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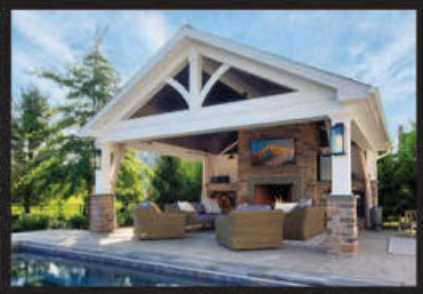
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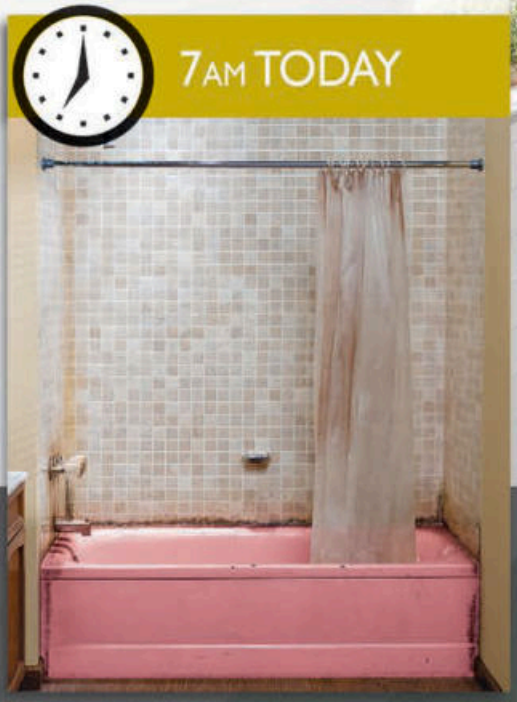
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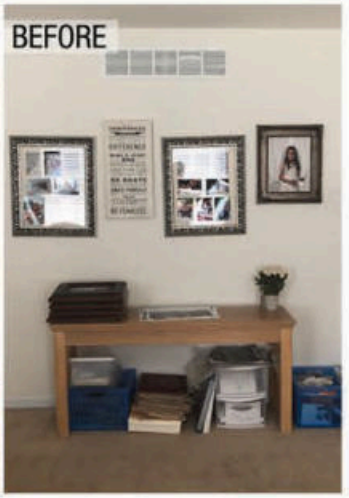


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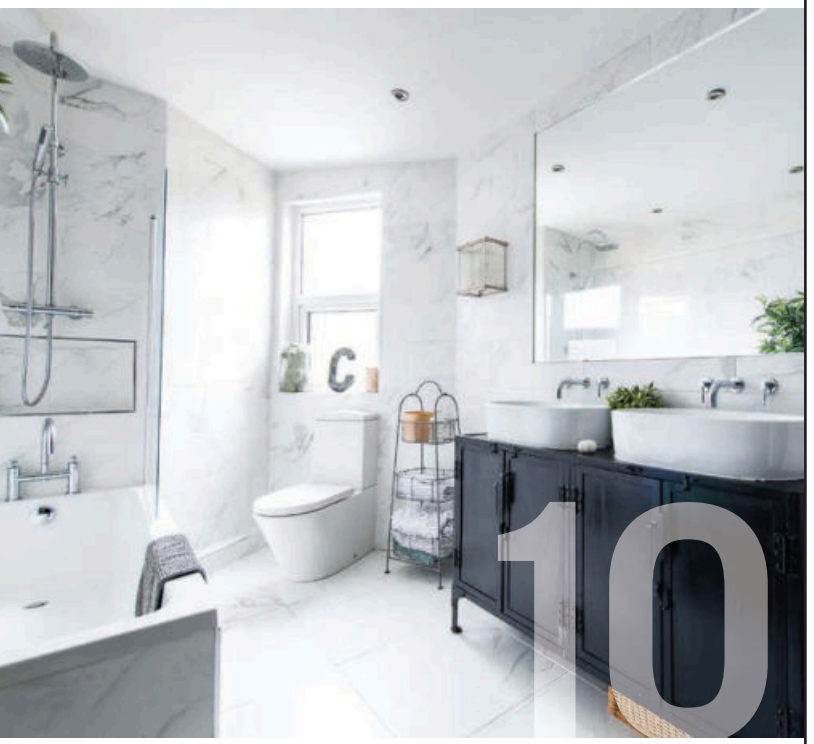
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ALWAYS IN

While some industries ebb and flow with the seasons, **kitchen and bathroom remodels** remain a leading area of home improvement all year long.



DEMAND

BY MATT COSENTINO



Photo courtesy of Amiano & Son Design-Build

When the ground is frozen and snow is in the forecast every other week, it makes it difficult for contractors to be building an outdoor living space or working on a pool installation. Conversely, the middle of summer isn't an ideal time to be replacing a roof given the extreme temperatures. Certain industries inevitably have their down times throughout the year, but there are two particular home improvement projects that never seem to come to a halt: kitchen and bathroom renovations.

"We dip down a little bit during the holiday season, typically mid-December to mid-January, but this year that dip was just around Christmas—it picked right back up in the new year," says Linda Fennessy of Kitchen Magic. "We've been seeing it continuously. We have a lot of work and our backlog is as big as it's ever been. The orders are there and we're working to get them installed as quickly as possible."

Increased time at home as a result of the pandemic has led to even more remodeling than normal, and kitchens and baths have lived up to their reputation as the most popular rooms to refresh.

"Now more than ever, kitchens and bathrooms … are a large part of our business," says Vic Fiore of Magnolia Home Remodeling Group. "It's a 12-month, steady flow of people looking to get prices, ideas and consultations."

The planning phase remains crucial to the process, and an experienced firm can assist greatly in setting the budget and expectations. *House & Home* spoke to several local professionals to get their tips and find out what trends to look for in 2022.

DEVISING A PLAN

Homeowners taking the leap to renovate a kitchen or bathroom have plenty of options, but finding a company that provides both design and construction services can make life a lot easier. That is especially true when it comes to a complete makeover of the space.

"A major kitchen remodel is not a straight A to B path," says David Cerami of HomeTech Renovations. "You need a plan and someone who can integrate everything into a fluid design and help you personalize it."

