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Volume 23, Issue 11



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Fall Checklist

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Meeting the challenge and exceeding customer expectations

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Providing dedicated customer service and exclusive products to more Pennsylvania homeowners *page 13*

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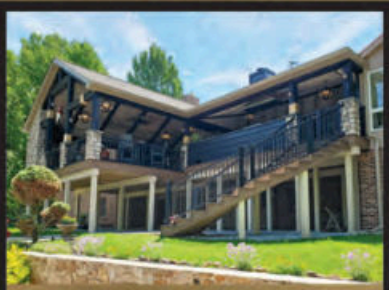
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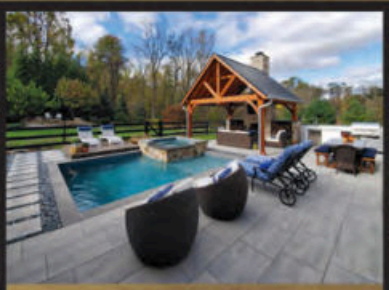
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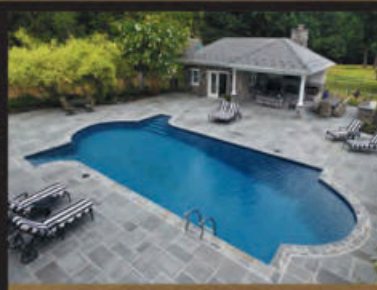
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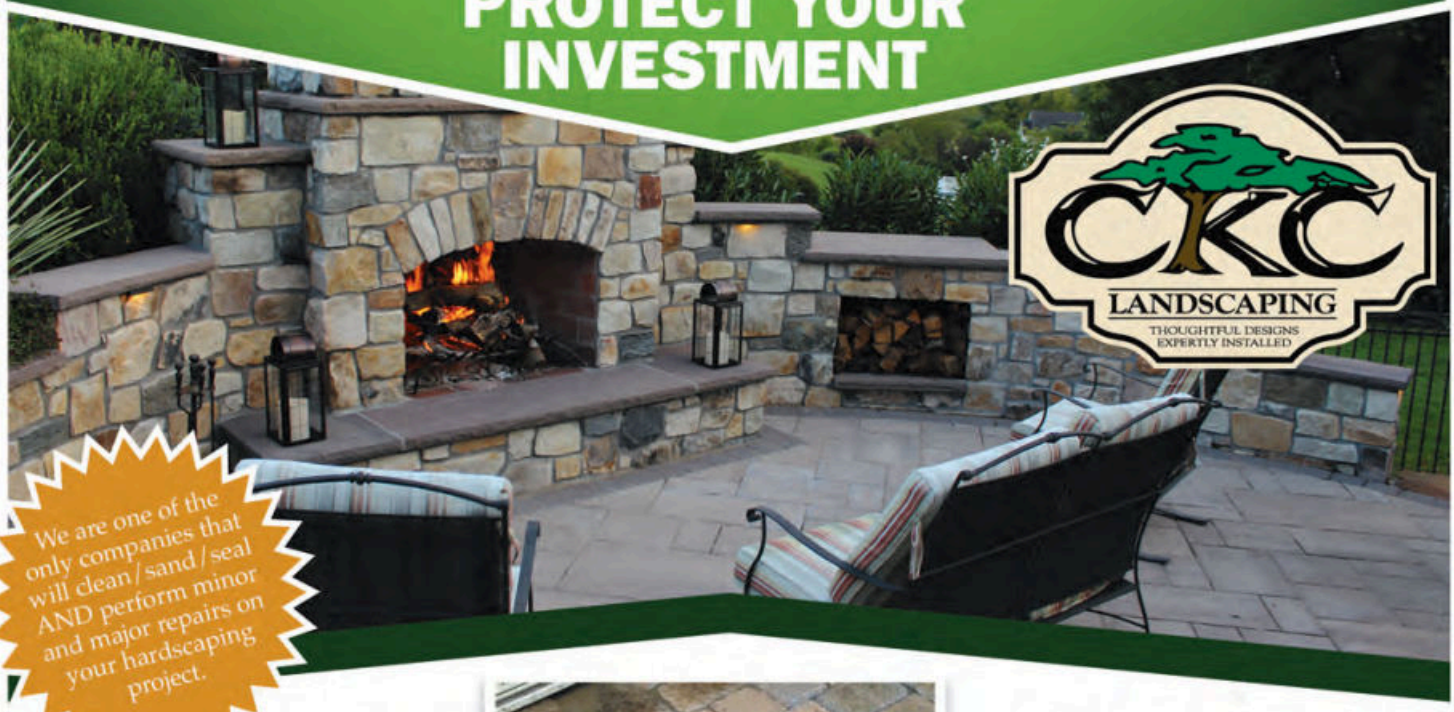
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Just a Stone's Throw Away

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."

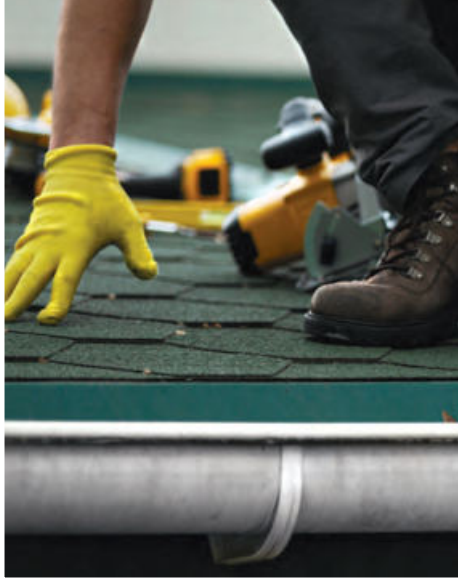


It is that determination to deliver high-quality, skilled and minimally intrusive work to clients that Kzelian believes will ensure that Imperial keeps growing so it can keep finding new ways to ensure all their clients' needs are met.

