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Volume 19, Issue 8

Set in Stone

From fireplaces to countertops,
Colonial Marble & Granite creates
a stunning design. page 22

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Since opening in 2008, Colonial Marble & Granite has accomplished unprecedented growth. As a full-service supplier of natural stone and quartz materials, Colonial offers thousands of slabs, along with professional design and installation services. The company has now expanded to include generators and smart home services under one umbrella.

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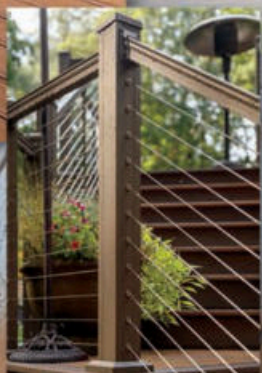


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Shutter Tech Inc.

by **Michelle Boyles**

For 44 years, Shutter Tech has been providing homeowners in Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania and New Jersey with shutters, blinds and shades. With that level of experience, the company has seen it all. Owner Robert W. Miller recently spoke with *House & Home* about their line of shutters, which are custom-made right in their West Chester factory.

What are the benefits of having everything made on the premises?

They can come see our shop and the [shutters] are made here in the USA. ... I find the No. 1 benefit is that we can fix everything. ... When you order some products from outside vendors, the problem is a few years down the road, if something breaks or comes loose, that company may not be in business anymore. ... It may have to then be sent to China, which could take months and you have to pay to have it sent over and wait to get it back or get a new one.

We custom make every shutter here in our West Chester factory. We can fix everything. If we made it, we can fix it. We have a lifetime guarantee. ... We've been [in business for] 44 years under the same owner; we're not going anywhere.

What is the typical process like for customers?

I would say 80-90 percent of our phone calls come from word-of-mouth or family/friend referrals. A customer will call me, I find out what they want and I set them up with a measure appointment—generally within the same week. Then I send someone out to measure their windows, taking into [consideration] their privacy needs, what type of sunlight the room gets, whether they need room darkeners, things like that.

Shutters are pretty easy, there are only a couple of options as far as shutters go, so they pick out the selections that they want and then we will quote them right on the spot. If they want to place an order, we require a 50 percent de-



Robert W. Miller, owner

posit. That will get the order started. Typically, shutters custom-made here take six to eight weeks to turn around.

Just before it hits the build table, I'll call the customer to set up their installation. That way, usually from the time they are finished being built to the time they are being installed, there's a three- to four-day lapse. We don't want the shutters sitting around here collecting dust once they are ready. The installation usually takes about half an hour per window.

What types of materials do you use?

It's important to note that we do price match. If people show us a quote for a similar product, we will match it. ... I always tell people ... to make sure they ask what's in the shutter, what is it made of? That is very important. We have some competitors that charge double the price, but their shutter is hollow inside. If a Frisbee nicks a slat, now you have a hole in your shutter. Some others are made of MDF. If you get a nick in those and any type of moisture gets in there, it's going to [swell] up like countertops used to back in the '70s. Our shutters are made of 100 percent synthetic material; it's solid foam

throughout. It is heat resistant and moisture resistant; it won't fade, warp, crack, or chip like wood will. ... It's a quality product that stands up to everything.

You have to do your homework. Shutters are expensive, it's a permanent fixture in your home. There is no tax on shutters. A lot of times, you can submit it at tax time and get some energy efficiency credits because they do recognize shutters as an energy saver in your home.

What are the benefits of installing shutters for your home?

They do stand up to anything. If you're getting blinds, for example, they're only going to last you a couple of years at best and it depends on the quality. If you're getting a shade and it's made of fabric, that shade is collecting every piece of pollen and dust in your home. Fabric window treatments [also] fade; they collect all the pollen so they're not good as far as allergies are concerned.

One of the No. 1 things I hear from customers is how easy [the shutters] are to clean, literally a swipe of a microfiber towel and you're good to go. You really only have to dust them. They're so low maintenance and they completely change the look of the entire room. **H&H**

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**How to keep
comfort and safety
in mind as you
remodel the
home you love.**

Stay Awhile

Baby boomers remain one of the most interesting segments of the country's population. History has watched them grow up, and as more of them age into their senior years, they are increasingly making their living preferences known. Studies show a majority plan to stay in their current home, as opposed to move to a retirement or assisted living community, and many plan to make improvements on their home. Remodeling industry professionals have embraced this

trend of upgrading kitchens and bathrooms with a balance of luxury and safety in mind.

Often referred to as “aging in place,” this trend empowers those who want to stay in their home but may need modifications to make it more suitable. This may mean moving a master bedroom to the first floor or installing safety features in a bathroom. We spoke with some of the region's prominent remodelers about renovating for this segment and how aging in place can still be done with style.

BY DANIEL SEAN KAYE



Top right images courtesy of Dilworth's Custom Design



Often referred to as “aging in place,” this trend empowers those who want to stay in their home but may need modifications to make it more suitable.



Stay Awhile

First steps

Assessing the safety and security of a home is a priority, says Christopher Fontana, owner of Magnolia Home Remodeling Group. “We have to look at everything, including the electrical, plumbing and heating. Older houses often don’t have what they need to help people stay there so a lot needs to be updated,” he says.

“When you’re considering aging in place renovations, the existing home has to be assessed for what can and cannot be done within budget,” says Doug Mottershead, CKD, kitchen and bath designer for McHales. “I have to look at all kinds of solutions. Can I build a soffit to hide things? Can I lower the ceiling or raise the floor to make access easier? These are important questions.”

