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Architectural Concrete Design

Bringing unmatched expertise and a designer's eye to decorative concrete projects *page 13*

A Warm Feeling

Heating your home safely and efficiently

Staying a Step Ahead

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Swim-Mor Pools & Spas

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East Coast Christmas Lights

Making the holidays merry and bright *page 21*

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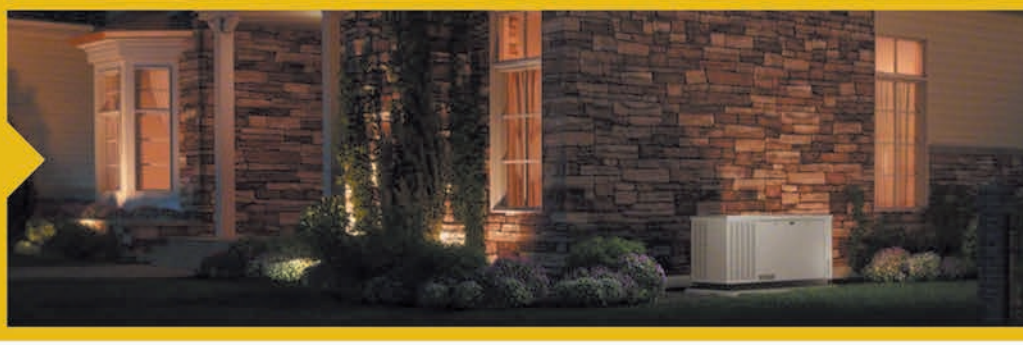
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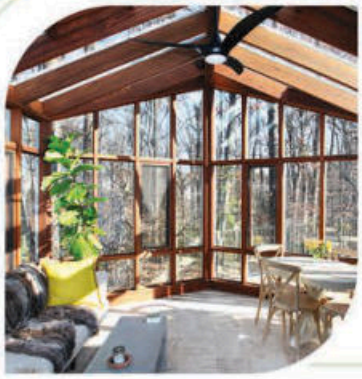
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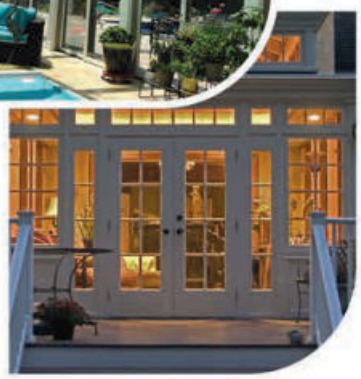
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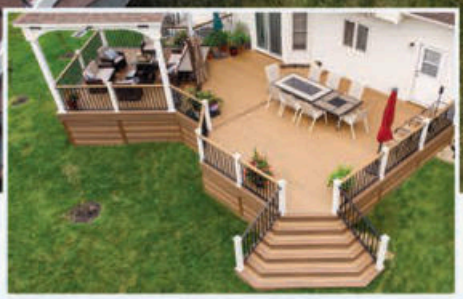
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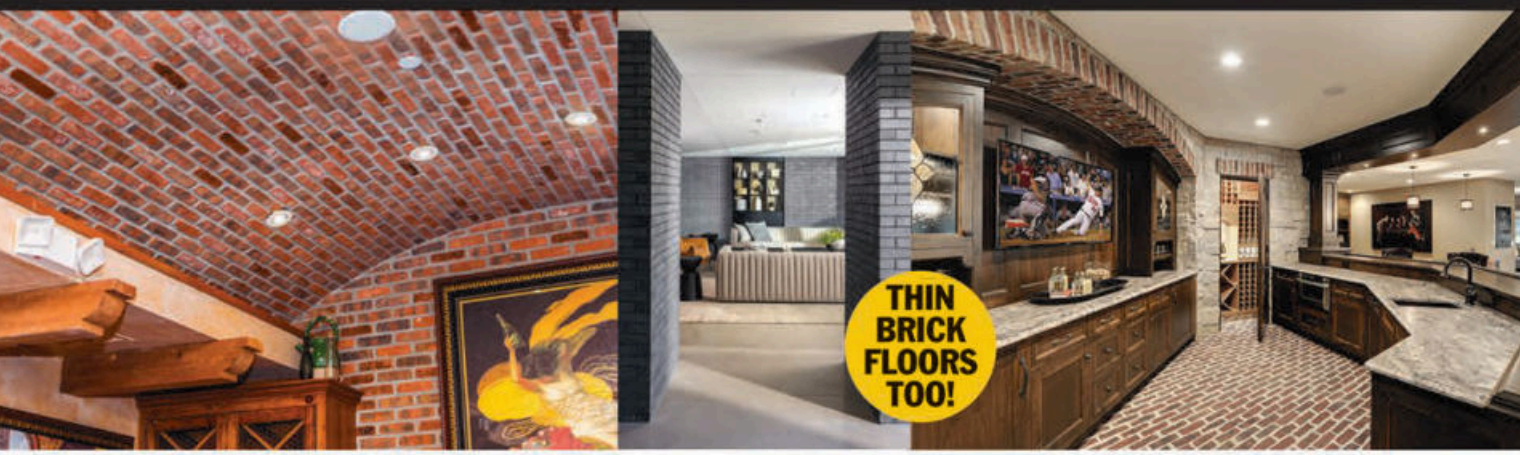


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H&H profile *by* **Kristen Dowd**





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Architectural Concrete Design specializes in a wide array of decorative concrete solutions to upgrade your exterior with top-quality projects.

IN THE EARLY '90S, DECORATIVE CONCRETE WAS A LITTLE-KNOWN ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENT ON THE EAST COAST.