"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

Nina Lea Photography

'TIS THE SEASON



Preparing for the colder months in the Northeast shouldn't be left to the last minute—or to chance. Trusted local professionals provide their advice for getting your home ready for the winter season. **BY CARLY MURRAY**

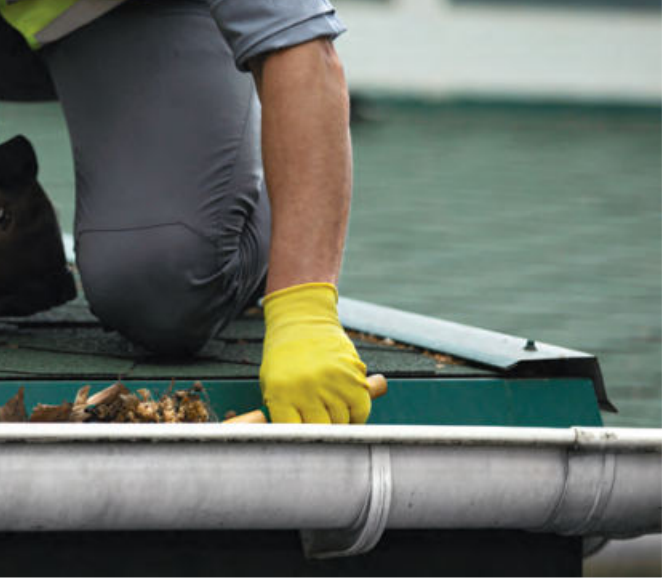
When disaster strikes, it's difficult to handle damage to a home's exterior in the midst of an emergency. That is why anticipating inclement and extreme cold weather should begin in early autumn—and forming a relationship with a contractor ahead of time can provide insurance that a household will stay warm and protected. *House & Home* spoke to local professionals who specialize in multiple categories from maintenance to replacement, and offered valuable advice for a fall checklist. Across all niches of home installations and repairs, all agree that now is the best time to get started in order to finish by the end of November.

Roofing

Roofs are subject to damage with inclement weather pummeling down directly on a home, yielding opportunity for the outdoors to invade a home's interior.

"Typically, every few years they should probably get their roof in-







spected, but if they know there was a big storm in the area, they should definitely get a check right after a storm to make sure. Because, even a half-an-inch of hail; they may not be able to see it from the ground, but it could really cause a lot of damage to your shingles within the next couple years after a hail storm. … It starts taking the asphalt off shingles, it'll leave impressions on the shingles. Wind will tear the stripping off the edge of the shingles," says Anthony Bate, the owner of Paramount Home Solutions.

Winters in the tri-state area are characteristically more intense than other states, and having local expertise with contractors who are familiar with local weather extremes on a firsthand basis can ensure that the right materials and installation process are utilized. Ultimately, it's a more intensive process.

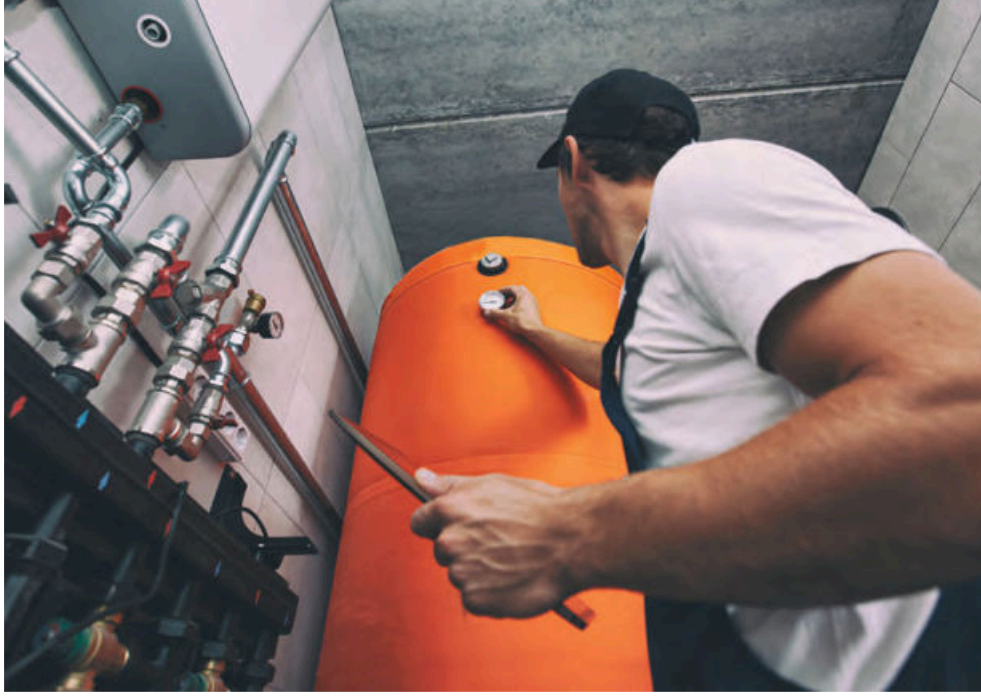
"The Northeast has different roofing underlayment and shingle types, and there are siding products that we use in the Northeast that maybe wouldn't be used in other parts of the country and vice-versa," says Vic Fiore, the owner of Magnolia Home Remodeling Group.

