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Central Jersey

Best of HOUSE & HOME

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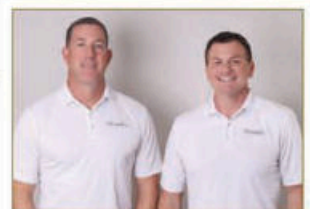
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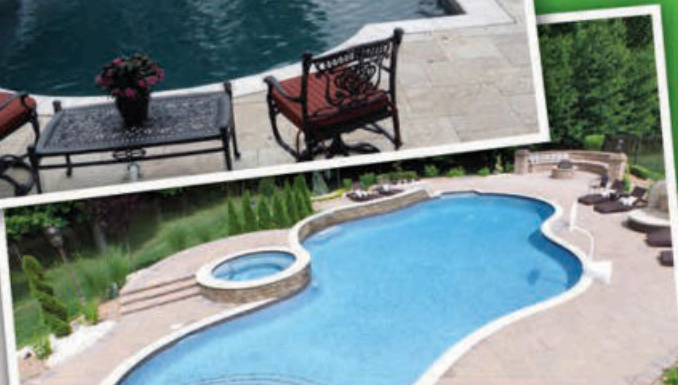
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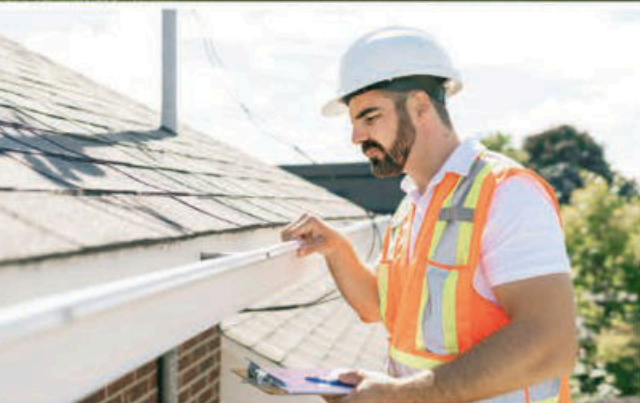
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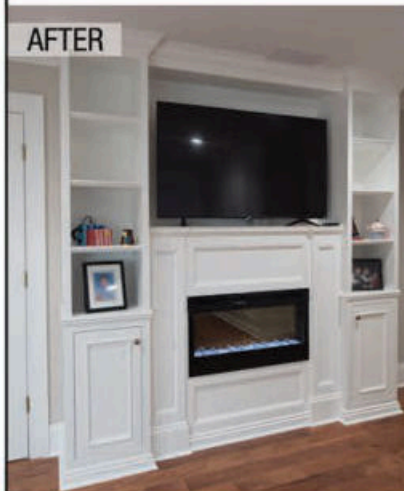
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DID YOU KNOW?

Buzzworthy industry news



The National Kitchen & Bath Association

(NKBA) recently announced the relocation of its corporate headquarters from Hackettstown, New Jersey, to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

“Why Bethlehem? It’s an emerging ‘creative class’ city with a rich history, world-class colleges

and universities, a diverse population, the amazing Hotel Bethlehem to house out-of-town guests, and access to major transportation hubs,” says Bill Darcy, NKBA CEO. “We look forward to joining and contributing to the dynamic Bethlehem community while providing an exceptional work environment for our employees. Our global reach connects some of the largest kitchen and bath manufacturers, retailers and design professionals around the world and we are anxious to introduce them to the beauty and unique culture embedded in the Lehigh Valley.”

TRENDS & TIPS

Advice on what’s new and notable

The world of furniture is constantly evolving and the folks at Baker Interiors Group and Baker Furniture are staying ahead of the curve by championing seasonally inspired luxury fabrics to help warm up interiors with sophisticated and timeless styles. In particular, Anissa Leatherman, product manager, textiles at Baker, is seeing a few trends this year that are sure to make an impression now and in the seasons ahead:

Performance-based faux leather: The onset of colder months is not deterring people from spending time outside the way they used to. As everyone spends more time at home, quality pieces of outdoor furniture have risen to the top of the investment list.

Boucle cloth: As one of the most sought-after fabrics in the industry today, boucle provides the perfect harmony of luxury and comfort.

Neutral linens: Synonymous with laidback luxury, neutral linens are timeless and effortlessly elevate any indoor or outdoor space.

Leatherman remarks that the weave details and subtle nuances within these cloth textures are highly important as texture continues to be a high priority for clientele. She’s also seeing the appeal of layering varying textures to build interest and dimension—a velvet with boucle, with chenille, with leather, and so on. As we approach the new year, Leatherman anticipates even more interest in outdoor performance fabrics, as well as a step away from all-neutrals with whispers of dynamic jewel tones.