That all started to change when Architectural Concrete Design, or ACD, came onto the scene in 1993. When founder Chris McMahon started the Levittown-based business, his aim was to introduce the Greater Philadelphia area to the innovative world of decorative concrete.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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Home is Where the "Hearth" is





Whether you're opting to stay warm with a **heating system or a fireplace** this winter, local professionals weigh in on the aspects to look for to ensure quality, safety and efficiency.

BY CARLY MURRAY

A home heating system is not typically at the forefront of peoples' minds, especially before the onset of winter. If there is any kind of problem with a heating system, it is usually only realized when it's turned on in the winter when heat circulation is most necessary. However, if a heating system has run its course or if a homeowner is just looking for a change, there **are plenty of different options** available that best suit the lifestyles within each household.

"Addressing your home through your insulation, your ventilation and mechanicals truly benefits everything that is essential to someone, and being able to be attentive to that with seasonal maintenance ensures the best quality of life for your loved ones and the essential belongings in your home," Allied Experts' Director Jose Diaz affirms.

The first step is to assess a home's heating system with the help of a professional to check if any regular maintenance is needed. These often-neglected checkups can save time and money before an easily-fixed issue turns into a bigger problem.

"The biggest thing is getting your maintenance, and tune-ups in general, done by a qualified professional, who will come out and change the filter, take a look at the heating system in general and make sure that it's working at peak efficiency for the next season," says Jeff Olewine, general manager of C&C Heating and Air Conditioning.

Olewine recommends having biannual inspections: one in spring and one in fall. Even getting started in August through September is better than nothing. Often a lack of general maintenance is the common culprit of issues with home heating systems.

"The most common issues revolve around the blower assembly in the furnace or a dirty air filter. Air filters are often forgotten about," says John Laphen, service manager with Doylestown Air.

Every circumstance is different, so having a professional check the system before it is fired up—especially after not

Home is Where the "Hearth" is

using it for several months—is always safest. A neglected heating system doesn't necessarily indicate danger, but it's always best to prepare for and to have a plan for the unexpected.

"The biggest [safety] concern would be being without heat during a cold snap. Another potential risk is the heat exchanger cracking, which can allow carbon monoxide to be released," Laphen continues.

An unexpected broken system—especially during the holidays when spending is maximized—may leave household occupants shivering in what is supposed to be the comfort of their homes until they can find the time availability and funding. In such an urgent situation, it may be difficult to properly assess the next steps, but each situation has a different, more cost-efficient option.

"If someone's looking to replace their system, typically it's when they have a certain amount of issues with a unit that needs repairs and it doesn't make sense to put money into repairing it," says Olewine.

If efficiency, sustainability and cutting costs are of interest, a newer model might be the best solution. Companies like Allied Experts offer innovative products that are easier to manage while being kind to the environment. The best option for each home can be determined with full home evaluations. In addition to working to assess the needs of your home, an experienced professional may also help cut down on costs as they are knowledgeable of financing options within the industry.

"There are beneficial tax breaks that customers should be made aware of with the Inflation Reduction Act. Utility programs and the Department of Energy [within the] federal government are going to be very active in pursuing options to help with energy efficiency and savings in the home. Homeowners should be aware that they have options for assistance," Diaz explains.

Beyond accessibility to cost-saving and government assistance programs, upgrading your system increases efficiency of your home, in turn lowering your heating bill.

Smart home models have heightened connectivity to other devices and are designed to provide a higher performance quality and energy efficiency. These electric "smart" heaters can connect to WiFi and can be controlled through phone and voice apps, some have room sensors to optimize usage and allow for programmable cycles.

Compared to home heating systems, fireplaces are more geared toward enjoyment, providing heat to only those nearby. Undoubtedly, a burning fire creates a picturesque holiday atmosphere.

"It's more fun than beneficial, because 80% of people are using fireplaces to heat the room a little bit and also to enjoy the fire, smell and noise of the wood when it burns," says Ardian Bejita, owner of Doctor Chimney.



Burning wood requires a supply and it's best to have experience or practice. It is not as cost-effective or sustainable to use wood compared to gas or electricity. Although wood-burning fireplaces are harmonious with nostalgia, they too have seen a technological upgrade with dozens of choices.

"First-time buyers really need to consider their lifestyle and their time commitment," Chris Olsen, owner of Newtown Fireplace Shop describes. "Are they looking for ease and convenience, or do they really love the smell and the natural crackle of real wood? Do they have the time to burn, to stack and store wood, or are they going to find more value in having ease with the use of a remote control for gas?"

Olsen and his team strive to customize the aesthetic of new fireplaces to fit the style of each home. Many of the Colonial- and farmhouse-style homes in the New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware regions are already equipped with built-in fireplaces. However, these still need to undergo some considerations before they are used.

"Homes that were built any time before 2010 have a very high chance of having a negative efficiency appliance and solvent, meaning customers don't even realize that it's taking the heat out of their home rather than adding heat value to the home," says Dave Rettinger Jr., owner of Rettinger Fireplace Systems. "And when it's not used, it's just a big hole for cold air to pour into the house. So, we have products that solve that exact problem that many thousands of homeowners, either knowingly or unknowingly, are challenged by today."

Fireplace inserts can help with efficiency and are a great way to upgrade a decades-old, wood-burning fireplace to a safer and more energy efficient option. They will convert an existing fireplace opening to wood, gas or electric and will still release smoke through the chimney. If using a fireplace this winter, one should assess the system itself and the chimney.

"People need to inspect the chimney smoke chamber and the lining. So, they need to go in the house, take a look if there are any cracks, any holes, any missing lining—that's very important," advises Bejita.

