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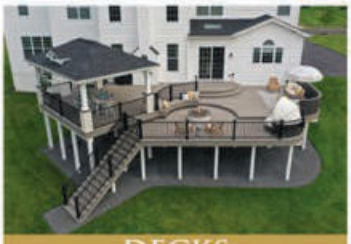
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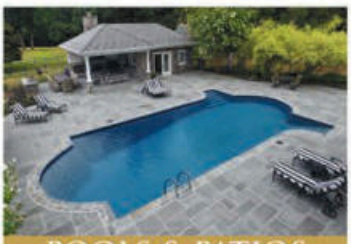
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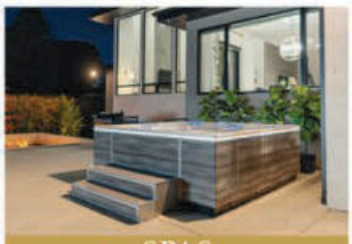
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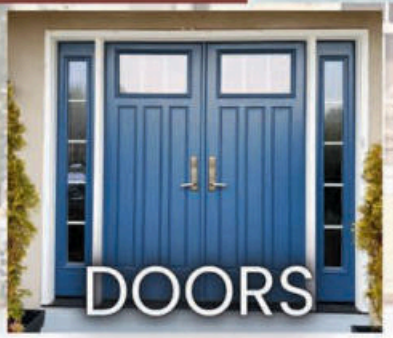
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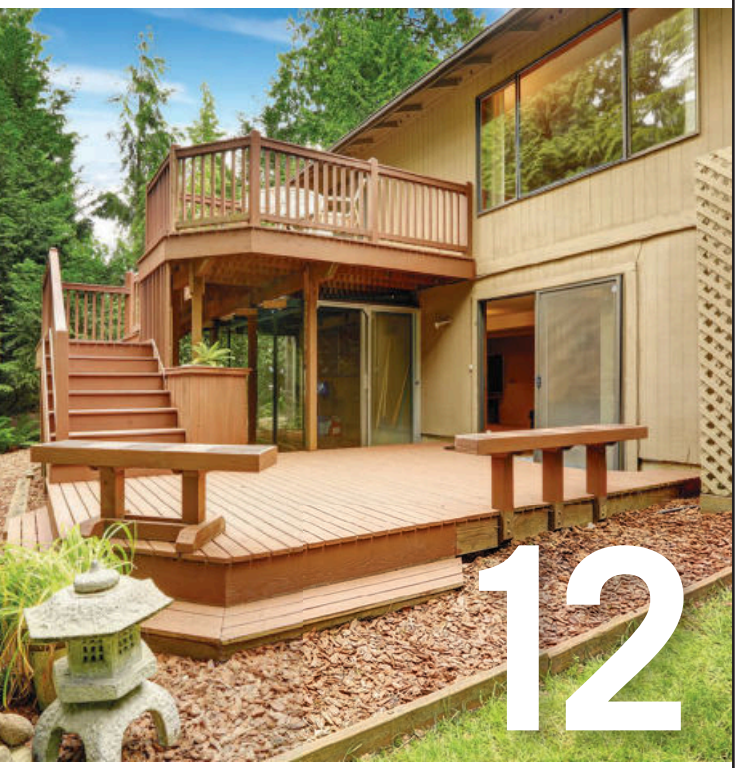
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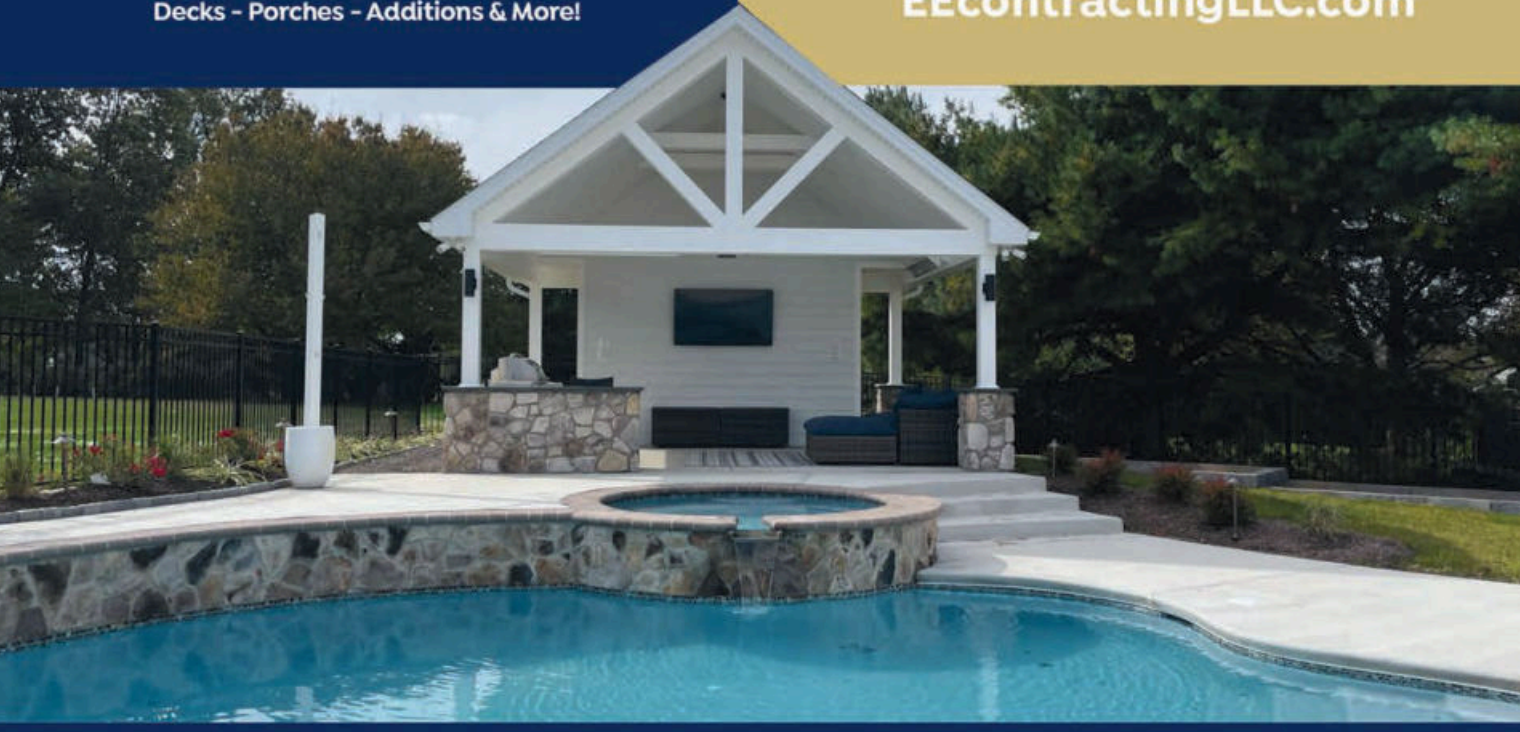
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PUBLISHER
Edward P. McCartney

