Delaware

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Volume 23, Issue 4

Spring PLANNING GUIDE



E&E Contracting

As the company grows, it remains true to its roots of honesty, integrity and value *page 9*

Spring Cleaning

How to get your landscape ready for the season ahead

Exterior Upgrades

Outside improvements that add value, curb appeal and protection

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Archadeck of Delaware

Giving area residents the outdoor living space of their dreams *page 19*

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Combining decades of experience with a personal approach

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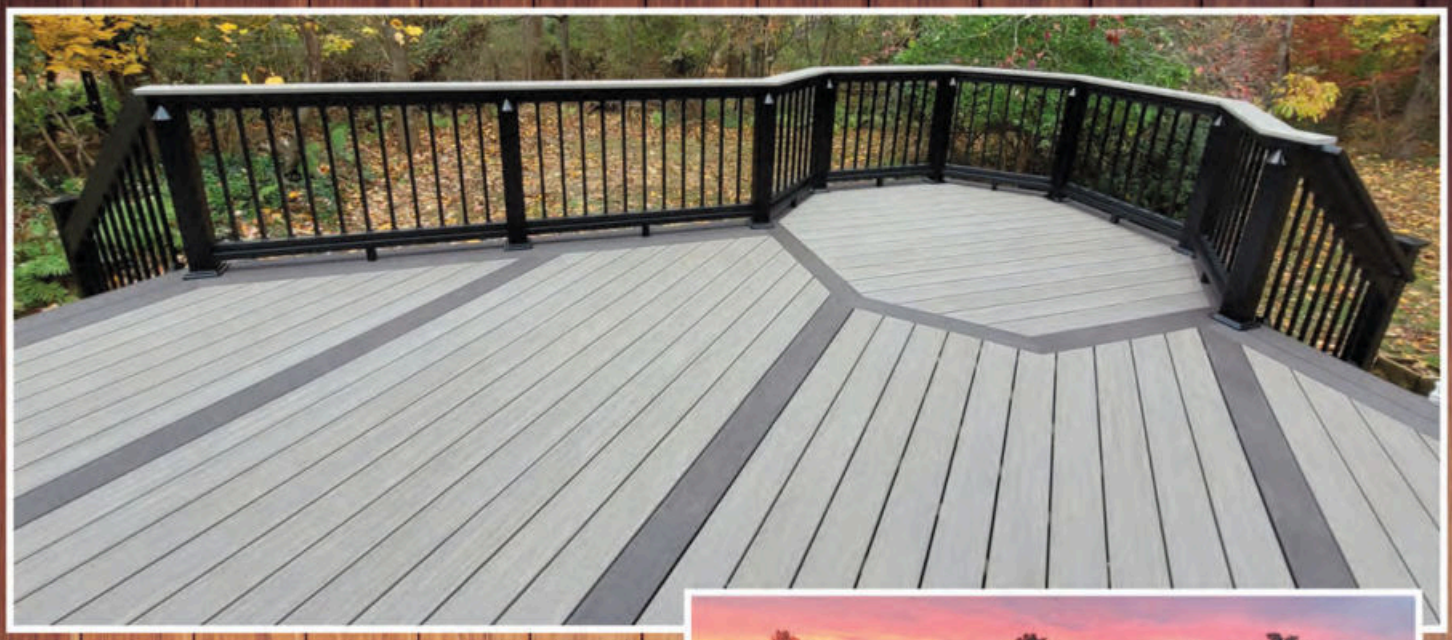
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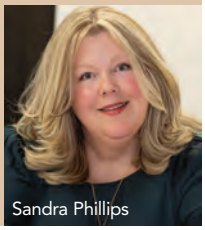




Rising to the Occasion

From its products and services, to its people, to the in-home experience it provides to each client, **Colonial Marble & Granite** makes key investments to "get to the next level."

by **Bill Donahue** | *photos by* **Nina Lea Photography**



Sandra Phillips

SINCE ITS FOUNDING IN 2006, COLONIAL MARBLE & GRANITE has become the largest fabricator of stone in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. Despite its size and position of prominence, Colonial Marble & Granite has been able to retain the nimbleness of a much smaller enterprise, blessed with the creativity and commitment to self-improvement needed to excel in such a competitive landscape.

"We're a customer-service-driven company, and we have always tried to rise to the occasion," says Sandra Phillips, senior vice president of sales, marketing, and design for Colonial Marble & Granite, which is based in King of Prussia.

Colonial Marble & Granite got its start in countertops, but customer demand has propelled the company to branch out into ancillary products, such as tile, sinks, flooring, and cabinetry. The family-owned and operated company also greatly expanded its design capabilities, both in and out of its sprawling King of Prussia showroom; in fact, the company now offers the option to bring the entire design process right into a client's home.

