SHORE HOME

published by HOUSE&HOME

Volume 22, Issue 11

Special Edition!

Enhance Your Escape

How to improve the look and feel of your Shore property

ASK THE EXPERT



Staffa Stone

A look at the latest trends in outdoor paving design page 11



Shore Sound & Cinema

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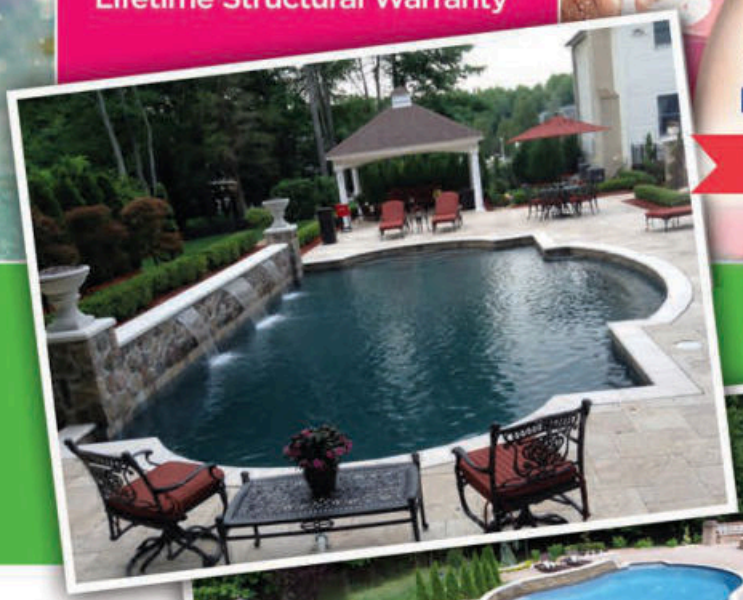
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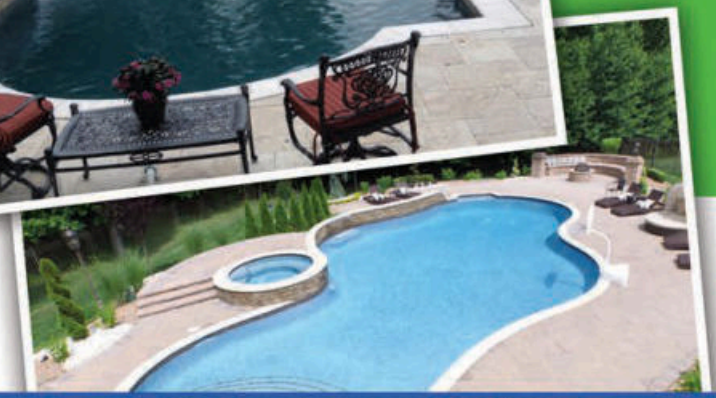
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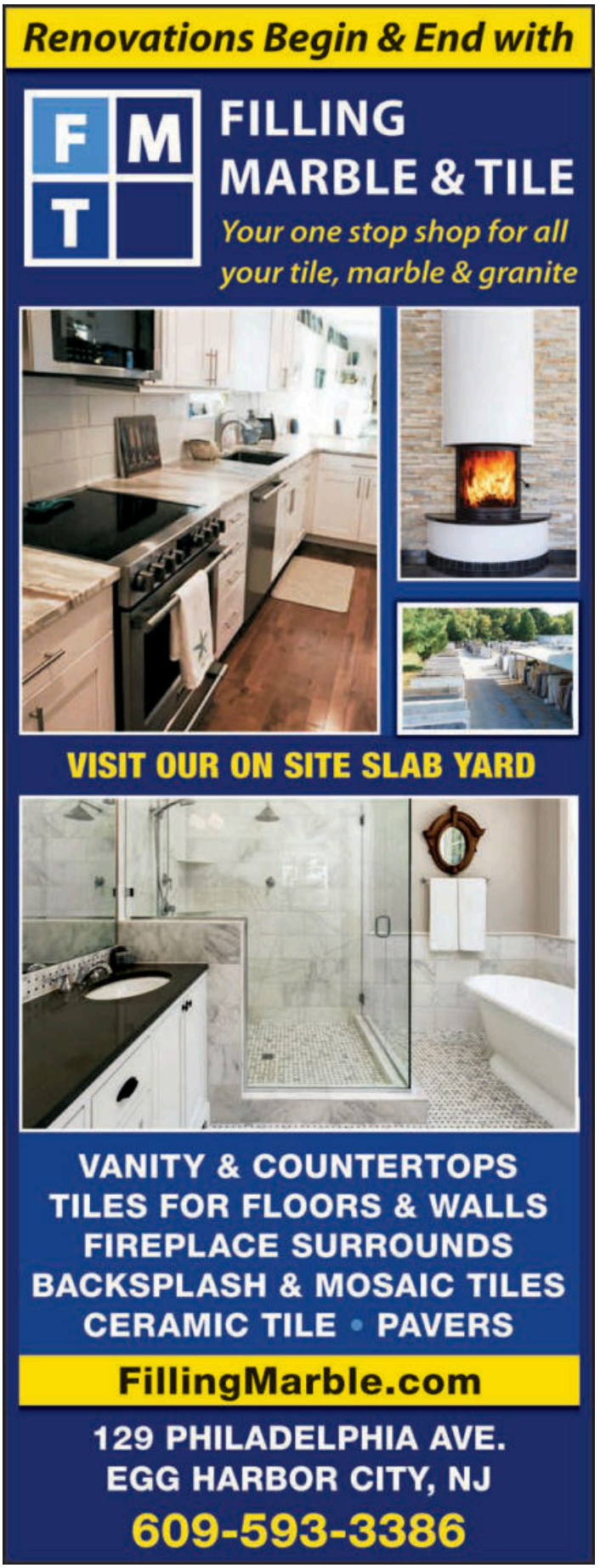
National Sales Office:
HOUSE & HOME Magazine, LLC
700 E. Main St.
Norristown, PA 19401
Phone: 610-272-3120 Fax: 610-272-2805
Email: info@housemagazine.com