EDITOR
Peter Proko

ASSISTANT EDITORS
Matt Cosentino, Madeleine Maccar, Carly Murray

CONTRIBUTING WRITER
Kristen Jorgensen

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Hank Alspach

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Brian Mikulski

DESIGNERS
Alex Bianco, Jay Urbaniak, Lisa Zollinger

ACCOUNTING DIRECTOR
Darlene Versak

SALES DIRECTOR
Lindsay Gonzalez

SALES MANAGER
Jim Romano

NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPER
Chuck McKane

MARKETING CONSULTANTS
Kristine Di Nardo, Rochelle Dodge, Frank Liantonio, Julian Rosado, Lori Vorgang, Amy B. Weiss

ACCOUNTING MANAGER
Max Haggerty

STAFF ACCOUNTANT
Karmal Pritchett

DIGITAL MEDIA DIRECTOR
Leigh Stuart

PUBLISHER EMERITUS
Bob Doran

EXECUTIVE PARTNERS
Gerry Haggerty, Edward P. McCartney

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Whether you're looking to create an inviting atmosphere for gatherings or a personal haven for relaxation, strategic accessorizing can make all the difference. We chatted with a few local experts on ways to unlock the full potential of your deck through thoughtful flourishes.

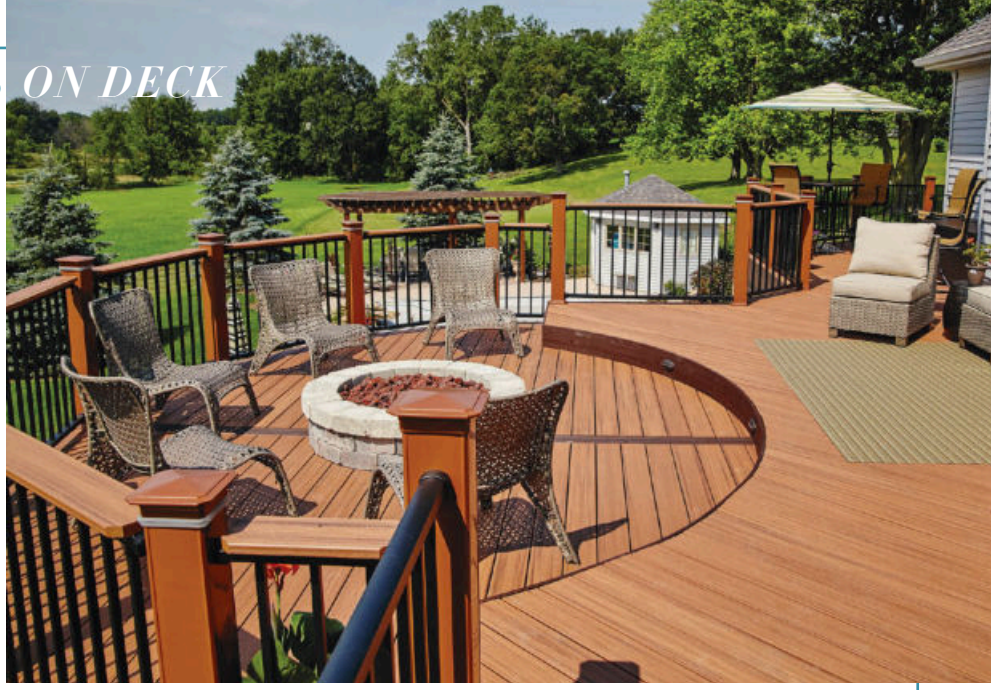
Define Your Style

Before diving into accessories, you'll want to establish the overall style or theme you want for your deck. Whether it's modern, rustic, coastal or eclectic, having a clear vision will guide your accessory choices and ensure coherence in the design. You should also:

Consider a Location: Just because you're at home doesn't mean you can't be anywhere else (in spirit, of course). You can base your patio area or deck on a favorite physical location. For example, if you love the beach, tropical prints and light blue accent colors could be a great way to recreate that vibe. Or, if you love the mountains, opt for a mountain-themed patio by incorporating a natural color palette and rustic furnishings.

Choose Colors You Love: A common way

BY KRISTEN JORGENSEN



to transform a patio area is by picking colors you love. And, truthfully, this option can be simpler and less overwhelming to achieve: All you need to do is select your base colors and then consider the tones they blend well with.

Incorporate Your Hobbies: Since our hobbies can help create an escape from the mundane, incorporating them into your patio area can provide some direction for your theme. Whether you enjoy sailing, painting, playing music or anything else, you can tastefully add your passions to your patio décor.

Curve Appeal

Straight lines and right angles give way to curves and flowing shapes in custom deck designs. According to Joe Oakes from First State Building & Design, curved decks are a top trend for 2024.

"Adding a touch of elegance and sophistication to outdoor spaces, a curved deck can soften the overall look of your outdoor area and create a more inviting and fluid space," he explains. "Whether it's a simple curved edge or a more elaborate curved design, incorporating curves into your custom deck will make a bold statement and set your outdoor space apart from the rest."