Sophia Amiano of Amiano & Son Design-Build believes education is an important part of the initial meeting with a customer. The average homeowner is not aware, for example, of the expenses involved when compiling a wish list for their new kitchen or master bathroom.

"Everybody goes into a project already having an amount in mind," she says. "We show them what we can do for the project and the work scope within that investment amount. We simply inform them on the market, on certain product costs, maybe how we can help keep costs down, just so that they're getting more realistic information. Sometimes Google can be very inaccurate and that will be a homeowner's first go-to when looking for information."

Fiore's first priority when meeting with a client is establishing a framework for pricing, which of course will ultimately be dependent upon their material selections. He also gets to know the customer's vision for the space.

"We always ask people what their needs and wants are, if they have any inspiration, pictures or examples of things they know they want or don't want," he says. "We put together a plan taking into account their feedback but also really what we think will work best. Then we work with the homeowner to fine-tune the plan, make sure it's their own and what they want."

"[The first appointment is] basically a fact-finding meeting," Fennessy adds. "We ask how they use the kitchen, are there multiple cooks, how big is their family, do they find it functional, what are the challenges, do they like the color, how long have they been in the home and how long do they plan on staying. Then we make our solutions

based on their budget. We have them pick colors and styles and give them a price quote."

Amiano wonders how any project could get accomplished without detailed planning in place. Her family's company follows long-held procedures for every job, to help prevent hidden costs or anticipate issues that may arise.

"The reason we've built our process to the way we have over the years is for that exact reason, because if you don't properly plan and put a project together from the get-go before jumping into construction, hiccups are bound to happen," she says. "Construction is already a process as it is and it's never 100% perfect, no matter how much upfront legwork you do, especially in today's day and age when you have delays. If we didn't do all that work in the beginning, I don't even know how you would get a project together.

"We pick out all the materials up front, we design the space as close to the measurements as we can get, we even do an onsite visit prior to signing the contract just to verify those measurements and that the layout is going to work properly. … We take pride as a company that we do those steps and we really limit those hidden costs that can happen in construction."

BUILDING THE DREAM KITCHEN

One of the most important decisions in a kitchen remodel centers on cabinetry. White kitchens have been popular for years and although color has been introduced more lately, Fennessy does not anticipate white going away.

"I opened up a Houzz 2022 report [recently] and it definitely mimicked what we're seeing: People are still choosing our whites—antique white, frosty white and satin white—and those are our most popular colors," she says. "While I hear the woods are coming back, I don't see it yet, only in our older demographics. Flat color is popular; we do sell a lot of colonial blue. Gray is second and we've just added a moss green to our offering, and that is by customer demand. Our in-house designer said we absolutely had to add it to our offering because it's everywhere and it's going to be very popular. But whites are still king."

Amiano saw a great push for colored cabinetry in 2021, particularly in the blue family. But the trend has not lasted long, at least with her clients.

"In this new year with all of the jobs we have coming in, we have a lot of people who want natural elements," she says. "I've done some research on it and that's where they're predicting everything to go. In the last couple of years more people have been working from home and they've been in the house more, so people want that natural and organic feel. I have people who want wood tones and soft gray cabinets, and natural or sage colors for the wall. I see it falling more in that direction than going too bold with color."

Color can be used in a way where it does not dominate the entire room, however.

"We're doing color for islands," Fiore says. "Some people will do the perimeter in one color and the island in another, or they'll do different colors for the upper and lower [cabinets], which is becoming more popular. … We're also doing a lot of open shelving. Is it here to stay? I don't know, but you can incorporate open shelving into a traditional design and it works nicely. It breaks up a wall of all cabinets."

Amiano suggests that stacked cabinetry can have the same effect. "Maybe you have a 36-inch cabinet on the bottom with a 12-inch cabinet on top. It looks super elegant," she says. "A lot of people will make the top cabinet glass for a decorative design feature; I've had quite a few kitchens where we've done that."

For those looking to keep costs down, Cerami and Fennessy agree there are many benefits to cabinet refacing. "We've really seen an uptick in that," Fennessy says. "They'll reface it because they're sick of looking at their outdated kitchen, and refacing offers a cost savings as well as quick transformation in color and style."

Five to 10 years ago, granite was the hot word when it came to kitchen countertops, but quartz has replaced it as the go-to material. "It's mostly all quartz [because of] maintenance and consistency," Fiore says. "If you have veining, it's a consistent look, whereas granite has a lot more variation. You can get the look of a natural stone and it's amazing. The options out there are incredible."

Another kitchen trend is to create a statement with the backsplash, compared to the past when it was used more to complement other elements in the room.

"We used to sell subway tile all day long in the ceramic, but people are asking for more elaborate styles and patterns," Fennessy says. "So we're adding lantern and octagon and geometric shapes. People are getting the lighter quartz countertops, the whites, so they're not as busy and it's the backsplash that is the star of the remodel. … You can introduce color, you can do busy patterns. It's eye-level and people want to make it the showstopper."



Photo courtesy of Kitchen Magic

A SPA-LIKE RETREAT

For some time now, many homeowners have looked to recreate the feel of a spa or luxury hotel in their master bathroom. For Cerami, that usually starts with removing the large, builder's-grade tub that is rarely utilized and using that space for the shower instead.

"The No. 1 request we get is to increase the size of the shower and the functionality of the shower," he says. "Why wouldn't you want a shower that is more like a spa experience? It can have a rain showerhead, a handheld showerhead, body sprays or room to sit down. People want more of that human car wash experience with beautiful tile surrounds, a space that is