Regional Editions:
Bucks County *HOUSE & HOME* – **PA**
Central Jersey *HOUSE & HOME* – **NJ**
Delaware *HOUSE & HOME* – **DE**
DelChester/Main Line West *HOUSE & HOME* – **PA**
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Staffa Stone

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Owner and CEO Kyle Staffa brings over 26 years of industry experience in the landscape and masonry supply business. With his extensive knowledge, *House & Home* magazine spoke with Staffa to learn more about the products and services that make up Staffa Stone.



Owner and CEO Kyle Staffa

FOR DIFFERENT PROJECTS, WHAT TYPES OF MATERIALS DO YOU RECOMMEND?

There are many different types of pavers we at Staffa Stone sell. However, we can offer customers a wide variety of materials depending on their applications. A great example of this is Unilock Umbriano. This product is a solar reflective paver and is also pre-sealed. That allows for a great pool and outdoor kitchen area.

WHAT MAKES STAFFA STONE STAND OUT FROM OTHER COMPANIES?

The best thing that helps Staffa Stone separate ourselves from the other competition is our sales team. We are all experienced in the field with the products. So, we know how to help answer questions on what products are best suited for certain applications.

CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE VAST DISPLAY AT YOUR SHOWROOM, AND WHAT VARIETY OF PRODUCTS YOU OFFER?

Our showroom here in Bayville displays all the different pavers and wall stones that Unilock has to offer. We show a wide range of materials used for many different applications from outdoor kitchen areas, pool decks and driveways.





HOW HAVE STYLES CHANGED AND MODERNIZED, AND WHAT ARE THE LATEST TRENDS CLIENTS ARE LEANING TOWARD NOWADAYS?

I have been in this industry for a long time and have seen many different trends in the market. Today the color trends seem to be anything in the gray family. As far as style is concerned, designers seem to be specifying larger format pavers. There are a few styles in the Unilock line that allow us to supply what the client is looking for.

