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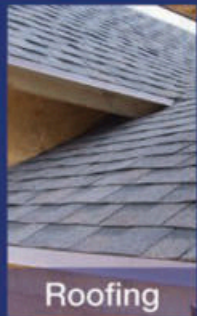
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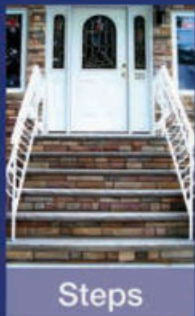
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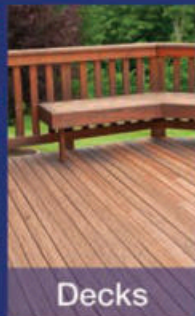
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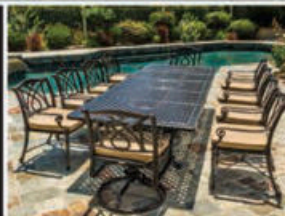
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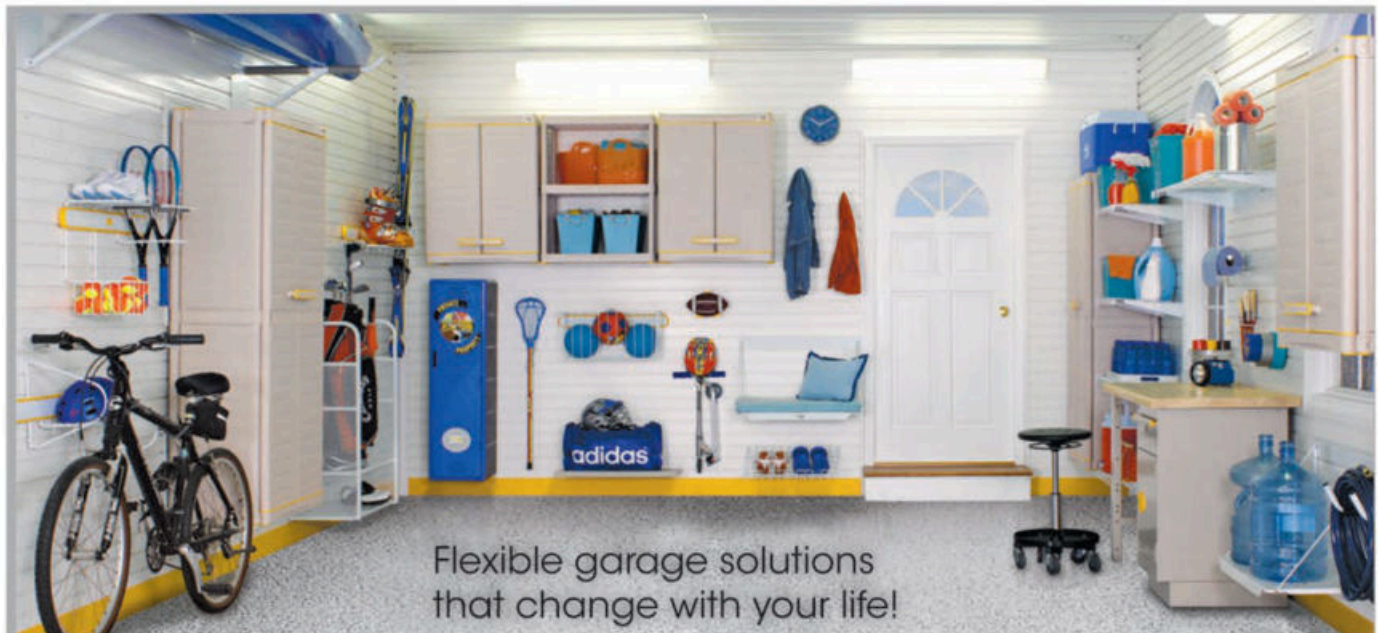
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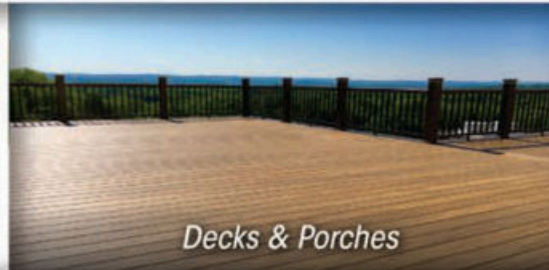
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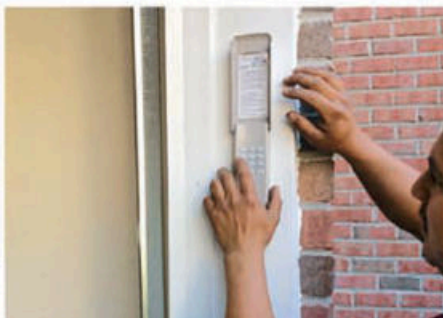