Sophia M. Amiano, design assistant at Amiano & Son Design-Build says hearing the client’s thoughts is what truly determines the direction of the project. “Do they want to use the stairs as frequently? Do they want a more functional kitchen and bathroom? Questions like these are dire when renovating a forever home,” she says. This information guides choices on budget, materials and planning.

“When people can move into new homes where they can have everything they want, it can be rare to have homeowners who want to convert a 60-year-old house,” says David Cerami, CKBR, president of HomeTech Renovations. “When they do, there’s a lot to think about, especially accessibility to everything.” He mentions ramps, doorway widths, ADA compliance, getting to and from the house, aisle width, etc. “A renovation is a substantial investment that could cost \$60,000 to \$70,000. You have to ask yourself, ‘Can we do this? Do we want to?’ It really comes down to your quality of life.”

The homeowners might not even need health-specific renova-

tions yet they don’t want to downsize. “We’re finding a lot of people are getting the work done not because they are having medical issues, but because they want to make their homes more comfortable,” says Stephen Turbyfill, president of Freedom General Contracting. “This might be the house they’ve lived in for decades, but they never had time to renovate. They’ve paid off the mortgage, the kids have left and they just don’t want to move. This is their chance to get 10 to 15 more years out of their house.”

Features to consider

Like any remodeling project, changes come in many degrees, from full-scale demolition/design/build, to minor updating that doesn’t necessarily disrupt homeowners’ daily life.

“Remote control lighting, keeping areas accessible and free of clutter and trip hazards are low-cost, common-sense ideas that can be beneficial to everyone,” says Dave Dilworth, director, sales and design of Dilworth’s Custom Design.

For other renovations, making the space accessible is key, says Cerami. “You need to consider walkers and wheelchairs, wider doorways, easy thresholds and transitions. Can the person easily manipulate a walker in the room? Is there enough space to turn around? Is the room easy to use assisted or unassisted? You might need to rip everything out of a space and reconfigure the room to make it function the best.”

With this in mind, an open floorplan often works best. “In all parts of the home, clients are asking us for open-concept layouts. They’re easier to get around, especially if the client uses a wheelchair or walker,” says Amiano.

“Bathrooms and kitchens are not usually set up for anything other than what an able-bodied person needs, so you have to approach things differently. Someone who is blind will need things that someone who uses a wheelchair doesn’t. There are different requirements,” says Mottershead. “People with visual impairment



Homeowners don’t need to sacrifice their taste. “There’s a lot that can be done that is still very attractive.”

—Christopher Fontana, owner of Magnolia Home Remodeling Group

can’t have white cabinets and white countertops. Having brighter, cleaner light and maybe white cabinets with a dark countertop helps with depth perception. People in a wheelchair will need a 9-inch high toe-kick for their kitchen cabinets instead of the usual 4-inch high one. They also need shallow-sinked sinks so they can fit their chair in and are able to get things out,” he says. “Also, no one likes to have to reach into the back of a cabinet, so we install roll-out trays in almost every one. It’s about making everything inside accessible.”

The kitchen now has many features that make life easier for homeowners, says Dilworth. The farmhouse sink and wall ovens

don’t require as much bending over, pull-out drawers give easier access and corner cabinets can be designed to allow use of the entire space without reaching far back. “Soft-close doors and drawers can be modified as to the amount of force required to open them. Kitchens can be modified to have larger doorways if needed for wheelchair access,” he says.

For those homeowners who are looking to aging issues, they might put an addition on the first floor to have a bedroom space available in the future and reduce the needs for stairs, says Turbyfill. Another popular option is to convert the garage into a living space, allowing older people more convenience without them worrying



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Stay Awhile

about going up and down steps, says Amiano.

Once the first floor of the home is remodeled, homeowners may want to consider specific changes in their bathroom, like replacing a large whirlpool tub with a freestanding soaking tub, and making the spaces cleaner and more simplistic. "But we're seeing that no matter the choices, everything is style attractive and style-driven," Turbyfill says.

Homeowners don't need to sacrifice their taste. "There's a lot that can be done that is still very attractive," says Fontana. "We had one house a son wanted fixed-up for his mom. The grab bars and towel bars were very tasteful and aesthetically looked really nice. It's not like a hospital."

"In bathrooms, many changes are good to have no matter who uses the space. Horizontal grab bars and small vertical ones are good ideas. Maybe even having a seat in the shower," Mottershead says. In addition to the standard hot and cold valves, he suggests a secondary one so you have more control, and installing a diverter so you can shower when seated, [using] the main one to rinse.

"We're getting more requests for low-curb or no-curb showers, because they're much easier to navigate for older people," says Fontana. They also install lower controls and showerheads on hoses, as well as a main floor drain and no-slip materials on the floor.

Bathroom doorways are often too tight for wheelchairs so a 36-inch door gives plenty of room, says Amiano. A curbless shower helps clients who find it difficult to lift their legs over the pans.

"Vanities can be made taller for less bending over and can be multilevel to accommodate a wheelchair," says Dilworth. "Radiant floor heating can eliminate the need for throw rugs in

the bathroom, a trip hazard as we age. If it's taking longer to get in and out of the tub or shower, a heat lamp may be a welcome addition." Other features to think about include touchless and anti-scald faucets with lever handles, and improved task and under-cabinet lighting. "Bathrooms should always have a nightlight and the shower area should be properly lit."

