

"September through mid-October is ideal as temperatures are on the decline, creating a more favorable environment for cool weather turf varieties such as fescues to germinate," Pasquarello says. "Having this completed by mid-October also ensures the newly germinated lawn blades have sufficient time to mature and harden off prior to winter setting in."

"Lawns will benefit greatly from fall aeration with combined overseeding and an application of lime," adds Scott Nickett, owner of Nickett Landscaping. "This will break up the clay compacted soils and allow airflow down in the soil, allowing for better root growth for new and existing grass."

Leaf cleanup and other tips

Most homeowners realize the necessity of raking and collecting leaves during the fall, but some will try to get away with the task just once or twice. This could have a negative impact on the lawn.

"I think people tend to do one general cleanup and if the leaves continue to fall, they figure they can clean them in the spring," DeMato says. "That's not a great idea because leaves sitting on a lawn throughout the winter will kill the grass, so you want to make sure you do two or three cleanups throughout the fall season and one at the end. You want to keep as many leaves off the grass and around your plant material as possible. When it snows and rains and you have clumps of leaves around your lawn, you're going to see a lot of damage in the spring when everything melts and starts to grow again."

DeMato and Pasquarello both stress that this pertains to any hardscaping as well, because piles of leaves left on patios, for example, can lead to staining once winter weather sets in and the material starts to decay. Leaves in flower beds, however, might actually be beneficial in acting like a mulch, Cording explains. In fact, he is a big proponent of mulching in the fall, even though most people consider it a spring activity.

"You want to protect your plant roots over the winter from freezing and not having moisture, so a good shredded, hardwood bark mulch protects the roots of the plants over the winter and next year it will hold down weeds, and it also insulates it," he says. "Obviously, the ground is still going to freeze, but it keeps it at a more even temperature. Most shrubs in our area have what we call surface roots—they don't grow down real deep, they grow along the surface. So having mulch over the top protects them and helps tremendously. Mulch is one of the most underused tools that horticulturists have."

Some experts suggest that fall is too late to be pruning, but others say selective, careful clipping can be done.

"Fall is a good time to prune back and shape most specimens of evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubbery and perennials," says Diane Marrazzo, outdoor design specialist and co-owner of Marrazzo's North River. "Pruning too late into fall may leave an unsealed wound open, causing the tree to lose moisture through the winter, potentially leading to infection or demise come spring. Deciduous trees can often be pruned well into winter without any consequence come spring. Preparing your landscape for winter also preps it for new growth come spring."

Rose bushes are another example of a specimen that can be pruned, and some people will cut back ornamental grasses.

"All perennials should be cut back once the first couple frosts set in and cause the surface vegetation to die back," Pasquarello says. "I actually leave my ornamental grasses up all winter long as the light tan blades and seed heads still are an added interest. Fall is also a great time for corrective pruning as once the leaves fall off the plants it makes it much easier to see the branching structure and evaluate."

Beginning or planning new projects

Autumn's temperatures also make it perfect for adding hardscaping elements and crews will often stay busy through the end of the year.

"The ground gets a bit harder as the cool weather sets in so it's a little easier to do outdoor projects such as patios," DeMato says. "The diggings and excavating is not as messy during the fall season. We do outdoor projects until the ground freezes, which can be as late as mid-January. As far as materials go, you tend to get a little bit better prices in the fall season. The garden



centers, brick suppliers and fence suppliers tend to discount materials they may want to push out the door before the end of the season."

As homeowners assess their properties following the summer, Nickett points to a number of different projects that can be completed before next season.

"All projects can still be planned in the fall," he says. "We are still booking new plant designs as well as plant renovations, and new hardscape projects like walls, walkways and patios are still being installed before winter. One of our biggest projects that is booked in the fall is lawn drainage remediation. With the decrease in temperatures and less daytime sunlight, the lawns stay wetter for longer. Fixing lawn drainage will result in a useable lawn, better lawn growth, no water in the home/basement and cleaner dog paws."