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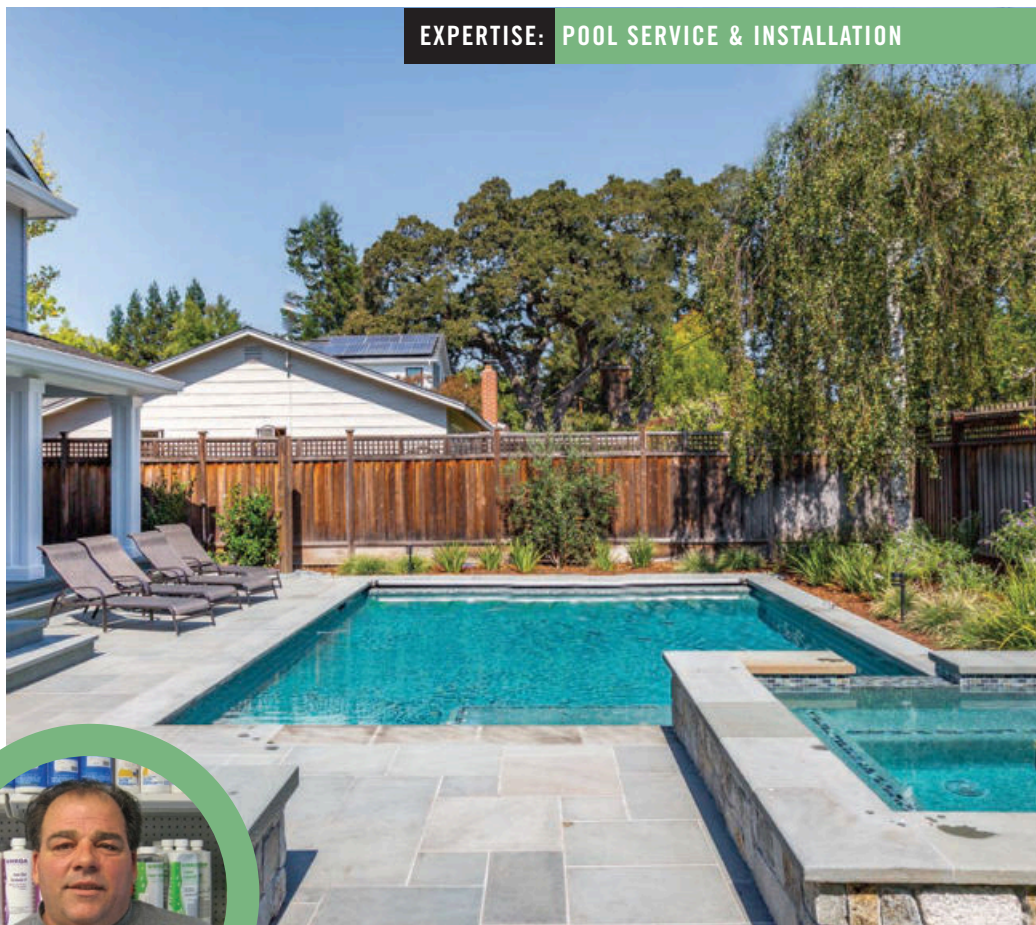
by John Anthony

With warmer temperatures here to stay, folks are beginning to envision those long summer days spent in the backyard enjoying their outdoor living space. And what better way to beat the heat than with a beautiful swimming pool? Walter Beyer, owner of Stardust Pools and Spas in East Brunswick, knows this all too well as his family-owned business has been building and servicing pools for both residential and commercial clients for nearly six decades.

Couple that level of experience with the fact that Stardust services the entire state of New Jersey along with all five boroughs in New York City, is open seven days a week, 365 days a year and it's easy to see why the company has become synonymous with quality and dependability. Their highly trained team of experts puts the customer first and foremost, no matter if they are breaking ground on new construction or updating an existing pool. We spoke with Beyer to find out why it is so important for Stardust to go the extra mile and how recent advancements are making it easier than ever to spend a carefree summer poolside.

As folks begin thinking about opening their pools in the next couple of months, is now the right time to start any upgrade or improvement projects?

If you think about it, May 27 is Memorial Day. Everyone wants to be in their pools, so it leaves you a small window. We open about 250 pools and we have people calling in January and February to get scheduled. Now's the time to be thinking about getting estimates



Walter Beyer, owner

on liner changes, or resurfacing projects—even if you're interested in a new pool.

What can you tell me about the advantages of choosing Fibre Tech surfacing?

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How popular are salt generated systems and what are the benefits?

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need chlorine or to shock ever again. With salt, it doesn't matter if it's rainy, sunny or 100 degrees out; once you set the generator, you will maintain that level. If you are going to have a party and have 50 people at your house, you can hit the sanitize button and shock your pool and create more chlorine throughout. The swimming experience is better, the water is silkier, and it saves money because you are not buying chlorine.

You have been in business for nearly 60 years, to what do you attribute that longevity?

It's a family-owned business and we spend a lot of time with people. We also service the whole state; a lot of companies will only cover the county they are in. We also only sell things in the store that we believe in, things we would have in our own pools. We have nearly 14,000 customers, some dating back 40 years and now their kids are buying pools from us. **H&H**

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Take the Party Outside

Industry professionals provide their take on how to make your outdoor living space ideal for entertaining guests.

By Julie Shannon

With the warmer weather now in the forecast for the next few months, that means time will be spent outdoors (if not already) for many get-togethers with family and friends on the back deck. But do you have everything you need to make the space just right for entertaining your guests—including items to protect your guests and your house from the outdoor elements? *House & Home* asked local experts what features homeowners should have in their outdoor living space to make their house the ideal hangout spot, what items are must-haves for entertaining and at the same time functional, and how to customize every detail to your liking.

Q: *I want to entertain guests this summer. What types of outdoor furniture do you recommend I have in my outdoor living space?*

"Entertaining outdoors involves comfortable chairs and sofas for relaxation and conversation. However, it also means having the correct dining furniture. The number of people you usually entertain and dine with will dictate the outdoor furniture you should choose. Dining tables that extend are very useful if space is an issue. Stacking chairs may be considered if space is a premium. Keep in mind this is dependent on the outdoor space you have. Your outdoor furniture style should be an extension of your indoor style—mid-century modern, traditional, contemporary, etc. The 'pop' can be provided by your cushion fabric choice and vibrant colored throw pillows."