"Evolution is nothing new for us," Phillips adds. "People used to come in here and say, 'Can you do my whole kitchen?' We would have to say, 'No, but we can do your countertop.' We don't have to say no anymore. The leaders of this company had a vision for what Colonial could be. As a company, we have pulled that vision together under one roof, and we're not done yet."

One might even say it's only just beginning. For example, Colonial Marble & Granite will soon roll out an interactive call center to facilitate client feedback and streamline the installation process.

"It's almost like a VIP service," Phillips says. "When our staff goes out to the client's home for an installation, someone from the call center can talk to the client while the installers are in the house. Before, if there was any issue with an installation, the client would have to submit a ticket and wait a few days for a response. Now, they get an instantaneous experience." For the small percentage of jobs that have any kind of issue, the client can give us that feedback and work with us right then and there to figure out what the resolution looks like."

The call center will become increasingly vital as Colonial Marble & Granite expands its design team and continues to enhance its in-home services. That said, the call center represents only one mode of interaction. Phillips says clients will have multiple ways to connect with Colonial Marble & Granite, including a revamped website that has an online portal with "chat" functionality.

"Some clients will want to spend $100,000 on a kitchen, while others will look to spend $1,999 on a new countertop," she adds. "No matter how much they're spending with us, we want to make sure everybody feels like they have been heard, like they matter."

Colonial Marble & Granite foresees more growth ahead for 2023. The company recently forged partnerships with the likes of American Standard and Grohe, and Phillips says clients are likely to see an expanded showroom alive with "more products that were never available in this area before." Going forward, the company intends to march boldly into "smart" technology for kitchens and other areas of the home.

"It's a very exciting time for us," Phillips says. "We have a sister company, Colonial Smart Home Services, and we're looking into how we can have these companies work more closely together to deliver what customers want in terms of smart-home functionality. We want to maintain the core of our business, and enrich and build upon it, sprouting out to meet the demand from our customers."

If there's a theme for Colonial Marble & Granite in 2023, it's one of evolution—the evolution of its products and services, the evolution of its showrooms and other spaces, and the evolution of the people who serve as the company's backbone.

"There are so many untold stories that happen at Colonial, and we're bringing those stories to the public this year," Phillips says. "What I think people forget sometimes is that this is a family-owned business. Nikos leads the charge, along with his father, Tom, his mother, Pam, and his brothers. This is what they love to do. They're a part of every process, from sales and design to operations, and they treat everyone who works here like family. As big as Colonial has become, it still has a family-owned vibe, and that's a beautiful thing." H&H

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Grow with E&E

This local, family-owned general contracting company has expanded its services to help clients' wildest dreams become reality.

by **Katie Francis**

E&E GENERAL CONTRACTING HAS DEVELOPED GREATLY OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS and substantially since the family business, originally focused on home siding, began in 1993.

"We have expanded into all sorts of exterior renovations," says Matt Esh, half of the brotherly duo who took over E&E from their father a few years ago.

Today, clients can opt for multiple essential and cosmetic services to enhance their home's livability and exterior aesthetics. E&E's services include decks, porches, patios, roofing and the always-popular stucco remediation.

As the company grows and improves, so do its clients' homes—literally. The team has spent the past few years incorporating home additions and those accompanying skills into its expansive wheelhouse of specialties. The service has come to be one of E&E's most sought-after services.

"Now we're at the point where we can offer a full-skill, exterior renovation or addition," Esh says. "We work with qualified subcontractors like electricians, plumbers and drywallers on the interiors of those projects, and our own guys do parts like the flooring and trim work."

Quite possibly the most important aspect of E&E's services is the fact that each and every job is managed by the same in-house project manager from start to finish. Esh says this not only sets the contracting company apart from many others, but also gives his clients a great sense of relief and comfort.

"All of our project managers were, at one time, a foreman or a craftsman in our system, so they've been through each part of the process. And when they step up to a project-manager level, they take on client communication from the beginning of the project to the end of the project," Esh explains. This includes daily stops on-site to ensure each project is going smoothly and enabling communication between the team and the clients, especially if they want to make any changes to the original plan.

Going on 30 years this fall, E&E has heard countless stories from clients who have dealt with companies that utilize multiple subcontractors for one job.

"None of them have had communication with each other. … They're just kind of showing up and stuttering their way through it. That's a lot of the feedback we heard from different people, so we've implemented a process that alleviates the pain of that part of the process.

"It's quicker, better quality because it's managed better, and customer experience and satisfaction dramatically increase," Esh says.

High standards create high-quality results, meaning E&E's services are often more expensive than competitors'.

"We take the extra time to focus on customer satisfaction and to listen to the customers," Esh says. "We try and set ourselves apart by not just trying to compete for the lowest dollar but adding more value too."