THE BUZZ

A look at what has the industry talking

The folks over at HGTV recently highlighted the 12 hottest interior design trends that are sure to be popular decor options for some time to come. Here’s a quick look at what homeowners should keep an eye out for:



- *Sculptural art to add design elements to your living space*
- *Checkerboard patterns, especially with rugs and bed linens*
- *Smoky glassware*
- *Warm-toned marble and natural stone like travertine*
- *Curved silhouettes on statement-making furnishings*
- *Cottagecore florals in napkins, pillow covers and more*
- *Ruffled or waved design elements for tablescape design*
- *Dark woods*
- *Brushstroke upholstery in neutral, tonal hues*
- *Saturated jewel tones*
- *Earthenware vases*
- *Chocolate accents*



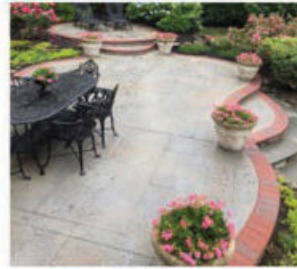
For more info on how to incorporate these trends into your interior design, visit HGTV.com



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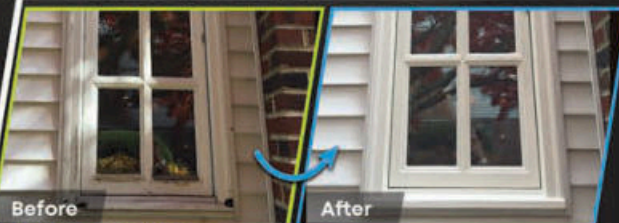
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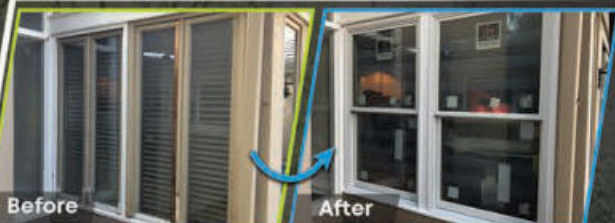
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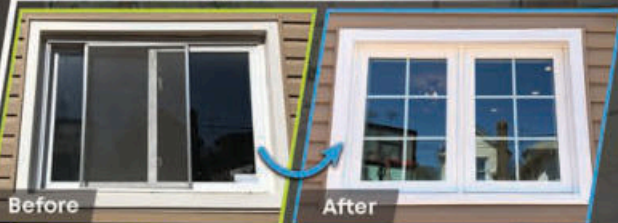
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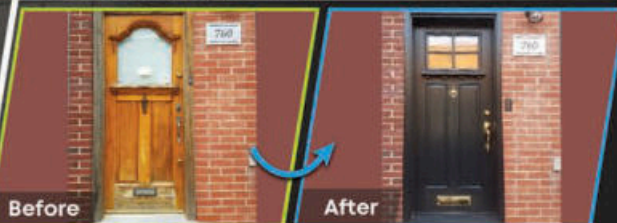
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Leading Legends

From luxury living spaces to classic backyard decks, the close-knit, highly experienced team at **Legends Home Improvement** is prepared to bring their clients' wildest dreams to life. by **Katie Francis**



lighting and heaters. To finish off the outdoor living space, some even have televisions installed to give their space more versatility and an even bigger “wow” factor.

Of course, more complex projects require extra hands. For projects with work outside the vast wheelhouse of expertise compiled by Snyder, his business partner Chris Maurath and teammate Nick Napurano, Legends brings in other professionals.

“We’re a one-stop shop. Anything we can’t do personally, we have guys come out to handle.” This includes any project requiring extra amenities involving electric, gas and plumbing. Outsourcing allows Legends to offer more luxuries to clients while ensuring that every project is done properly and professionally.

Rest assured, each person working on a Legends project is highly qualified and thoroughly interviewed before joining the crew.

“If I’m going to put somebody on my crew, I want somebody dependable, and somebody who’s going to care as much about the job as we do,” Snyder says of his meticulous hiring process. “We’re nothing if not what people say about our projects, so, of course, I want people that are going to pay as much attention as I do.”

This speaks volumes coming from Snyder, who has more than two decades of professional experience in the construction industry and a lifelong passion for building.

“I’ve been hands-on since I was a kid. I was the type of kid who would take apart their toys and see if they could put them back together,” Snyder says. He took his early passion and ran with it from childhood through high school and now into his professional career path in adulthood.