Charles Hessler, executive vice president
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Q: *What hardscaping materials do you recommend for outdoor living spaces? Are there any that have little to no maintenance?*

"Most all the products that are made to be outside will work, from natural stone to Cambridge Pavers with ArmorTec. Cambridge Pavers with ArmorTec will not fade or wear over time so the color and texture will last. Flagstone is probably the lowest maintenance product. All concrete products are very low maintenance, but we do suggest protecting all your outdoor material to keep it looking new and clean. The best way to help you choose what you want is to show you ideas. We have a large display area here at Landis Block & Concrete outside. This helps show the colors in sunlight, and you can get a real feel for what it's actually going to look like. We also have plenty of product guides and photos showing completed jobs. A picture speaks a thousand words."

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Q: *What are the benefits of having an awning for entertaining purposes?*

"Three words can sum up the advantages of adding a canopy to your home: protection, savings and enjoyment. Aside from protecting you and your home's interior draperies and furnishings from the sun's harmful rays, canopies can block between 55 and 77 percent of the summer sun's heat gain, which can help to reduce your home's energy cooling consumption up to 60 percent. Being able to use your deck or patio rain or shine affords you more opportunities to enjoy it and allows you to plan gatherings without concerns about limited indoor space or changes in weather. You'll no longer need to cover your nice outdoor cushions or furniture when rain is expected and you can plan outdoor parties and other get-togethers without having to consider rain dates."

**Russ DiBella, owner
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Q: *How many different types of awnings are there, and what are the differences between them?*

"There are two main types of awnings—retractable and fixed, with a bunch of subtypes under each. Underneath retractable, you have the self-supporting, projecting awning that most people think of when they hear 'retractable awning,' but you also have a variety of other shade products, like pergola awnings and curtains. Within the fixed category, there is even more variety. Most people think of patio and entrance canopies in this category, but there are also window awnings, valances, porch and deck awnings, and more. Beyond differences in location and function, there are wide varieties in style, price and durability within these categories. For example, within door awnings, aluminum construction is inexpensive and incredibly durable, while a fabric awning on a custom frame offers a step up in style."

Charlie Dwyer, marketing manager
Globe Canvas Products
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Q: *I am interested in having a fire feature installed in my outdoor living space. How do I go about choosing the best one, and are they still a popular feature?*

"Outdoor fire is hotter (no pun intended) than ever. Not only does it create a warm inviting atmosphere, but it will prolong your outdoor season as well. I think with most people, sitting in front of a fire has a very calming and sometimes nostalgic affect on you. It's a time for sharing, laughter and reflection. There is something about a fire that can wash away the day's effects and one of the more meaningful items you can add to your outdoor space. Your choices of wood, gas or electric depends on your space. For instance, you don't put a wood burning fire pit on a wood deck. You can go as big as an outdoor fireplace or smaller like a portable gas fire table or patio heater. Consider your space and how you are going to use it. If you want easy with no fuss, go with gas. The amount of space you have is always a consideration when making your choices. Map it out so you don't overcrowd or underwhelm."

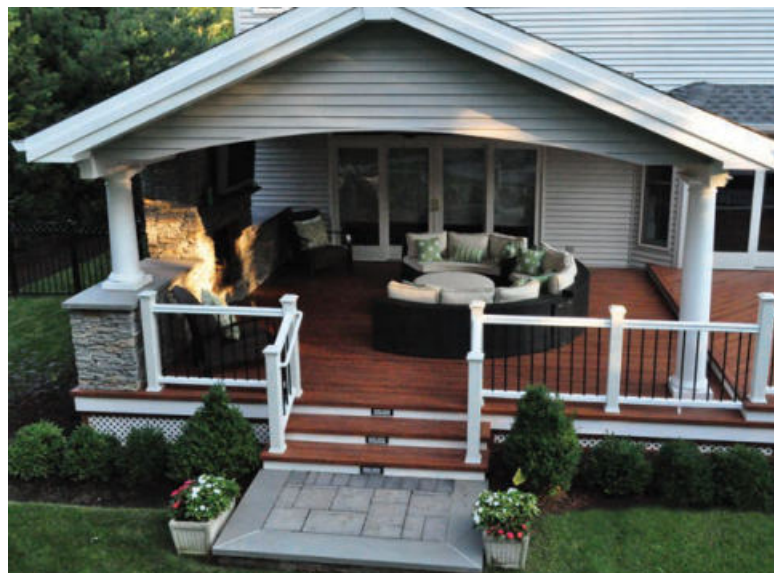
Kristen Fiorito, outdoor oasis designer
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Take the Party *Outside*

Q: *Is a deck roof a must-have item for entertaining guests?*

"A roof is a very functional item on a deck and is an asset to your outdoor living area. If you want to entertain, it has a lot of benefits. First, the ambient temperature under the roof on a warm day is generally about five to 10 degrees cooler than the ambient temperature on a deck without a roof because of the sun. It allows you to be on the deck when you have a partly drizzly day and still have a party. It allows you to be out on your deck on the hottest day and you'll be comfortable. It also extends the season much more into the winter. You can also customize your roof once it's installed by adding nice columns, electric and ceilings fans to name a few options."