One option Cerami floats is the idea of building or creating an in-law suite, with a brand-new layout specifically built for the older person. "Maybe they don't need or want a full kitchen. Perhaps a smaller kitchenette is best. The space functions as a mini-apartment, so the senior can keep their independence."

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Passion in the Profession

The builders behind **Get Decked** call themselves the best for good reason. *by Amanda Hamm Hengel*

Mike Jerminski is one of the lucky ones. When it comes to getting up and going to work every day as a deck builder, he does it with a smile on his face. It's not easy to find a profession to be so passionate about, but when he entered the scene 34 years ago, he knew he had found the place for him.

It was this passion that led Jerminski to open his own company, Get Decked, 22 years ago, and it is this passion that has kept him there. He builds decks, and only decks, with the five men he's brought to his crew, six days a week, and there's no place he'd rather be.

"Back when we started 22 years ago, we were a rare breed: A deck builder who did only that—build decks," he says. "But we've maintained that focus today with the knowledge that decks are a very important part of many homes and though many companies have entered into the business, we're the ones who have built thousands of decks to get us to where we are today."

Jerminski also admits he wasn't able to build his business by sitting down.

"My goal is to be the best deck builder in the area," he says. "I work seven days a week because somewhere every day someone is building a deck and we at Get Decked will not be outworked."

"Today's customers are very smart," Jerminski continues. "They contact several deck builder candidates then compare quotes and businesses. We earn the contract when we create a business combining honesty, hard work, old-fashioned worth ethics and thousands of references."

Being the best deck builder in the area is a tough title to claim. In fact, Get Decked received a notice from the Better Business Bureau last



year that a competitor had filed a complaint asking the company to prove Get Decked is in fact the best deck builder in the area.

Jerminski says Get Decked's second-place finish in a nation-wide deck contest held by the Deckorator Company, along with its recognition for the last eight years in the Chester County, Pa., newspapers as best deck builder, paired with the customer satisfaction award it has received from Houzz for two years now is all the BBB needed to dispel the complaint.

"When we responded back with the facts and documentation back to the BBB, they accepted our response," he says.

It is not easy to start and maintain a business, let alone keep it up and running for 22 years and earning such coveted awards, but Jerminski says it is being the best in his trade that continues to drive him and his crew.

"We absolutely love what we do and

take each job very much to heart," he says. "We truly care about everything we do and back it up for many years."

"We have been truly blessed with the best customers and think of everyone as family," Jerminski continues. "We have one crew, not several like our competitors, and we do one job at a time, with no monies down and we offer no-interest plans—all of this certainly helps."

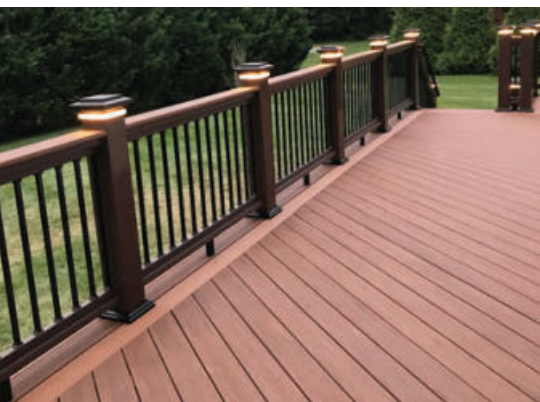
As for the future of Get Decked, Jerminski says he looks forward to seeing what the young crew he has working for him will do next.

"I have had the pleasure of working with the same crew for the past eight years," he says. "We have a very young core of carpenters who work very hard to polish the trade and they are the future of Get Decked."

"They have the same drive and energy I have, and are able to add that new, young creative spark to the job where my old stubborn ways have set in," Jerminski concludes. "I am so proud to know Get Decked will work so hard to have a very long future in the decking trade." **H&H**