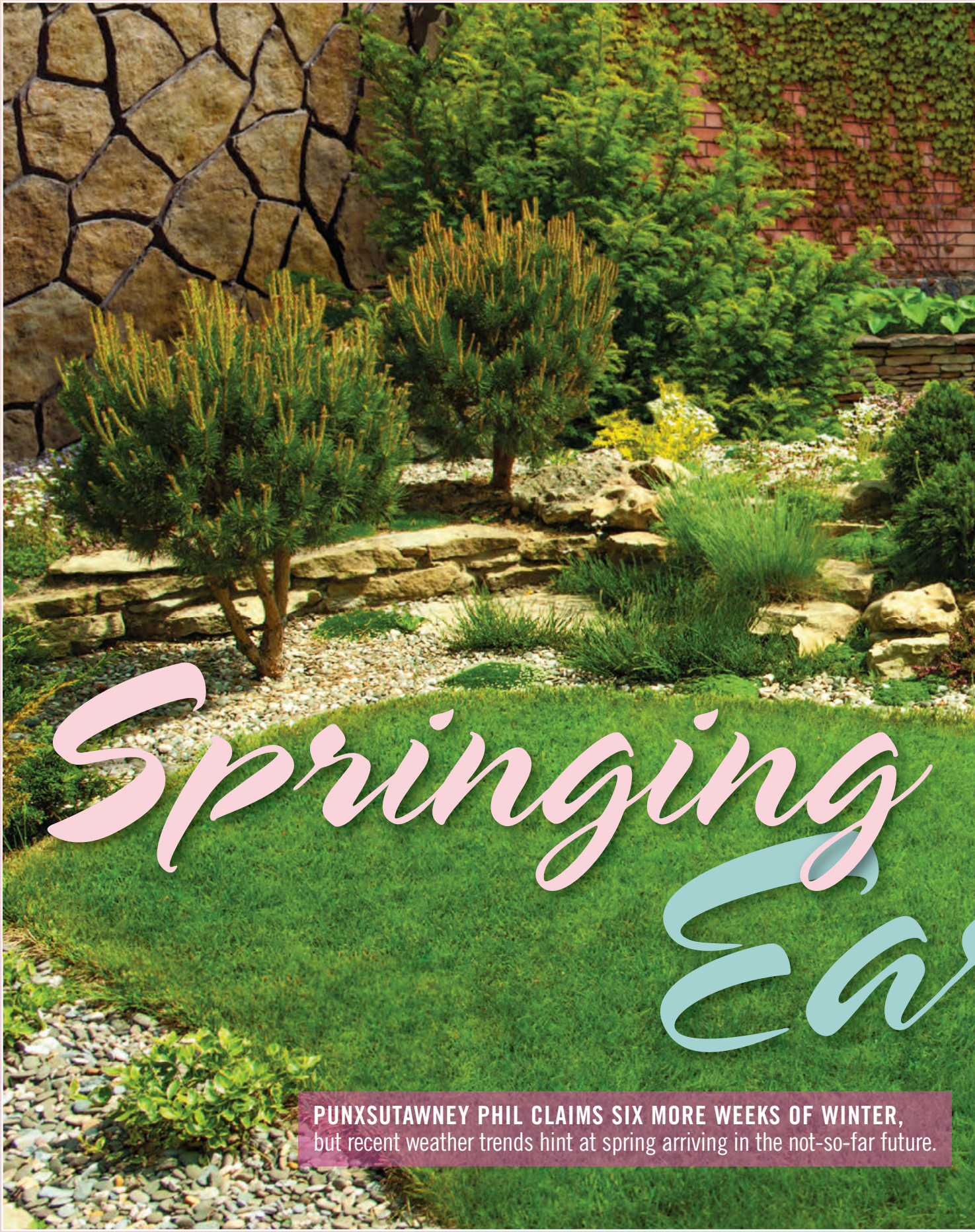
E&E is welcoming an addition of its own in the form of a 24,000-square-foot space. The massive project, which broke ground in June of last year, will host the contracting company's new office, shop and showroom.

No matter how much E&E grows or what it adds to its expansive list of services, Esh says the company remains dedicated to the values that have granted the family business nearly three decades of overwhelming success. "Our mission statement is all about providing an excellent customer experience. That's what our reputation is built on." **H&H**

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Springing Ea

PUNXSUTAWNEY PHIL CLAIMS SIX MORE WEEKS OF WINTER, but recent weather trends hint at spring arriving in the not-so-far future.



rly

by **Katie Francis**



WE'VE BEEN FORTUNATE THIS WINTER WEATHERWISE, with only a few snowfalls and some unseasonably warm days. Though relatively insignificant to us, fluctuating conditions take a considerable toll on our outdoor spaces, which haven't been adequately tended to since the fall. *House & Home* spoke with local experts to find out what proactive homeowners should be doing to get a jump-start on spring cleaning.