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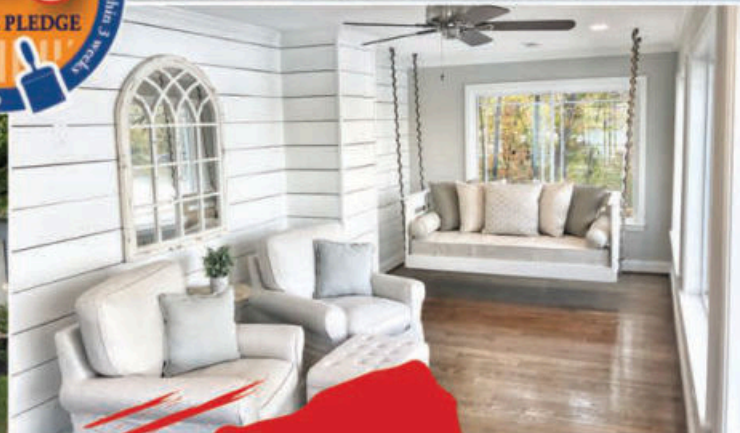
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TUNING UP YOUR

LANDSCAPE

FOR SUMMER

As the warmer days approach, here's what you need to know to help your investment last through the season.

BY DANIEL SEAN KAYE

Getting plants in the ground and a hardscape installed is all well and good, but between harsh weather and Mother Nature doing what she does, there's a lot you need to think about if you want your outdoor oasis to make it to the fall. *House & Home* spoke with industry pros for their best recommendations for a healthy summer landscape.

Softscape issues

Softscapes are the living elements of your landscape design—and the things most at risk during the harsh summer weather.

"Landscapes are no different than human beings. Proper water, food and preventative supplements will ensure your landscape to thrive throughout the season," says Michael Pasquarello, degreed landscape architect with Elite Landscaping.

He says that irrigation systems should be evaluated and adjusted annually to adapt to plant growth and any landscape additions. Also, fertilizer is very important. "Plants should be fed at least once a season to promote healthy growth. Insecticide and fungicide applications should be scheduled and performed at the times of the season when landscapes are stressed," he says.

On the surface, mulching and weed prevention

Image courtesy of KM Gardens Inc.







TUNING UP YOUR LANDSCAPE FOR SUMMER

are top priority.

“Overall, landscapes need mulching in the spring for weed suppression, water in dry times and the occasional weeding,” says Scott Silberman, vice president of KM Gardens, adding to make sure weeds are removed before they go to seed.

“Mulch should be tilled over, existing mulch re-distributed and mulched beds should get a top dressing,” says Diane Marrazzo of Marrazzo’s North River. “Weed seeds begin to sprout so a generous application of a weed preventative will keep maintenance at a low (if applications are consistently applied monthly). If you did not prune your specimens in the fall, as the new growth pushed forth, clean up now or you may need to wait again for many specimens.”

To avoid plant stress, make sure you water when it’s hot, says Chris Bianciella, owner of K&C Land Design & Construction. “For a good installation, space the plants correctly to allow them to grow into their space properly. And remember mulch keeps plants moist so cultivate it so dense and compacted mulch doesn’t impact root growth.”

Some homeowners may feel inclined to over-manicure their lawns, but a professional landscaping company can provide just what

a yard needs, when it’s needed.

“For grass, cut it higher after July 4 until Labor Day,” begins Andrew Savinson of Creative Landscapes. “For plants, prune and feed them at least once a year. Beds should be edged and mulched about once every 18 months, and use a double-shredded hardwood bark mulch and not dyed woodchips.”

“Have a professional touch your property at least once a month,” says Steve Compton, general manager, CKC Landscaping. “We’ve had unseasonable rainfall the last few years and professionals know the care your trees, shrubs and plant beds need. People want a ‘set it and forget it’ landscape but things don’t work that way. You need to pay attention. A professional knows the right mowing, fertilizing and care needed.”

Hardscape care

Patios and walkways can’t be overlooked and should have their condition evaluated before summer, both for safety and aesthetics.

“Mid-spring to summer, check for areas of settling or areas that need to drain or are heaving or cracked. Look for creaky boards, pointing issue, etc.,” says Compton. “If you don’t nip it in the bud, if you don’t repair or replace, a minor service call now could turn into a thousand-dollar repair next year. It’ll only get more damaged.”

“For your hardscape, general maintenance and upkeep makes all the difference,” says Bianciella. “Paver patios may just need a simple power washing. This prevents deterioration. A little attention after the install is all it needs.” However, as time goes on different

**PATIOS AND WALKWAYS
CAN’T BE OVERLOOKED
AND SHOULD HAVE THEIR
CONDITION EVALUATED
BEFORE SUMMER, BOTH FOR
SAFETY AND AESTHETICS.**

hardscapes require different things. “Weed growth means movement of the hardscape, so after a strong washing, add new polymeric sand. Also, using paver cleaners and regrouting masonry patios lead to longer lifespans for your hardscape.”

Savinson warns homeowners against power washing these surfaces on their own.

“Remember that for anything you want to have improvement for, the best thing is to have a professional take a look at it,” says Savinson. “Sometimes a power washing can be good but that depends on whether water has gotten into the hardscape and has done damage. Make sure you redo the mortar.”

Clean, re-sand, seal—these are the main ideas Pasquarello suggests. “A high-pressure scrubber with spinning jets will remove all surface discoloration and joint material (weeds,

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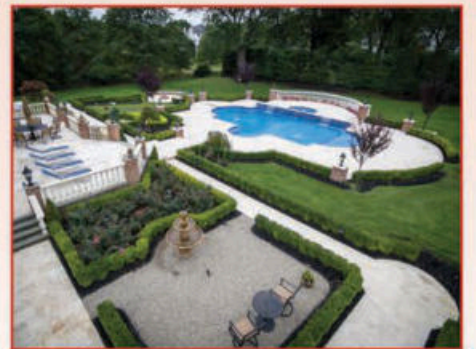
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moss, soil, etc.),” he says. Chemical cleaners then open the pores of the concrete to allow better absorption of a sealer. In addition to adding polymeric sand to replenish joints, a water-based sealer applied to enhance the overall color of the paver also closes off pores to limit additional staining.