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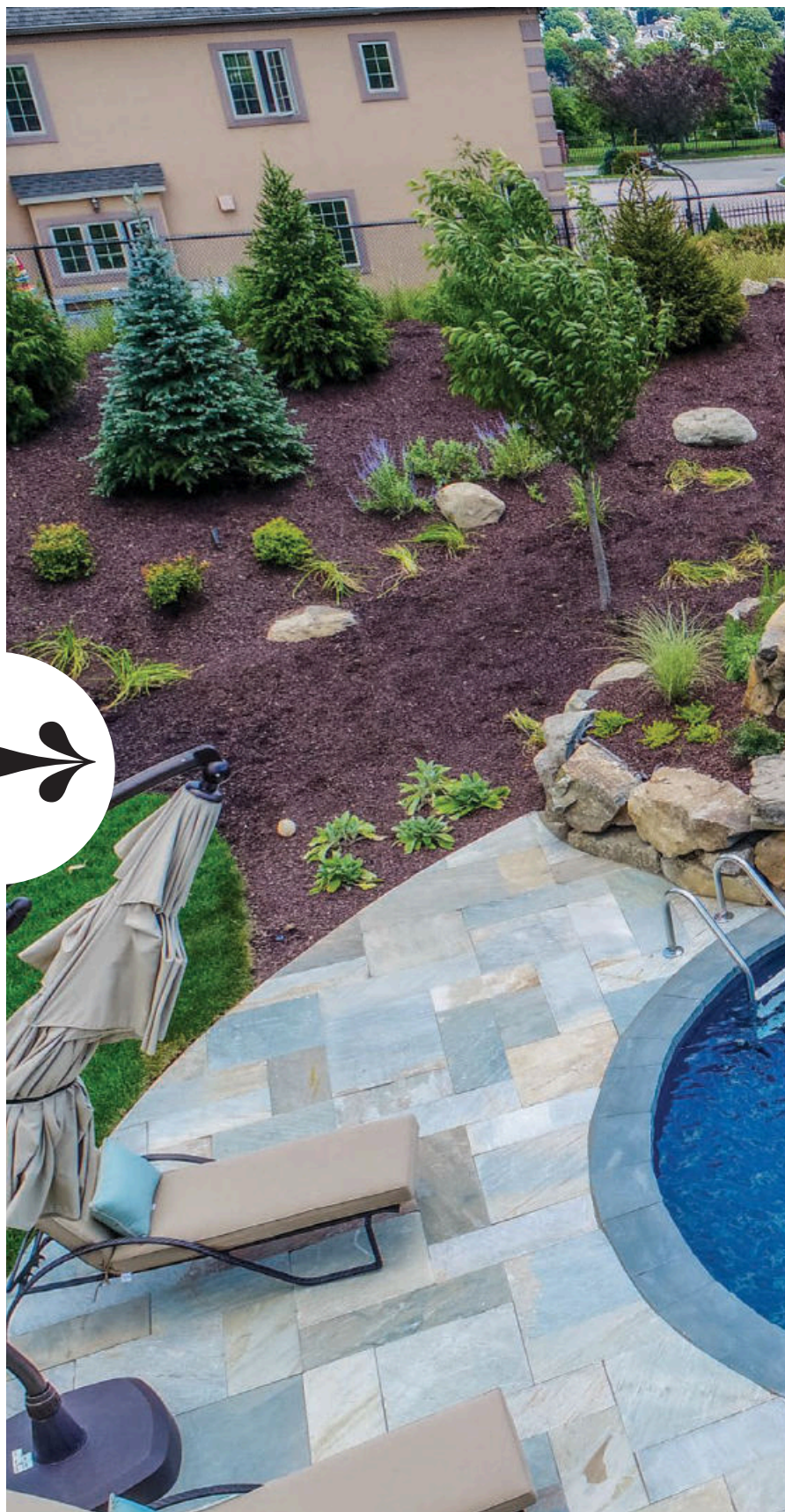
HEAD START



BY LINDSEY GETZ

While we may not be finished with snow and icy temperatures just yet, warmer days are just ahead and the only way to be truly ready for them is to start planning now. Landscaping professionals are already gearing up for their busy season and booking jobs. Homeowners who are waiting to make that call risk getting left behind as landscapers fill their schedules on a first-come-first-serve fashion.

“Checking in with your landscaper before the spring is an excellent idea,” says Chelsea Feast, sales and marketing-Go Green Division-at Elite Landscaping. “Professional landscapers are extremely busy in the spring because they are starting to install



Landscape design sketch and project images courtesy of CLC Landscape Design

LANDSCAPING CALENDAR



MOST HOMEOWNERS DON'T
REALIZE JUST HOW MUCH TIME
IT TAKES TO PLAN A PROJECT.
...IT PAYS TO GET THOSE
PLANS STARTED EARLY..."

—Richard Cording Sr.,
owner of CLC Landscape Design

HEAD START

all of the projects that were planned during the winter. Therefore, the longer you wait to reach out and plan, the longer you will end up waiting for the project to get on their schedule and get completed.”

“It’s never too early to get ready for spring—especially if you’re looking for something fun to do,” says Tammy Panetta of D. Panetta Contracting. “D. Panetta does 3D designs of your yard to show you what you can do by bringing it to life on the screen. You can see how your yard can become the backyard paradise you are dreaming of. Then, when you approve the design, we’re ready to bring it to life for you.”

Plan Now for Warm Weather Fun

The landscaping experts we spoke with all stressed that the “offseason” is an excellent time to start the planning and designing phase of an outdoor living project—particularly if it’s a larger undertaking like a new patio, an outdoor kitchen or maybe even a pool. In fact, it’s simply not feasible to have a project like this finished if it doesn’t get underway early on.

“Most homeowners don’t realize just how much time it takes to plan a project,” says Richard Cording Sr., LIC, owner of CLC Landscape Design. “A lot of that process is out of our hands with permitting being required for even smaller projects these days. We’ve had permits take two or three months to get approved as the local townships are often overburdened with receiving so many at once. It pays to get those plans started early so that there are no hold-ups when it’s time to build.”

“The offseason is the best time to start planning your landscape updates and renovations,” adds Dave Zimmerman, owner of Zimmerman Landscaping. “Unfortunately, those who wait until the first signs of spring to start thinking about their landscape could be in for a long wait. If it’s a large

project, you may not even be able to enjoy it until the following season. We always recommend getting on your landscape provider’s radar well ahead of time—even if it’s just an idea at this point.”

Planning in the winter is also a great way to get through those “wintertime blues,” adds Dean Johnston, owner, Johnston & Associates Land and Water Creations.

“It also helps you create a budget so that you don’t overspend

or rush into something,” Johnston says. “I find a lot of mistakes with homeowners who are just rushing to put something together at the last minute.”

Cording says that acting soon will also help avoid disappointment. He has had first-hand experience with this and says he always gets last-minute calls from homeowners who want to have a brand-new patio built in time for their child’s high school graduation party or a pool installed in time for Memorial Day swimming. It’s difficult to have to disappoint those people.