According to Keith Frederick, owner of ELA Outdoor Living, one of the biggest landscaping mistakes that homeowners make is not performing a proper fall cleanup.

"If you have a heavy buildup of leaves on your lawn and you let it sit there all winter and it gets snowed on and matted down, it'll effectively choke out your turf," Frederick explains.

As the owner of Rock Bottom Landscaping & Fencing, Chris DeMato sees people overlook the importance of fall cleanups often and says that this mistake could end up taking a huge toll on your wallet.

"If leaves are left to linger and sit on the lawn, they do more damage and therefore you'll need more repair work. If you don't address those leaves until April, it could end up costing a lot more in expenses," DeMato says.

An autumn cleanup is equally important for water features like ponds and their inhabitants. George Mihalchick, owner of Ponds By George, says that the decomposition of debris sitting in a pond throughout the colder months leads to excessive algae, which can decrease oxygen in a pond and block the sunlight aquatic plants need to undergo photosynthesis.

Even if you do tidy up your yard in the fall, leaves and debris inevitably build up over the winter, leaving you with plenty of work to do once the weather gets nicer.

Local experts agree that now is the best time to start fixing up your outdoor space, and the first step is going out and assessing the condition of your property.

"I would recommend that customers walk their property and make a list of any issues that may need to be addressed," DeMato says. This includes hardscape repairs, fencing repairs, dead plant materials and dead growth on trees, which could be dangerous if not addressed.

After surveying your property, DeMato recommends calling your landscaper as soon as possible, as it's never too early to get on their schedule for things like lawn repairs and tree removals.

It's best to leave these larger jobs to the professionals, but

Springing Early

there's plenty you can do right now to prepare for the spring. For one, the piles of leaves wreaking havoc on your once-lush green lawn and manicured flower beds should be removed to avoid further damage.

Secondly, perennials are in the beginning stages of revitalization. These plants can be cleaned up this time of year, but Frederick warns homeowners to be careful what they remove.

"If they prune off flowering plants, they're going to prune off all the flower buds for spring," he explains. Homeowners should only remove things like dead branches and dead plants, which take up space that could otherwise be room for the growth of healthy plants.

While flowering plants should mostly be left alone, besides a few small haircuts, now is a good time to remove any tree branches that snapped during the winter, as they could be extremely hazardous if not handled promptly and properly.

At this point in the year, there isn't much to be done about the hardscaping aspects of your yard. While it's important to note the state of your hardscape and fencing, experts advise homeowners to wait until the temperature remains steadily warm to address these issues. This includes the readjustment of rocks around water features, which Mihalchick says "could slightly shift" due to ice formation over the winter.

Whether you're thinking about making a subtle change or redesigning your entire backyard, now is a good time to start thinking about fresh ideas you want to bring to your space to ensure that it's ready to enjoy for the spring and summer.

There are so many different options for outdoor entertainment spaces today, from standard decks and patios to grand pools with flowing water features and outdoor kitchens with accompanying fireplaces.

No two yards are the same, and the same goes for households and their personal preferences. This has a huge impact on how to lay out a yard.

"Everybody's different, depending on the land and the size of your family," Don Panetta, co-owner of D. Panetta Contracting with his wife Tammy, says.

According to Mihalchick, the best way to get the most out of a space, regardless of its size, is to be mindful of location during the design process.

"Allow yourself to walk two paces away from any door before steps start. When installing a water feature, keep it close to your living space to be able to see it, hear it, and interact with it," Mihalchick says. These simple layout strategies ensure that a homeowner maximizes both the potential and experience they can get from their yard.

Along with creating a functional entertainment area with the space you have, it's critical that you find a balance between hardscape and landscape to create a cohesive and aesthetic environment that you'll want to spend time in.

> "Allow yourself to walk two paces away from any door before steps start. **When installing a water feature, keep it close to your living space to be able to see it, hear it, and interact with it."**
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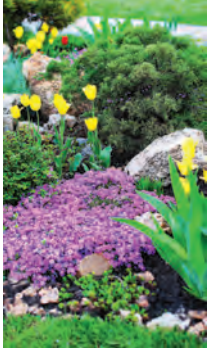
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Springing Early





People typically love installing hardscapes like porches and patios because they are easy to maintain, but DeMato says that too much stone and concrete can result in a "stark, cold feeling."

"It is very important that you allow space for landscaping to soften up the hardscaping. This will give you more of the garden-like feel that you want to create in your own yard," DeMato explains.

Creating thoughtful pockets of greenery breaks up the harshness of hardscaping, allowing color and life to complement and soften the space. Tammy Panetta echoes the importance of landscaping, calling it the "icing on the cake."