Chimneys need to be cleaned and inspected before fireplace use. Chimney liners reduce utility costs, streamline maintenance and cleaning, and allow for more safety. Depending on home- and township-specific codes, different types of liner may be installed, often depending on the type of fireplace and the size of the chimney flue. Liners can be made of stainless steel, high thermal re-

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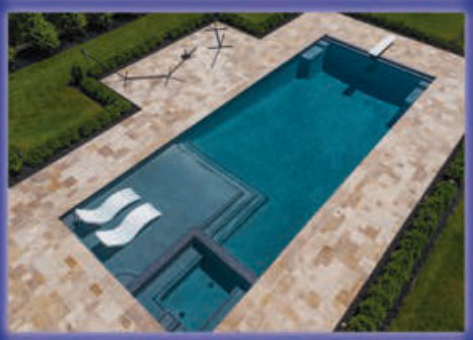
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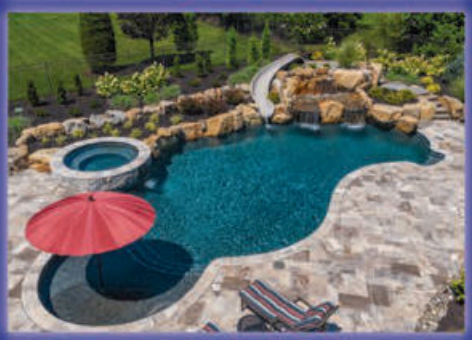
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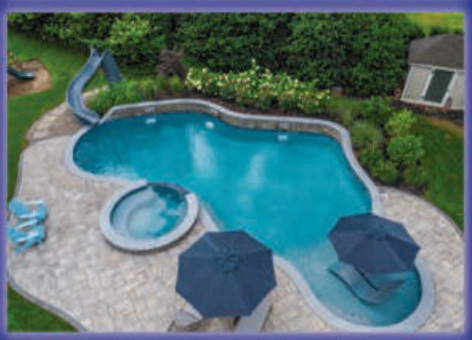


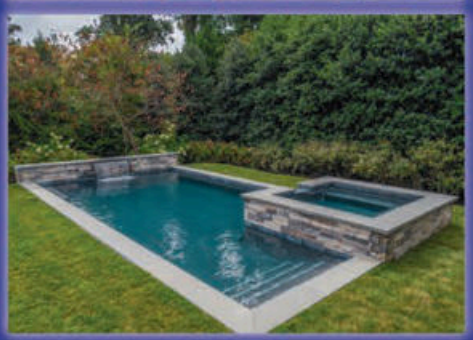


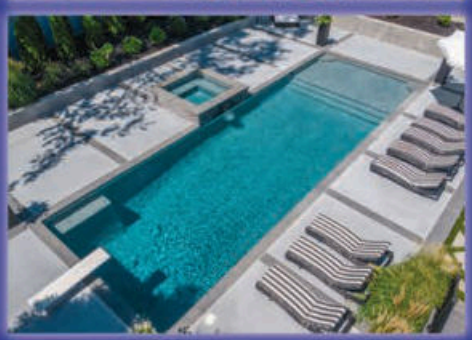


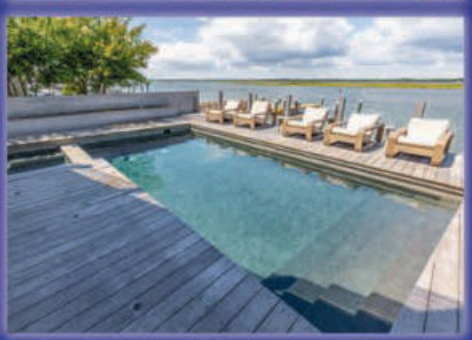












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Due to all of the necessary aspects that go into a fireplace system that may have to be divided among multiple specialists, some companies will act as a one-stop shop to fully guide a customer through the multifaceted process. Chimney sweeping is required for any system update, which Rettinger Fireplace Systems provides in conjunction with its concierge service.

"If we need a licensed electrician or plumber on the job, we'll hire them for you. If you need permits and inspections, which almost all jobs do, we'll take care of the permits, we'll arrange for the inspections," says Rettinger. "You cannot do anything to an existing fireplace without getting a Level 2 inspection."

The wide range of product options available for heating a home today allow for different types of operation, effect and maintenance. Ultimately, though, warmth in the home is primarily about comfort.

"Homeowners should really take a look at their fireplace to make sure that it's creating an inviting, warm environment that makes their house feel like a home," says Olsen. "Is it providing the ambiance, the atmosphere, the look, the style that fits their energy? They are creating that mindset to make a peaceful home." **H&H**

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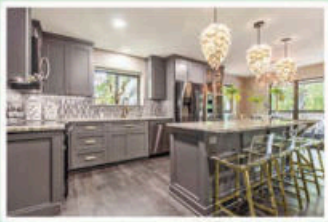
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Merry and Bright

The team at **East Coast Christmas Lights** is here to make sure that families can enjoy all the festive beauty of the holidays without losing any time on installation and maintenance.

by **Madeleine Maccar**

Even though the first crisp notes of fall are just starting to touch the morning air, it's not too early to start planning how you'll brighten your home with holiday cheer this year. In fact, Danny DeLuca and the rest of the East Coast Christmas Lights team will be well into designing and installing some breathtaking decorations by the time the first of this year's customers get their homes decked out on Sept. 30.