Furthermore, damage can be caused from the sudden rises and drops in temperature experienced in the region.

"The real hot summer that we had can do a lot of damage and melt things. … Being in this cold climate, you go from 90 degrees to 20 degrees. And what happens is that between the hot and the cold, the expansion and contraction from the hot and cold starts to crack things. It'll crack the shingles, it'll crack the flashing. The good thing is, we didn't have a horrible winter last winter, but this year they are calling for a pretty bad winter, so that's when the damage would occur. And that's why they need to get their roof inspected and checked out before the bad weather comes. When it's 20 degrees and we have a wind chill factor, it's very difficult to put a roof on at that point. So this is obviously the best time to get it inspected," says Gary Selleck, the owner of C&C Family Roofing.



'TIS THE SEASON



Windows

Winter air—or worse, winter storms—can impact the inside of a home if windows are not properly secured. Any gaps or cracks can lead to a chilly draft indoors, and snow, hail or freezing rain can easily get through and create water damage. Fierce winds can also contribute to further breakage if windows are already damaged.

"A big thing in the winter is windows. We do a lot of window replacements. That's kind of something that you can see and noticeably feel the effect of when you change your windows in the wintertime, as far as keeping the warm air in," says Bate.

It's always safest to get a consultation to make sure a home's windows are sturdy and safe, so that a professional can determine if vital replacements are necessary. Once its standard functionality is taken care of, insulation can be added for extra warmth and protection.

And not only is locking one's windows wise for safety reasons, but billowing wind can throw open windows (and doors, for that matter) and create violent back-and-forth slamming that weakens the hinges. Locking them provides that extra protection from the freezing outdoors and longevity for the product itself. When spring finally comes along, the windows will be ready to protect from intrusive insects, too.

Gutters

In the repeated circumstance of preparing for penetrating weather with the potential for major damage, commonly-neglected gutters play a key role in draining water. If a gutter is clogged, the water can build up and freeze. This can result in cracks, bursts and leaks of dirty water.

"You have to make sure that your gutters are 100% cleaned out. No leaves, no debris, no nothing in the gutters. … Gutters are like the arteries of the roof. So if the gutters are clogged, everything stops and all the water backs up. And that's what, in the wintertime, causes ice damming when all the water goes into the gutter," says Selleck. "And if it doesn't go down the downspout and out, what happens at night when it gets real cold, below 30 degrees then it freezes? All the water freezes in the gutter and then that's what causes ice damming. Then you have a frozen gutter and it takes days for it to unfreeze. And then if you have another rain on top of that, then it's even worse. So having clean gutters is very, very important."

Similar to extreme temperature changes affecting roof material, metal is easily contorted and can result in not only damage, but loud noises as pipes rupture.

Siding & Insulation

With a category as expansive as siding, it's pertinent to know what type of product will work best with a home and what kind of protection it will provide. Larger projects inevitably take more consideration than others, requiring a bit more urgency to complete now or soon.

"It can be risky. You can do roofing or siding or windows in the middle of winter, but you have more challenges and a greater possibility for delays. Your house is exposed to extreme cold in some cases, so it's just a more challenging, less desirable time of year … if you're stuck in that situation," says Fiore.

Foam and vinyl insulation as a part of the home's siding will provide extra protection and warmth, and save energy that is otherwise wasted by running a heater 24/7. Ultimately, it is a shield for the home



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'TIS THE SEASON

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Siding can also protect from condensation that forms when indoor warm air meets the outdoor cold air and causes decay to the material. This can occur without being directly visible, so it is essential to keep in mind.

Heating Systems

While the other elements in a fall to-do list are exterior projects to keep the cold from getting inside, a heating system is integral to circulate warmth inside. Much like any technology, check-ups and maintenance prevent any potential risks and make sure it works when needed. After many months of not being in use, it's never guaranteed that a heating system will operate when it is finally turned back on.

"People [need to be] proactive about their systems and to make sure their filters are changed. A lot of people don't keep regular maintenance plans; so, making sure that they're keeping regular maintenance just like you would do for your car is important," explains Jeff Olewine, the general manager of C&C Heating and Air Conditioning. "Like anything else that's a mechanical piece of equipment, just make sure that you're keeping it up to date with the tune-ups and things like that."

Critical thinking and adequate planning have the bonus benefit of saving money, too. When working with heat, it's always best to think safely to prevent malfunctioning fires or carbon monoxide leaks. Portable mini heaters hardly provide enough heat for an entire household in the Northeast, and are typically considered more dangerous without constant supervision and extra precautions.

"When systems start to run less efficiently and not work as well, it also becomes less efficient to run, so you're spending more money on your energy bills, and things like that. But most importantly is to make sure that you have heat in your home when you need it," continues Olewine.

