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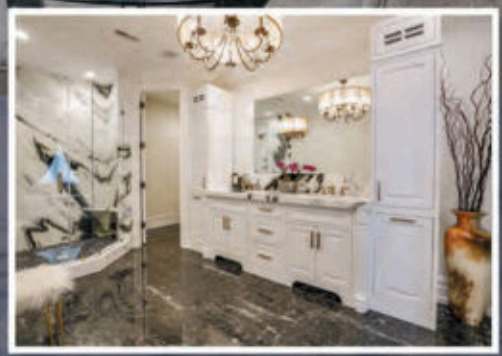
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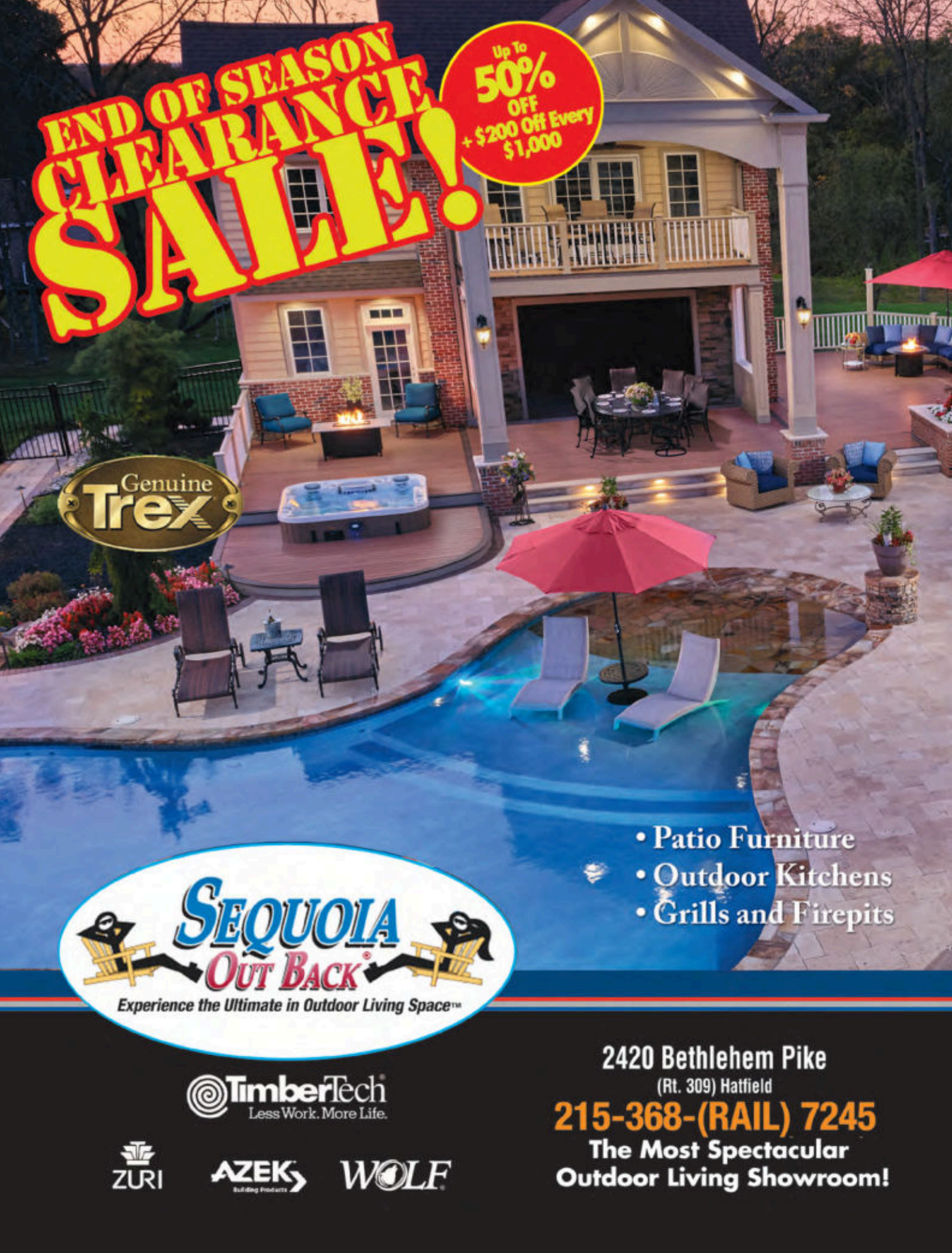