Maximizing With Multi-levels

In 2024, multi-level decks are gaining popularity as homeowners seek to maximize their outdoor space and create visual interest. Oakes elaborates: "By incorporating multiple levels into your deck design, you can create distinct areas for different activities. For example, one level can be dedicated to dining, while another can serve as a lounging area. Multi-level decks not only maximize the functionality of your outdoor space but also create a visually dynamic and engaging design."

Another example of maximizing your space is creating an escape you'll enjoy so much that it can serve a variety of purposes.

"We recently built a breakfast bar for a client that enjoys having breakfast outside in the late spring and summer. Ironically enough, it doubles as a great space for happy hour in the evening," says Shawn Covely from Ameritech Services, LLC.

Bright Ideas

Extend the usability of your deck well into the evening with strategic lighting. From string lights and lanterns to built-in fixtures and torches, there are myriad options to illuminate your outdoor space. Consider both ambient lighting for overall brightness and task lighting for specific areas like dining or lounging.

"When adding lights to deck spaces, we typically add them to the deck stairs. It gives a subtle illumination and helps to make your deck safer at dusk and into the evening hours," Covely notes, adding that builders also commonly install under-counter deck lighting. "If you have an outdoor grilling or cooking area, it's a great consideration."

Year-round Enjoyment

A covered deck is a trend that is here to stay. With unpredictable weather conditions, having a covered area on your deck allows you to enjoy your outdoor space year-round. Whether it's a pergola, a classic covered roof or a fully enclosed structure, a covered deck provides shade, protection from the elements and an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors even during inclement weather. And in 2024, covered decks are becoming more versatile and aesthetically pleasing, with design options that can be seamlessly integrated with the overall deck design.

"We've seen an increase of requests from customers wanting a portion of their deck covered so they can extend the use of the space," says Keith Fry from Amazing Decks. "The benefit of having an area covered not only protects you from the elements, it also allows the homeowner to add entertainment options like a fireplace or TV."

Another design style that offers more usability is what builders refer to as "the all-seasons" deck, an aptly named design that extends its usage beyond just the spring and summer months.