DeLuca explains that it's East Coast Christmas Lights' job to take the stress out of exterior holiday decoration for every home and office it's responsible for festively beautifying. Whether your tastes err on the side of minimalism or if you want it all—lights of all colors and sizes adorning your home and yard, wreaths, hexagonal snowflakes and more—the team of Santa's helpers is here to bring that vision to life and work within any budget, even providing the extension cords, timers and other items serving more of a functional role than decorative purpose.

"We want to bring magic to your house and take away the maintenance, the labor and the challenges families face when decorating for the holidays," he begins. "We have the proper tools, the proper team, the proper knowledge and the proper experience to provide you with an incredible experience. We are fully responsible for the service: We just ask that you respect the product you're renting."

East Coast Christmas Lights got its start a few years ago, when owner Neil Fairley extended the scope of services provided by Artificial Grass Turf Warehouse. Every season since then has been an opportunity for the company—previously named by *House & Home* as North Jersey's best in holiday lighting and installation—to refine its services for an even more personalized, professional result.

"The years of experience we're bringing, the professionalism, the products and the materials we use, it's all how we give people a beautiful experience," says DeLuca. "The ball is in your court. We're just the design team, our clients are the creators—we just put it all together, we put it down on paper, we put it on a layout so we can show you exactly what it looks like. You create the experience by giving us your ideas, what kind of direction you're going in. Whether you want it simple or extraordinary, everyone gets treated the same. As the years go on, we're learning how to be more efficient, to minimize repairs and how to save people money."

It's the team's goal for every client to bask in the glow of masterfully designed, fully maintained and hassle-free holiday decor that can be as understated or dazzling as individual tastes and budgets allow. But, as DeLuca notes, the service also allows them to bring seasonal cheer to those who truly need a helping hand.

"Everybody is equal to us, but we love to focus on taking care of those who are truly less fortunate," he says. "That is something that is honestly a blessing on our behalf, that we're able to give that experience to everyone: single mothers, disabled personnel, elderly people, people who are so busy they can't give that holiday experience to their kids, the families who just don't have the experience or equipment to decorate for the holidays."



That accessibility extends to free design consultations and estimates, too, as well as "teams on standby" in case a bulb burns out or a decoration needs some professional intervention. Reducing the likelihood that any home's or business's holiday decorations necessitate calling back the professionals means you can trust in their fully insured, exhaustively certified installers and high-quality products. DeLuca cites the lights they use as a perfect example: Those C9 LED bulbs "have a lifetime warranty and they're energy-efficient," so the commercial-grade products are as durable and cost-effective as they are vibrant.

But well-nurtured client connections are among the benefits of working with East Coast Christmas Lights, so they're always ready to help however they can.

"This is not just a service, it's more of a relationship," DeLuca affirms. "It's actually a lot of fun for us to be involved, and we're always getting new ideas from customers' different dynamics and different approaches—we're continually evolving."

After all, the team loves nothing more than knowing they were able to play a role in adding to the magic of the holidays.

"The No. 1 gift a client can give us is a referral, when they trust us enough to vouch for us to the people in their personal circle," DeLuca begins. "But we really do love it when people tag us in social media posts or give us feedback thanking us for giving them a wonderful experience." **H&H**

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H&H SEASONAL

A Step Ahead



Fall is the perfect time to begin winterizing your home.

BY PETER PROKO

With autumn's arrival, countless homeowners are looking forward to admiring the fall foliage and enjoying extended outdoor activities whether around the fire pit, the pumpkin patch or otherwise.

But the fall season also creates a great opportunity to get one's home ready to handle the harsher conditions that Old Man Winter brings. Winterizing your home should be top of mind for all homeowners, as it can solve problems in the short-term while also saving you lots of time, money and aggravation in the long term.

Adam Parnes of Global Home Improvement acknowledges the importance of staying on top of a winter checklist and says that homeowners who don't regularly do so are tempting fate. "I think anyone who is winterizing their home is already ahead of the ball game," he says. "Upgrading insulation, re-caulking windows and cleaning gutters are some of the easier solutions to a safe home this winter."

House & Home spoke with various leaders in the home improvement industry to get a better understanding of the key areas to focus on when winterizing your residence. Whether making energy-efficient upgrades to the interior or making necessary repairs to the exterior that also help boost curb appeal, the fall season offers ample opportunity to rectify any issues now and give homeowners some reassurance for once winter arrives.



Energy Efficiency

Checking to see if one's HVAC system is in need of a tune-up is recommended by industry professionals. Annual service will ensure things are running smoothly and curtail rising energy bills that result from suboptimal operation.

Poorly insulated attic space can also be a major contributor to energy loss. According to the Department of Energy, a properly insulated attic can help slash you heating bill as much as 50%.

Another common contributor to energy loss is poorly sealed windows and doors. "Not only do older windows and doors not have updated thermal efficiency, but many of them have air leaks, which are just inviting cold air directly into your home," says Parnes.

Brian Iwano, founder and project manager with Blue Tree Builders, says it can be difficult for most people to tell if it's time to replace their windows if there's no clear and present physical damage.

"The obvious signs your windows need replacing are when the seal fails and air gets between the panes; and with older wood windows, when the wood becomes damaged. Aside from these examples, it can be difficult to notice air seepage during mild weather," he says.

Roofing & Siding

Replacing one's roof or siding can be a sizable expense and cause some homeowners to delay any major repairs or replacements for another season in hopes they can avoid any catastrophic issues while saving some money. But one major winter storm can change that equation and the result could be an even heftier out-of-pocket cost.



When looking to determine if your roof may be a candidate for either repair or replacement, one tell-tale sign is the appearance of leaks. But there are also other factors to consider, namely age. Is the roof 20-25 years old? If so, it's likely the shingles have or will soon start to curl and the adhesion to one another will become compromised.