“It’s no fun having to tell a homeowner who is excited about their project that it’s not going to be ready in the timeframe that they want it,” Cording admits. “But when you don’t make that call until March, it’s just not realistic. Even if we worked as fast as we could, there will always be factors like weather and permitting that are out of our hands. In most cases, we’re already starting to break ground on projects by mid-March, so you want all the designs and permitting to be finished by then.”

Of course, planning ahead doesn’t only apply to large-scale design/build projects. While it’s

definitely critical that you get those on the calendar, you can also use the offseason to plan for maintenance projects. Feast says that the winter is a good time to create checklists of smaller items that you plan to do (or want your landscaper to complete) in the spring such as power washing and resealing your patio or deck, repairing loose boards or bricks in outdoor spaces and making sure that all outdoor lights are operational.

Trends on the Horizon

In terms of what homeowners are interested in, the big trends seem to be all about “backyard vacation destinations,” says Zimmerman. Homeowners are looking for lots of amenities like new patios with outdoor fire places, built-in stone pizza ovens, outdoor kitchens and combination water/fire features for amazing “accent pieces,” Zimmerman adds.

Sam Waddell, owner of SLS Landscaping, agrees and says that the “stay-cation” trend continues to reign in popularity. If anything, homeowners are getting more elaborate than ever with their backyard paradises. He says that it’s due to the fact that people are



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—Christine Gale,
president of Gale Nurseries

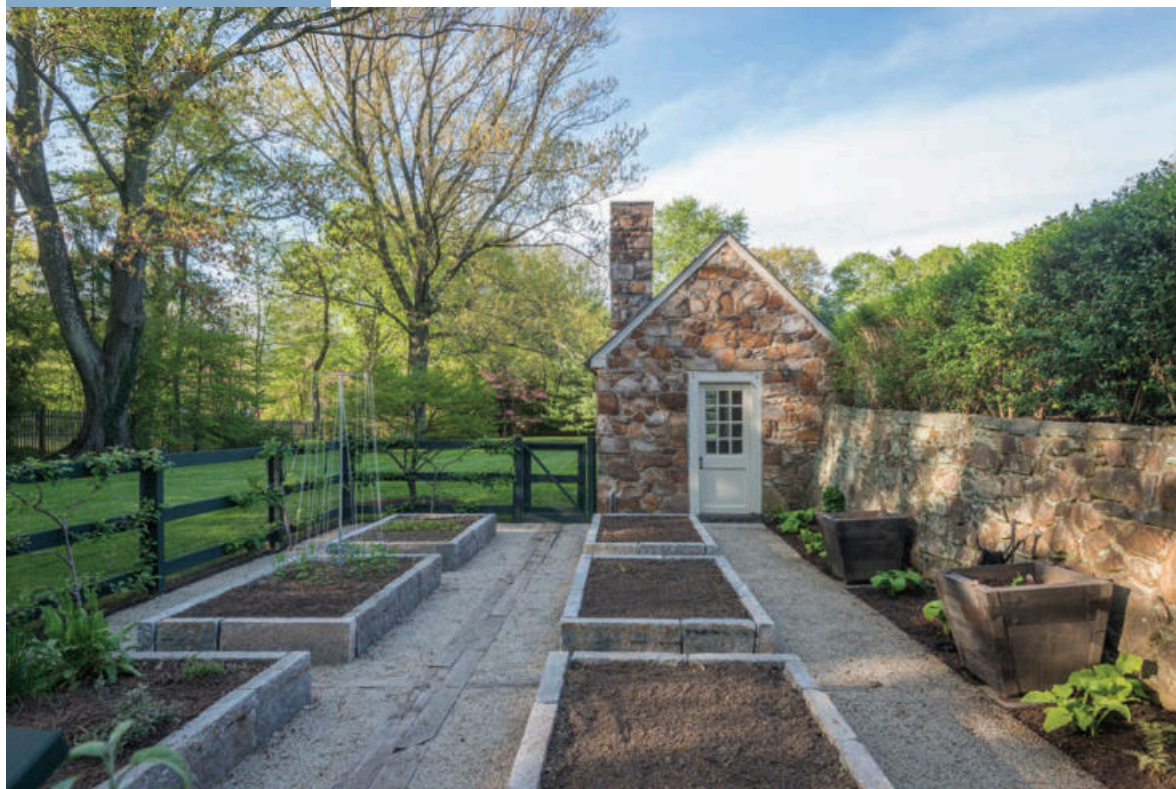


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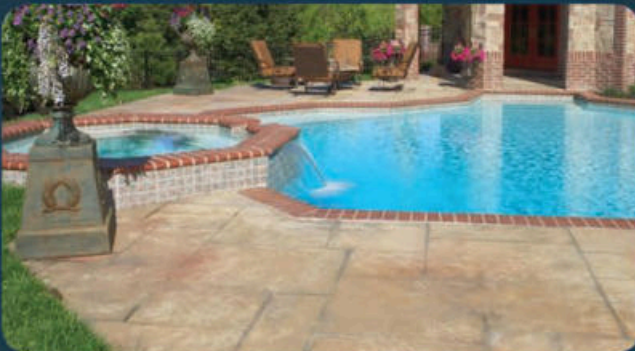
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HEAD START

spending more time at home and want to have a backyard they can enjoy.