"We've been seeing an increase in folks looking to create a four-season deck," affirms Marcus Stoltzfus from Keystone Custom Decks. "It's something that is open (without windows) but still available to use year-round. We like to suggest products like Phantom Screens and any type of heater. Utilizing products like that can increase the time you spend outdoors and yet still feel comfortable."

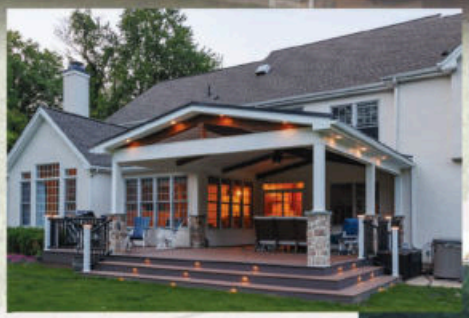
The Rise of Grills

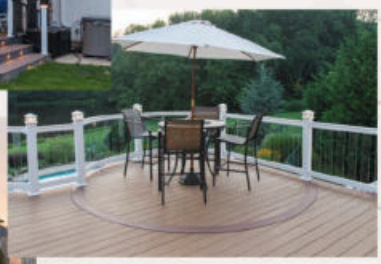
Grilling has always been a popular outdoor activity but it's taking center stage in today's custom deck designs as more and more homeowners opt for built-in grills that seamlessly blend into their current space. These grills not only are functional but also add a touch of sophistication to the outdoor space.

"A deck or patio is your extended home, an outdoor oasis that you can relax with the family, read a book or grill with friends" says Kristi Reading, a managing partner at

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She adds that another popular option for jazzing up your backyard oasis is the Gozney Pizza Oven. "Imagine having a decadent pizza that makes your mouth water in just about 90 seconds—the Gozney Pizza Oven does just that. Grab your favorite dough, add some sauce, cheese and toppings of your choice, and you can make pizza for the whole neighborhood."

Whether you're a grilling enthusiast or simply enjoy cooking outdoors, incorporating a grill or pizza oven into your custom deck design is a trend that will elevate your deck experience.

The Finishing Touches

The foundation of deck accessorizing lies in the right furnishing, and designers recommend considering the size of your deck and how you intend to use the space.

Opt for durable, weather-resistant materials like teak, cedar or metal for longevity. Lounge chairs, sofas, dining sets and benches are popular furniture choices, offering both functionality and comfort. Outdoor rugs also introduce warmth and texture: They not only anchor the seating area, but also add visual interest while defining different deck zones. When choosing a rug, go with something that complements your furniture and withstands outdoor elements.

Lastly, greenery and planters bring nature closer when incorporated into your deck décor. Potted plants, hanging baskets or vertical gardens add a pop of color while creating a serene ambiance. Select native plants that thrive in your climate and don't require excessive maintenance.

Accessorizing your deck is about more than just adding decorative elements: It's about creating a harmonious outdoor oasis that reflects your style, enhances functionality, and fosters both relaxation and enjoyment. By carefully selecting furniture, incorporating greenery, lighting up the night and adding personal touches, you can transform your deck into a welcoming haven for both intimate moments and festive gatherings. So, unleash your creativity and let your deck shine! H&H