Even if the actual construction is not being done now, it never hurts to begin the design phase and the process of acquiring any necessary permits from the municipality or homeowner's association. Getting on the landscaping company's schedule before it fills up in early spring is another bonus.

"Spring projects seem to be at a distance, however, with the shortage of materials, pavers, natural quarry stones and lumber [along with] booked schedules, now is the time to consider scheduling with your landscape contractor or building contractor for your desired spring needs," says Marrazzo, who emphasizes that a key element for outdoor projects is coverage. "I always say, shade is a commodity—please plant a shade tree. Dedicate the tree planting for a loved one and commit to the care of that tree for years to come. Or plan for the on-site construction of a pavilion for your outdoor space."

In the end, planning ahead in the fall with an experienced professional can pay major dividends when the warmer weather returns and homeowners want to enjoy their outdoor space.

"We're licensed landscape architects and we have a saying: 'Great landscapes start with great ideas,'" Cording says. "If you want these beautiful landscapes that you see on Instagram and in magazines, it comes with planning and coming up with great ideas. We have several architects who work on every plan to come up with a synthesis of ideas, because we feel that's better than just one person's ideas. Then we obviously follow the town's guidelines for setbacks and lot coverage, etc. Sometimes it takes months and months to do the design and get the permits. If somebody is looking to do a project that requires permitting or designing, you can't start that in the spring—you've got to start now." H&H

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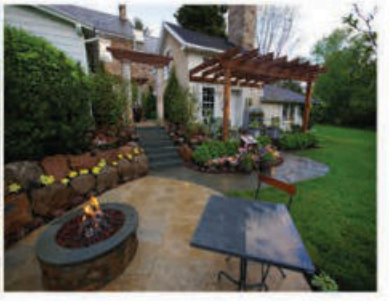
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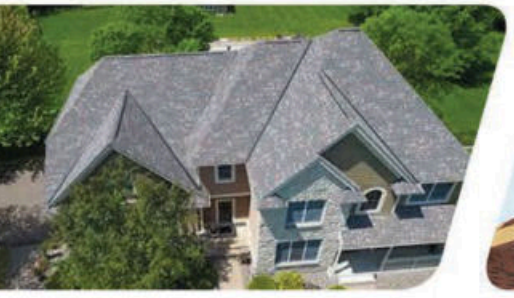
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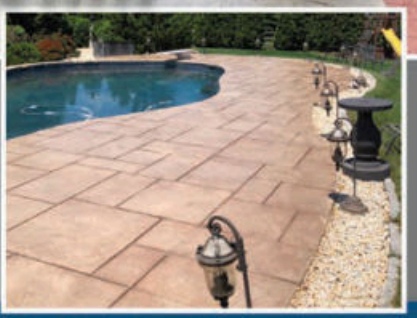
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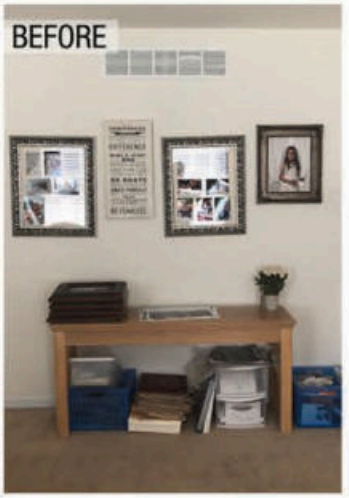