The Legends Home Improvement team, above all, is dedicated to producing a stunning product for its clients, and for Snyder, it’s his favorite part of the job: “For me, building things is just a lot of fun.” **H&H**

LEGENDS HOME IMPROVEMENT HAS BEEN PROVIDING CENTRAL JERSEY RESIDENTS WITH LUXURIOUS OUTDOOR ENTERTAINMENT AREAS SINCE 1975. The family business, founded by Bill Lecorchick Sr., lives on with his son-in-law Josh Snyder and his two childhood friends, who Snyder refers to as “brothers by spirit.”

When clients first contact Legends Home Improvement, they are immediately in touch with Snyder, the proud successor of the company. To ensure that the team maintains the quality service standard set by his father-in-law, Snyder works with clients throughout the entire process.

“I’m the guy that you’re going to see when we discuss the sale, I’m the guy who’s going to be there on the job, and I’ll be the guy to stay on the last day when we’re cleaning up,” Snyder says.

To begin a project, the team comes to the site, meets the client and provides them with a ballpark estimate. “And if they want to continue,” Snyder explains, “we’ll meet

again, iron out the details, come down to a finite price and project idea.”

Once everything is organized, the team gets zoning clearance and permits from the township, completes a pre-build inspection and gets to work. Each project’s timeline varies depending on size and complexity, but Snyder says that a good baseline is that of the standard deck.

“Initial meet-and-greet to finish time can be anywhere from six weeks to 12 weeks for the standard size. Something a lot bigger and more complicated can take a bit longer. It really depends on the size of the project that you want.”

While Legends Home Improvement offers endless variations of outdoor kitchens, patios, fire pits, kitchens and bathrooms, standard decks are undoubtedly the most popular request.

However, the definition of “standard” is much different now than it was just a few years ago. Many clients take advantage of the unique amenities that Legends offers, including deck roofing, outdoor ceiling fans,



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BASEMENT BR

From **home gyms** to extra **entertainment areas**, finished basements add more living space to homes without breaking new ground.



ALLIANCE

BY
**KATIE
FRANCIS**



Photo courtesy of Gehman Design Remodeling

So many homeowners can't envision their basements as anything other than unorganized, don't-let-the-visitors-see storage, and end up wasting the space's possibilities. However, many are now realizing that previously untapped potential and transforming their underground square footage into finished living spaces that they're constantly boasting about and showing off to guests.

House & Home talked to local experts to discuss the latest advancements in basement finishings, including the most popular trends and common uses for these repurposed spaces. All but one say they're seeing an increase in basement renovations—but even for that one, these projects are in high demand.

"We have not seen an uptick in basements but people are definitely still renovating them," says Dennis Gehman, owner of Gehman Design Remodeling, adding that this option is much more wallet-friendly than putting an addition elsewhere. "It is cheaper to finish that space because the square feet of floor space is already there, so we don't have to build an addition. You don't need a foundation. You don't need a roof. It's just putting the finishes in."

And now more than ever, people are looking to add—or in this case, take advantage of—as much space in their homes as possible. Following the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, many jobs are still remote or hybrid, meaning people are spending much more time at home than they have in years past.

Nick Kornea, owner of LBK Design Build, says that he's seen an increase in basement renovation requests because of the pandemic aftershocks.

"A lot of it has to do with the post-

COVID world because people are spending more time at home still. We feel that they're looking for more space within their home, especially if they have young kids," Kornea explains.

There are many different ways that basements can be utilized to ensure parents can finish the last few hours of their workday while their children are arriving home from school.

Kornea says that clients oftentimes create home offices on the lowest level, which frees up the ground level and above floors. Some transform their basement into more of an entertainment space, giving kids the opportunity to play or hang out while their parents are upstairs.

doubtedly the way to go if you're looking to increase the overall value of your home. The experts agree that nothing says dollar signs like an additional bedroom or full bathroom.

Regardless of how a homeowner decides to use it, finishing a basement gives a new and more intentional purpose to an otherwise overlooked space. Many times when Gehman first sees a project, it's an unfinished basement where homeowners have multiple things going on—storage in one corner, exercise equipment in another and a rug dedicated to children's playtime somewhere else. He says that finishing that space gives it a more deliberate appearance and gives those using it a much more enjoyable experience.



"A lot of homeowners may have limited space in their overall floor plan in their house, so they're using the basement as a rec room or playroom for their kids. Or, if they're older kids or teenagers, it'd be like a hangout spot," he explains. This space utilization allows for more privacy opportunities for all members of a household, too.