Investing in your home as a priority is analogous to investing in all of its occupants and their quality of life. With reliable maintenance and service providers, who often specialize in multiple areas, there will be nothing to worry about throughout the entirety of winter except the holidays. H&H

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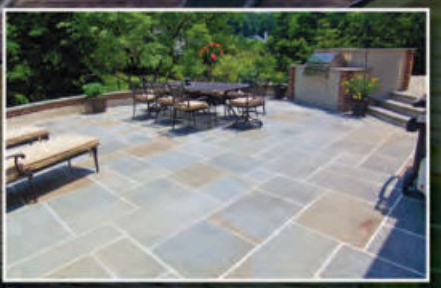
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A True Calling

First inspired to become a contractor as a teenager, Sam King has poured his passion into **Beechdale Builders**, a thriving company that offers custom homes, additions and renovations to happy clients.

by **Matt Cosentino**

MOST 13-YEAR-OLD BOYS HAVE PLENTY OF DISTRACTIONS TO KEEP THEM OCCUPIED OTHER THAN THINKING ABOUT THEIR FUTURE CAREERS. While Sam King readily admits that he was not above some of those trappings, at the same time he also displayed a dogged work ethic and a passion for construction, even at a young age.

In fact, by his early teens he was already employed by a shop near his Pennsylvania home as a cupola builder. At 16, he joined a general contracting firm led by local builder Norman Graham and took his skills up another notch. Before long, he knew he had found the field that was right for him.

"My dad was a carpenter and he worked for Graham's, and I just had a big interest in it from when I was young," King says. "I'm thankful for the upbringing that I had, for sure."

King mentored under Graham for 11 years before deciding to branch out on his own. In 1999, he founded Beechdale Builders, a company that today specializes in constructing brand-new custom homes, creating additions for existing houses and renovating kitchens, bathrooms and basements.

His goal from the beginning was to utilize the knowledge and skills he had accumulated in his previous stops, while giving customers the stress-free experience they deserve when making a substantial investment and undergoing a major project in their homes.

"We try to be straightforward and honest with everybody," King says. "We go the extra mile to help them achieve their look and give them what they want."

That is especially true when it comes to custom homes, which are like a blank canvas for King and his team, including his designer/architect. Beechdale Builders works in a wide variety of styles and can usually complete a new house within six to eight months, or a little longer for larger homes. King understands the anxiety that customers are feeling during the process, but he is in constant communication and keeps them up to date on the progress.

"If they have the land, we can help them get the house that they want," he says. "We will help make their dream come true, whatever they're interested in. I recently estimated a project for $200,000, which is a small rancher, but we're also working on a $1.5 million house right now as well. I try not to count anyone out."

When it comes to additions, Beechdale Builders time and again rises to the challenge of providing a space that is functional, aesthetically pleasing and looks like a natural extension of the home.

"When you have someone who loves their location and doesn't want to move, they'd rather spend some money and make the house more like they want it instead of going out and buying a new home," King says. "We have all of the resources they need to do the planning and get started. They might just be looking for more living space, or a new master bedroom and suite area is also quite popular at the moment."

Remodels make up a large portion of Beechdale's business, with kitchens and bathrooms being the primary rooms in need of a makeover. In kitchens, it's common to remove a wall and open up the space, and Beechdale's designers and crews can handle everything from cabinetry and countertops to flooring and appliances.

"You can really upgrade a house with a kitchen renovation," King says. "Even though you're going to spend $80,000 to $120,000, it also adds to the value of the house."

With Beechdale offering all of those services and having a well-earned reputation for finishing projects on time and on budget, it's no surprise that the company is busy throughout the year. King is happy to have crews he can depend on—several employees have been with him for more than 20 years—including project manager Matt Graham, who oversees each job with a fine attention to detail. The grandson of Norman Graham, he already had a strong relationship with King and has been a welcome addition to the team since joining in 2020.

With that support behind him and grateful customers who appreciate his work, it's no wonder that King is proud of what he has built at Beechdale and the career he first embraced back in his teenage years.

"I love it now more than I ever did," he says. "It really helped bringing Matt on, because that has allowed me to focus on growing the business. Before, it would wear me out trying to line up new jobs while keeping the ones we already had running smoothly. Now, I can focus on the new jobs and Matt oversees the ongoing projects. That makes it enjoyable." ■



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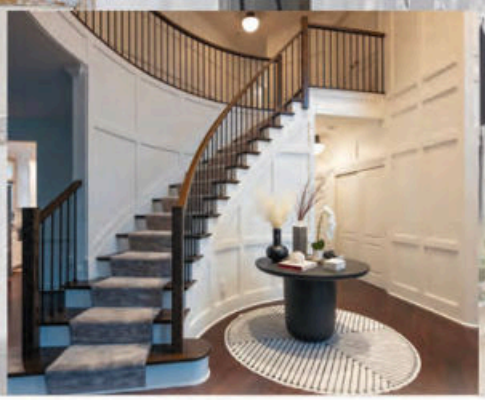
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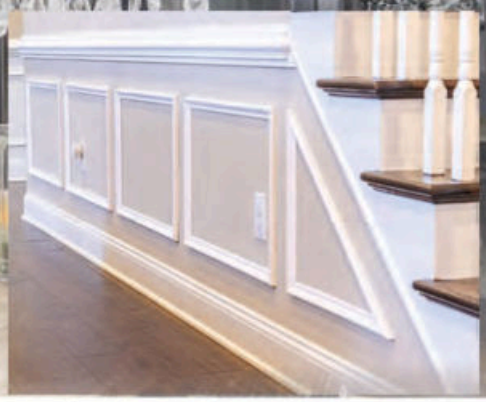
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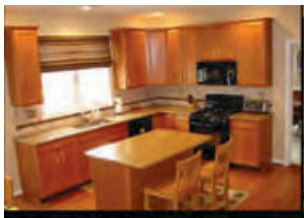
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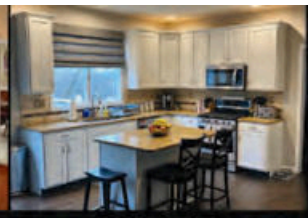
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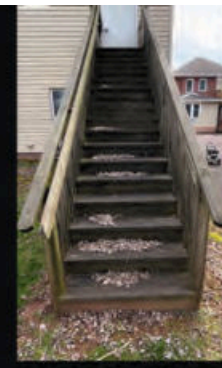
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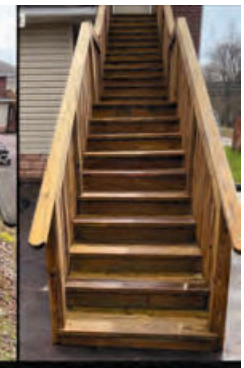