And to make your area even more special and functional, update your hardscapes by adding fire, water features and/or landscape lighting, says Silberman.

Final thoughts

For things to keep in the back of your mind, each expert has some suggestions.

“Don’t forget to water your trees through hot and dry weather, particularly ones like dogwoods that prefer to be in the shade,” says Savinson. “They appreciate a good soaking every three to four weeks.”

“If you have deck issues, call a deck professional,” says Compton. “They’ll know if you need to just replace [it] or do something bigger. They’ll fix things but can also advise you on how to tighten things up, when you’ll need a sealer and how doing certain things today will help your deck last longer and look better. You need to maintain things to protect your investment.”

Bianciella says there are some great new hardscaping trends including use of porcelain tile. “The oversized tiles have a nice look and can handle winters. It’s non-porous and never weathers.”

Silberman cannot stress enough the importance of adding native plants to your garden. “Natives attract tons of wildlife including birds, bees (not all are bad), and butterflies. The removal of invasive plants helps contribute to a healthy ecosystem especially when replaced with natives. A good example is Burning Bush. People love this plant for its vibrant fall color yet it is

a highly invasive species that reseeds everywhere and can completely take over, crowding out other more beneficial plants.” He says other options, such as Aronia (Chokeberry), will provide equally stunning fall color with the added benefit of having berries that birds love to feast on and will not take over the ecosystem.

Marrazzo takes all this to another level. “When you get into your garden, go with love in your heart and the plants will be receptive to what you are feeling and speaking,” she says. “Be gracious with your intentions when in the garden. Your garden reaps what you sow! Pleasant music while gardening is heard by your trees and plants ... and lawn too. Choosing happiness while gardening will benefit your chore!”

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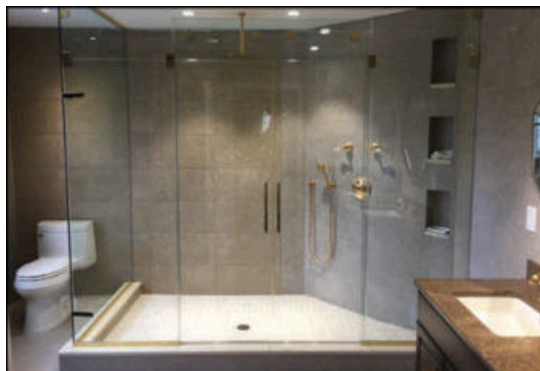
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What appealed to you about this industry?

I love interacting with people and this industry gives me an opportunity to not only interact with them, but to also get a chance to know them on a more personal level. Helping them choose a garage door becomes much easier when you get to know a person a little better and act as a consultant rather than just a sales person.

What has been the biggest obstacle to being a woman in business?

As a woman in the construction industry, I've seen my fair share of prejudice. Honestly, there are still individuals that give

me a sideways glance when they ask about a product or have a question about service or installation. But I win them over when I demonstrate to them that I can answer any question they pose and provide them with educated suggestions. By the time we're through with our discussion, they no longer view me as just a woman, but as their peer.

Who has been your biggest inspiration?

There have been so many inspirations in my life. From my parents who showed me the importance of a good work ethic and honesty in dealing with people, to my husband whose acute sense for business has taught me so much.

How do you define "success"?

I've had the pleasure of leading this company for over five years and I'm in as love with it today as I was when we first discussed branching our residential business out from the main business.

What is something you can't live without?

I'm sure that I'm not the first one with this answer, but coffee is something I can't live without.

How do you unwind after a stressful day?

I enjoy spending time with my family. I cherish when we are able to sit around a table to share a meal and a conversation. It really helps me take the edge off of a stressful day. **H&H**

Jo-Ann SERILLO

PRESIDENT, DOOR WORKS, INC.



How long have you been in this industry?

I have been working in the garage door industry for over 15 years. I started out working in the residential sales and marketing departments of our parent company, New Jersey Door Works. It started out as a part-time opportunity for me as I was just helping out in the family business. Over time, I found out that I really enjoyed the work and acquired a real affinity for the residential side of the garage door business. When we decided to open a separate location for our residential division, it was a very natural transition for me to lead that initiative. I would have never guessed that my career would have taken this path, but I'm very glad that it did.

Did you have another career before this one?

Yes. I actually began my career in the fashion industry. I was able to work my way up to a management position in a notable company. During my time there, I developed a very diverse skill set including project management and marketing. When I was asked to take a position at New Jersey Door Works, I was able to utilize those various skill sets that I acquired early on in my career. In an interesting aside, I never really left the fashion industry. One of my first tasks when I began working for New Jersey Door Works was to design and choose the shirts and uniforms that our crews wore in the field. And I still do that to this day. I guess you can say that my career has come full circle, but not in a traditional way.

Door Works, Elmwood Park, N.J., (201) 794-1234, DoorWorks.net



What is the most rewarding thing about what you do?

The most rewarding thing about building a pool for someone is seeing the end result. After all is said and done people love their pools. It brings families together and much happiness is spent around a pool. Families and friends gather to celebrate graduations, birthdays and holidays all in their backyard. Seeing customers happy and enjoying their pool means a lot to me. Our customers become part of the family when they buy a Nicholas Pool.

How do you define success?