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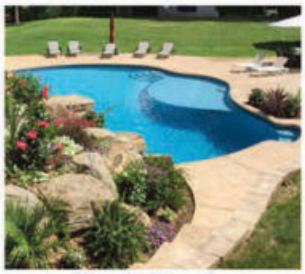
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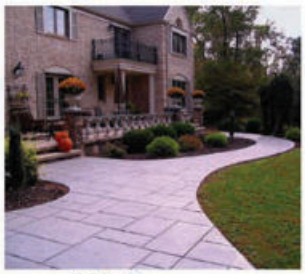
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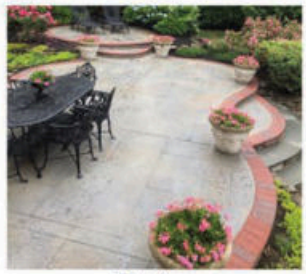
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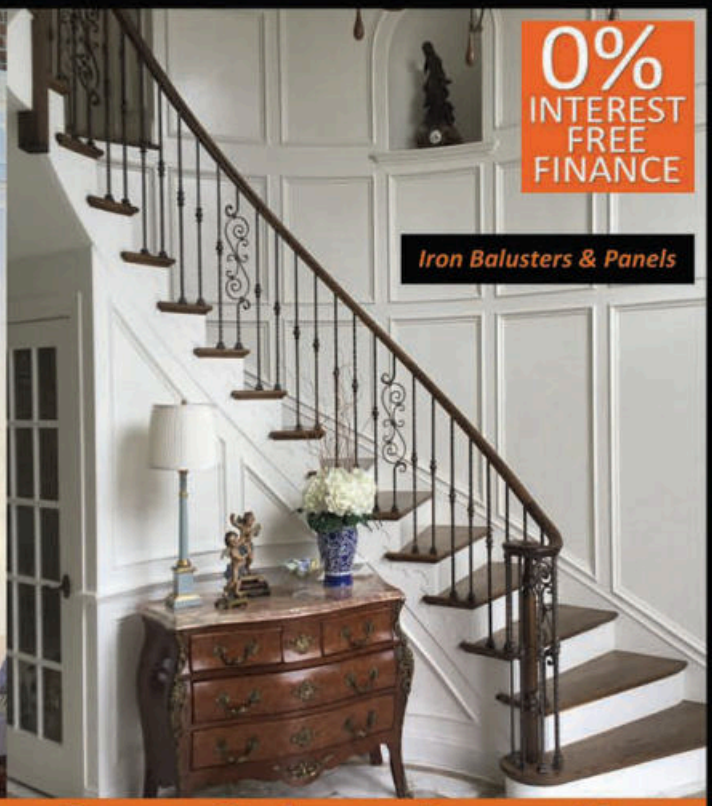
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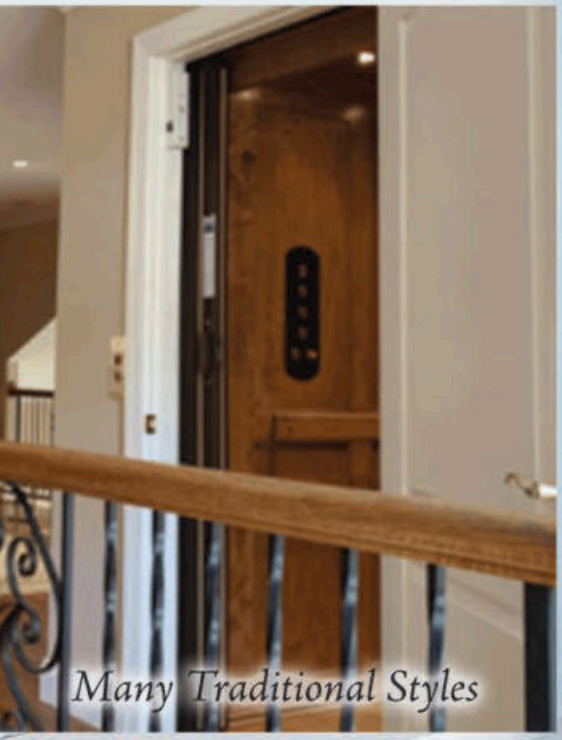
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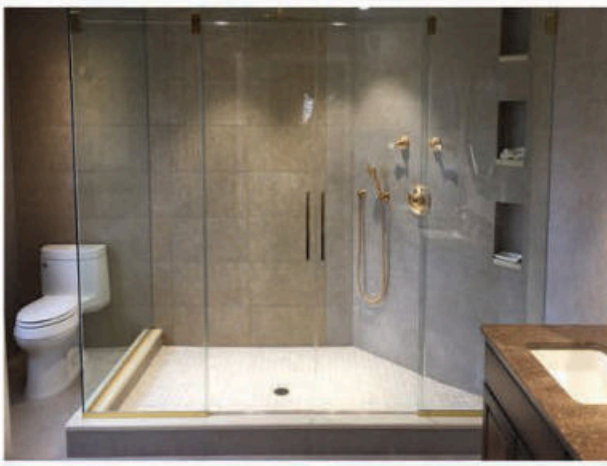
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OUTDOOR

Shore Decor Done Right

With another summer in the books, local experts weigh in on the do's and don'ts of **Jersey Shore landscaping.**

BY **KATIE FRANCIS**



Autumn is quickly approaching, making it a bittersweet time at the Jersey Shore. The rush of traffic and bustle of summer vacationers have subsided, restoring the calming silence of substantially empty commercialized towns.

At the same time, the threat of brutal weather is on the horizon. Whether it's potentially devastating hurricanes or the return of freezing temperatures, Shore property owners have seemingly endless obstacles to tackle in the fall and winter months. It's time for folks to start focusing on maintaining their property's landscaping and exterior through the offseason. This is also a great time to learn what works and what doesn't when it comes to Shore landscaping.

Local experts spoke with *House & Home* to provide crucial information on building and maintaining the perfect outdoor space for any seaside home.

What Thrives

When people buy properties along the New Jersey coastline, they often overlook the drastic contrast between salt air and the air on the mainland. This is because this difference doesn't really impact humans. However, the environmental difference could be a matter of life or death for plants.

Luckily, there are plenty of beautiful and practical plants that thrive in the salty conditions of the Jersey Shore. According to the Cape Atlantic Conservation District (CACD), there's a large variety of trees, shrubs, herbaceous plants and grasses perfectly suited for Jersey Shore homes.

For trees, the CACD recommends a variety of different evergreens like the Atlantic white cedar and the American holly. Residents can also plant trees that transform with colorful foliage in the offseason like the flowering dogwood and persimmon. The CACD also notes that there is a wide variety of different ornamental grasses, colorful shrubs and flowering plants that thrive in the salty ecosystem of the Jersey Shore.

Kyle Staffa, owner and operator of Staffa Stone, provides his expert opinion on how to bring an ecological pop of color to any seaside property.

"Some of the easier plants for the coastal living environment are hydrangea, a variety of grasses, and black-eyed Susans," Staffa says. "This type of plant material gives color throughout the summer and is also eco-friendly." The CACD also recommends black-eyed Susans, one of the most common wildflowers in America.

Steve Bombaro, owner of Cousins Garden Design, is a firm believer in the coinciding aspects of practicality and decoration in seaside landscaping.

"We plant a mix of flowering shrubs along with evergreens for Shore properties, and ornamental grasses are a great option," Bombaro says. "We suggest to homeowners that they have a good blend of colorful shrubs with ornamental grasses in the landscape. Low maintenance is a high priority for Shore homes. The more popular shrubs we suggest are hydrangeas, weigela and Knock Out roses, along with ornamental grasses, and for a colorful evergreen, Gold Thread cypress, euonymus, boxwoods."