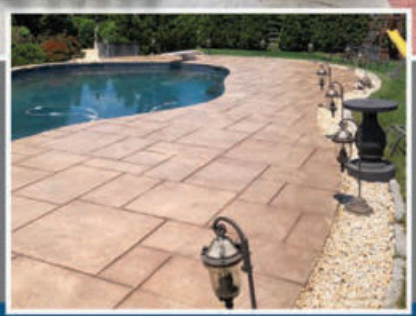


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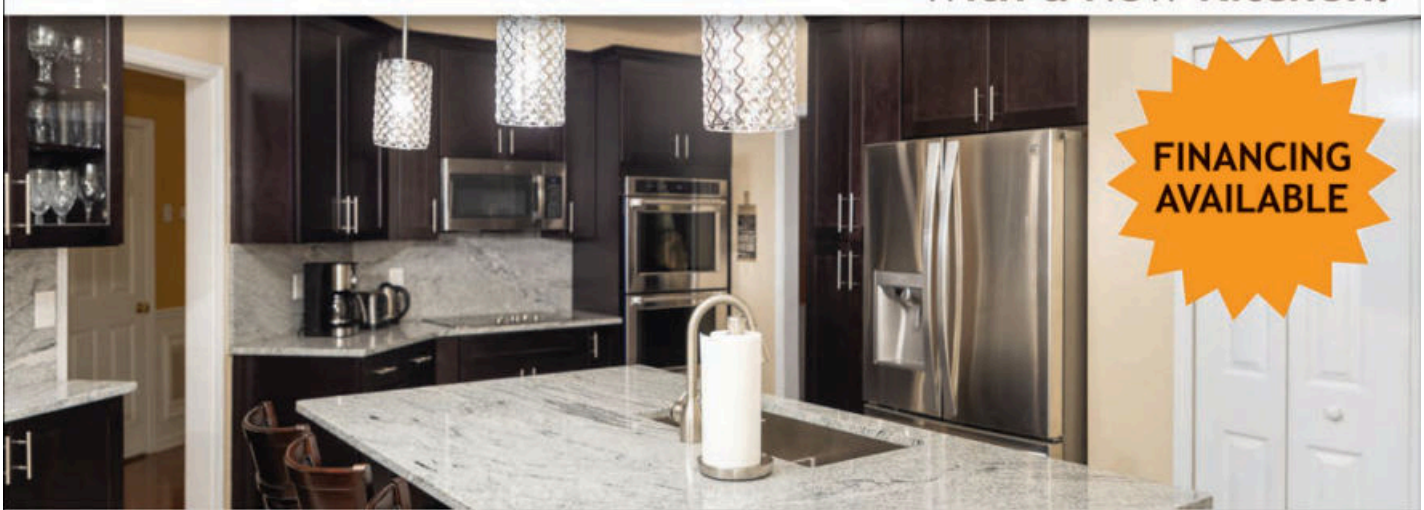
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Fiore is getting the same request from his customers, along with oversized vanities and heated floors. Cerami adds that those who still want a tub can opt for a freestanding one that is almost like a piece of art and has visual appeal. To that end, Amiano recently designed a master bath that certainly stands out.

"We just did a project where we actually incorporated the tub into the shower, so it's a drop-in tub in the shower," she says. "We did granite at the top to coordinate with the granite on the vanity top, and it looks really neat. I also do a lot of the freestanding tubs. Most people if they can fit it still want a tub, but the idea is to make a bigger shower so it's like a hotel or luxury feel to it."

She adds that no-entry showers are also in demand, especially for older homeowners who want to ensure safety without having to step over a curb. Linen cabinets within the bathroom are popular as well, so that towels can be accessible without walking down the hall.

THE FINAL WORD

Renovating a kitchen or bathroom is a major project and homeowners should know what to expect when beginning one. But with the right plan and team of professionals in their corner, the end result can be life changing.

"Understand that they are probably the two more costly projects to get involved with, especially if you're going to go all in, meaning you're going to strip the room and upgrade the plumbing, electrical, insulation, drywall and then start your finishes," Fiore advises. "But if it's done right, there is a return on your investment, not only in terms of house value but enjoyment and day-to-day use. The mistake that some people make is not setting a sufficient budget and not being 100% satisfied with the finished product. You really need to have a budget that is realistic in terms of the space and what needs to be done.

"You might want to wait until you can properly budget for a whole room renovation. You can minimize your cost and just do a little facelift until your budget allows for the full gut. You don't want to spend too much and you don't want to spend too little. We try to find a good balance of budget and scope, and you also have to take into account how many years you plan on living in the house and what your long-term goals are. Not everybody needs a custom gourmet kitchen with $50,000 appliances. Everyone has to make sure they're comfortable with the entire scope, budget and material selection." **H&H**

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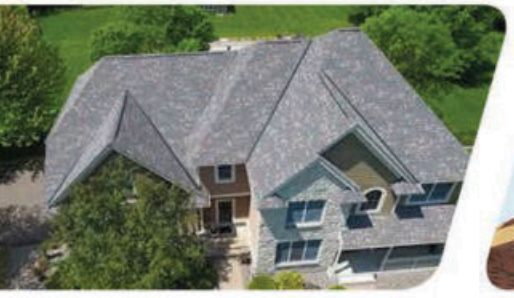
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The 2022 Philly Home + Garden Show is very excited to announce the Main Stage Guests and Speakers at this year's event! Friday kicks off with hit television and home renovation stars, Jeff Devlin from DIY Network's *Stone House Revival* and Matt Blashaw from the HGTV series *Professional Grade, Yard Crashers,* and *Vacation House for Free*. Get ready to hear from HGTV star, Mina Starsiak Hawk from *Good Bones* on Saturday, Chris Lux from *Harth Builders*, Chris Mattingly from *Backyard Eats*, and Jennifer Anderson from *Trellis for Tomorrow*. On Sunday, get expert advice from Collen Falicki from *Back to Earth Compost Crew*, as well as Jeff Devlin. For Main Stage schedule updates and more information please follow the link https://phillyhomeandgarden.com/ show-features/speakers-celebrities.

Celebrity Guest: Mina Starsiak Hawk

SATURDAY, FEB. 26, 1 PM



The HGTV series star, Mina Starsiak Hawk from *Good Bones* will be in attendance to share some of her best home improvement and renovation tips, as well as meet with fans of the show.

Celebrity Guest: Jeff Devlin

FRIDAY, FEB. 25, 5 PM;
SUNDAY, FEB. 27, 12 PM



Host of DIY Network's *Stone House Revival* and licensed contractor with more than 20 years of building experience, Jeff Devlin will be in attendance to share his passion for designing, creating, and building with attendees. Devlin will also have a booth set up all weekend demoing different tools and answering your questions.

Celebrity Guest: Matt Blashaw



FRIDAY, FEB. 25, 6 PM;
SATURDAY, FEB. 26, 11 AM

HGTV Host of *Professional Grade, Yard Crashers,* and *Vacation House for Free*, Matt Blashaw will be in attendance to share his experience as a licensed contractor and relator with the slogan "One Call Fixes It All." If you are thinking about starting your own DIY project, Matt is the guy to talk to.