"The most important thing to consider is what could happen if you don't replace it," says Parnes. "A leaky roof will cost you way more money in damage then the money you save by trying to wait one more year."

"This may seem obvious, but look for any damage that may have occurred from summer storms," adds Iwano. "It's pretty easy to look for missing shingles. This in itself isn't all bad, as the real waterproofing is maintained by the underlayments and other prep. However, missing shingles do leave your roof open to further wind damage, which would definitely cause bigger problems very quickly."

Danny Cenaj of Siar Construction says in addition to seeing missing or buckled shingles that are no longer lying flat, there are other noticeable changes you may recognize. "If one area is much darker than another part of the roof; that is one of the other signs that it may be time to get a roof inspection. Another thing would be if you are cleaning your gutters and you are able to see a lot of granules that have fallen from the shingles," he says.

If your roof is old or you are not sure it will last another winter, fall is actually the ideal time to have it replaced. In the summer when battling extreme heat and humidity, the shingles can occasionally become damaged during the installation process, something that is certainly avoidable thanks to fall's cooler temperatures.

"The fall is one of the best times of the year to replace the roof," affirms Cenaj. "Homeowners can make sure they get everything done right before winter, which gives them peace of mind that they will not have to contend with any issues."



A Step Ahead



Elsewhere on the exterior, Iwano points out that problems with siding usually occur at transition points either between trims or moldings, or aluminum capping. "Additionally, end pieces and tops commonly become loose, which also [could lead] to further wind damage. Again, like roofing, the real protection is in the prep. But you definitely want to mitigate any vulnerability as soon as possible," he says.

Chimneys

For those who enjoy lighting a fire inside the home during the winter months, fall is also the right time to have your chimney serviced, as a detailed inspection can help to uncover any potential hidden issues.

"Inspections will check for any cracks in the cement or the mortar or if there are any other problems, and you will be able to determine if the chimney will be good for the winter or not," says Cenaj.

At the very minimum, Cenja advises homeowners to have their chimneys cleaned before seasonal use. "Getting a chimney cleaned is something I would say is mandatory every fall before you start using your fireplace," he says.

Preparing Your Pond

It's important to know how to winterize a pond and prepare fish to withstand the harsh winter. Over a year, your pond will accumulate debris and organics such as leaves, twigs, grass clippings and fish waste. Left unchecked, decaying debris can release toxic gas and reduce oxygen levels. Removing this debris and replacing filtration systems with aeration kits and deicers will help ensure oxygen levels stay as high as possible and provide aeration,





ventilation and circulation throughout the winter months.

"When fall officially arrives, and the trees start losing their leaves, we often recommend netting your pond," says George Mihalchick of Ponds by George.

Fall netting is intended for collecting debris, and is often a choice to use for predator protection, which is why some pond owners even choose to leave the net in place until spring, but it is important to note that these nets are not designed to carry a heavy snow load, and should be removed in the winter before any snowfall.

"Once all the leaves have fallen, begin your fall pond care by removing any netting. Pond netting should be stored indoors to keep it safe from wear and tear due to heavy snowfall and ice," says Mihalchick.

As fall ends and winter approaches, plants will naturally fall into a dormant state. To winterize hardy plants, use your pruning tools to trim off dead foliage just above the soil. Removing debris that may have made it into the pond should also be removed. "Rotting leaves, twigs or dead aquatic plants will put stress on your pond's oxygen levels throughout the winter, which puts your fish at risk. I recommend removing leaves and debris from ponds and streams with the help of a hand net if possible," Mihalchick details.

Another way to keep fish safe when temperatures drop is with the help of aeration, and de-icers help to keep a hole open in the ice during winter months. "This prevents harmful gases from being trapped under the ice and allows oxygen levels to stay saturated in the pond. Or if your pond has a waterfall, leave it running, the movement will cause a natural opening," Mihalchick explains. **H&H**

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A Matter of Trust

When it comes to finding the right contractor for the job, **Emmons Remodeling** offers clients both expertise and peace of mind.

When you need work done on your home—expected or not—you want to know that you can trust the contractor you've hired to get the job done well. After all, you're not an expert on what's involved in services like roofing, siding or windows, and you don't want to get taken advantage of as a result. Because of that, it's important to choose a company that you can feel confident is reputable.

But how exactly do you know a company can be trusted?

One important factor in choosing the best contractor is longevity. Only a company that performs great work is going to be able to stick around for the long haul. That's exactly the case with Emmons Remodeling, a company that has been offering expert care for South Jersey and the Jersey Shore area since 1996. They are a wellknown name in the region—and for good reason. Their success was built upon a reputation of honesty, integrity and good work.

In fact, the company is an Owens Corning Platinum Preferred Contractor. That's not a designation that any old company can have. Platinum Preferred Contractors are in the top tier of a premier-network of roofing professionals. In order to achieve this title, they must have passed a workmanship inspection, been professionally screened for financial stability and customer service, and continue to adhere to stringent guidelines set forth by Owens Corning. Fewer than 1% of roofing contractors in the United States are Owens Corning Platinum Preferred.

"It's a title that backs up our already strong reputation," says Stephanee Kelly, co-owner of the company along with her husband Matthew. "Only the most reputable companies are able to earn that designation."

Besides being able to feel confident that you've hired a contractor you can trust, this designation benefits homeowners in a more tangible way as well. That's because Platinum Preferred Contractors are able to offer 50-year warranties on their work—much longer than other companies can offer. According to Owens Corning's website, "because we stand behind these warranties, we need to make sure that we are backing up the best roofers in the business."