Success is to be able to walk into work every day knowing you are making a difference in people's lives. We have been through many difficult years and we were able to keep our business and employees. We invested back into the company where many would have thrown in the towel. Being named by *NJ Monthly Magazine* as a Top 25 Leading Woman Entrepreneur in 2014 was a highlight and cemented the notion of success for me. Giving back is also very important and goes with the theme of success. If you have gotten to the point of being able to help others, you should. The ETTWomen "Power of Connections 360 Conference" is something that allows me to give back. I have partnered with the ETTWomen to help women entrepreneurs. The biannual conference helps fund women who want to start their own business. The profit is used to mentor, educate, train and support women to be successful entrepreneurs.

What is something you can't live without?

I cannot live without my phone. Having my phone allows me to be in contact with my staff, my customers and my business partners. I am able to view emails, send responses and get things done throughout the day. It helps keep things moving along. It also helps me keep in contact with relatives all over the world through social media.

How do you unwind after a stressful day?

My favorite way to unwind after a stressful day is to sit by the pool with a glass of wine, enjoying good conversation with my husband while watching the kids jump in and enjoy the pool. We open the pool in April and close in October, it is the perfect opportunity to bring everyone together at the end of the day to reconnect, have fun and relax. **H&H**

Theodora SERGIOU

PRESIDENT, NICHOLAS POOLS



How long have you been in this industry?

I have been in the pool and spa industry for over 30 years. I began at age 16 when my parents opened up our first store; however from my birth I have been visiting pool construction sites with my mother to bring parts, lunch or paperwork to my father. Nicholas Pools is now celebrating 50 years in the pool business.

Did you have another career before this one?

When I graduated with my MBA degree I left the U.S. and moved to Cyprus where I was a professor of marketing and management at a university. When I [came back] to the U.S., I returned to my position at Nicholas Pools. My parents wanted to retire and my husband, Sotiris and I purchased the business from them 14 years ago. Five years ago I began teaching at Georgian Court University as an adjunct professor. Now I am also the internship coordinator of the school of business at GCU.

What appeals to you about this industry?

The pool and spa industry is very unique. You have the power to transform an ordinary backyard into a magical place that brings the family together; a place where people will go so that they can put their stress behind them and swim the night away. A pool or spa allows families to spend time together having fun, exercising or relaxing. Building people's dreams is a wonderful experience.

What has been the biggest obstacle to being a woman in business?

Work/life balance has been my biggest obstacle. As a mother of three it has been challenging to give my full attention to my family. The business is seasonal and at times it has been difficult to leave the store to attend school or sporting events. There were many times I arrived late for a special celebration because I had to take care of a customer who was walking in as I was about to walk out the door. People do not realize how quickly time goes by and how important it is for us to make an effort to be there for our children.

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Spring is the Perfect Time to Organize your Cluttered Garage

When it comes to cleaning, most people focus on kitchens, bathrooms, closets and basements, overlooking a key component of the home: the garage. It's the primary entry for the majority of homeowners, family and friends. Yet, it's often a catch-all for bikes, sports gear, tools and more. With so much foot traffic, clutter looks unsightly, and creates safety concerns and stress as well. A well-organized garage improves access to your home, and you wind up with more efficient storage space than you realized you had while making this year's cleaning easier than ever.

Les Hutton of GarageTek of North and Central New Jersey says a garage makeover can make a big difference. "Removing clutter is at the top of everyone's list, and the garage is a great place to start," he says.

"Homeowners need to easily locate their seasonal items during this transitional time, when summer items are still being used, but also to get fall gear ready—rakes, leaf blowers, etc., as well as golf and fishing gear. Kids will also need to be able to reach their toys and easily put them away after using them."

GarageTek can help you take a fresh look at your garage and make it truly functional. "As part of our garage makeover services, we will help customers assess their space, figure out what should be kept and what they should get rid of," says Hutton. "Once we know what items are staying, we present and deliver cost-effective organization and storage solutions."

GarageTek offers flexible systems of hooks, shelving, cabinets and fixtures to get used items—

like bikes, beach equipment and tools—up and out of the way. Special hooks, racks and baskets are available for everything from surf boards to scooters to golf clubs. Hutton

says, "Imagine getting ready for practice and going to

a dedicated spot in the garage where all of the gear is safely stowed. It removes stress and gets you out the door in a better mood and on time."

He adds that an organized garage is much safer for kids, who are often injured when they trip over something left on the floor. "We help make the garage a safer place for the entire family to use."

And homeowners don't have to do the whole garage at once. You can set small goals, like organizing one wall at a time, or getting the car(s) to fit in. "We have an endless choice of designs and solutions that can address your needs and fulfill your goals throughout the year," Hutton says.

Homes with a clean, organized garage create a real wow factor for visitors—and potential buyers—who see this unexpectedly finished, clutter-free space as a positive reflection on the entire property. GarageTek of N&CNJ recently earned the coveted Angie's List Super Service Award, reflecting exemplary service to members. "We are extremely grateful to our thousands of satisfied customers, including many Angie's List members, for their continued support over the past 13 years," says Hutton. **H&H**

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SOME OF US HERE IN THE NORTHEAST enjoy the changes that come with all of the different seasons, but others just don't want to deal with temperatures in the 20s or the threat of a blizzard every other week during the colder months.

For those who are counting down the days until spring, nothing beats the winter blues—other

than a trip to the islands—quite like a visit to Sequoia Out Back's stunning showroom. It is the perfect spot to forget about the snow and slush on the ground, plan a backyard oasis and daydream about the warmer days ahead.