There are likely still a few more cold days ahead of us and maybe even a snowstorm, but before we know it, we'll be putting the winter coats away and breaking out the tank tops. It's time to stop dreaming about the warmer months ahead and start preparing for them instead. H&H

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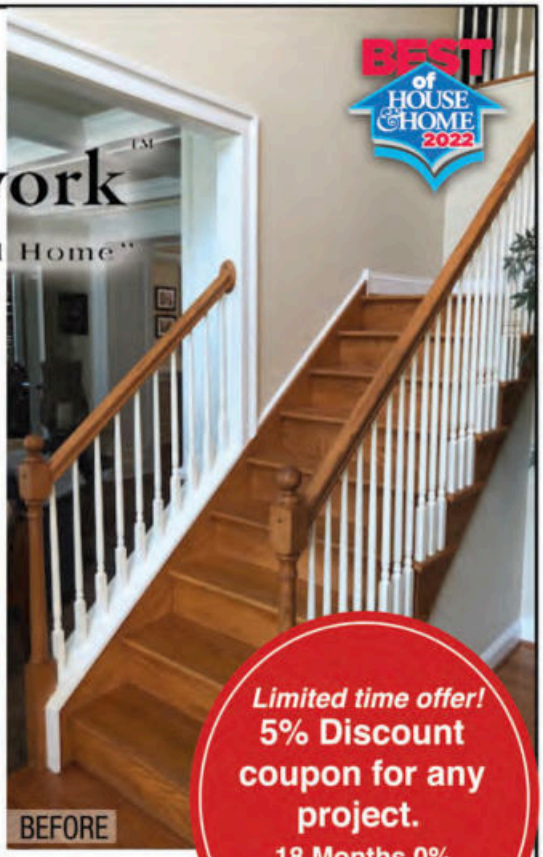
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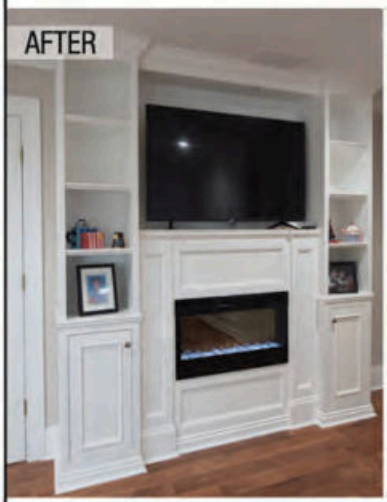
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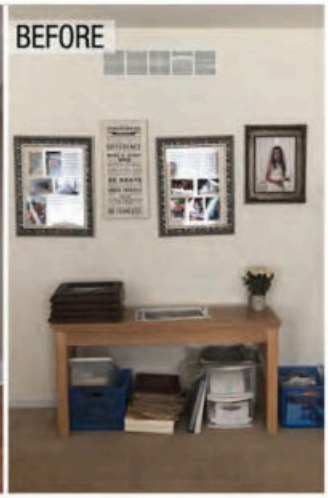


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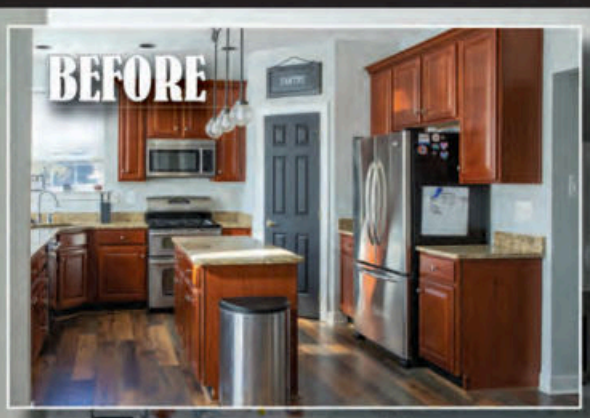
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A CONTRACTOR FOR *All Seasons*

The Delaware-based **A. W. Viohl Contracting** delivers high-quality remodeling and maintenance every month of the year, which means it's always the right time to get started on the interior or exterior project of your dreams. *by* **Madeleine Maccar**

Anyone who loves what they do will tell you that they don't do it for the awards and accolades: They do it for the personal satisfaction, like knowing that they made a difference, finding the work rewarding and fostering strong relationships along the way.

"By the time a project's over, our clients have become part of our family," says Andrew Viohl of A. W. Viohl Contracting.

Viohl founded the company that bears his name in 2008 and, since then, has diligently amassed a team of in-house professionals whose dedication to clients and a job well-done mirror his own, and whose talents come together to make the Delaware-based contractor a truly versatile, trustworthy indoor and outdoor service that can do it all.

"The guys who work with me are good buddies, we've been working together for a long time. We're like a family and we're family-oriented," Viohl explains. "We know what we're doing, and we know how to work together. We've been doing this for 20-some years, so we've pretty much seen it all."