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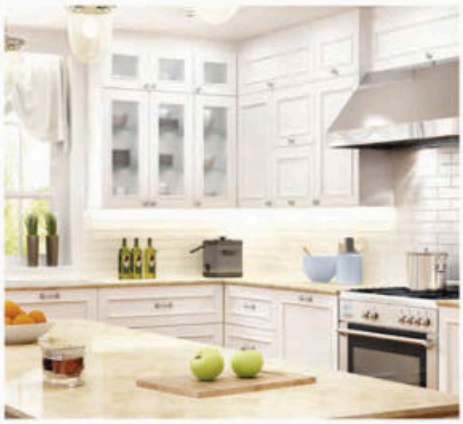
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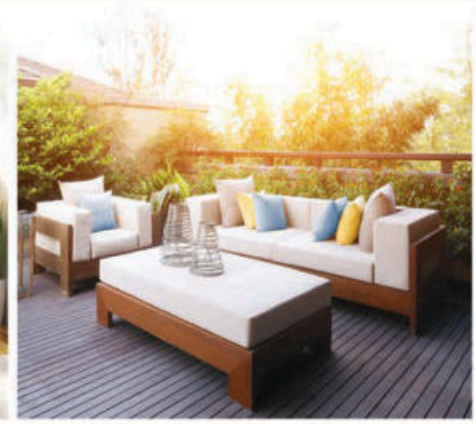
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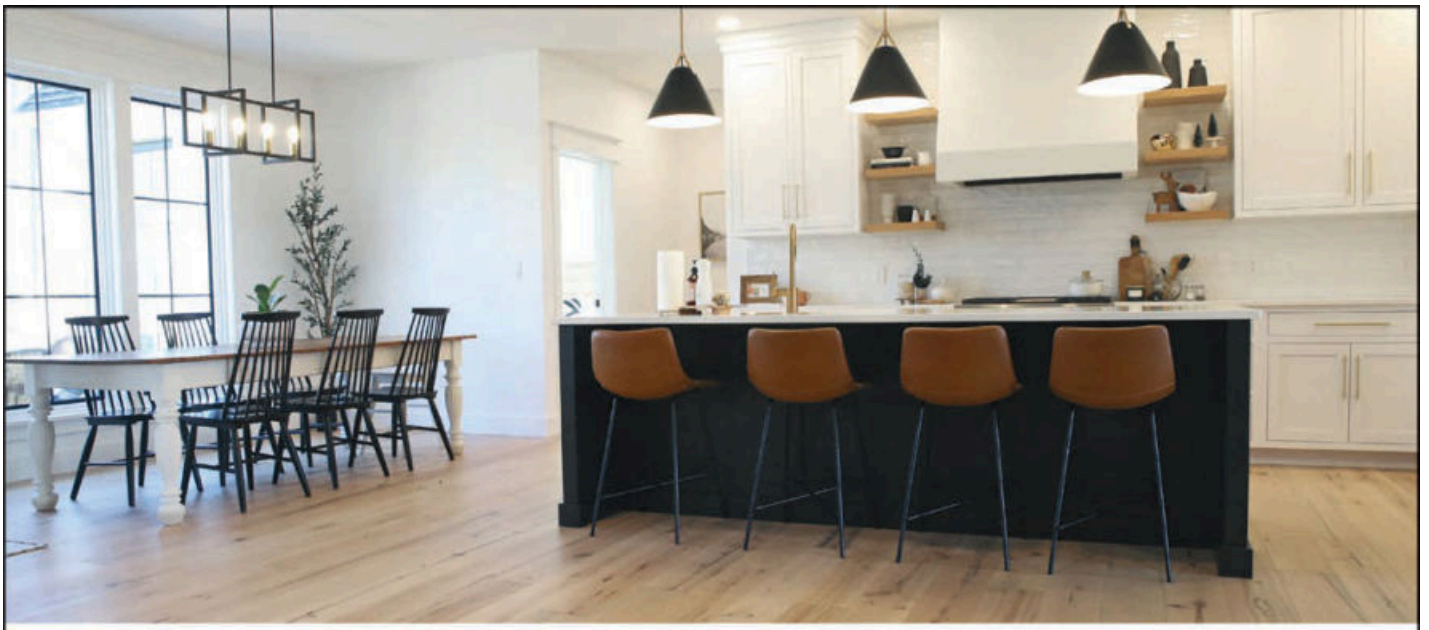
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IT'S SAFE TO SAY THAT THE PANDEMIC HAS TAUGHT US TO APPRECIATE THE OUTDOORS EVEN MORE. While backyard outdoor living areas have been soaring in popularity for years now, for many, the stay-at-home orders and the experience of being stuck indoors for 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

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Just a Stone's Throw Away

Debuting a West Chester showroom earlier this year has helped **Imperial Marble & Granite** bring its dedicated customer service and exclusive products to even more Pennsylvania homeowners. *by* **Madeleine Maccar**

Imperial Marble & Granite

Main location: 200 Old Tinicum Island Road, H Complex, Essington, Pa. (610) 521-0130

Showroom: 1311 West Chester Pike, West Chester, Pa. (610) 738-5277 | **IMGStone.net**

Since 2004, Imperial Marble & Granite has been working with clients from all over eastern Pennsylvania to design, fabricate and install uniquely stunning natural stone and quartz furnishings, from residential kitchens and bathrooms to retail establishments' reception spaces and dining areas.

But owner Albert Kzelian noticed a worrisome decline in clients from Exton, Malvern, King of Prussia, West Chester and other areas for whom Imperial's Essington location was just a little too far away.

So, just like with every job Imperial puts its name on, Kzelian came up with a solution that prioritizes his customers' needs: establishing a showroom closer to them.

"I said, 'OK, if you guys don't want to come to us, we'll come to you,'" he begins. "An opportunity came up at this location in West Chester and I could not resist. We built a 4,000-square-foot, beautiful showroom, and it's right on West Chester Pike."

The result was a wide-open, thoughtfully designed space. Open since April, that West Chester showroom is already a resoundingly well-received success.

One of the most striking features of the Imperial showroom is that there are no tiny samples trying to approximate the full extent of all the colors and natural beauty that exist in one piece of marble or granite: The entire slab is available for client scrutiny, which Kzelian says is crucial in helping them fully assess a stone they're considering for their home.

"The sample certainly doesn't justify what the slab looks like," he explains. "The slabs have so many variations that a sample that's just six or 12 inches isn't going to tell you about the entire piece because that piece has gold, gray, white, beige, all these different colors that a sample can't show you. So when the customer sees the whole entire piece, they're like, 'Oh my God, this is beautiful!' or 'Wow, this is not what I was expecting, it's too busy.'"