When in doubt, plants that are native to New Jersey, specifically the seaside, are the best bet. They will not only thrive, but also are highly beneficial to the Shore's natural ecosystem.

Making the Most of a Space

Many times, seaside properties have much less land dedicated to landscaping and outdoor space than other properties. This is because if a homeowner is deciding



between leaving a few extra square feet of outdoor space for a garden or adding another half bathroom, they're almost always going to choose the latter.

While originally perceived as a bad thing, sometimes less is more. There's less upkeep, which is a huge plus for owners who only actively reside in their Shore houses during the summer months. Less outdoor space also means that homeowners can spend more time enjoying their time by the water and less time worrying about maintaining a green, healthy lawn through the dog days of summer.

Even with a small outdoor space, there is a ton of potential to make a seaside house stand out. After all, the landscaping and upkeep of the outside space is the first thing guests see when visiting a property. There are many ways for homeowners to utilize even the smallest of spaces to ensure they have the most curb appeal in town.

"When there are tight restrictions, we usually try and recommend a small paver so the area looks bigger," Staffa says. The use of smaller pavers gives the illusion that an area is larger than it really is. Staffa also recommends Unilock products for seaside properties to ensure that hardscapes are protected from the salt air. "[Unilock products] are made from different raw materials than you will find in other hardscape materials. This gives the product a high-density rating and a lower absorption rate."

As for plants, owners can plant taller greenery like small trees and cardinal flowers. This minimizes the amount of horizontal space taken up while maximizing the natural décor vertically.

"I'm a believer in that less is more," says Tommy Grimes, owner of T E Grimes Construction. "Focusing on a few key elements and making them stand out can help keep the open space from getting too overloaded."

With so many different options to choose from, it can be difficult to decide exactly how to decorate a small outdoor space. Regardless of the ornamental features you select to create the perfect seaside escape, it's important to keep balance in mind.

"We suggest a mix of rocks for coverage of property and some grass to help soften up the landscaping," Bombaro says. Having the juxtaposition of both hardscaping and landscaping will ensure a beautiful and practical space that will turn your vacation house into a home. H&H

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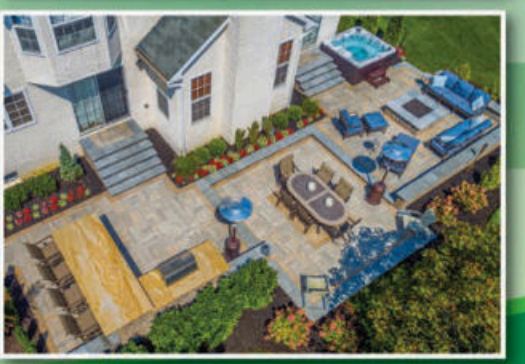
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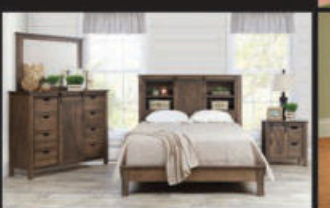




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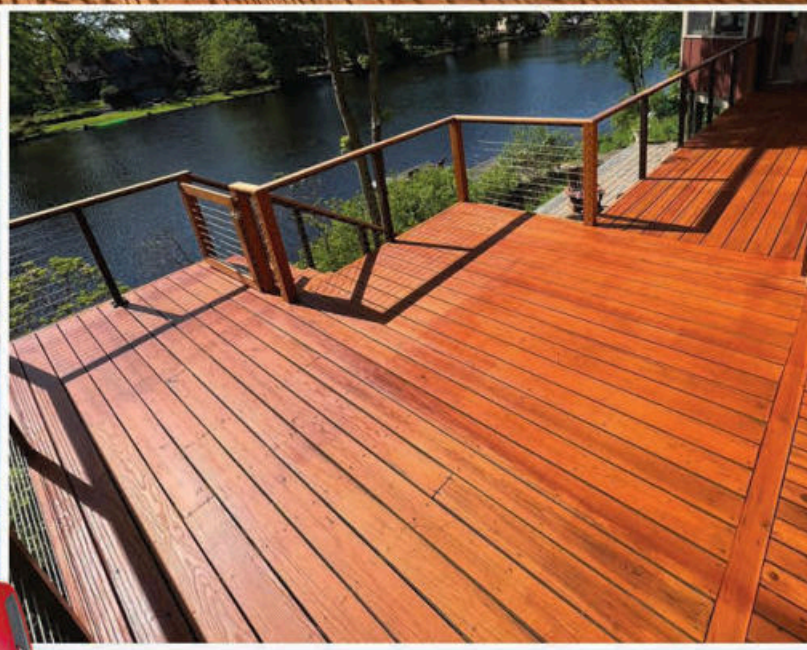
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Flooring it

From hardwood to luxury vinyl and more, homeowners have plenty of flooring options to fit their needs and budget.

by **Matt Cosentino**



When most people dream about renovating their homes, their minds automatically drift to the exciting aspects of the project, whether it's the cabinetry and countertops in a kitchen, the vanity and enlarged shower in a master bathroom or the bold new paint colors in a living room. One piece of the remodel that might get overlooked at first—but is of critical importance, no matter what the space—is the type of flooring to choose.