And while Viohl appreciates the talent on his team and knows they're absolute professionals who can navigate any challenges that may arise along the way, the awards are a nice confirmation that the A. W. Viohl team is on the right track. Having been recognized as one of *House & Home* magazine's Best of the Best is one of the contractor's most recent honors.

"We're out there working as hard as we can, so it means a lot to all of us," Viohl says.

But Viohl and his team are never content to rest on their laurels. Whether it's renovating a basement, creating an addition, updating a kitchen or bathroom, repairing a deck or boosting the longevity of a roof, they aim for nothing less than the best for the homeowners who trust them with their interior and exterior remodeling goals.

"We're not rushing from one project to the next," Viohl promises. "Our focus is on you and your home, including finishing the job right."

And there's never an offseason for the year-round operation, which means they're not only scheduling projects for the spring but also breaking ground on a few now. It often comes as a pleasant surprise for clients who are planning ahead for the warmer months—or aren't about to let winter stand in the way of their renovation projects.

"I don't think you should react to a customer by saying 'Why do you want to do a deck now?' and I don't like turning down work: Whatever job people need done, we'll do it regardless of season," Viohl says. "We're always doing projects, even in January and February. On the other hand, we also have calls now to get on the books to start work three months out. That gives us time to get the production going, to get all the permits we need so come March, April or May, we're ready to go for them."

With the pandemic entering its third year and people still spending more time at home than usual, Viohl says that renovations and updates are just as in-demand as ever.

"People have these old wood decks with the boards falling through and loose railings, or they've had the deck for 15, 20 years and they're just tired of the maintenance for staining and sanding, so they want them updated with materials to achieve a maintenance-free result," he explains. "You still have to clean it because it's going to get dirty, but it's not like you'll have to power-wash it every two years or watch out for splitting wood and handrails splintering."

Viohl adds that features like composite decking boards and vinyl railings will ultimately save homeowners some money. "You won't have that extra yearly fee or every two years because you're paying someone to stain it or pressure-wash it."

The pandemic's influence on the supply chain is still causing some lingering delays, affecting the immediate availability of some materials, like grout in certain colors, cabinetry options and particularly windows. "Some windows can still take up to three months to be delivered," Viohl notes. But he says that A. W. Viohl's clients are generally understanding and realize the delays are just a part of construction right now.

Viohl diligently encourages open lines of communication, both with the homeowner and among his team. It ensures everyone is on the same page at every stage of the project while managing clients' expectations—because it is, no matter the project, always about making sure a customer is completely satisfied.

"A lot of the jobs we do are for repeat customers, so they've been there and know what to expect," he says. "They know that they're getting the quality work they're paying for. It's an honor when they hire us for repeat work, and we want to make sure they'll call us for their next job." **H&H**

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Archadeck of Delaware combines the personal attention of a local owner with the backing of a national brand to give area residents the outdoor living space of their dreams.



Best of Both Worlds

by **Matt Cosentino**

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AS A YOUNG MAN WORKING IN HIS FAMILY'S HARDWARE STORE, Dave Lyons discovered that he had an interest in—and a talent for—designing and building backyard decks. Starting with his own house, he finished a handful of jobs in his spare time, eventually working up to complete outdoor living spaces that included a deck, a patio and additional amenities.

While it didn't occur to him right away that he should turn his hobby into a career, the proud feeling he had never went away.

"It was gratifying to go from nothing, do the drawing, get the permit and build the deck—basically to do the whole thing from soup to nuts," Lyons says. "To me it felt like a big accomplishment to get that done, considering it wasn't even my profession at that point."

Of course, Lyons was no stranger to the industry, having grown up around the business as the son of a general contractor. From a young age he helped his father remodel rooms, build additions and yes, work on decks. Years later, he was employed by another company as the lead project manager responsible for $20 million worth of residential construction when he finally decided to go out on his own.

It was no surprise that his first inclination was to focus his new company on decks. He had previously researched Archadeck and was intrigued by its reputation as one of the leading manufacturers of outdoor living spaces in the country since 1980. Lyons was inspired to become the franchise owner of Archadeck of Delaware, combining his own experience in the field with the support of a national brand and bringing that knowledge to residents in his home state.

"The nice part about it for the customer is I feel you get the best of both worlds," he says. "You get a small, local owner who is easily accessible and available to help with any issues. At the same time, you always get the advantages of being backed by a large company. Because of the relationship with Archadeck, I have buying advantages, I have an engineering department and I have a lot of resources that most small, local companies are not going to have. It's a big help to me and the customer."

Archadeck has franchises throughout the United States and Canada and has built over 100,000 projects worldwide. Lyons recently attended a conference for the company where he was able to participate in seminars, learn about new products coming to the market and discuss best practices with other owners. "It's very beneficial and it's nice to know you're not the only one dealing with a particular problem," he says.