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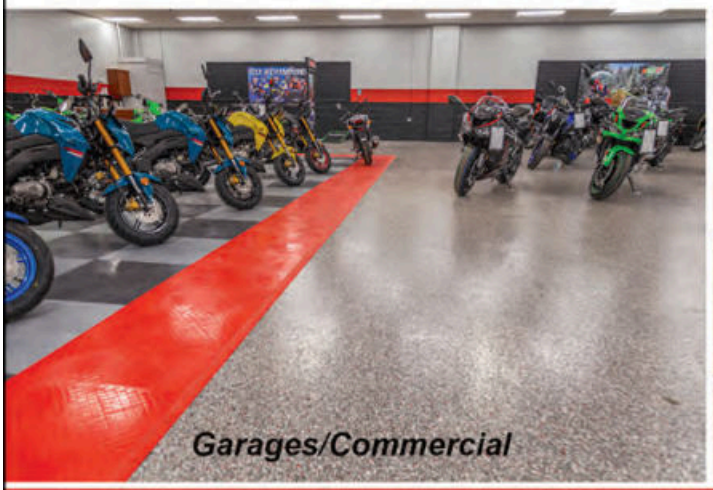

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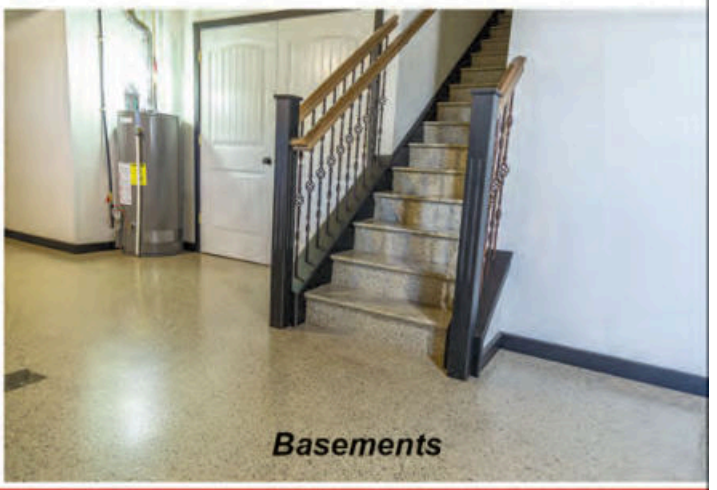

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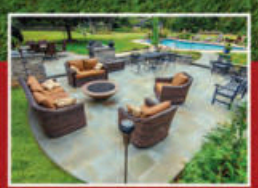
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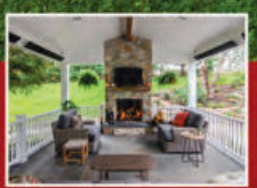
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QUALITY WORKMANSHIP IS SOMETHING THAT HAS LONG RUN IN PATRICK BURKE'S FAMILY. It all started back in 1960 when his grandfather started Burke Asphalt and, over the years, began sharing his years of expertise with his son, who would in turn eventually pass those tools of the trade down to his grandson. As a third-generation contractor, Burke is keeping that legacy alive as he now heads up the family business.

During his years on the job, Burke has run into a lot of customers with similar questions about asphalt care and maintenance, so we wanted to ask him about some of the things that homeowners should know. Here he shares his answers to some of the more common things he's asked and offers advice for anyone considering sealing or resurfacing their driveway.

SHOULD A DRIVEWAY BE SEALED WITHIN THE FIRST YEAR OR TWO?

The answer to that is a little complicated, depending on what sealer is used. If you prefer water-based sealer, you have to wait at least a year in order to seal a new asphalt driveway. For an oil-based sealer, you can seal it as early as right away to make sure the driveway is saturated with the natural oils in asphalt. Most people think you have to wait at least a year for either sealer, but it is only true of water-based sealers.



ARE THERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ASPHALT?

Yes, generally the stone size is different in the main types of asphalt. Driveway top, which is what we put on residential driveways, is primarily 9.5mm stone. For some commercial parking lots we sometimes use 19mm, which shows a little less wear for heavier equipment or trucks. If you're going to be paving in two layers, we use 25mm for the under layer and 9.5mm for the top.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD A DRIVEWAY BE SEALED?

Driveways tend to need to be sealed when the pavement is devoid of any tar, which leaves it gray. This is usually around two years, depending on weathering and how much traffic it gets.

WHAT IS BETTER, A WATER-BASED OR OIL-BASED SEALER?