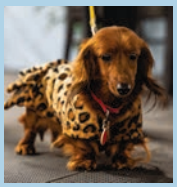
Make-It, Take-It Workshop Presented By Little.Tall.Rulers

VARIETY WORKSHOP TIMES THROUGHOUT THE WEEKEND



Take your DIY skills to a new level this year with a variety of DIY workshops presented by Little.Tall.Rulers. Attendees will have the opportunity to work directly with local designers on a variety of projects including candle making, mini sunburst wall hangings, clay earrings, the art of charcuterie, hand-stamped vintage spoon plant stakes, melt and pour soap, sugar scrubs, paint your own cookie, and a clean/dirty dishwasher magnet

Doggy Fashion Show



SATURDAY, FEB. 26, 3 PM

We've partnered again this year with our friends at the Pennsylvania SPCA to bring some of their adorable, adoptable dogs to the Philly Home Show. Support our four-legged friends as they strut their stuff in Doggy Fashion Show where a portion of sales will support PSPCA!

The Spirited Backyard Yappy Hour

ALL WEEKEND

2D Distillery has partnered with this year's event to set up the Whiskey Backyard where attendees can relax and check out some of the finest spirits. Guests are also welcome to join Yappy Hour on Saturday, February 26th, 4PM- 6PM with our furry friends from the PSPCA!

The Red Cross Blood Drive

FRIDAY, FEB. 25, 10AM- 3PM

This year's show has partnered with the Red Cross to put together a Blood Drive in Hall E of the Expo Center to support U.S. blood banks. Come out and support the American Red Cross by donating at this year's event! Pre-registration is required. Visit phillyhomeandgarden.com to register to donate.

Hero Day

FRIDAY, JAN. 25, ALL DAY



The Philly Home Show proudly honors our local heroes on Hero Day. All active and retired military, nurses, first responders, firefighters, and teachers will receive one free ticket with identification at the box office on this date.

The Factory In Oaks

FRIDAY, FEB. 25, ALL DAY

The First 100 people to come to the show on Friday, February 25th will receive a free ticket to the American Treasure Tour, and every attendee will receive a coupon with discounts for all the fun at Arnold's Family Fun Center.

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PHILLY HOME +GARDEN SHOW

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FRIDAY
February 25
11 a.m.–9 p.m.

SATURDAY
February 26
10 a.m.–9 p.m.

SUNDAY
February 27
10 a.m.–6 p.m.

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Floral And Hardy Garden Market And Succulent Bar

Shop the Garden Market with some of the most unique décor and gift items to spruce up your yard and be sure to customize your own succulent at the DIY Succulent Bar.



Pop-Up Flower

Take home beautiful, fresh-cut arrangements by Cameron Peters Floral Design and register for one of the Cameron Peters Floral Workshops throughout the weekend to learn the artistry behind the floral design process.



Ask The Gardener

This year's event will feature an "Ask the Gardener" booth thanks to the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society in which attendees will be able to ask questions and get advice from the professionals.



The Barking Lot

Don't leave the show without visiting The Barking Lot pet market! Delight your fur babies at home with special treats, accessories, and more that you'll find from vendors in this specialized market area. And you'll feel good about a portion of all purchases benefitting the Pennsylvania SPCA.



The Spirited Backyard

2D Distillery has partnered with this year's event to set up the Spirited Backyard whiskey and vodka tasting area where attendees can relax and check out some of the finest spirits while playing backyard games with their family and friends.



Do You Dig It?

Join the experts to upgrade your gardening experience. Learn more about edible landscaping, composting, native plants, and more.



Homes That Roam

Drop by the Homes that Roam presented by Campers Inn to check out the latest and greatest in RV's including new adventure trailers that are perfect for bringing along your bikes and kayaks. Don't settle for a tent on your next camping trip, find out more about your new home away from home on wheels at the show!



Philly's Favorite Market

An open market featuring one-of-a-kind décor and gifts from local artisans and retailers. Shop anything from antiques to original art to homemade pieces to finely crafted items.

Reimagine Your Workspace

Remodel your work from home office space with traditional and modern inspiration from the design corner presented by Ethan Allen. Vote on your favorite design and be entered to win great prizes!