For the third year in a row, Archadeck of Delaware won a national service award at the conference, as it was recognized for ranking in the top 10% of the company based on reviews. The achievement speaks to Lyons' commitment to providing a positive experience for his customers, starting with the initial meeting.

He aims to get to know the customers on a personal basis and find out exactly how they will be using the outdoor space, which enables him to fulfill their wishes. He asks questions about their lifestyle, the size of their families, their cooking habits, etc. "We can build whatever deck you want, but if it doesn't fit your functionality, a couple of months in you're not going to be happy with it," he says. "My job is to be able to design you something that you're going to love, fits your functionality and fits your budget."

Lyons has seen a trend toward deck/patio combinations or even a deck that complements a covered porch. Most of his designs feature a shade element and may include an outdoor kitchen and fire pit. "I get the more complicated, custom projects that your everyday carpenter is not necessarily going to want to handle."

He is always researching the latest products available and soon hopes to offer steel framing to his customers. Because of the rising costs of wood, the price tag will only be slightly higher but the end result will be a better, more durable deck.

Lyons advises potential customers to meet with multiple contractors if they wish, and encourages them to speak to former clients of his to learn about their experience. No matter who they choose, the decision must come soon if they hope to have their new deck by the end of this summer.

"It's almost getting too late," he says. "If I come out to talk to you tomorrow, it's probably going to be July or August before we can start building. A lot of people have already signed contracts, but also permitting is getting to be a bigger problem and materials are becoming a bigger problem. You'll still get some use out of it in late summer and fall, but sooner than later you need to make the decision."

Those who do end up selecting Archadeck of Delaware will surely be pleased with a company that provides the finest craftsmanship with an honest approach.

"One of the things I strive for is to put the customer first," Lyons says. "I need the customer to be happy—that's what is most important to me. Profit is nice, but I really want the customer to be satisfied with their project." H&H



OUTSIDE INTERESTS

Spring is usually an opportune time for homeowners to consider exterior projects, including the installation of new roofing or siding. *by* **Matt Cosentino**

Although this winter has certainly been mild by typical Northeast standards, it still makes sense for homeowners to head into spring by taking stock of their property after the ice and snow have rolled through. Whether certain exterior projects are on tap out of necessity or just because of the curb appeal they can bring, it is wise to seize the opportunity now to ensure the house is in its best condition and small issues do not become worse.

"As the weather changes and people start coming outside, they should walk around the house to see if any shingles have fallen down, if any screens have ripped or the gutters are loose, anything like that," says Gary Selleck, owner of C&C Family Roofing. "If somebody is having a problem, we work all winter long, especially this year and last year when there's hardly any snow and the temperatures are pretty good. But the ideal time is March and April to start assessing what they need done."

An added benefit of addressing any concerns early is getting on the schedule for the premier roofing and siding contractors in the area, especially since spring and fall are the best times to complete such projects because the weather is not extremely hot or cold.

"If homeowners want to get the work started and completed in the spring, they're probably better off considering which direction they want to go and which products they might want to use, and which companies they want to have in to give estimates," says Vic Fiore, co-owner of Magnolia Home Remodeling Group. "You start the process now so that when the weather breaks, the work can begin and before the spring is over all of the construction work is completed."

House & Home spoke to local professionals about the most common exterior projects and the advantages of certain products over others in regard to roofing and siding.

PROTECTION FROM ABOVE

The roof obviously plays a significant role in protecting the rest of the home, so it is crucial to have an understanding of what kind of condition it is in, especially after the winter. A regular inspection by an expert is always a good idea, but there are also clues that homeowners can look for themselves in determining if a new roof may be needed.

"The shingles lifting, shingles breaking off, the granules of the shingles wearing off the face of the shingle and sitting in the gutter. All of those are good signs, and of course a leak," Fiore says.

"Age is probably the thing you want to keep an eye on the most. If you have a roof that is 20, 25 or 30 years old, you're nearing the end of its life expectancy."

Because a new roof is a major investment, some homeowners may want to put if off as long as possible, and in certain cases a repair will buy them time.

"We don't replace every roof," Selleck says. "If one part of the roof is bad and some shingles blew off, they're wearing a certain way or there's a flashing that's not right, we do a lot of repair work and they can last for years and years. You don't necessarily have to put a whole new roof on. The good thing is, we're a family company, so if we tell people we can get them through a repair and it will last another three or four years, then they'll call us back when they need a new roof because we were honest to begin with."

When it does come time for replacement, there are several options available, with a large majority of homeowners choosing traditional shingle roofs.

"We do shingle, we do some metal, we do rubber and there are some synthetic products that we can work with," Fiore says. "A shingle roof is the most cost-effective. The warranties are excellent and there are some real solid companies like

Photos courtesy of Magnolia Home Remodeling Group.

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GAF and Owens Corning that we work with that offer all different colors, designs and styles."