In terms of better for asphalt, oil based is much better for the longevity of the asphalt. But it is much more expensive as it penetrates completely into the existing asphalt, whereas water based does not penetrate and mainly sits on top like a blanket coating. For this reason, most people think water based is a thicker product viscosity wise. They are actually about the same. Water based is definitely better for older and more worn asphalt as it will hide some blemishes and cracks that oil based will not. It is also less expensive.

WHAT ARE COMMON SIGNS YOUR DRIVEWAY NEEDS RESURFACING?

You will start to see alligator areas, which are several cracks all together that lead to slight sinking in some areas on your driveway. You will also see some of your cracks start to become full separations, which means that the asphalt has completely separated all the way to the stone underneath.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF RESURFACING?

Resurfacing is the practice of overlaying a new driveway over a settled old driveway using what is called modified driveway mix. That is essentially 9.5mm top asphalt that has been modified to get into the cracks and crevices of the old driveway so you don't have to tear up what you have. This service saves the homeowner quite a bit of money and gives the same result as tearing up and starting new. There are exceptions, such as pitch concerns and water drainage concerns, which may make certain projects unqualified for a true resurfacing.

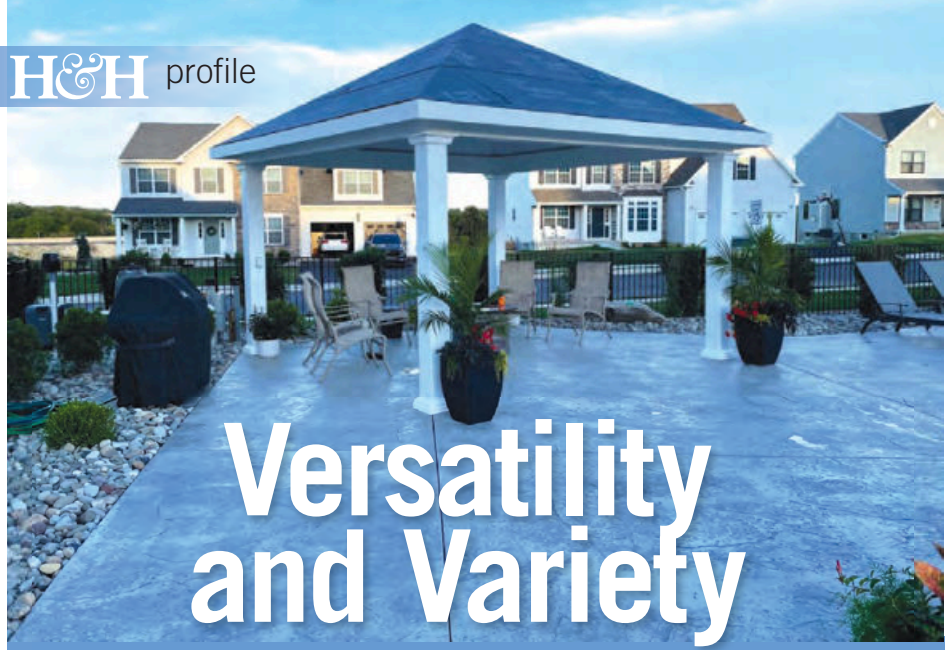
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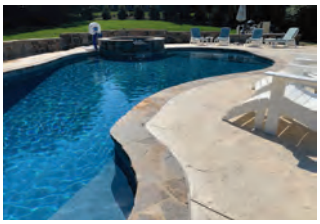


Versatility and Variety

At Architectural Concrete Design, clients can expect a skilled team that treats each project as a partnership and understands how to enhance a home's curb appeal.

by **Madeleine Maccar**

In his five years with Architectural Concrete Design (ACD), Adam Myers has learned that clients are often surprised by their options.



"A lot of people are still unaware of what they can do with concrete," says the company's director of residential sales. "They'll pull pictures from Pinterest or Google and say, 'I love how this looks but I don't know how to get there.' … That's where we can come in and make them aware of any material limitations and how decorative concrete can give them a similar look in their backyard."

That commitment to educating customers separates ACD from the competition. Whether the team is working on a customized pool deck, driveway, patio or walkway, one thing remains the same: Every job is rooted in respect.

"It should feel like a partnership from the beginning," says Myers. "We want the homeowner to understand we're listening to them. Their first form of contact comes from the office, they'll be contacted quickly by our design team. From that point, it's setting up an appointment, getting some face time, and having a design professional walk around your yard with you and really listen to what your vision is. Very few hardscape contractors open up a conversation like we do at the design phase."

Transparency supersedes netting a sale, he adds. "The designer doesn't leave until they understand exactly what the homeowner wants. Every decision we make throughout the process can easily be justified or explained because we're doing everything in the homeowner's best interest."

Getting to know each client and their expectations, lifestyle, property, budget and vision allows ACD to deliver completely customized results every time. And with concrete options that go beyond pavers to offer a seemingly infinite multitude of finishes and color combinations, the team knows exactly how to deliver an elegant, impressive final project guaranteed to last.

"With stamped concrete, we have versatility of color, texture and pattern selection—I'm confident you can find a fit for any home," Myers says. "We've done projects on new-construction homes that are incredibly modern-looking, all white and black; we've done 5,000-, even 10,000-square-foot driveways; we've done 300-square-foot patios with a designated space the client wants to look decorative, but the space is so limited that you have to be really intentional about what you pick. … It's incredibly adaptable, and you can't get that look with any other paving material, only concrete.

"That's one of the coolest parts of being in this space: There really are no limitations on the product," he continues. "The designers can be creative, the guys in the field can be creative, it's something new every day."