Extra living room areas and entertainment rooms are popular uses for finished basements, along with home theaters, gyms, and even guest and in-law suites.

These projects require more involved work, including plumbing for kitchenette sinks, bathroom showers and toilets, but are un-

"This space is sitting there, they're probably using it for something already. ... Now they're saying, 'You know what, we're spending so much time down here and I'm tired to look at the concrete walls and open ceiling joists so let's finish it off,'" Gehman says.

After figuring out what they want the space to be used for, homeowners must also decide the style their newfound space embodies.

The experts agree that the overwhelming majority of clients are looking to make their basements what Kornea calls an "extension of the house." In other words, they want to make the level feel less like it's underground and more cohesive with the rest of their home's decor.



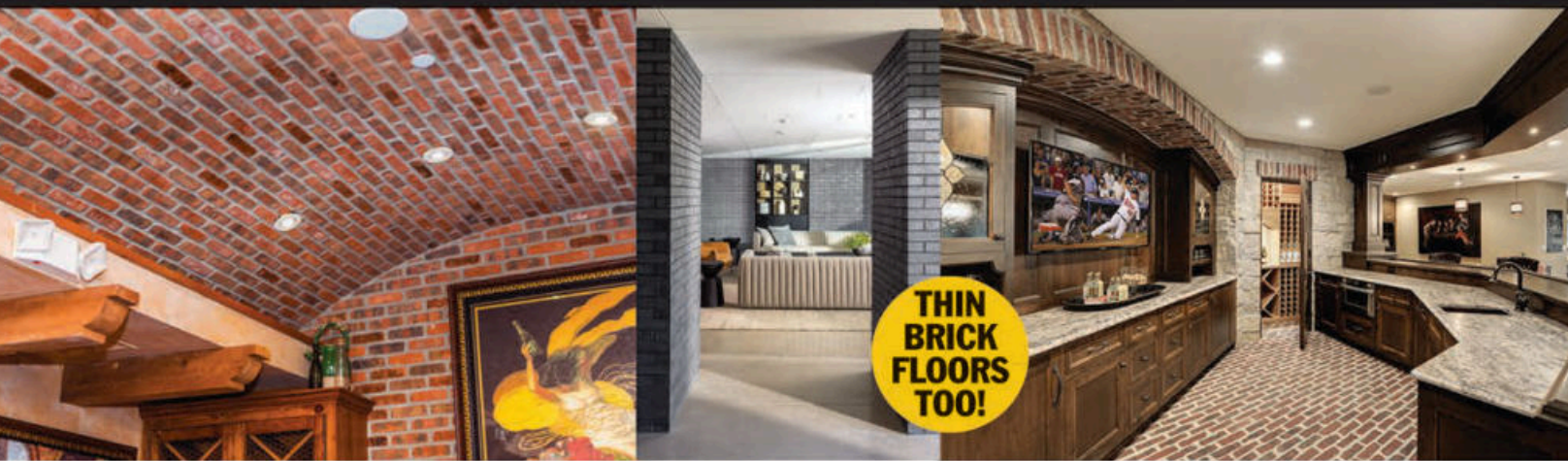
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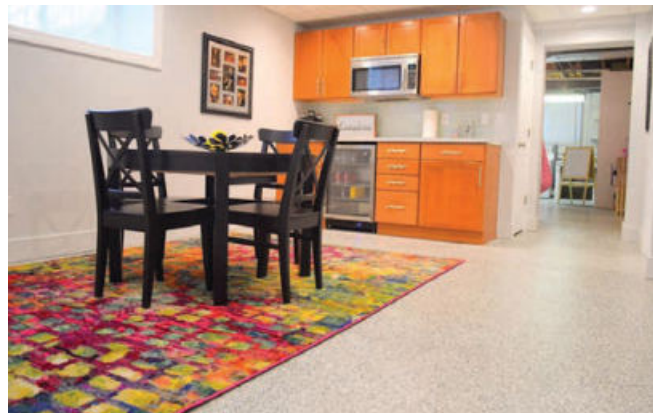


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BASEMENT BRILLIANCE



“People don’t want it to look or feel like a basement anymore,” Gehman says. Drop and suspended ceilings are telltale signs of a basement, which is what his clients are steering away from.

“People don’t even like to call it a basement. We call it a ‘finished lower level,’” Gehman explains. Of course, it’s difficult to mask this reality when many lower levels don’t have large windows or high ceilings. That’s where, Kornea says, clients opt for walkout style basements, allowing an exit and entry as well as the opportunity for natural light and that above-ground feel.