Global Home Improvement has had great success over the years with the installation of metal roofs and recommends that option because it is more durable than a shingle roof. Instead of having to be replaced in 25 years or so, metal roofs will usually last a lifetime for a homeowner.

Metal roofs are also eco-friendly and add an aesthetic appeal.

"Asphalt roofing can show its age quickly," says Adam Parnes, marketing manager for Global Home Improvement. "It may last 15-plus years, but typically after five it will show discoloration and staining. Metal roofing has no discoloration issues and will last longer and look better on your home. Metal slate roofing turns your boring asphalt roof into a dynamic and aesthetically pleasing focal point of your home."

Fiore agrees that metal adds a nice decorative touch.

"A lot of people want to use metal as an accent on a front porch roof or something along those lines," he says. "Once in a while we'll do a whole house in metal but it's expensive and the cost becomes prohibitive."

Because it is a one-time job, metal roofs make financial sense for some, but others do not want to pay the extra money up front compared to a shingle roof.

"It's expensive and when it rains, it's very loud," Selleck says. "When the snow lies up there, it slides off at a fast pace, and if you don't have the snow guards at the bottom, it can really do some damage if somebody is walking under there. There's not much call for it—in the suburbs, people want to replace the roof with shingles because it's cost-effective and the shingles now are a 50-year shingle, which they call a lifetime shingle. The price is right and you can get the job done on most houses in a day."

WOW FACTOR

Just as with the roof, the siding is important to keep a house protected from harsh weather, but a new project can also provide a much-needed facelift to a home. There are plenty of options to add curb appeal, including the always in-demand vinyl siding along with James Hardie fiber cement siding.

"[People love] the look and the durability of the James Hardie fiber cement, but the downside is that it's very expensive compared to vinyl siding," Selleck says. "And if vinyl siding is put on right, it will look beautiful and stay for years to come, especially if you put insulation behind the siding. There's only a certain amount of homes that we ever put the Hardie on—it's all very upscale homes because of the expense."

If homeowners can afford it, Fiore is a big fan of the fiber cement siding and other products from James Hardie. He also has high praise for Ascend from Alside, which he explains is a composite siding that is installed similarly to vinyl, making it a quick project at a lower price point than James Hardie. Magnolia also works with well-regarded companies like CertainTeed and Azek.

"There are lots of options that work well with any budget," Fiore says. "It's just a matter of budget, style and color—those are probably the things that factor into the decision the most.

"If homeowners are purchasing a higher-end product, they also need to make sure that

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the install is done by somebody capable, knowledgeable and well versed in what the manufacturer is looking for, so you're not voiding warranties and creating a problem down the road."

As for colors, Selleck says grays, whites and earth tones are popular at the moment, and Fiore has had clients ask for darker hues lately.

"The last five-plus years, the trend has been toward these darker architectural colors—the deep blues, the dark grays, there's even some charcoal and black options now," he says. "[Manufacturers are] able to roll those colors out now because of the technology—they don't have to worry about the color fading because of the advancements in their manufacturing process. Years ago, they weren't able to put out a dark color and guarantee against fading. Today, they're able to do that."

THE FORGOTTEN EXTERIOR PROJECT

While roofs and siding will get most of the attention, Selleck warns homeowners not to forget about another aspect of their house's exterior.

"People really overlook the gutters, but gutters are kind of the lifeline of the roof and siding, and over the years they start to drop a little bit," he says. "If the water is not being taken off quick enough, or the gutters are clogged, then the water backs up and it rots the fascia out and it can get underneath the roof. Not to mention, when it snows and the gutters are not pitched the right way or the gutters could be clogged, the snow builds up and you get ice damming, which could get into people's houses."

Repairing or cleaning gutters can be a dangerous DIY project, but fortunately there are experienced professionals ready to help.

"We have thousands of customers who bring us in to clean their gutters and get the leaves out," Selleck says. "We tighten them, we clean them and we make sure the downspouts are all clear. Gutters are very important for a home." H&H

RESOURCES

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For this kitchen, we opted for cottage white cabinetry featuring contrasting quartersawn red oak island and floating shelves on either side of the wood hood. A professional series gas cooktop with full height tile splash gives this space further elements of function and design.

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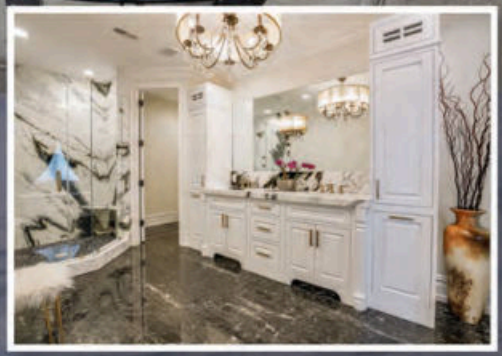
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