Designers' creativity and homeowners' visions must work hand in hand, though, for a smooth installation phase. Collaboration and communication are critical, ensuring clients know their voices are heard and that the ACD team can get the job done in a timely fashion while also meeting their high standards.

"We want that mutual respect where the homeowners know the feedback and perspective we're offering all work toward the same goal: making sure they're getting something they're going to love for 20, 30 years," Myers explains. "It should feel like we're working with you.

"Homeowners are encouraged to be onsite during the first building phase: They can see what we're doing, and we can inform them immediately of unforeseen changes our installers may need to make. After breaking ground, there's always a chance something unexpected happens—you want someone experienced in your corner to best handle that. We know how to navigate those circumstances, come up with effective solutions and illustrate that to the homeowner."

ACD's expertise and a variety of options mean the team always knows how to arrive at the design that perfectly complements a home and is in harmony with the project's surroundings. Working with the existing colors, patterns, textures and materials already present onsite is a win for the homeowner, since they won't need to redo their whole yard's aesthetic to still have the space "flow," even with a brand-new concrete project.

With ACD's 30th anniversary coming, it's a milestone the entire organization is proud of. But it's not just the company that can boast longtime success in delivering dazzling results, as much of its team has called ACD home for over two decades.

"What really sets us apart is the installers and their experience," Myers notes. "We have multiple guys who have been here for over 20 years—I don't know too many places that can say that. With concrete, our guys are physically crafting the product in the field so it's a new product every time—that's why it comes down to the guys forming and making that material. This is an industry where there's a direct correlation between the installers' experience and the product's quality." **H&H**



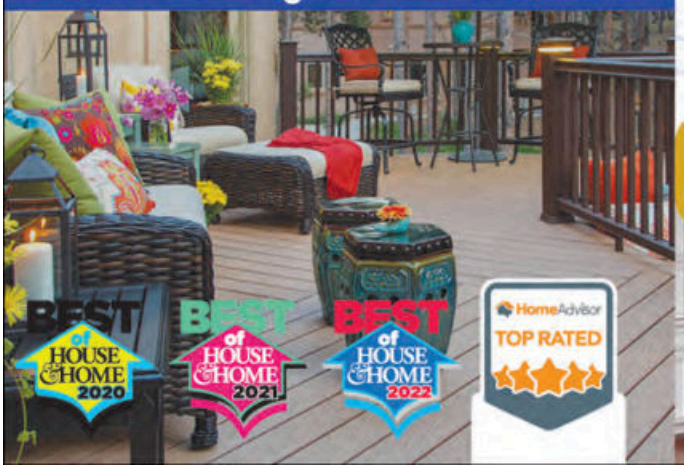
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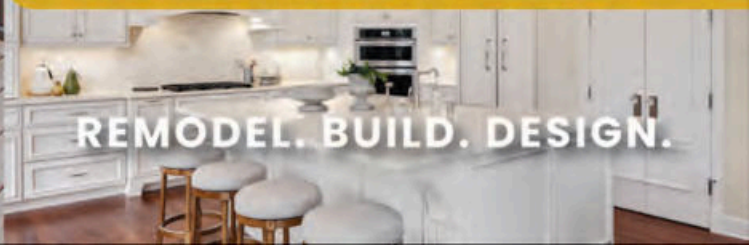


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A Little Extra Love

Autumn's arrival provides the perfect opportunity to keep your landscaping looking its very best.

by **Kristen Jorgensen**

AS THE LEAVES CHANGE COLORS AND THE TEMPERATURE BEGINS TO DROP, IT'S TIME TO SHIFT YOUR FOCUS TO FALL LANDSCAPING. Autumn offers a unique opportunity to enhance the beauty of your outdoor space, whether you have a sprawling garden or a cozy backyard. In this article, we'll explore some fall landscaping ideas and offer tips to help you make the most of this vibrant season.



EMBRACE THE FALL COLORS

One of the most enchanting aspects of autumn is the kaleidoscope of colors that nature provides. To make the most of this, consider planting trees and shrubs that are known for their vibrant fall foliage.

Chris DeMato of Rock Bottom Landscaping & Fencing shares, "Maple trees, for instance, display stunning red, orange and yellow leaves, while burning bushes and dogwoods also offer beautiful autumn hues. Bradford pears and most deciduous trees will turn either yellow or orange before they shed their leaves while adding interest to your property. Also, planting ornamental grasses like switchgrass or maiden grass can add a touch of elegance to your fall landscape."

"Incorporating seasonal flowers is also a great way to bring color to your yard. Although summer is typically associated with vibrant blooms, fall has its array of gorgeous flowers," explains David Flack, owner of Bountiful Acres. "Chrysanthemums, asters and pansies are perfect for autumn, and they come in a variety of colors to suit your aesthetic preferences. Plant them in pots, containers or directly in





the ground to create colorful focal points in your landscape."

MAINTAIN YOUR LAWN

A well-maintained lawn can also enhance the overall appeal of your fall landscape. "Keep up with regular mowing, but raise the blade slightly to allow the grass to grow a bit longer as the weather cools," offers Flack.

Autumn is also an excellent time for lawn aeration and overseeding to ensure a lush, green lawn come spring. "Grass is the hardiest perennial in your entire yard, and the fall is the best time to invest more time into it. All the work you put into your grass during fall will only lead to greener and lushier results in the spring," Flack adds.