A lot of the “basement feel” also comes from the flooring. Bob Pop, owner of Transylvania Concrete Coatings, is seeing a trend in the flooring that people are choosing for their personal gyms, man caves and television rooms.

Pop says that “seamless, resinous floor” like polyaspartic

or polyurea flooring has become the most popular for finished spaces because people are becoming more and more educated on the topic.

“It is durable, tough, anti-bacterial, anti-microbial. In the event of flooding, it would not get damaged and is easy to clean,” Pop explains, adding that the typically popular carpet and floating floors have a lot more issues with mold.

That being said, adding an area rug or two is a great way to incorporate pops of color, warmth and comfort into any basement space while maintaining the practicality of hard flooring.

These spaces, regardless of how you use them or how you decorate them, are crucial square footage that can add value to a home and the lives of those residing there. Families feel pride in showing off their luxurious downstairs den instead of closing the basement door every time they have guests over. **H&H**



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Above photo courtesy of Transylvania Concrete Coatings



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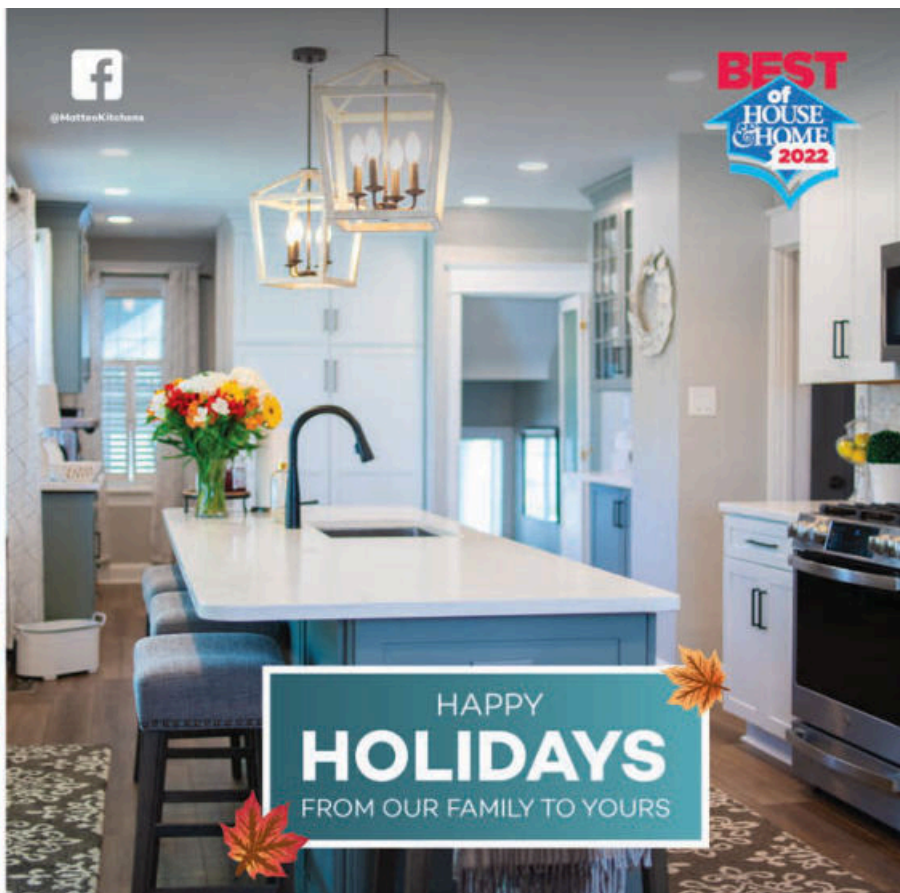
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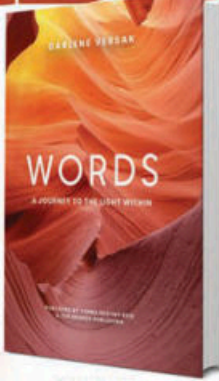
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by Matt Cosentino

From holiday gatherings to family dinners and plenty of quiet moments in between, the kitchen is often the place of lasting memories for a homeowner. Eventually, however, the room might start to show its age and become defined by outdated cabinets and countertops, appliances that don't perform quite the way they used to and poor traffic flow.

When that time comes, a kitchen makeover may be in order. Whether it's a full renovation, or a remodel in the existing footprint of the kitchen, the decision can be a nerve-wracking one. The team at Cranbury Design Center is happy to help relieve the stress.