The 30,000-square-foot showroom has no comparison on the East Coast, and as impressive as it seems on the company website,

it has to be experienced in person to get the full effect. That's why it comes as no surprise that some people journey hundreds of miles just to see it.

"People will come to check our showroom out just for the experience," owner John Keller says. "There's nothing like it anywhere, so it's worth the trip for sure. No one who makes a long trip to get

here is ever disappointed.

"This is the best time to come see what we have to offer. This is when we have the most inventory of furniture, and if you're building a deck or patio you want to give yourself enough lead time so you can enjoy it when the warmer weather arrives."

Keller has vast experience in the outdoor arena dating back to

his days as a deck builder. In 1998, he opened Sequoia Supply—one of the premier retailers of decking and railing products in the country—and he added Sequoia Out Back 10 years later to offer everything imaginable for outdoor living.

That includes beautiful, high-end furniture from popular brands like Gensun, Tropitone, Winston, Lane Venture, Pride, Woodard and many more. Fire pits and outdoor kitchens continue to be in demand for outdoor living spaces, and all of the necessary components can be found at Sequoia, such as a full line of grills and smokers. No outdoor space is complete without a shade element, and Sequoia has you covered with pergolas that not only add relief from the sun but an attractive design element as well.

Dozens upon dozens of displays are set up in the showroom complete with decking, railings, furniture and a faux-blue sky overhead to give customers a genuine feeling about the products.

“When we set out to build this showroom, our goal was really to make it life-like,” Keller says. “The displays are the size of the decks you would build in your backyard so you can get a good idea of how it’s going to look and feel on your own house. We also have all the amenities and furnishings once your deck or patio is finished.”

Keller and his team have

worked tirelessly over the winter to update all of the displays and ensure the latest and greatest products on the market are being showcased. In terms of decking, Sequoia works with all of the leading manufacturers—such as Trex, TimberTech, Wolf, Zuri and Fiberon—who continue to develop different styles and dazzling colors.

“

People will come to check our showroom out just for the experience.

There’s nothing like it anywhere, so it’s worth the trip for sure.”

— John Keller, owner

Keller is also excited about the new composite boards being offered that are closer in price to pressure-treated wood. “Although it’s the opposite in this area, across the country pressure-treated wood is still by far the leading product used for decking,” he says. “So Trex and TimberTech came out with new composites at a lower price point that we have installed in our showroom. In addition to being aesthetically pleasing, homeowners are drawn to these composites because there’s a lot less maintenance than with pressure-treated wood.”

Sequoia welcomes customers of every type, from those looking to start a DIY project to those who have been sent by their contractor to make product selections. A knowledgeable and friendly staff is on hand to answer any and all questions.

“It’s not really a showroom for browsing,” Keller says. “Most people need help and we are here to guide each one every step of the way. Backyards are big right now—everybody wants to be outside. We want to help them get the relaxing space they desire.” **H&H**



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You already know that adding a swimming pool to your backyard is going to take it to a whole new level of entertainment. You can imagine yourself not only swimming with friends and family but also relaxing poolside with a great book or dining al fresco on those warm summer nights. Even the idea of enjoying the view of your pool from inside of your home adds an element of excitement. But you may be wondering what you can do to make your pool even more spectacular. After all, you're not looking for a run-of-the-mill, cookie-cutter style pool. You want something unique.

The fact is, there are more options for your pool than ever before. Gone are the days when a pool was built in a standard rectangle with basic features. These days everything from the pool shape to the added features can be custom designed and built to your exact specifications.

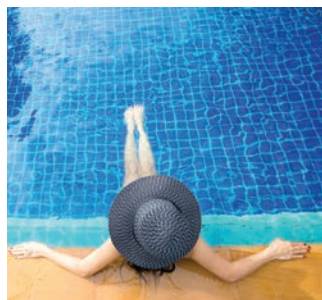




All the Features

Oftentimes, it's the added features that really make a pool spectacular. One way to take your luxury pool to the next level is to add a sundeck, says Don Panetta of D. Panetta Contracting. A sundeck (which has also gone by names like a "baja deck," "tanning ledge" or "sun shelf") is a custom feature that provides an area where you can be "in the pool" without being fully submerged. Some homeowners want this ledge created large enough to fit one or more lounge chairs, others are happy with just a small ledge where they can sit or have young children play while watching older children swim.

"You might also consider adding a custom-built grotto, which is a private cave area built behind a waterfall," Panetta



adds. "It's all up to a person's preference of what they want to add to make their home into a vacation resort."

Dominic DiCesare of Blue Haven Pools by Calvitti says that automation is another important luxury design option. Homeowners want the ease of being able to control their pool features at the push of a button. This includes not only the automated pool cover but also the fire and water features around

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the pool. Everything can be turned on or off with ease.

“Homeowners might consider water features like fountains, jets, cascading waterfalls and more,” says DiCesare. “There are so many features you can add to your pool; Anything you can dream.”

Lighting is also important, says Mike McCool, general manager of Swim-Mor Pools. Not only the lighting within the pool but also around it. After all, you want your space to be highly functional, even after the sun goes down.

Many homeowners are opting for LED lighting that can be controlled from their smartphone. Everything from color-changing lighting to different lighting set-ups for different zones can really help take your

pool area to the next level, says McCool.

“Just keep in mind that the more features you add to your pool, the more complex the design becomes—and that takes time,” adds McCool. “We complete 3D digital designs that help our customers see exactly what their pool is going to look like.”

Vacation Inspiration

The backyard vacation trend—or “staycation”—is as hot a trend as ever, says McCool, adding that there is no doubt that many homeowners get their inspiration for pool ideas after visiting resorts in places like Mexico or the Caribbean.