Emmons Remodeling has been providing interior remodeling service throughout New Jersey and Pennsylvania for more than 30 years. The company has built its solid reputation on craftsmanship and exceptional customer service.

As the family-owned company grows, it has expanded the team that is available to help design and build your projects. Several talented remodeling industry professionals have recently joined Emmons to serve its over 6,000 existing customers and help expand the growing number of satisfied customers throughout South Jersey.

And the expertise is not limited kitchens and bathrooms. Emmons provides full-service remodeling and construction services for additions, interior renovations, porches, decks, windows, doors and basement finishing. The design team acts as your trusted advisor to help you make the right decisions on products, materials, colors and selections. They make it easy using a proprietary curated design concept, which is an industry first. It's an easy, affordable way to quickly get a custom designed project without the heavy cost of a design-build process.

You can always trust Emmons to provide exceptional value and design with quality project outcomes. Now with Krista (lead designer/project planning manager), Rebecca (project design consultant), Frank (construction project manager) and Pete (director of operations) teaming up with seasoned vice president of construction Chris Kelly, key project manager Eric Gilham and 20 trade professionals, you can rest assured that your project is designed and built right. A five-year warranty and a lifetime service guarantee back up the claim of quality and craftsmanship, while providing you with peace of mind that you made the right decision.

The experts at Emmons are always ready to help you with kitchen, bathroom, additions and deck solutions. They make remodeling your home easy and affordable with exceptional financing programs and realistic pricing. Trust Emmons with your next project.

After all, the Emmons' mission statement is: "Our customer's experience builds our business and defines our reputation, which is one of trust, reliability, integrity and value for every customer we serve."

Choosing Wisely

At the end of the day, your choice in roofing, siding and window contractors can be the difference between good, quality work—and a big headache. Stephanee says that the last thing Emmons wants to see is people in their local community get taken advantage of by unscrupulous roofing, siding and window contractors.

"You should be able to feel confident that you've chosen a contractor that you can trust— not one that is going to leave you with problems to fix after they've gone," she says. "At Emmons, you are not only investing in a new roof, new siding or new windows—you're investing in peace of mind." H&H

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More Than a Pool

Swim-Mor Pools & Spas elevates backyard atmospheres with quality custom designs

by **Kristen Dowd**

Swim-Mor Pools & Spas partner and general manager Mike McCool recognizes that there is a lot more that goes into a new pool than there used to be.

"The backyard has transformed over the last 10 years or so away from being just 'your yard' and into another room of your home with the same care and detail put into it," McCool says. "Because of this the design of your pool has become more than just a pool but the focus of the outdoor living room. There is a lot of coordination with creating what a customer's backyard haven is going to be."

Fortunately, the family-owned South Jersey business is more than up to the challenge of bringing a customer's backyard pool vision to life. In its 55 years of business, Swim-Mor Pools & Spas has helped to create thousands of backyard paradises throughout the region.

And what's more, they make the process as easy as possible for their customers.

"We're a start-to-finish gunite custom pool company—the design, the build and the service afterward," McCool says. "We have our own crews that handle the work which helps us control quality and makes the process go smoother."

There are six designers at Swim-Mor Pools & Spas who can help guide customers on a new pool design. The company's countless photos and 3D drawings can provide inspiration, and the final design is what best suits the backyard, according to McCool.

"Size, setbacks, elevations. We're here to help you work through that," he says.

Finding the right pool

"The first step is to give us a call. From there we'll set up an appointment to come out to your home," McCool says. "That way we can see all the aspects of the property. What the contours of the yard are. What the access is like. Even the best location based on where the sun rises and sets."

The timeline to get started is largely based on the homeowner and how decisive they are, McCool adds. Once everything is confirmed, things move to contract and Swim-Mor Pools & Spas starts working on permits.

"Time is of the essence. Permits can take from two weeks to several months, all depending on the municipality," McCool says.

Pool popularity

Prior to March 2020, business was strong for Swim-Mor Pools & Spa. That was only boosted when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the region.

"The pool business was never busier than it was in COVID," McCool says. "The lockdowns forced people to stay at home and they immediately focused on the backyard."

Although that business boom has settled down a bit, things are still busy. But pool trends, according to McCool, have held fairly steady.

Hampton-style pools have long been a customer favorite, but equally popular are the freeform designs, which can be customized to fit into any backyard environment.

"Through COVID there have not been many significant changes in the industry," McCool says, "other than the increased popularity of adding more bells and whistles to the pool."

Natural stone is popular for the coping along the pool's edge, McCool says, as well as darker finishes in the pool. A majority of Swim-Mor Pools & Spa customers are using a salt sanitation system and automated controls in their new pools, as well as choosing to add water features—waterfalls, fountains, deck jets and plenty more. The company also offers many in- pool fixtures for lounging—bar stools and benches that can tie into your outdoor kitchen or can run inside the pool, along with table areas, sundecks for your lounge chairs and custom fire features. Color LED lighting packages come with every pool, too.

The majority of customers also choose elements to lengthen their pool-enjoying season, such as heaters and spas. "It will extend your pool season by a few months," McCool says.

Why Swim-Mor Pools & Spas?

Being a local family-owned independent business makes Swim-Mor Pools & Spas a smart choice for customers, according to McCool.

"We're not national. We're not a franchise. And we do not try to sell everything. Our expertise has been building custom gunite pools for 55 years and that's what we focus on," he says.

Save for a few aspects that are legally required to be outsourced to independent licensed contractors, Swim-Mor Pools & Spas uses all of their own crews for the pool construction, which McCool says is unique for the pool business.