But the showroom, Kzelian points out, "is not just for countertops." It's also where you can find an array of ceramic and marble tile, vanities, faucets and sinks, knobs, kitchen cabinetry, lighting and even sound systems. Imperial also outsources appliances so "we can give everything to the customer looking for a complete kitchen."

"We have a variety of different things," Kzelian says. "A homeowner could come in and purchase pretty much everything for every room all at once."

The Imperial team stays on top of current trends and client-demographic preferences—Kzelian notes that customers under 40 tend to gravitate to the manmade quartz but those 40 and older still prefer more natural stone like granite and marble, while neutral colors are staging a comeback in demand across the board—that guide their offerings.

And for much of those in-stock options, Kzelian adds that Imperial is the only place in the state where they can be purchased. "There are specific products or colors that we're the exclusive dealers of in Pennsylvania. Nobody else carries them or has them."

While the West Chester showroom gives clients a chance to get an up-close, hands-on look at all the pieces Imperial has in stock, one of the biggest advantages to them is the cost savings that comes with making a purchase directly with Imperial.

But what really differentiates Imperial from the rest is the kind of dedicated, attentive client support that drove Kzelian to open up a showroom to better assist his customers in the first place.

"Customer service is No. 1, No. 2 is craftsmanship and No.3—which is the most important thing—is turnaround," he says. "From template to install, it's a 10-day turnaround.We have the technology and machinery to back us up. Everything is done by digital measurements and laser measurements, so that helps us make things more precise and accurate."



It is that determination to deliver high-quality, skilled and minimally intrusive work to clients that Kzelian believes will ensure that Imperial keeps growing so it can keep finding new ways to ensure all their clients' needs are met.

"We started out in 2004 with six employees and now have 43," says Kzelian. "Our second location is helping us to continue helping clients with a warehouse experience that has all the beautiful lights and design of a showroom." H&H

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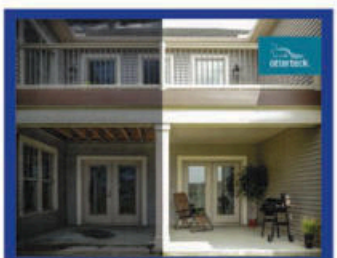
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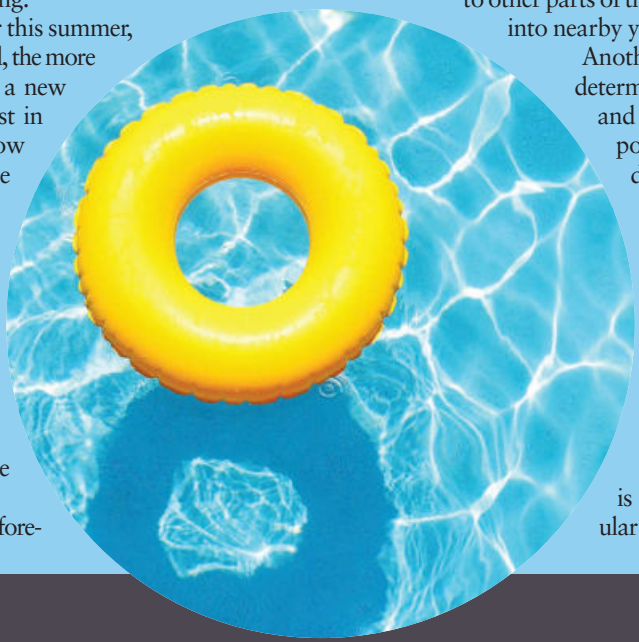
by **Carly Murray**

Locals are lucky enough to be just a drive away from the ocean, but they also may be yearning for something much closer to home—like going for a swim in their own personal backyard oasis. But cookie-cutter pools are a thing of the past, as homeowners and pool experts alike are opting for innovations in both design and functionality. Personalizing a pool and its surrounding area creates a one-of-a-kind gathering place for relaxation, for recreation and for entertaining.

While it may be too late to get started for this summer, planning for next can begin right away: After all, the more thought you can give your expectations of a new space, the better. Preparation yields the best in visuals and utility, and it is pertinent to follow property regulations that are often unique from one township to another.

"Summer to fall is the best time for homeowners if they're really considering a pool for the upcoming season to meet with their builder, get the contract, get that engineering done, have the builder submit permits so come springtime, we can start digging in as soon as we can," says Joe Perchetti, who co-owns Ted's Pools with his wife Carol. "I frankly plug this all the time: We want it done right the first time, every time."

He adds that engineering helps prevent any foreseeable issues by taking into account the location of the pool from the home, different parts of the yard and neighbors' properties. One such example is ensuring that any runoff from storms will not cause damage to other parts of the home and will not spill into nearby yards or basements.