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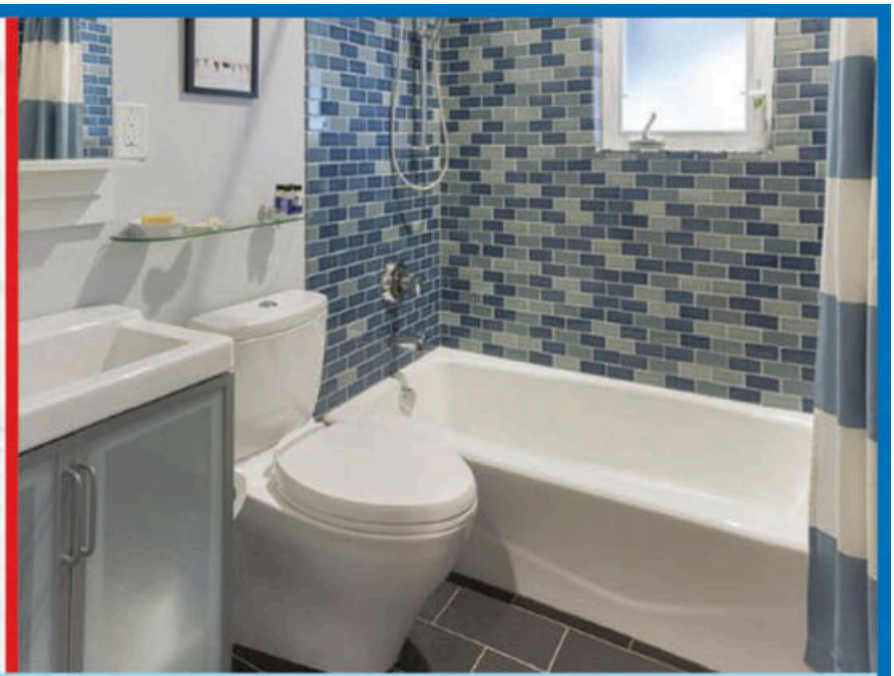
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Heating UP

The key to staying comfortable this winter is making sure your heating systems are running properly.

by **Peter Proko**

WITH THE SUMMER SUN ALL BUT FADED AND OLD MAN WINTER RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER, the cooler temperatures and gloomy weather will see beach blankets replaced by throw blankets as people move indoors for warmer conditions. Which means it's beyond time to find out if your heating or fireplace system is in need of service. Too often an afterthought, homeowners tend to neglect routine maintenance only to come face-to-face with much larger issues that may approach the point of no return.

According to Farrel Shuster, president and owner of Family Heating & Air Conditioning, semiannual checkups would go a long way into preserving your heating system.

"Ninety percent of the failures we see, the heater is going to go in the wintertime and the air conditioner in the summer," he says.

Shuster likens the situation to buying a brand-new car, but still having the need for an oil change to maximize efficiency and avoid more costly repairs down the road.

"For some reason, people don't accept that and try to get away with things and I see it cost them tons more than if they would actually spend the money to make sure the efficiency is there and the parts are not going," he adds. "It's been said that 60% of residential systems are not installed properly."

Jeff Olewine, general manager of C&C Heating & Air Conditioning, also feels preventive maintenance is of the utmost importance.

"Heating and air systems have many components and annual checkups often catch potential breakdowns before they happen in the extreme winter or summer days," says Olewine. "Systems that are not maintained typically have higher rates of failures and issues."

Aside from the age of the system, there are other warning signs for consumers to watch for like frequent breakdowns and a noticeable increase in operating costs. But, when it comes down to determining whether your heating system is in need of being simply repaired or in fact replaced, only an expert will be able to truly tell after examining things and running a diagnostic test.

These days, those replacing their heating systems are increasingly gravitating toward higher-efficiency systems. Over the past decade, HVAC systems have become more technologically advanced and residents are eager to reap the benefits of upgrading their equipment while also keeping rising energy costs down.

"Customers are savvier; they are doing [their own] reading and investigating," says Shuster. "[A new system] is an investment and they want to know how they can reduce their bills and what are some options to make their home more comfortable."

Because there is no one-size-fits-all answer, it is vital for homeowners to seek the professional advice of a skilled and trusted industry professional. A system that is not sized properly, for example, will run inefficiently and cause higher operating costs—even if it just came out of the box.