Flooring options have advanced dramatically over the years, and a wide variety of selections are now available to fit varying budgets and lifestyles. An update to one room or an entire level of a home can make a world of difference, even on its own without an accompanying renovation.

"People are definitely home more [since the pandemic started in 2020] and it's been very busy with projects," says Julie Ward, showroom manager and design consultant at Renaissance Ceramic Tile & Floor. "Updating the flooring, whether it's the whole floor or just a bathroom floor, brings your house back to life. With many different flooring options and colors, it has a big impact."

House & Home spoke to local experts to learn more about the different options and the pros and cons to each.

Finding the best fit

To help customers determine the type of flooring that will best suit their needs, industry professionals first try to find out as much about their lifestyle as possible.

"The first question we ask is how active is their household? Do they have children or pets? Do they entertain a lot?" says John Schwendiman, flooring general manager at Bucks County Wholesale. "Once we get those answers, then we can steer them in the right direction."

Yasu Yamauchi, owner of Yasu Floors LLC, offers several different types of flooring and will make recommendations based on his experience.

"It depends on the situation in the house," he says. "Last week we did a house where I proposed vinyl because the [homeowner] had a pool and he comes into the house wet. When water comes into play, hardwood is not a good option. It all depends on the client. I try to see what the client likes and sell them whatever they want."

Dennis Gehman, president of Gehman Design Remodeling, first asks if the flooring is for one particular space or multiple rooms. Before making his suggestions, he also needs to understand the budget the homeowner is working with.

"Most people would love to do real hardwood everywhere and/or real tile," he says, "but that can be crazy expensive."

Options upon options

As Gehman notes, hardwood is still a popular choice for those who can afford it. Yamauchi is often tasked with reviving hardwood floors, perhaps if a customer has purchased an older home where the original flooring had faded.

"A lot of people are looking for sanding and refinishing their floors," he says. "This week I already did a 60-year-old hardwood that was under carpet and we brought it back to life. But sometimes it can just be two or three years old and the client doesn't like the color anymore and wants to change it."

Gilmar Marcelino, co-owner of Victorian Floor Finishing, says homeowners can customize the color of their hardwoods. While grays are popular now, the classics are still around: walnut, dark walnut, ebony. "We can mix and blend colors to create any color the customer is looking to do," he says.

Refinishing a hardwood floor is a days-long process, however. Marcelino says homeowners usually opt to do this when they first move into a home and before the furniture is in, or when they are undergoing other renovations and things have already been moved out of the space.

For a 4,000-square-foot home, Marcelino says to expect refinishing to take three to four days. "The first day, the crew sands the floor and applies the first coat of stain. On the second day, we buff the floor to make it very clean and apply the next coat," he says. The number of coats is dependent upon the homeowner's choice of water- or oil-based stain. Oil only allows one coat per day; water can be two coats, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

"Oil-based lasts longer, which is good for families with children or pets, but it leaves a smell on the house that can take a few days to dissipate. In New York state, oil-based is not allowed," he continues. "Water-based stains are free of smell and are the most popular choice these days. Nine out of 10 jobs, the customer is choosing water-based."

Once the floor is finished, Marcelino highly recommends putting felt padding on all furniture legs before moving it back into the room.

In homes where young children and pets are present, however, hardwood might not be the best selection, regardless of price. Those clients need something that is easier to clean and maintain.

"A strong material these days is luxury vinyl, whether that's luxury vinyl plank, which looks like a wood board, or luxury vinyl tile, which obviously looks

Photographs courtesy of Renaissance Ceramic Tile & Floor





H&H INTERIORS

like tile," Gehman says. "That will be a fraction of the cost of real hardwood or real tile and the durability is definitely there for general wear and tear as well as with animals."

"A lot of people now are going with the luxury vinyl products just because it's cleanable, water-resistant and scratch-resistant," Schwendiman agrees. "For families with pets and kids and active lives, it holds up a lot better than the hardwood. With hardwood, you get a better return on your investment than vinyl, but it's not as durable."

Manufacturers continue to take the luxury vinyl planks to a new level, mimicking the look of wood without the hassles. Sometimes even the pros have a hard time noting the difference between vinyl and real hardwood.

"The image that they're printing on these tiles is incredible," Ward says. "Every time something new comes in, it almost feels like wood grain or like you could get a splinter from it even. It's hard to tell what's real and what's fake anymore."

Yamauchi opines that laminate flooring resembles real hardwood even more than vinyl, although there are drawbacks.

"The vinyl is waterproof on top, waterproof at the bottom, it is slip-proof and it doesn't scratch," he says. "If you drop water on top, it just stays there and doesn't go under, so you can just wipe it off. Laminate consists of recyclable wood pretty much, so it absorbs water. Water goes in and the laminate expands. I don't do a lot of laminate, unless the client is going to take care of it and really likes the way it looks. It looks way more like wood than vinyl, but when it comes to water it's not good."