The design-build company, celebrating its 22nd year in business, is led by owner Frank O'Leary, whose attention to detail and sincere commitment to delivering beautiful spaces for clients is shared by his entire team, many of whom have been with him since the beginning. That continuity leads to a seamless process in kitchen remodeling, as well as bathrooms, laundry rooms, home offices and other areas of the house.

"The keys to our success are the long-standing relationships with quality tradespeople on our team, and the 'do what we say' ethic that drives our commitment to our clients," says Kim Evans, general manager of Cranbury Design Center. "We work with you to design and create custom kitchen and bath solutions that maximize the use of your home. With over 45 combined years of remodeling, planning and professional project management experience, we ensure you realize the space of your dreams."

Cranbury Design Center works on projects of all sizes and is a one-stop shop, handling design, project management, the oversight of all permits and inspections within the township, and finally installation. The company also has professional relationships with trusted vendors to fully integrate the renovation process. A detailed schedule is created for clients, who are given regular updates and kept in the loop each step of the way.

"Rather than focus on new trends that may come and go, we help clients balance how they live and function with beautiful design options," says the team's lead designer, Elizabeth O'Leary. "For example, open shelving may not be the best solution for you if your kitchen space is limited, or if you desire consistent visual order in your kitchen. Storage organization behind closed cabinet doors or a hidden pantry design may be a better choice for you."

At the same time, the Cranbury Design Center team is always aware of new innovative ideas in the industry and is excited to get creative with its designs.

"Some tried-and-true design trends we'll continue to see include a mix of warm woods and painted cabinetry, two-toned kitchens and quartz countertops mixed with either tile or similar surface backsplashes," designer O'Leary says. "The use of technology in both the kitchen and bath continues. Smart appliances, shower controls and

electronic lighting options will continue to evolve. We've seen clients choose these features when they truly add value to their lifestyle, and are simple to use."

Clients also have options when it comes to the faucets in their kitchen or bath, including a brushed stainless finish or black matte. "There are more right choices than wrong when it comes to color and styles," GM Evans says. "In the bathroom, plumbing style choices we see include handheld-style shower heads that connect to a slide bar, as well as the more traditional fixed shower head on the wall. And of course, rain shower heads remain popular. And some clients have all these choices in the same bath! In both the kitchen and bath, hands-free options continue to be popular."

Subway tile is still in high demand, Evans adds, but some homeowners are choosing to show off their personality with unique choices. "Mosaic tiles, available in many beautiful colors, designs and materials, help add dimension to our designs and we expect this trend to continue. Mosaics can be used as a border in a kitchen or bath, or can vertically run down a shower wall and be offset to add a more striking focal point."

All of these options can be seen in Cranbury Design Center's spacious showroom, which has a wide range of kitchen, bath and office setups on display. The company also offers guidance for builders, interior designers and homeowners who do not require contracting services but may be interested in a new kitchen or bathroom renovation project.

Whatever the situation, Cranbury Design Center has had hundreds of satisfied clients in over two decades since its founding, and has no plans on stopping now.

"Cranbury Design Center and its team of experts are here to help," owner Frank O'Leary says. "We have the relationships and resources to pull together all the design choices needed to complete the kitchen or bath of your dreams."

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Crafting the perfect outdoor space is a careful orchestration combining function with aesthetics. How the space will be used determines every material installed, especially for hardscaping, and it takes an experienced industry veteran to make the best recommendations and to ensure every detail is considered.

One such consideration homeowners should make in the planning stages is the beauty and durability of decorative concrete. The product checks more boxes than you can imagine, including being low-maintenance, cost-effective and able to withstand the elements of the Mid-Atlantic. Concrete not only makes sense from a functional standpoint, but also is incredibly versatile, and can mimic nearly any material, such as flagstone, brick, tile, slate, fieldstone, cobblestone and granite pavers—at a much better price.

team that includes designers, foremen with over 100 years of collective experience and office staff dedicated to the process. Steve Abel recently joined the company as vice president of business operations and says the diverse backgrounds of the team members contribute to the customer experience.

“We have an eclectic team, like myself who comes from a commercial banking background. We have designers with experience in interior architectural design and landscape architecture. We all bring a unique approach to the industry and our customers,” Abel says. “We are obsessing about the customer experience. When customers call us, they can reach the right people on the phone.

“That has contributed to our high referral rate. Our installers are the best in the business and, if and when an issue arises, we’re there to handle it.”

“There is a wide range of approaches to making concrete look decorative, from applying stains and dyes, to using color hardeners, or coloring the concrete integrally. When done correctly, these various techniques can allow for concrete to stand out as a showpiece or incorporate surrounding colors and textures into the slab to complement existing stone, stucco or siding. The materials have certainly advanced over the years which makes the design possibilities even more expansive,” says Abel.