PREPARING YOUR POND FOR WINTER

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

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

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

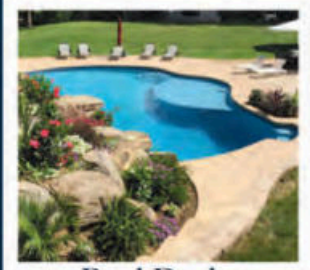
"Once all the leaves have fallen, begin your fall pond care by removing any netting. Pond netting should be stored indoors to keep it safe from wear and tear due to heavy snowfall and ice," says Mihalchick.

As fall ends and winter approaches, plants will naturally fall into a dormant state. To winterize hardy plants, use your pruning tools to trim off dead foliage just above the soil. Removing debris that may have made it into the pond, should also be removed.

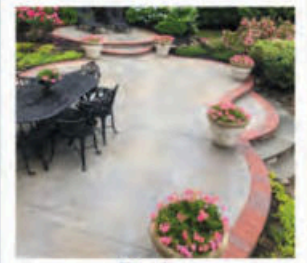


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"Rotting leaves, twigs or dead aquatic plants will put stress on your pond's oxygen levels throughout the winter, which puts your fish at risk. I recommend removing leaves and debris from ponds and streams with the help of a hand net if possible," Mihalchick details.

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

ADD HARDSCAPE ELEMENTS

Incorporating hardscape elements like stone pathways, patios and fire pits can extend the usability of your outdoor space well into the fall months.

"The fall is a great time to invest in new hardscaping projects. Landscaping companies typically aren't as busy in the fall, as they are in the spring months, so it's a great time to schedule larger projects. Something like a cozy fire pit not only provides warmth but also creates a welcoming ambiance for gatherings with friends and family," says DeMato.

Stone pathways lined with autumn-themed decorations can add a touch of rustic charm to your landscaping. Flack agrees and also encourages decorating with seasonal accents to infuse your landscape with the spirit of fall.

"Consider adding seasonal accents like pumpkins, gourds, and hay bales. Arrange these items strategically around your garden or front porch for a festive and



inviting look. Cornstalks, scarecrows and wreaths made from fall foliage and flowers can also be wonderful additions to your outdoor décor," he says.

FOCUS ON LIGHTING

As the days grow shorter, outdoor lighting becomes increasingly important for both safety and ambiance. Adding path lights, uplighting trees and string lights to create a warm and inviting atmosphere in your outdoor space. The soft glow of well-placed lighting can make your landscape feel magical during the fall evenings.

PLANTING FOR SPRING

Most homeowners typically get hit with spring fever and refocus their home improvement projects to the outside, but Karen Frederick from ELA Landscaping advises that this is a common landscaping misconception.

"Fall is an excellent time to get your hands dirty and plant new additions to your garden. The scorching heat of summer has passed, but it's not yet freezing cold. Fall moderate temperatures create ideal conditions for plants to establish their roots without the stress of extreme weather," she says. "As the weather cools down, your garden will require less water. This means less maintenance and lower water bills while your new plants become established."

While fall is certainly known for its vibrant foliage, it's essential to maintain visual interest in your landscape throughout the year. "Planting evergreen shrubs and trees can provide the necessary structure and color contrast during the colder months when deciduous plants lose their leaves," adds Frederick.

Popular evergreen choices include junipers, arborvitae and various types of holly.

PREPARE FOR WINTER

Lastly, don't forget to prepare your landscape for the winter ahead. This may involve cleaning up fallen leaves, mulching garden beds and protecting delicate plants from frost. Be sure to also take care of any necessary maintenance tasks, such as pruning, before the harsh winter weather sets in.

"The fall is the ideal time to survey your property for any issues. Make a list of things that need to be cleaned, any hardscaping repairs, fence repairs, dead plant material, or even dead growth on trees that can be hazardous," advises DeMato. "Addressing these matters before winter can prevent greater expense if let to linger."

Fall is a wonderful time to enhance your outdoor space and create a captivating landscape that celebrates the beauty of the season. By embracing the colors, incorporating seasonal elements and paying attention to maintenance, you can transform your yard or garden into a stunning autumn retreat. So, roll up your sleeves, put on your gardening gloves and let your creativity flow as you embark on your fall landscaping project. Your outdoor space will become a welcoming haven for you and your loved ones to enjoy throughout this enchanting season. H&H

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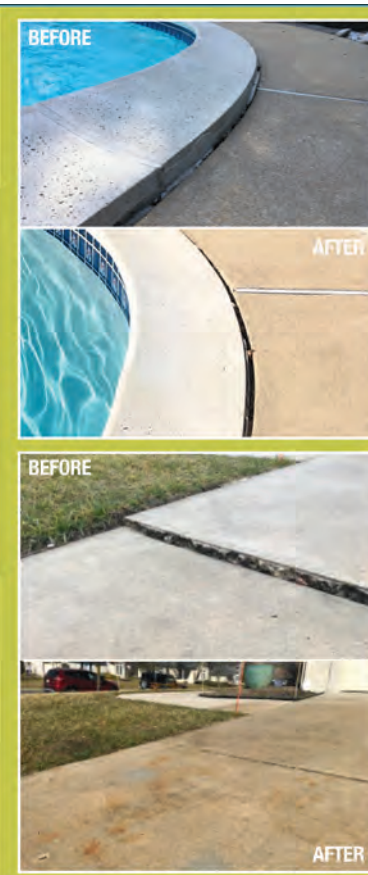
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