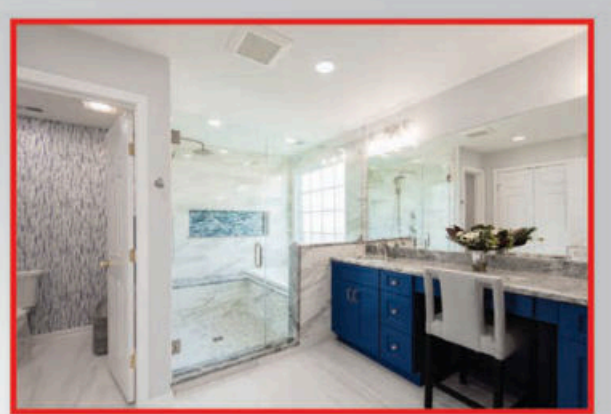
Schwendiman believes that laminate manufacturers are addressing the water issues recently, and it does have the advantage of being much more affordable than vinyl.

Ward's company sells a lot of porcelain tile as well, which is also a strong option for cleaning purposes. Natural stone requires more maintenance but is popular for kitchens or master baths.

Carpet is still used, mainly in bedrooms, offices or a finished basement, but Schwendiman says homeowners with allergies are getting away



> "For aging in place or ADA compliance, smooth, hard flooring is the best."
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from it since it traps dust and hard surfaces are easier to clean. Gehman also points out that carpet can be a tripping hazard for seniors.

"For aging in place or ADA compliance, smooth, hard flooring is the best," he says. "People talk about slipperiness and that's a consideration, but by code and actually by law, flooring materials need to meet a certain slip resistance qualification before they can go out to market. The most common [falls] are in a bathroom where it's a little wet or just inside a door where you're coming in from outside. There are some that are better than others but all must meet a minimum qualification."

Trends and popular colors

One major theme in recent years is to keep the same flooring throughout an entire level of the home, rather than, for example, using carpet in the living room, hardwood in the kitchen and tile in the bathroom.

"People don't want to break up the rooms, they want that open feel," Schwendiman says. "So they'll continue the flooring throughout the whole first floor or second floor instead of breaking it up. Some people still opt to put ceramic in the wet areas like kitchens, bathrooms and laundry rooms in case there is a leak. But the luxury vinyl can withstand all of that wetness."

"Consistency is a big thing with a house," Ward adds. "If you can run your floors all the same, it's going to make it feel bigger and more consistent versus having all these different floors throughout the home."

As for color, Ward says neutrals are always a big request, such as whites, grays and taupe. Gehman sees the wood tones coming on strong, but the trends always seem to change quickly.

"Gray is still in high demand with beige coming in second," Schwendiman says. "In the hardwood arena, it's the white oak natural or real light colors and wide planks. Next year it will probably be dark again. Very few manufacturers have actual colors like blue or red or green, they're all one form or another of gray or beige."

No matter what colors or styles customers think they want, Schwendiman advises them to visit a showroom and get a feel for the options in person as opposed to on a website. He has been in the business for 30 years now and even he is constantly amazed at what is out there.

"It was all carpet and hardwood when I started," he says. "Sheet vinyl was on its way out when I started, then laminate came into play, and now luxury vinyl has taken over a big chunk of the market share. But laminate and carpet are making their way back. You have to keep the ratio of what people want in the store. People don't use sheet vinyl anymore, so we only have one display of that compared to 15 or 20 displays of luxury vinyl. People should definitely come in and see the samples." **H&H**

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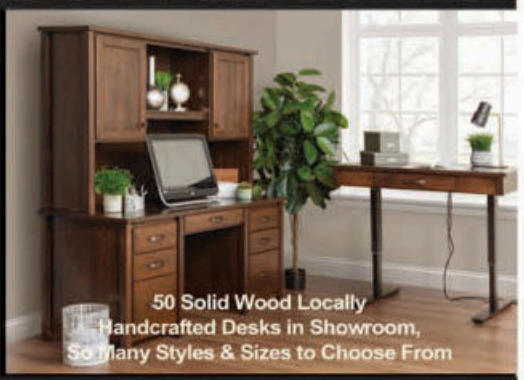
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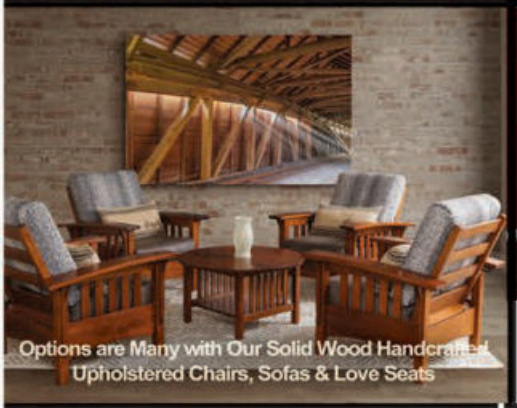
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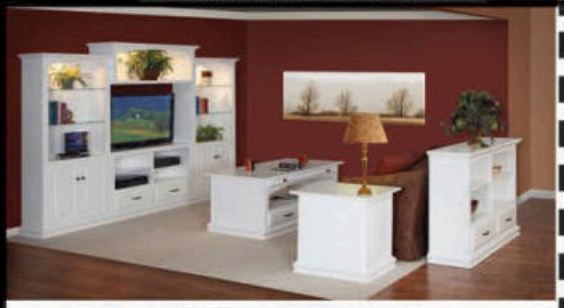