“However, we truly believe the real secret sauce is the expertise of the installers,” he continues.

It’s something clients notice as well, including Bob Nonemaker, founder of OuterSpaces Inc., a high-end landscape architect. “Concrete is one of those things where if everything doesn’t go right, it can end up really wrong, but with ACD, it’s like a ballet for them,” he says. “They know exactly what they’re doing and they have tremendous productivity. It’s pretty much impossible to find a flaw. They’re just really good at what they do.”

Abel says, in the residential space, the appeal and practicality of decorative concrete comes down to quality, value and maintenance. “It’s the perfect low-maintenance complement to a well-manicured home. Time is scarcer than ever, and our customers continuously find the maintenance of natural stone to be either cost prohibitive or time consuming. This makes decorative concrete the perfect material for them.”

Another benefit to using ACD is that their product is readily available. “Unfortunately, due to global supply chain issues, you will find pavers and natural stone difficult to come by these days. Prices change monthly and the availability of the product seems to change by the minute. We have found ourselves insulated from most of these issues,” Abel says. “We work with several suppliers in our service area who have moved mountains to keep their product available. This enables us to be there for our clients, which in today’s market is very appealing.” **H&H**

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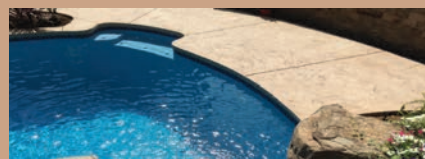
Working with a product like this and achieving a client’s desired results comes down to expertise and technique. It’s not as simple as showing up with a concrete truck and pouring a slab. There’s a finesse to it, and one company in particular has built its reputation on exceeding expectations in the industry of decorative concrete: Architectural Concrete Design (ACD).

Founded in 1993 by Christopher McMahon, ACD has been the go-to company for major projects, from the Pennsylvania Turnpike, Philadelphia casinos and Longwood Gardens, to malls, schools, multi-family housing developments and more. Their ability to handle projects of this size and scale truly sets ACD apart in the residential space.

Clients have access to a comprehensive

From the initial design to installation, there are quality checks in place to ensure a customer has the most functional design for the space, he continues. “Not only are our designers looking out for any potential concerns in the process, but the installers have 25 years’ experience and have seen nearly every imaginable circumstance. They are the final layer to make sure nothing was missed,” Abel says.

Concrete is unique in the sense that it can truly go as far as an installer can take it.



A Window OF OPPORTUNITY

Custom window treatments offer privacy, light control and energy efficiency, while also adding a stylish finishing touch to home décor.

BY MATT COSENTINO

When most people think about the décor in their home, the first aspects that come to mind are the furnishings, paint colors, artwork and other accessories that help define a space. Usually further down the list—but just as important—are the window treatments, which sometimes get overlooked but can be crucial to tying a room together.

Of course, blinds, shades and draperies play a functional role in providing privacy, protection from the elements and light control, but they can also be a way for a homeowner to add flair and personality. The type and size of the window, the specific room and personal taste are all factors in determining which treatment would be the best choice.

House & Home spoke to local professionals to learn more about the decision-making process and the trends to be aware of heading into 2023.

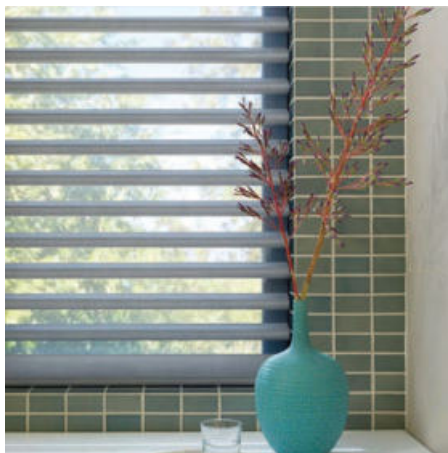
SEEKING EXPERT ADVICE

As in many areas of home décor these days, the options for window treatments seemingly go on and on. Whether a homeowner is primarily interested in functionality, aesthetics or a combination of both, there are countless offerings to choose from and the task can be overwhelming.

That's where the services of an informed professional can be instrumental, and will likely save the customer money in the long run.

"We really focus on trying to direct people to make the right choices," says Denise McCracken, showroom manager at Ambiance Design. "Different shadings accomplish different things, and depending on the person's needs, one shade might be better than another style. ... They're investing money in this and we want to make sure they get what's best for their décor and still give them an updated look."