Beyond outdoor living spaces, there are other trends to pay attention to in 2019 as well. Christine Gale, president of Gale Nurseries, says that she's seeing more requests to accommodate organic lifestyles.

"Many clients are requesting vegetable gardens so that they can eat organic," she says. "We have done a lot of raised-bed vegetable gardens recently. Along that topic, we have done some very interesting chicken coops and even vineyards. People want to grow their own food and it's an easy way to accommodate an organic lifestyle."

Along those same lines, there's also an increased interest in being environmentally friendly.

"Permeable pavers are gaining a lot of attention as they reduce or even eliminate any rain or storm water runoff," adds Zimmerman. "This is great for the environment as it keeps water from your property out of storm drains leading to rivers and streams and eventually to the ocean. Sustainability is becoming a key feature in our ever-changing climate."

Making Smart Choices

As you think ahead to the summer, Johnston advises that you make sure you "work with a professional."

"You may find that anybody with a truck calls themselves a landscaper," he says. "But many of us go to school in the winter to sharpen our skills and knowledge. An educated designer and builder will help you get the right results the first time. I work with a lot of clients who went with the cheap contractor first because they wanted to save some dollars but ended up spending two times what it would have cost to work with an experienced and educated

contractor in the first place."

The bottom line? Reach out to a professional who has your best interest at heart and plan now. If you want to be able to actually enjoy your space all summer long, you must plan ahead.

"Meeting with a landscape professional now enables sufficient time to design the swimming pool, outdoor kitchen and landscape, make necessary revisions to plans, submit for permits and schedule and order job materials," Waddell says. "Projects implemented in late winter and early spring will provide for all-season-long use of the new backyard, giving family and friends time to enjoy it!"

H&H



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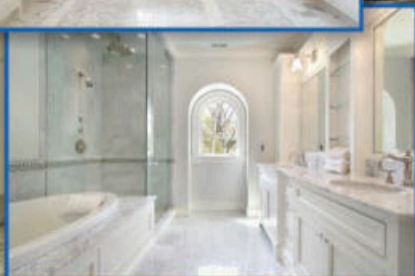
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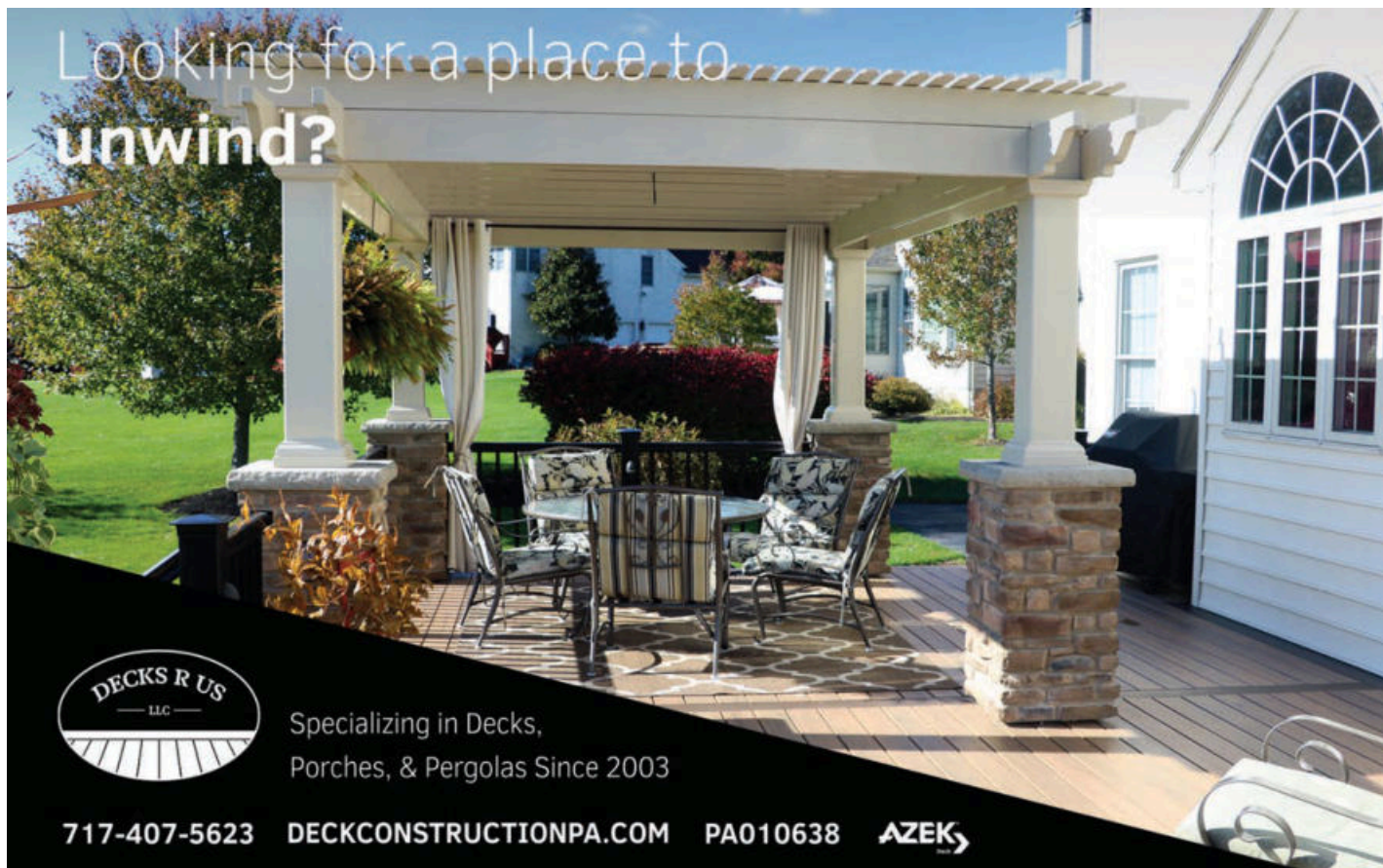
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The Kitchen Visualizer is just one of many ways in which Colonial—a family-owned business that opened its doors in 2008—has continued to offer its clients world-class customer service. Keeping the customer at the center of the company’s rapid growth has left them constantly innovating and looking for ways to fully meet their customers’ needs. There’s no question that this “customer-centered growth” has been a key to their success.