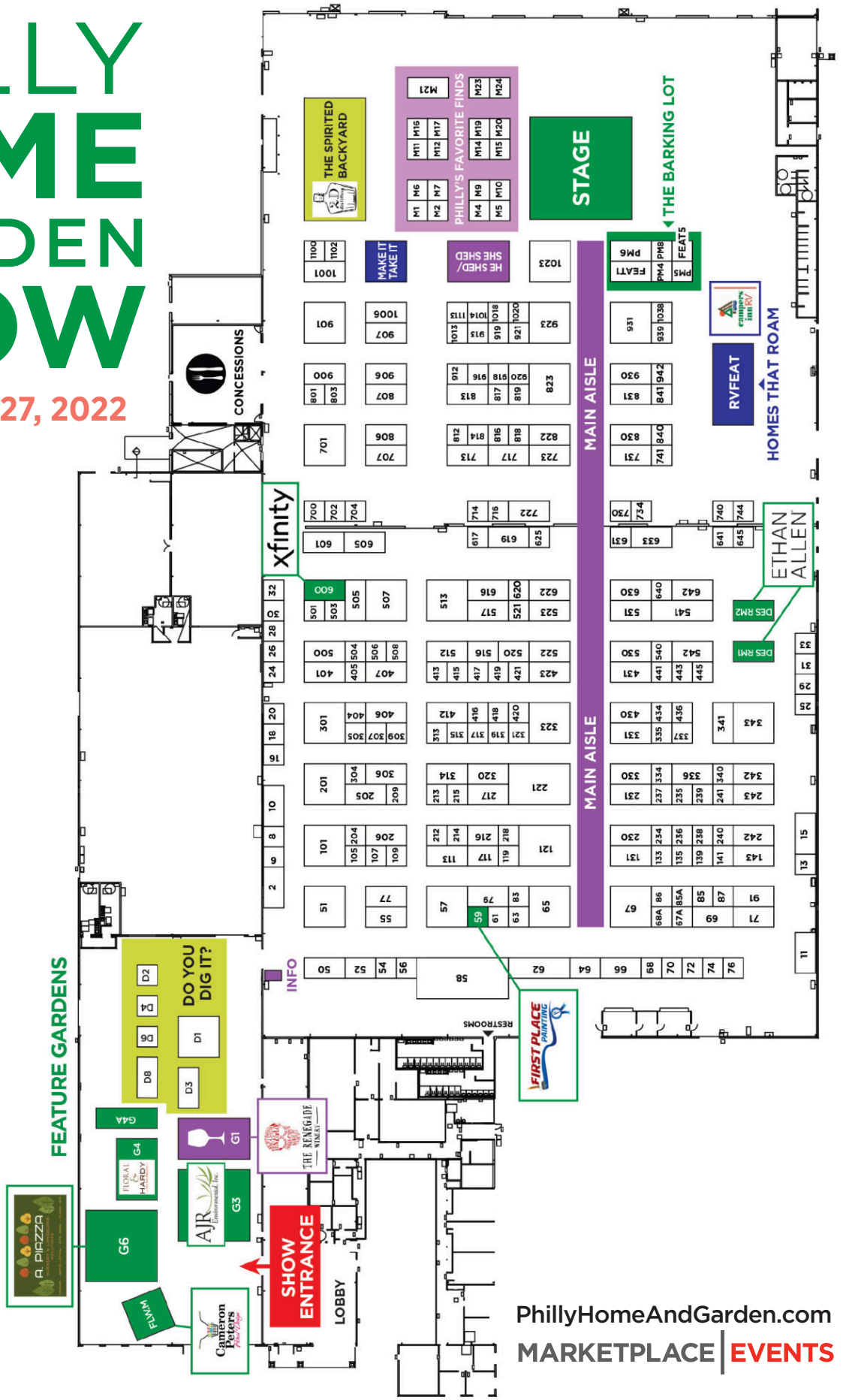


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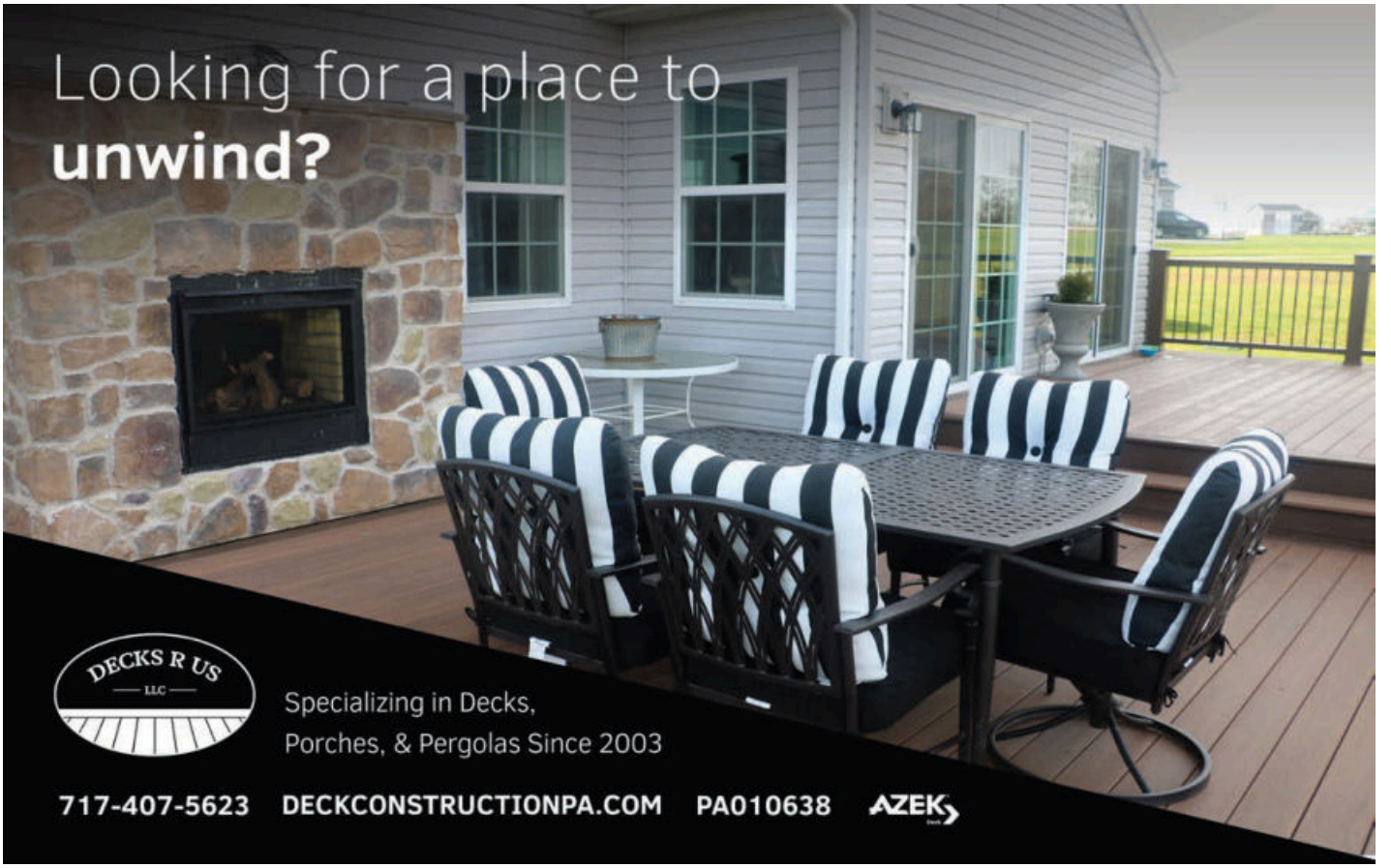
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H&H profile

Honesty, Integrity and Value

E&E General Contracting continues to grow but hasn't lost sight of its roots.

by **Lindsey Getz**



Over the years, E&E General Contracting has grown through word of mouth from satisfied clients and an outstanding reputation to back that up. The family business—which got its start as E&E Siding—was founded by John Esh and built upon nearly three decades of success before his sons Michael and Matthew took ownership. Now, they continue to grow the business and its reach while maintaining the values that have made them so successful in the first place.