Getting to know the customer's lifestyle and preferences goes a long way, enabling professionals to steer them toward certain products and away from upgrades that may



be unnecessary. For example, McCracken points out that a home situated on a private lot would not have as many privacy concerns as one in a busy neighborhood.

Stella Zaffino, showroom manager at Blind Builders Inc., takes a similar approach with customers and, like McCracken, encourages them to bring photos to assist with the process.

"I ask a lot of people if they have a picture of the window or the room, because it's definitely a huge help to see what I'm working with and I can offer a suggestion or offer a situation that the customer may

not be thinking about," she says.

"There are so many options out there, so I'm able to say that options X, Y and Z aren't necessarily going to work for them. It narrows down the options and makes things a little bit easier to understand, and we can go over what would be the appropriate product for that project."

Zaffino adds that taking the time to visit a showroom is much more effective than just browsing online for window treatments.

"Seeing them on a computer screen does not do them justice," she says. "To be able to come in and touch, feel and operate shades really gives you a sense of the quality and how great they are."

POPULAR SELECTIONS

Once the wants and needs of the client have been determined, they can be presented with different choices for their home. One product that McCracken frequently recommends is a Silhouette shade from Hunter Douglas, which is notable for its versatility.

"That's what I have in my home and it's what we call a multi-functional product: You get several levels of both privacy and light control from it, and you're not necessarily closed off from the outside world," she says. "It's a combination of sheers and a fabric vane in the middle, and when you have that vane open, you can still see outside through the sheers. But most of the time those two layers of sheers are enough to give you privacy during the day, when it's hard to see into someone's house."

"Then in the evening, when it's easier to see into someone's house, you simply close the fabric vanes and you have complete privacy. It really does check all of the boxes and it has a few added benefits, like protecting your interior furnishings and floors from UV rays that fade everything."

Cellular honeycomb shades, Zaffino says, are similarly versatile and can work in both traditional and contemporary setups. They are offered in a variety of colors, textures

and patterns, and are one of Blind Builders' top sellers.

Plantation shutters are another popular choice because they are easy to maintain, durable and provide complete light control as well as energy efficiency.

"I'm a huge fan of plantation shutters because you can put them in different types of rooms and with different styles," Zaffino says. "Like the honeycombs, you can make them look very traditional in an old, historic home—which we have a lot of in this area—or you can make them look modern and contemporary. There are a lot of different types of plantation shutters: You've got PVC shutters if you have a window in the shower; you've got hybrid shutters; and you've also got solid wood shutters, where you can match stains and paints and fully customize them."

The vinyl shutters, McCracken adds, are often used in Shore homes because of their coastal feel and ability to withstand humidity.

Roman shades are still in demand when it comes to a more formal look, Zaffino says, although she rarely gets requests for vertical shades anymore. Then there are soft treatments—fabric-related items like draperies or curtains in which the homeowner can add personal style to the room.

"We're doing less and less of the full drapery, but we do a lot of a stationary side panel, which is a great way to bring in a bold color or a pattern without being overwhelming," Zaffino says. "We're also doing a lot of the cornice boards—a nice, fabric-wrapped cornice across the top is another great way to bring in a nice, bold color without having it be a big part of the room."

Soft treatments are usually the finishing touch, according to McCracken.

"It's often the last piece of decoration—the jewelry to the outfit, if you will—and it can make the room," she says. "We work with a lot of interior de-

signers in the area and they'll come to us to have us take care of that aspect of their project. It definitely adds something to the space."

TAKING CONTROL

Of course, no talk about window treatments is complete without getting into motorization, which continues to grow in popularity. Not only can blinds or shutters be operated with the push of a button, but they can also be programmed to open and close at certain times of the day, promoting better energy efficiency.

"Those are definitely on the rise in popularity," McCracken says. "We find that sometimes people come in and spec out motorization for a certain area of the house, and then they'll come back and want more once they get a taste of it. They want it in every room."

Motorization used to be a harder sell for older generations, but according to Zaffino, that's no longer the case.

"Everybody at least has an Alexa in their house and they carry around an iPhone," she says. "Motorization allows people to integrate their home with their technical life. ... Hunter Douglas makes a very user-friendly product. We have these displays in the showroom, and when we sit down and talk about them, I show customers and let them operate them. They realize it's not that scary, it's nice and easy." **H&H**



RESOURCES

Ambiance Design
Blue Bell, Pa.
(267) 898-0200
ADWindowTreatments.com

Blind Builders Inc.
Feasterville, Pa.
(215) 322-5855
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