A One-Stop Provider

Beyond this technology, Colonial—a full-service supplier of natural stone and quartz materials—is also continuing to offer its customers the best by being a truly one-stop provider for all home (and commercial) renovation needs. With a slab yard with more than 5,000 slabs in over 500 different colors, there’s truly something for everyone. Colonial also offers tile, sinks and faucets.

In terms of what’s popular right now, James Freeman, Colonial’s chief operating officer, says that quartz continues to be trending upward. However, with such a vast selection of stone materials including granite, marble, onyx, quartz, quartzite, travertine and more, there’s something for every taste, style and budget.

“We are proud to offer an extensive showroom that gives our customers the wide selection that they want access to,” Freeman says. “However, we also understand that a choice this big can be overwhelming, which is why our designers are available to guide our customers in

“How we can best meet our customers’ wants and needs continues to be at the heart of all of Colonial’s expansion and growth.”

—James Freeman, Colonial’s chief operating officer



making a selection that they'll love. We want every aspect of the process to be both easy and enjoyable for the customer."

A Demand to Expand

As Colonial has continued to become a household name, there's been a growing demand for the company to offer even more services. That's why the Colonial brand has now expanded to include Colonial Home Services. Under this umbrella is Colonial Generators and Colonial Smart Home Services, giving customers access to the same top-notch customer service they've come to count on for more of their needs.

While Colonial Smart Home Services handles upgrading homes with more smart controls, Colonial Generators is a leading emergency generator installation company that has simplified the process of purchasing, designing, installing and monitoring standby backup power systems.

On top of expanding the company's service offerings, Colonial has also grown regionally by adding new locations. This has increased access of Colonial's services by customers who were otherwise driving quite far to be able to work with the company.

"It became obvious that we were getting

A Company that Cares

It's no doubt that Colonial has grown its business by being a company that cares about its customers. But Colonial is also a company that cares about the community. They believe strongly in giving back to the local areas that have so wholeheartedly supported them over the years. As a result, they are devoted to a number of local and national causes. For instance, they have focused a lot of attention on raising funding for childhood cancer research and have maintained a strong partnership with Alex's Lemonade Stand. Colonial also supports the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

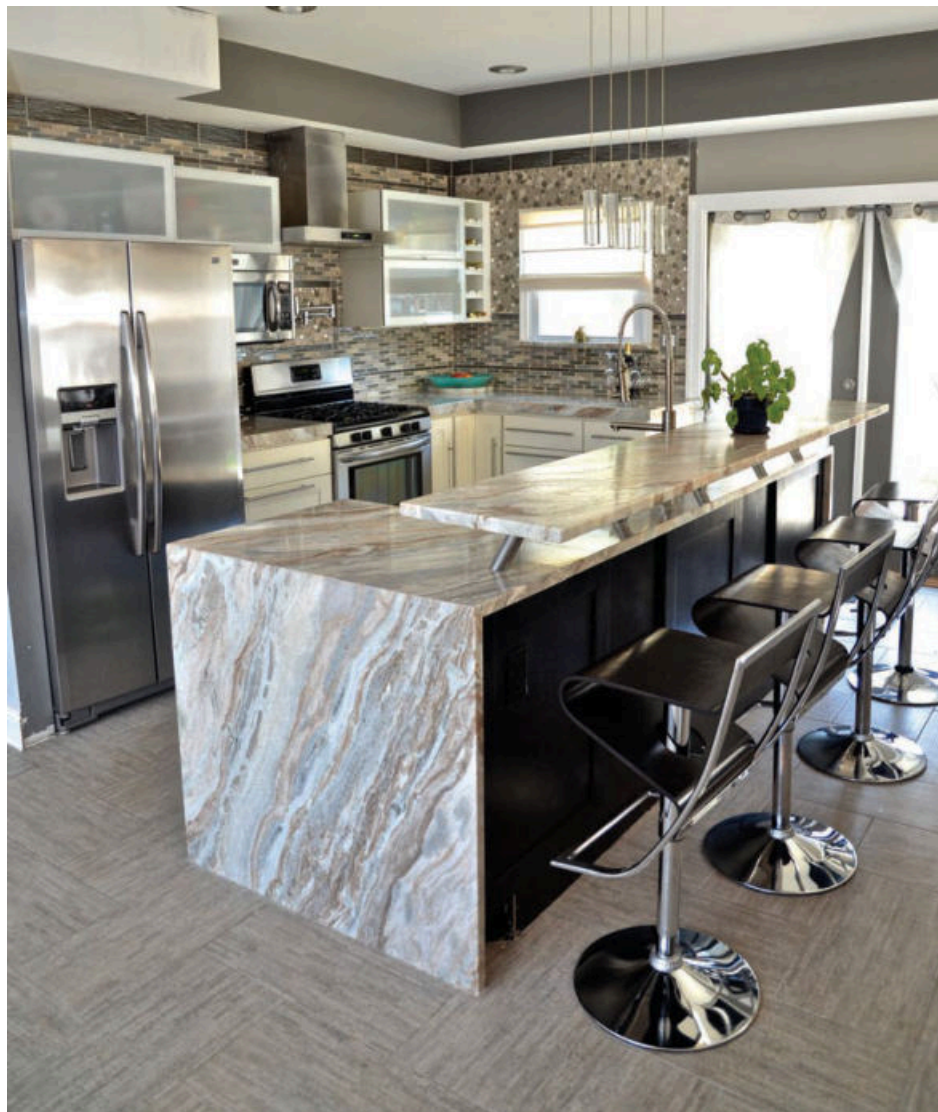
On top of that, Colonial recently hosted its annual Charity Golf Outing and raised more than \$100,000 to support Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Upper Darby.