"It started as a small, one-man company and has grown from there," says Matthew Esh. "While we continue to grow, it's been important to us to maintain the values that got us here. That includes integrity, honesty and providing the customer with a high level of service."

Since Esh and his brother took over the helm of the family business (though, their dad remains involved to this day), they've expanded it from a siding business into an exterior renovation company. As homeowners came to know and trust the company, naturally they wanted them to handle more—and the company grew organically in that way.

Today, they're involved in any exterior remodeling work including roofing, windows, doors, siding, stone veneer, and even decks and additions. All of these elements add aesthetic interest and value to a home making it more functional and more beautiful. In terms of curb appeal, this is incredibly important—particularly for the front of the home. After all, that is the first thing that people see.

"We've worked with a lot of homeowners on upgrading their home to a dream exterior," Esh explains. "That might include adding a stone veneer, adding or changing windows, or incorporating a portico. We're not just coming in and offering a basic, run-of-the-mill siding package. We have the know-how and ideas to upgrade homes to truly boost their curb appeal and value and help transform the home into something that homeowners are truly proud to show off."

More recently, E&E General Contracting has even transitioned into some custom home build work. There has been increased interest in truly custom, "from-scratch" home builds. More homeowners are interested in exploring the option of a custom home but are finding a void in this area. Naturally, they've turned to a company that they already know and trust to help on this project.

"We build long-term relationships with our clients who might hire us for one project but then want us to do more," says Esh. "That's how we've naturally expanded what we offer. Now that's even included creating a custom home package where we can literally build from the ground up."

Rather than just jumping right into additional services, E&E General Contracting gradually transitioned into these new offerings. This has ensured they have the experience to continue to offer the top-quality work that they've built their reputation on.

Of course, siding continues to remain a specialty for the company as well. With a lot of homeowners seeking premium siding products, E&E was an early adopter of LP SmartSide, a product that's been popular in the Midwest for many years but remains relatively new to this area. Esh says there are many reasons that it's a superior choice.

"This is an engineered product made of wood strands coated in wax and a special solution which provides extra protection," Esh explains. "Homeowners really like it because it has the look of wood but the longevity of an engineered product. They get the best of both worlds."

On top of that, E&E General Contracting also partners with Diamond Kote for the pre-finishing of the SmartSide and as a result, offers a 30-year, no-fade warranty. The durability and longevity of the product truly removes the burden from the homeowner in having to keep up with maintenance. It is impervious to water and won't dent like traditional fiber cement siding.

Despite significant growth from where E&E got its start, none of these changes happened overnight. Instead, steady growth thanks to happy clients has brought the company to where it is today. Even so, with those core values remaining at the heart of the business, it's still the company that homeowners know and trust. This is important as Esh admits he has heard plenty of stories from homeowners who have had previous poor experiences with contractors. It's frustrating to feel as though you might have overpaid for subpar work.

"While we aren't going to be the cheapest price out there, we also don't intend to be," he says. "We're not out there trying to underbid the competition—we're committed to setting a fair price for top-quality work. Our focus is on quality, customer service and building long-term relationships. We might cost just a little bit more, but homeowners realize that's worth the added value and service we offer." H&H

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H&H LANDSCAPING

LANDSCAPING ISN'T JUST FOR THE WARM-WEATHER MONTHS, and area experts have plenty of advice for all the ways you can use the rest of winter to plan, prune and prepare to ensure that the outdoor oasis of your dreams comes to life once spring has sprung.



Preparing for *Spring*

by **Madeleine Maccar**

It's tempting to regard the winter as a temporary reprieve from outdoor projects, especially when the cozy indoors become more and more appealing with every cold snap and snow storm.

But being too lax with your property in the dormant season can come back to haunt you in the spring. By sitting out the winter, you lose out on valuable designing time, an optimal place on professionals' client schedules and staying on top of necessary yard maintenance, to say nothing of the extra work winter neglect can make for you in the spring.

Even just using this time to plan ahead can be a proactive approach to kickstarting your property's yearly transition from cold-weather dormancy to spring's reawakening. "Winter is probably the most ideal time of the year to plan these projects," says Mike Pasquarello of Elite Landscaping. "There is much more added time and attention that can be given to the design phase, with actual installation construction slower due to weather constraints."

As more and more people are bringing the comfort and personal flourishes of their home's interiors outside, they're casting a keen eye on its landscaping and hardscaping potential. Whether your upcoming outdoor projects are major overhauls, more about simple updates or anywhere in between, the region's landscaping professionals have plenty of advice about how you can embrace the winter months to get started, maximize the lifespan of your yard's features and boost your home's overall curb appeal.

Your Property's Plant Life

With the pandemic entering its third year and people still spending more time at home than ever before, they've been able to focus on truly personalizing their living spaces. Some already tackled their major landscaping goals a season or two ago and are focusing on maintenance and upkeep, while others are just now getting around to their outdoor overhaul.

"Homeowners spending more time at home has given us more opportunities to create healthy, beautiful, pest-free living spaces to beautify their property more," confirms Madison Malik of Joshua Tree Experts. "Winter is very important as the beginning of a project's planning stage. We arborists have more time in the winter to really nurture our clients' property and create a great maintenance plan with them moving forward."

Winterizing a living yard actually begins in the fall. That's when it's crucial to lay down a protective layer of "compost or high-end mulch that doesn't introduce new weeds to your garden" to protect plants' root systems from the cold and prevent their soil from drying out in the harsh weather, says Ronni Hock of Ronni Hock Garden & Landscape.

"Snow is actually great for your garden: A blanket of snow on the ground is marvelous because it acts as an extra blanket protecting it from the winter winds, and those winds are what's most damaging to your plant life and soil," she notes.

Unsurprisingly, your yard's soil is a crucial component in determining how exactly your landscaping goals will come to life, as its composition will indicate what kind of foliage will thrive there. Hock points out that

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winter is a great time to get your soil tested, and says that all kinds of resources offer testing kits, like the bigger tree companies, any county office of Rutgers University's New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station Cooperative Extension or a local gardening center.

"It's all in the soil: If your soil's not right, nothing is going to grow no matter what you plant in it," she says. "Once you test your soil and send out your sample, you'll get your results back and an explanation of what they mean and what you should be planting."