Another part of planning is to determine a pool's size, shape and material. While freeform pools provide more unique design options, rectangular pools provide the most swimming space. This fits the reemerging trend of incorporating right angles that line up with the home instead of curves, according to Bryan Hull, co-owner of Del Val Pools & Spas.

Yet, if a homeowner is feeling whimsical, irregular shapes are a possibility—

Perchetti has even seen a guitar-shaped pool. Smaller pools, or "spools," are more adaptable to out-of-the-box shapes and sizes. The key for any project, of course, is attention to detail.

"[With] concrete pools, you can just draw a picture and we can put it in, it just goes by square footage. And a lot of people are putting sun shelves in where they can actually have an 8-foot area, or where they could put a lounge chair and only have a foot of water and then walk out into the pool from there," explains Walter Beyer, president and owner of Stardust Pools.

Concrete, vinyl and fiberglass are three options that offer differences in durability and maintenance depending on lifestyle requirements. Concrete is perfect for placing pool chairs and tables as opposed to vinyl lining, which can tear from the friction. Similarly, gunite is a concrete mix blended from sand, cement and water with plenty of potential for personalization.

"A custom gunite pool is affordable and allows the most flexibility, so we start there: Go gunite, go custom. It's what we are known for. From there, technology drives the newest changes each year. Customized lighting, heating and moving

> "Technology drives the newest changes each year. **Customized lighting, heating and moving water options that can be controlled from your phone are the expected norm. Automation, imagination and creativity drive everything else."**
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Making a Splash


Stardust Pools

water options that can be controlled from your phone are the expected norm. Automation, imagination and creativity drive everything else," affirms Hull.

The latest technology does greatly enhance a pool, including the water itself. In addition to smartphone-controlled lights, colors and movement, salt generators to replace chlorine and heat pumps to extend the swimming season are trending upward. Saltwater pools are also getting a lot of attention for being gentler on swimmers' skin—and their wallets, too.

"By putting a heater on, you're basically adding at least two months to your swimming season. This April was cold, but usually you could swim at the end of April [through] May, June, July, August and September," says Beyer. "Everybody's going with salt generators, it's just a money saver—just better swimming water and the savings on chlorine and shock that you'd have to buy. You don't need to buy any of that anymore."

The pool serves as the centerpiece of an outdoor living space, and the surrounding enhancement options are endless. Lounge areas on the deck can incorporate entertainment systems like speakers for music or TVs begging for an outdoor movie night. Outdoor kitchens, spas, restrooms and changing rooms can take a backyard to the next level, making it the new preferred place for pampering, hanging out and



bringing loved ones together for cherished memories that ultimately become a lifestyle.

"Sun decks remain a very popular option, as do waterfalls and fountains. The sound of moving water is very soothing, and it's good for your pool. Lighting comes in a variety of options that allow one to change color, color patterns, brightness, and create all kinds of special effects. Fire balls have become quite popular and are a unique juxtaposition of natural elements—fire and water," says Hull.

He also points out that as the "core area of socialization" rather than simply a place to swim, pools can include seats in the water to accompany a swim-up bar accessible to those outside the pool. In addition to waterfalls and fountains, diving boards, aquatic climbing walls and slides add even more activities that appeal to any age, promoting both fun and exercise.

Coordinating all of these different components generates an atmosphere fitting homeowners' preferences. Change the water's color to complement different themes, like red, white and blue for Fourth of July, or change the pattern and speed of lights to accompany music for a DIY disco. Additionally, harmonizing the human-made features of an outdoor living space with the natural environment is a streamlined source of inspiration to decide which pieces look best and where they should be placed.

"We're all earth-friendly now; we're all very, very conscious about recycling. If I go to empty a pool, how is it going to affect wildlife and shrubbery downstream? So, we're very conscious of Mother Nature and Mother Earth. With that, we're seeing an increase in natural products, like a boulder waterfall feature," affirms Perchetti. "So, not only do you have a very nice visual in front of you, but you have that audible effect that is just absolutely beautiful. Just sit there and close your eyes, and you'll swear you're at a mountain retreat right next to a lake with a waterfall."