Rich Cording Sr., owner and founder of CLC Landscape Design

agrees, adding that his company has designed and built some unique pools which were inspired by vacations. One pool that CLC recently constructed was meant to look like it was “floating” with infinity edges around all sides.

Of course, homeowners might also consider an infinity edge on just one end, too. This special feature (also sometimes referred to as a “vanishing edge” or a “zero edge”) means water flows over the edge, creating a visual effect of water with no boundary. They’re quite popular at high-end resorts.

“We’ve also designed and built a pool shaped like a horse’s head and another like a guitar,” Cording says. “You can get really creative with a custom design. Another feature from a resort that homeowners like is a swim-up bar with stools where they can share a drink with friends or family.”

In addition, adding



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Image courtesy of D. Panetta Contracting, LLC

gas-powered fire torches or urns around the pool can really take it to that resort-like level, DiCesare adds. It creates a sense of ambiance and wow factor that you wouldn't get with an ordinary pool.

The Total Package

While the pool will surely be the showpiece of your outdoor design, it's not just the immediate pool area that matters. Today's homeowners are looking for the total

package. That means they want an outdoor space that has all of the amenities.

"It's the complete space," DiCesare says. "Homeowners don't just want the pool itself—they want all the surrounding amenities that makes the space even more enjoyable."

This includes add-ons like an outdoor kitchen, pool house or pavilion. Homeowners might also want game areas such as a putting green or a spot to play horseshoes

or quoits. DiCesare says that today's homeowners are looking to get as much use out of their backyards as possible.

Cording agrees, adding: "Homeowners today want it all. They want an outdoor space that is going to keep them outside all weekend so that they can enjoy time with their friends and family to the fullest. It's not really about the space itself as it is the memories that are made there." **H&H**



RESOURCES

Blue Haven Pools by Calvitti

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BlueHaven.com

CLC Landscape Design

Ringwood, N.J.
(973) 839-6026
CLCDesign.com

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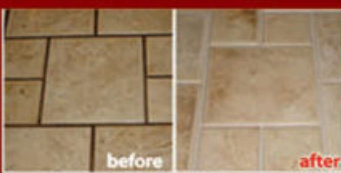
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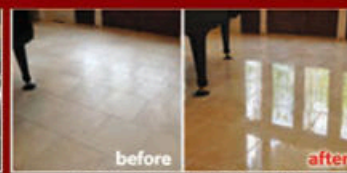
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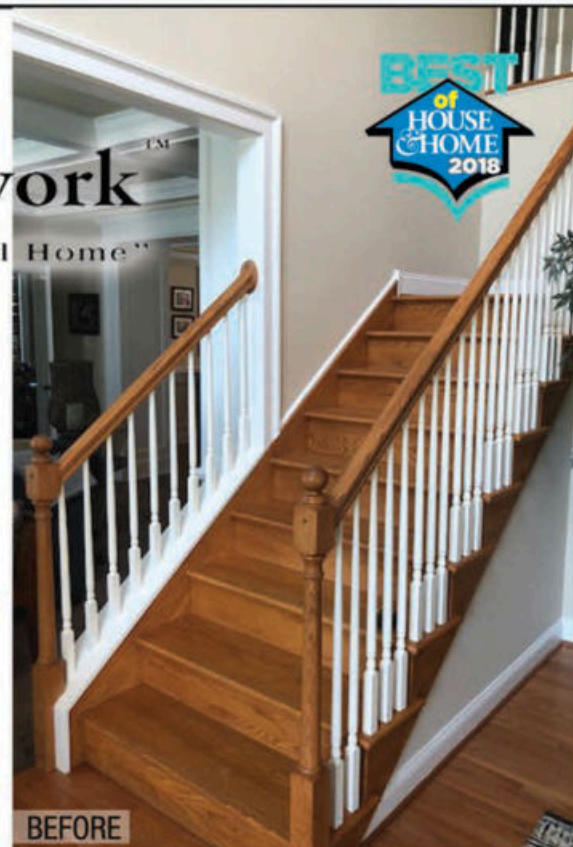
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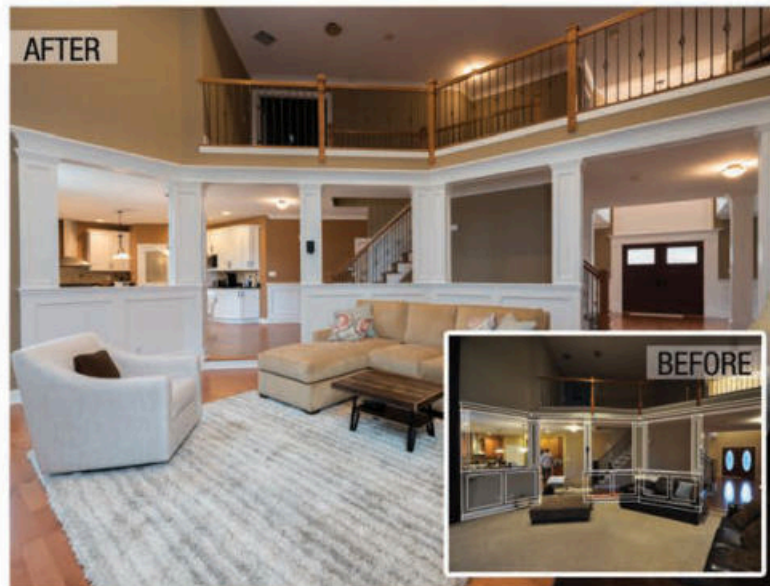
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