In addition to building new pools, Swim-Mor Pools & Spas also specializes in renovating gunite pools. The experienced team can handle everything from your standard renovation of replacing your coping, tile and plaster finish, to adding features such as raised water features, sun decks, and even spas that were not originally built with the pool. McCool says, "Even though your pool may not have originally been built with the more current popular features doesn't mean that Swim-Mor cannot add them now."

The 2023 pool season is already underway for the business, which thanks to the mild winter meant they were able to start construction early. Pool openings and service will ramp up from mid-April to Memorial Day.

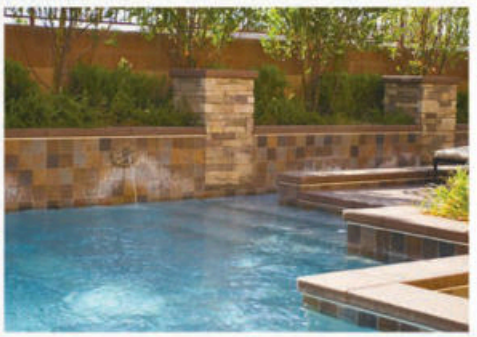
But, for those looking to add a pool to their backyard this summer, it's not too late. "We're still building for this year. We're still selling for this summer," McCool says. "But don't waste time. Get in!" H&H

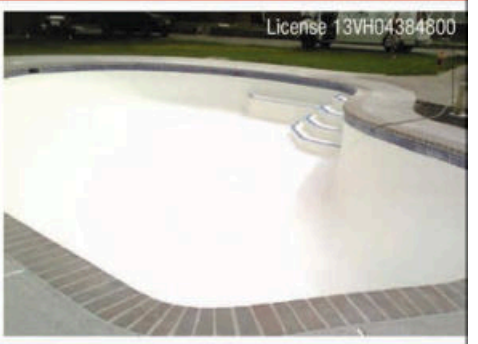
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H&H profile by Kristen Dowd

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Building an Expert Foundation

Siar Construction prioritizes communication and transparency to provide best customer experience in roofing, chimney work and more.

Whether it's installing a new roof, relining a chimney or simply giving an estimate on a home improvement job, customers can rest assured that the professionals at Siar Construction are experts in their field.

They can also expect to be treated like family, because every job the Garfield-based business takes on is handled as if it is the team's own personal home.

"That goes for everything," Danny Cenaj says. "We make sure everything is done in a professional way, and we build to last."

Cenaj owns the company alongside his uncle, Bes Cenaj, and many family members fill roles throughout the organization. Established in 2000, Siar Construction is going on a quarter-century of success in North and Central Jersey—success in jobs completed and in building a solid reputation as the go-to for roofs, chimneys, siding and masonry work.

The key is keeping customers informed throughout the process—from the job estimate to completion—and keeping a clean worksite during construction. Cenaj personally stops by each job site every day to ensure things are going well.

"That's all very important to us," he says.

It also helps things stay organized for both employee and homeowner when dealing with a potentially large-scale job.

Roofing needs

One big focus of Siar Construction is roofing, something that is critical to the safety and well-being of a home.

"The roof is basically the guardian angel of your house," Cenaj says. "It's very important in terms of the structural safety of the house and also to have peace of mind. If you have a bad roof you know bad things are going to be happening."

A leaky roof can lead to destroyed ceilings, mold issues and even fires if that water reaches an electric box, so staying on top of a roof's lifespan and condition is important. For those who don't know when a roof was last replaced, there are visual clues that can help.

"Decoloration of shingles will be there. Small pieces of the shingle may come off. Granules will start coming off—that will look like black dust in the driveway. Shingles may not look straight or lay flat," Cenaj says. "And the neighbor's roof may look brand new in comparison."

A potential roof job starts with a free inspection from Siar Construction. A professional will come out, climb onto the roof and examine everything, taking photos along the way. They then will present those photos and their assessment to the homeowner.

If a new roof is needed, the expert team will walk customers through the whole process. It starts with choosing shingles from provided books featuring materials from GAF Roofing, Owens Corning or Atlas. They get a timeline, typically one to two weeks from booking if nothing needs to be special ordered. And the entire job is outlined.

"By the end you're going to be almost as much of an expert as us," Cenaj says.

Chimney repairs and rebuilding

Cenaj recommends chimney inspections every four to five years and Siar Construction offers two types of inspections. Level 1 is no charge and includes examining the fireplace or boiler connections inside the home and looking at the structure of the chimney on the roof. Level 2 starts at $700 and involves removing the chimney cap, and checking flues and liners and more with a camera.

"The chimney can be extremely important to the house. In a lot of houses, the chimney is connected to the furnace and boiler. A leak or damage from water can cause it to stop working. The furnace will need to use more gas and energy to produce the same heat as if it was in good condition," Cenaj explains.

Chimney jobs can include repairs—sealing issues, installing new liners—or completely rebuilding the structure. The same goes for fireplace chimneys. Although they may not be vital to functioning of the home, ensuring they are in top working order is still essential for safety and pleasure.

Chimney job costs can vary depending on the work that needs to be done, but typically the timeline is "fairly fast," Cenaj says, assuming no special materials need to be ordered.

A job well done

It's important for all Siar Construction jobs to not only go smoothly, but go as quickly as possible while maintaining high quality work. To help this along, Cenaj says they handle any necessary permitting with towns. They also offer some special pricing.

"We have a pretty huge discount for senior citizens and all first responders—police, firefighters, nurses, doctors, dentists—and veterans," Cenaj says. "It's 10% off any type of job, no matter how big or small."

With a stellar reputation thanks to its dedication to the craft and its customers, it's no wonder why Siar Construction is so highly regarded by homeowners across the region.