And with the pandemic putting a renewed focus on indoor air quality, people are looking to improve the conditions inside their homes, especially during the winter months when respiratory viruses are more prevalent. Each home has a certain amount of air changes per hour and that information can be used to calculate how to capture airborne particles to

create the cleanest environment possible.

Olewine says the main things to consider when looking to improve one's indoor air quality are ventilation, purification, filtration and humidity. "There are products and solutions which can improve air quality in different ways and can help provide a healthier environment for you and your family."

Of course, a smooth operating furnace isn't the only way to turn up the heat to help fight off winter's chill. Besides creating a place to cozy up with loved ones, a fireplace also provides wonderful ambiance and more modern systems can easily become an extension of one's décor.



And there are plenty of options available to suit any household or style preference. While wood-burning fireplaces have a nostalgic vibe to them, the overwhelming number of folks looking to either install a new system or replace an existing one are opting for gas, according to Jen Kester of Kester Fireplace.

"We all can appreciate the traditional wood-burning fireplace, but the problem is they are considered a negative for your house because they heat the room you are in while syphoning the heat from the rest of your house," she says.

According to Kester, vent-free gas log sets are extremely popular at the moment. They are designed to go into an approved wood-burning device and provide an economical solution for bringing more heat into the home without changing the look of your fireplace. And energy-conscious consumers will appreciate the fact that they are 99.9% efficient. Conversely, direct-vent gas fireplaces are only around 70% efficient.

For those wondering if they should



Heating Up

replace or convert their existing fireplace system, Kester says you'll want to consider these key factors: efficiency, damage and safety. Whether it is wood, gas or electric, depending on the issue, then it may be most cost-effective to change the system for something more updated.

"Sometimes it is more beneficial to upgrade to a current efficient system, which will reduce costs over time," says Kester. "If needing to replace a bunch of parts on an older system, the cost of those parts could end up being close to the cost of a new system. … It is very important to have your fireplaces serviced routinely" to stay ahead of potential issues that may arise in the long run.

While fireplaces are not just for the living room any longer, and are now commonly found in bedrooms, basements and backyards, Kester says the pandemic has certainly spurred a number of homeowners to install new systems inside the home.

"With more people working from home and converting unused spaces into their new office, having a heat source to be more comfortable during the day has also been popular," she says. "We've had many customers say that they've always wanted to add a fireplace to their home and now is the best time for them to do so."

No matter how you plan to keep warm this winter, having a trusted professional assist you is the best way to ensure you don't get left out in the cold. **H&H**



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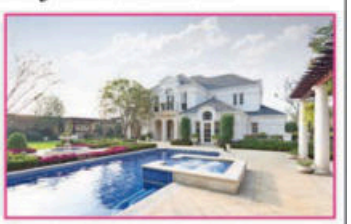
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Let Nickett Landscaping design a lawn drainage system to take away your headache. We are a full service landscape company providing:

- Landscape Design & Installation
- Shrub & Tree Installation
- Outdoor Landscape Lighting
- Lawn & Driveway Drainage
- Patios, Walls & Walkways Design & Installation
- Tree Spraying & Fertilizing
- Lawn Renovation
- Diagnosing Disease & Insect Infestation of Lawn, Trees & Shrubs
- Lawn Maintenance including Mowing, Aeration & Lawn Applications
- Trimming & Pruning of Shrubs
- Spring & Fall Clean-ups
- Mulching & Weeding

Call today for a *FREE* Estimate!

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www.NickettLandscaping.com

Nickett Landscaping, PO Box 1553, Doylestown, PA 18901

We return all calls within 24 hours, ***most*** the same day!

NICKETT LANDSCAPING

DESIGN • CONSTRUCTION • MAINTENANCE

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In Business Since 1982



WARNING: THE SPOTTED LANTERNFLY IS INVADING PENNSYLVANIA

GIVE US A CALL TO FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN FIGHT BACK

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