Ryan Panetta of D. Panetta Contracting says the winter can be a great time to study your property's relationship to the elements.

"Do some research to see how the sun travels across your property," he suggests, adding that websites like SunCalc.org can help in determining things like daylight duration, shadow lengths, average solar paths and more to ensure you're designing natural elements that are harmonious with your unique geographic location and its features.

Take Advantage of the Dormant Season

With winter's bare branches and dormant plant life making parts of your yard more accessible in the cold months, it's also an opportune time to get hands-on and reshape some of your more unwieldy overgrown landscaping elements.

"Winter pruning is great to do during the late winter months, as you really can easily see and evaluate branching habits of a deciduous shrub or tree," says Pasquarello.

"Some tree pruning is optimal to perform in the winter, despite the common misconception that springtime is best," Malik adds. "This includes pruning fruit trees because they become dormant or pruning diseased trees. When it comes to accessing hard-to-reach trees, winter is an optimal time to perform that service—plus, the soil conditions often create a more compact ground, which supports heavy equipment without damaging the lawn."

She also suggests removing dead or dangerous trees, as well as any unsightly stumps. "You'll want to look at mature trees with hazardous deadwood, as well as hazardous oak trees. Tree removals and stump grinding also become ideal in the winter if you are looking to plant a new tree in its place, since it provides plenty of time to prep the area to plant again in the spring. If you wait until spring, the optimal window for planting will have passed."

Panetta notes that a little winter landscaping TLC can be hugely beneficial for plant life once spring returns, whether it's tidying up or introducing native species to your landscaping.

"Starting in the fall through now, it's nice to get all your plant material properly trimmed and pruned back to make sure the snow doesn't do any damage to your plant material," he explains. "Make sure your grass is all cleaned up and there's no grass clippings or leaves on it so when spring comes, it has a better chance to germinate and a better chance to thrive."

"If you're OK with digging through the frozen ground, you can do transplants," Panetta continues. "They'll just kind of stay dormant until springtime, which is when you'll have to revisit them and make sure everything's coming in properly. We've done a lot of pine plantings and spruce plantings this time of year. They're all in their element, so they'll be dormant until they start thriving in the spring."

Some Final Words of Advice

The frozen ground, snowy runoffs, soggy daytime conditions that refreeze at night, and the overall harshness and unpredictability of Northeastern winters make it a suboptimal time to break ground on a new walkway or steps. It is, however, a good opportunity for examining cement, concrete and other hard fixtures for signs of weathering and wear so you know exactly



what you need replaced or repaired.

Most high-quality construction should be fine after just one winter, though the introduction of salt and other de-icing agents can be what rapidly ages those features. "The one thing that really hurts everything in the winter is the chemicals and salt you use, which could do damage to certain materials," Panetta explains.

The kind of winter weather we have will definitely impact the kind of spring maintenance you'll have to do. To minimize the damage of harsh winds, driving snow and inclement weather that can kill plants, Pasquarello has some proactive tips to ensure your yard's plant life lives to see another spring.

"Protect trees and shrubs from snow and ice, which can bend and break branches," he says. "Many evergreen varieties of trees and shrubs become extremely weighted with snow and ice and become damaged beyond repair. Simply tying outer smaller branches to inner central leaders will give an added strength to withstand the stresses of snow and ice load."

With the uptick in landscaping services' demands, now is the time to start talking with professionals and snagging your place on their schedules before it's too late.

"In a normal year, if you called in January, you could probably expect to get your work done by late spring or early summer but now, with the pandemic and the volume of calls and leads, I'm working on projects that I started last summer," notes Hock. "And it's not just me: It's across the board with anyone in the business and construction because there's been such a big explosion of demand, which is a blessing and a curse."

No matter what your landscaping goals are, the size of your property or the features you want to personalize your outdoor space with, the must-dos remain the same, according to Malik.



"If there's one thing every homeowner should keep in mind when it comes to caring for their homes' outdoor spaces, it's to prioritize preventative maintenance and yearly inspections," she says. "They are both extremely important." **H&H**

RESOURCES

D. Panetta Contracting
Randolph, N.J. | (973) 659-9374
DPanettaContracting.com

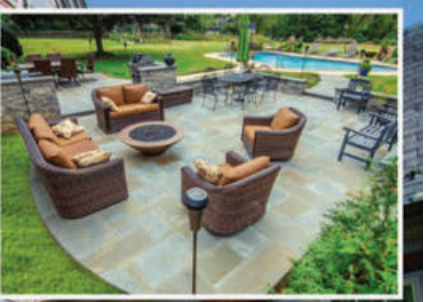
Elite Landscaping
Berlin, N.J. | (856) 753-1944
EliteLandscaping.com

Joshua Tree Experts
Souderton, Pa. | (215) 798-9520
JoshuaTreeExperts.com

Ronni Hock Garden & Landscape
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Set in Stone



With expert guidance from **AAA Hellenic Marble**, homeowners will find the perfect stone product for a variety of applications.

by **Liz Hunter**

Stone materials are essentially the icing of any kitchen or bathroom project, providing both the functional value of pulling the room's components together and something pleasing for the eye.

Choosing the perfect stone takes careful consideration, and the guidance of someone who knows the product. At AAA Hellenic Marble, customers can turn to professionals who have decades of experience designing and installing stone in kitchens, bathrooms, foyers, fireplaces and even in outdoor living spaces. Mike Werner, sales manager, is one such expert who has been with the family-focused company for more than 10 years.



House & Home spoke with Werner about how new products from Silestone and Dekton are giving people the high-end looks they've wanted at a more reasonable price.

When you meet with clients, what are some things you need to know about their lifestyle to guide their selection?

Most individuals typically have saved pictures they found online or in magazines to establish an idea of their design preferences. We also want to know about what's going on in the space where the stone will be used. Every household is different. Materials they might like or find attractive might not be the best choice for their home. Granite is very dense and durable. It is heat resistant and scratch resistant, with minimal maintenance. Marble is a classic choice with unrivaled beauty and gives you a timeless look. It may be a little softer than granite, but will still give you a very durable surface.

Can you talk about the emerging popularity of natural stone quartzite and your knowledge of it?