"We've always believed in giving back," says Freeman, "and our growth has made it even more possible to do more for the causes we believe in."

Colonial is also an avid supporter of local sports and a proud sponsor of the Temple Owls, Philadelphia Flyers, Philadelphia Union, Philadelphia Sixers, and more.

As the company continues to undoubtedly grow, Freeman says that their commitments to the customer and to the community at large will remain unwavering.

"We recognize that it's our customers who have helped us get this far and that's why we'll continue to look out for them," Freeman says. "We're proud to be thought of as a company that makes the customer our top priority." **H&H**



"How we can best meet our customers' wants and needs continues to be at the heart of all of Colonial's expansion and growth," says Freeman. "With the growing demand for the installation of smart home applications like Nest, there's been interest from our customers in having those services performed by a brand they've already come to know and trust which is why we've expanded into smart home services."

quite a few out-of-state customers who were driving a couple of hours or more to one of our showrooms," says Freeman. "Our flagship King of Prussia location remains our largest showroom but we've grown to include showrooms in Center City Philadelphia, Harrisburg, and New Castle, Delaware. With four locations we're now more accessible to New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Metro New York."

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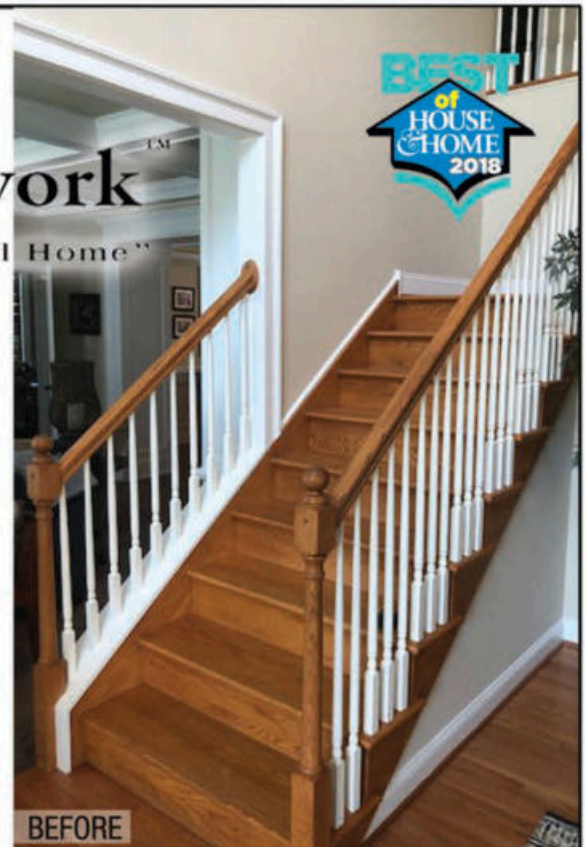


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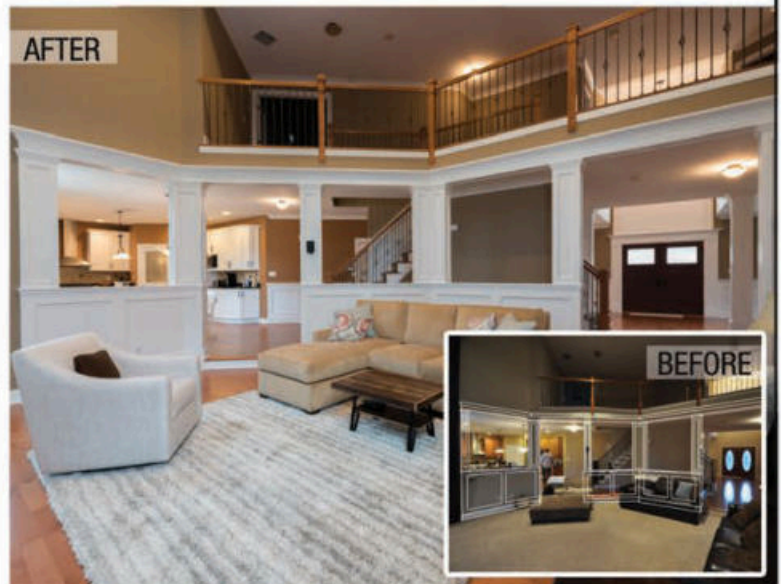
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