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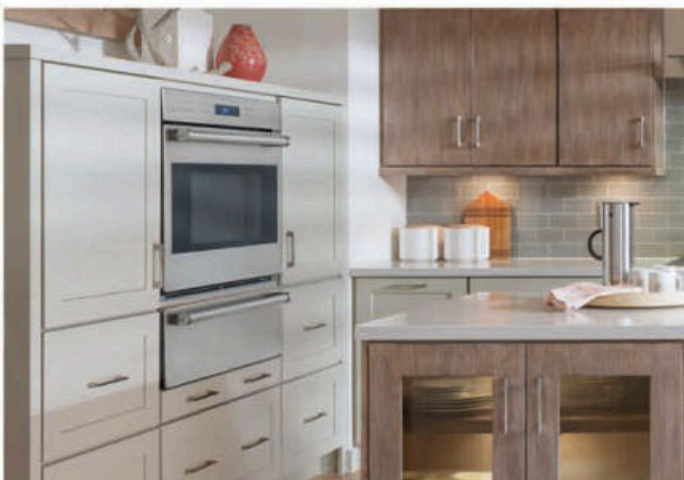
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We spoke with Wiessler about how things have changed in recent years, what clients are looking for these days when it comes to outfitting their homes with the latest smart technology, and to find out more about the latest trends in the industry.



Neil Wiessler, president

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Memorable Makeovers

Upgrades that make a guest bathroom unforgettable

BY AMANDA HAMM HENGEL



Renovations are inevitable when it comes to home ownership. Whether you've lived in your home for two years or 20, chances are, there's an update you think could make your home the house of your dreams.

For the majority of homeowners, kitchens, master bedrooms and bathrooms are at the top of the renovation priority list. They are both the center of the home and a homeowner's sanctuary, so it's no wonder they take precedence.

Perhaps further down the list, but some would argue just as important, are guest bathrooms. They can be, after all, one of the most frequently used bathrooms in the home.

"Every home is designed differently and has different features, but there tends to be a utilitarian bath in most where the kids and everyone who comes into the house can go in," says Dave Cerami, president of HomeTech Renovations. "Some homes have a guest bath within a separate bedroom. Either way, these rooms are high-use rooms or they're rooms people want to provide a nice experience for."

When looking to renovate, there are a number of options to consider, from bold, unique colors and accessories to really give guests an experience they won't forget, to neutral, soft colors that are timeless and can easily be incorporated into any style. Whatever your goal is, our experts share their thoughts and experiences to make the renovation experience that much easier.

Go Bold

Renovating your guest bathroom so that it stands out and creates a truly unique experience can start with color and move to more elaborate amenities, says Lorraine Sterl, office manager for Sterl Kitchens.



Photo courtesy of Sterl Kitchens/opposite page photo courtesy of HomeTech Renovations

Opting for a floating vanity in a blue, green or gray, and adding a ramp sink creates a statement piece that is eye-catching and functional, she says.

Scott Kingsland, president of Glass Castle, adds going beyond distinctive wall paint will also elevate the room.

"Nice tile work with extensive designs and a low-iron (ultra-clear) glass on the shower enclosure really makes a room stand out," he says.

An eye-catching hanging light fixture or even a unique shelving system are other ways to make the room pop and catch the guest's eye.

Going a completely new route from the design of the rest of the house is also a possibility, says Dan Dilworth, president of Dilworth's Custom Design.

"One of our basement projects was set up like a pub with a full bar," he says. "The bathroom is what you would see at a pub—including a urinal."

In other words, the sky is the limit when

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it comes to creating a bathroom experience your guests will always remember, and going the safe route isn't always necessary.

Keep It Simple

Of course, a more neutral color palate and overall experience is also an option. Homeowners who prefer to be able to easily refresh areas without having to make huge changes may feel more comfortable with neutrals, says Dilworth.

"Try not to follow trends too closely since it's a less-used bathroom that would not be remodeled again," he says. "Keep the colors of everything neutral so it can be decorated or walls repainted to give it a fresh look."

Recessed lighting can give clean lines and more visibility, but sconces are also a timeless way to add light and character without being too bold in an otherwise neutral room.

Cerami says grays and whites are popular in bathroom remodels right now, as well as natural wood tones and furniture-style vanities.

"Replacing the builder-grade materials that are in the bathroom with things that are a little more upscale can really make a difference in the room," he says. "Adding tile floors, better lighting and ventilation are all updates that can be made."

As been noted previously, it may feel as though a renovation needs to include drastic changes, but subtlety can go a long way in making a bathroom stand the test of time.

Overall Updates

Whether you're electing to go big or prefer to keep things modest, Kingsland says homeowners are making more room for bathrooms overall.

"Ten years ago, the average shower enclosure was four feet," he says. "Now, the average enclosure is five feet and usually incorporates a 90-degree return panel [shower enclosure]."

Toilets have also come a long way, with many of them now fully skirted, hid-





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ing the s-trap at the back, says Cerami.

"It offers a clean, molded side to make them look more custom," he notes.

Additionally, while it may be enticing to add a toilet with special functions or a shower system with unique knobs, keeping things mainstream is probably best.

"Make sure everything is easy to use," Dilworth says. "A complicated shower system may make a guest nervous."

Safety and overall accessibility should also be well-thought-out, concludes Sterl.