Engineered quartz has gained popularity over the past couple of years, but natural stone is still the most requested for its beauty and durability. Natural stone quartzite is an especially good choice for kitchens. Everyone likes the look of marble, but it's softer and more porous. Quartzite is a dense stone that can handle the impact and functionality in a kitchen, and it's not as porous.

We directly import this stone from the quarries to our facility, which enables us to pass discounted pricing on to clients for rare quartzites in a wide variety of colors. The materials are temperamental and require a high level of care and precision, which Hellenic excels and specializes in.

What are the newest materials on the market and where are they best used in the home?

We're really excited about the design potential with products from Silestone and Dekton in shower wall and bathroom applications. People have been longing for a solid-slab, seamless look on their shower walls—nobody likes grout joints—but this comes with additional labor to get these large slabs into tight shower spaces. These new products are more durable and thinner, making them easier to transport and install. Silestone is engineered quartz and in particular has some nice combinations of natural stone-looking materials, as well as muted patterns for the monochromatic look people want. Dekton is a porcelain and glass hybrid with quartz that is more durable and still gives that desirable natural stone look. This is something that we are specializing in.

How can customers arrange to visit your slab yard to see their options?

Our slab yard is open by appointment so we can control the amount of people in the building at a time, everything is spaced out and we also have outdoor inventory available weather permitting. We have implemented additional safety measures, including UV light systems and UV air purifiers to reduce airborne contaminants and provide more peace of mind for customers. We also offer virtual appointments.

Our inventory of marble, granite, soapstone and quartzite is very strong right now, we've added a lot of new products for people. We have about 200 different colors on display, and our stones are directly imported from places like Italy, Brazil and Africa. It's always beneficial to walk through and see the stone in different lighting, and more often than not, people find something they never expected. H&H

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H&H SHOWCASE by Lindsey Getz

Sequoia Out Back

helps homeowners take their backyard living dreams and make them a reality.



Be Inspired!

IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT THE PANDEMIC HAS TAUGHT US TO APPRECIATE THE OUTDOORS EVEN MORE. While backyard outdoor living areas have been soaring in popularity for years now, for many, the stay-at-home orders and the experience of being stuck indoors for so long have made homeowners absolutely crave these spaces more than ever. They are truly a must-have—a fact that's been increasingly evident at Sequoia Out Back, where owner John Keller says that he's seeing even more people come into the showroom than ever before.

From the moment that homeowners walk through Sequoia Out Back's front doors, the experience is really unlike any other. The 30,000-square-foot showroom has everything you could want for your personal oasis on display so that you can envision it in your own backyard.

When you walk through a typical patio store or a big-box store, items aren't usually set up or paired together the way they would be in your backyard so it can be difficult to visualize your finished space. At Sequoia, you can see an entire outdoor living space the way that you might set it up on your own patio. It inspires so many ideas.

The goal of the showroom has always been to make homeowners feel like they're stepping into a real-life outdoor space. This helps homeowners to make the best choices when it comes to furniture and decking supplies that will work for their own projects.

Pair these gorgeous displays with the knowledgeable and helpful team members who are ready to assist—and homeowners can really appreciate the showroom visit experience. Customers always leave Sequoia with a lot of great ideas and information.

Of course, in general, inventory has been a major issue since the start of the pandemic. Homeowners who have tried to purchase furniture and decking may have noticed limited stock. But Sequoia Out Back has been fortunate to be able to keep a lot of inventory in stock thanks to its relationship with manufacturers and its purchasing power, as well as having a large quantity from the start. Even so, with so many people coming through the doors, now is the time to start planning for the spring while inventory is still available.



After all, before you know it, the weather will be consistently warm, and we'll all be spending even more time outdoors. Homeowners want to make sure their space is ready now!

"The sooner you can start planning, the better," urges Keller. "The number of visitors coming to the store right now is higher than ever for this time of year. It's definitely not too early to start thinking about setting up your outdoor space."

As you start planning, Sequoia Out Back has all of the amenities that you might want to consider. This includes fire pits, patio furniture and all of the material supplies including decking and railing and hardscaping. Sequoia works with all of the leading manufacturers including TimberTech, Wolf, Trex, Zuri and Fiberon—all of whom continue to offer innovative products.

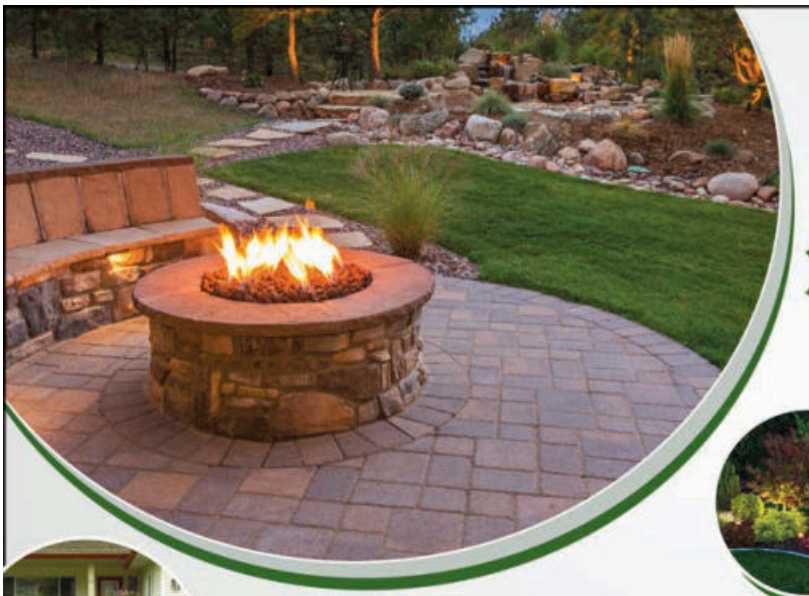
Whether you're a do-it-yourselfer or someone who was sent by their contractor to look for materials, Sequoia's showroom can accommodate everyone.

It's all about making the experience as easy and as enjoyable as possible for homeowners. As the true outdoor living experts, Sequoia and its team are ready to help make homeowners' backyard dreams come true.

"Outdoor living has been a trend for a long time but it's hotter than ever," Keller sums up. "I think we're all ready to start spending more time outside." H&H

Sequoia Out Back

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