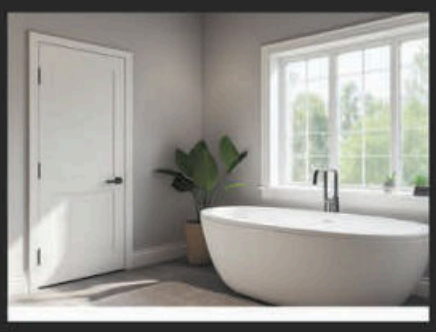
"At the end of a job, basically with most of our customers, we become friends because of their great experience with us," Cenaj says. H&H



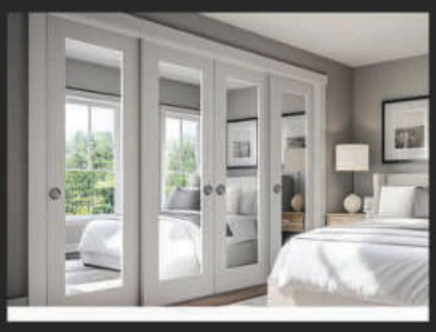
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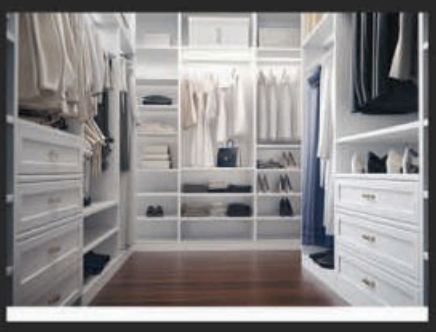
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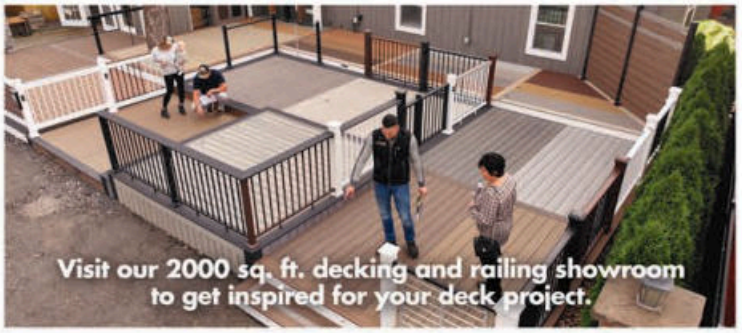
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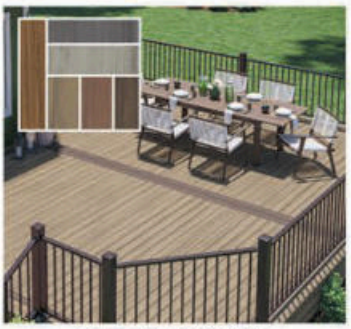
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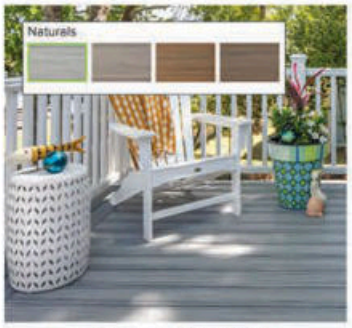


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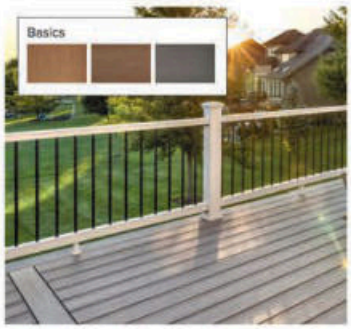

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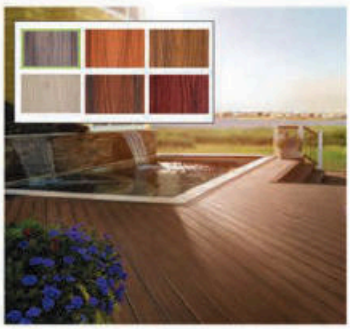

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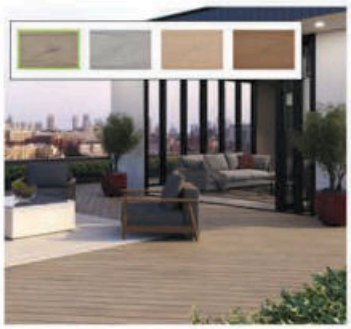


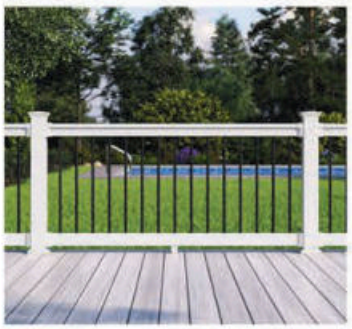
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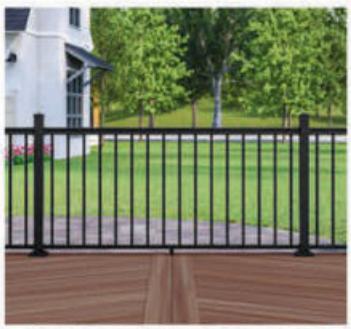


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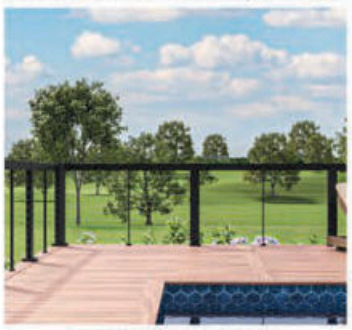

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