The No. 1 trend today above all else is summed up in one word: personalization. With the ability to both research and compare ideas from home improvement internet, television and print sources—as well as the range of experts available with whom to confer—one can witness their dream pool come to fruition. Afterward, there is no longer a search for something to do or for the perfect venue to host a party: The solution is right in your backyard. **H&H**



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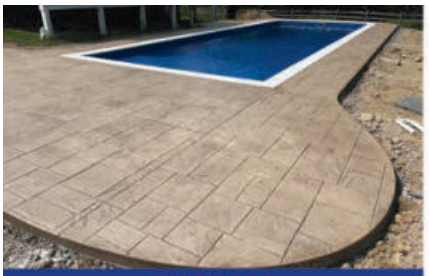
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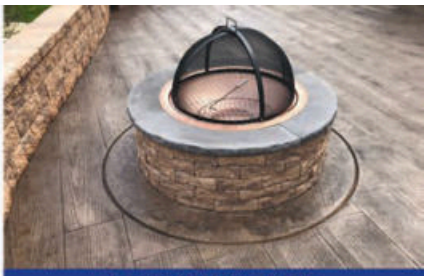
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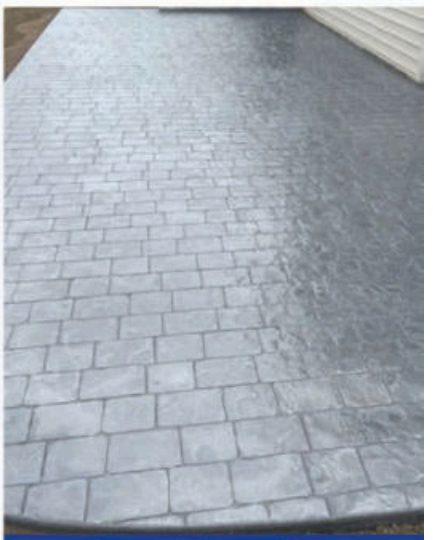
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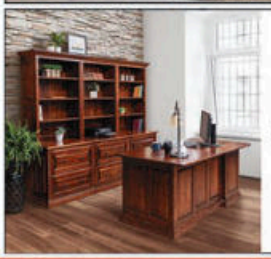


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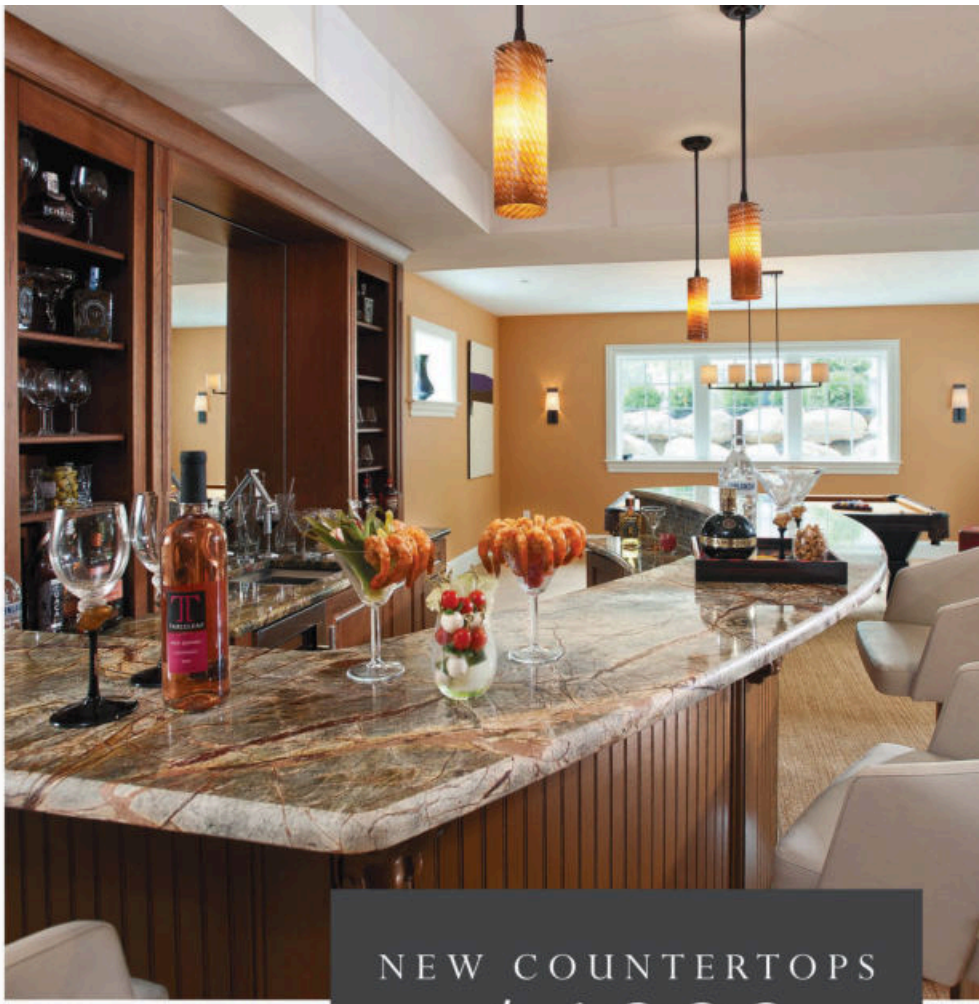
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