"Consider barrier-free bathrooms for mobility or accessibility issues, wheelchair access, etc.," she says. "Incorporating discreet grab bars into the design of bathrooms for lifelong safety is also something to think about."H&H

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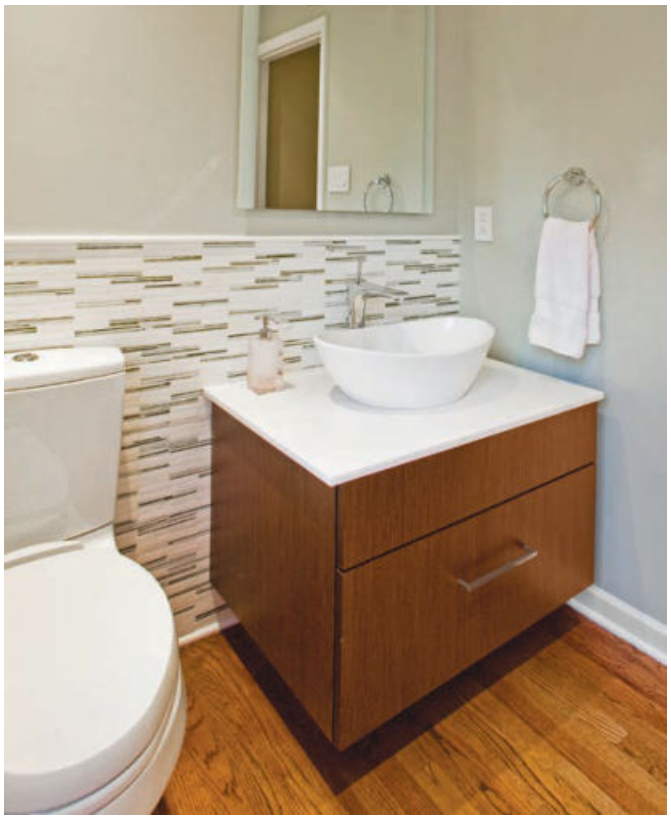


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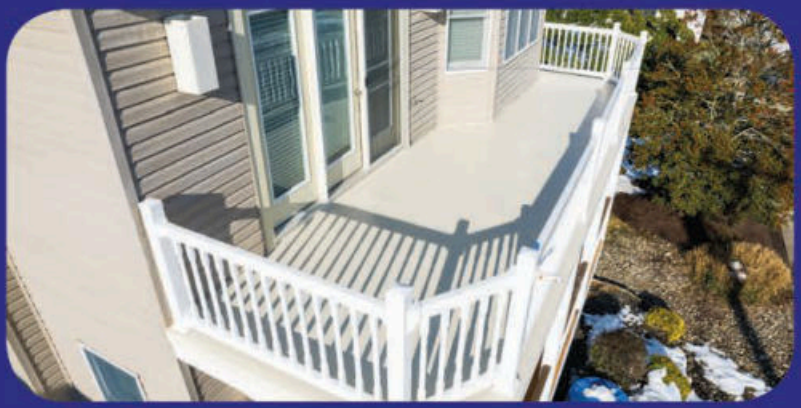
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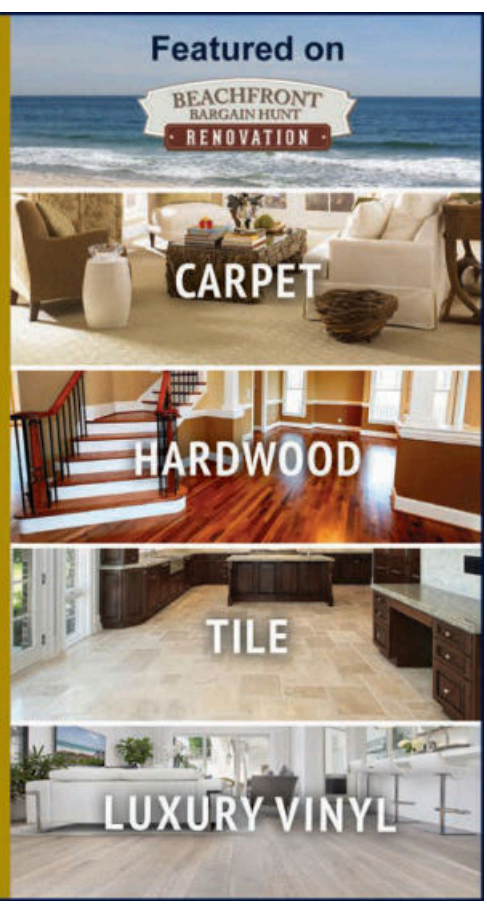
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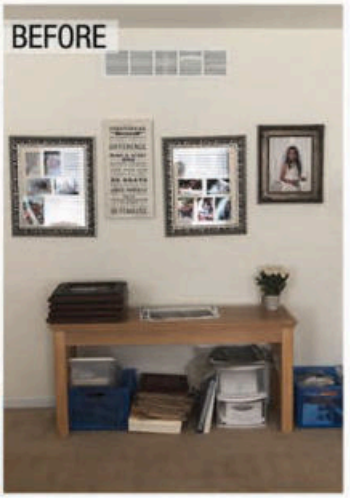
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