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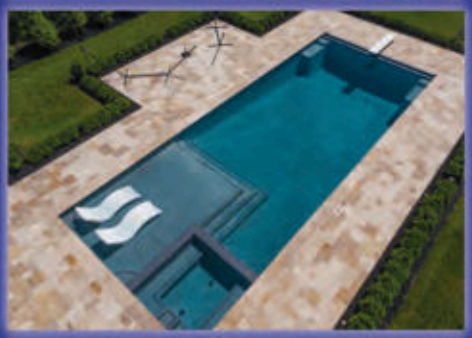
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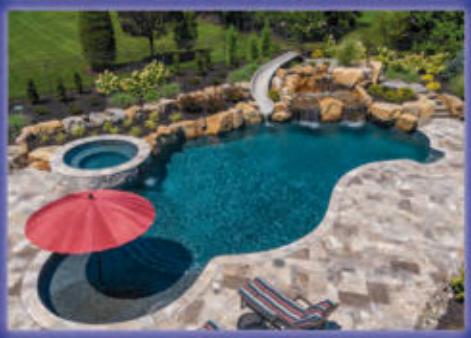
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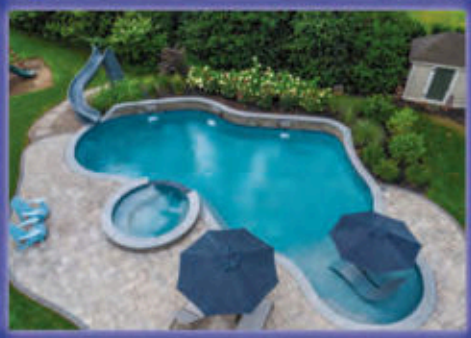


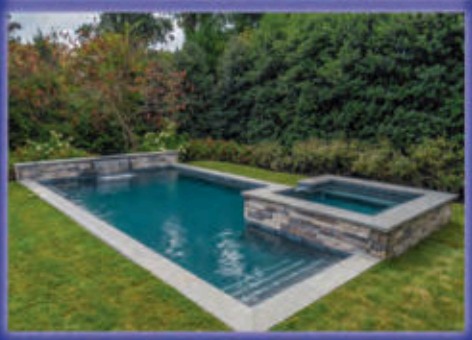




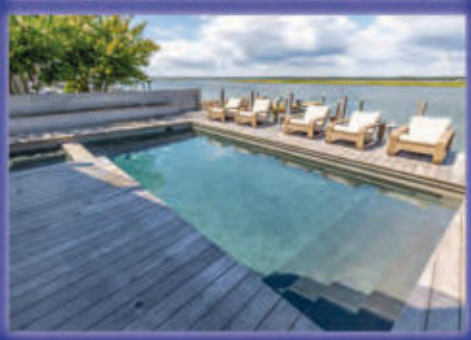












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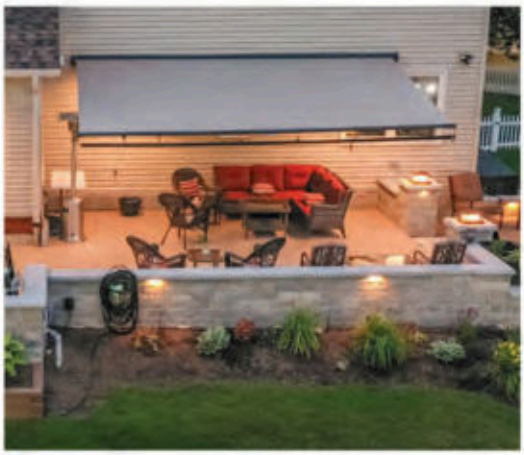
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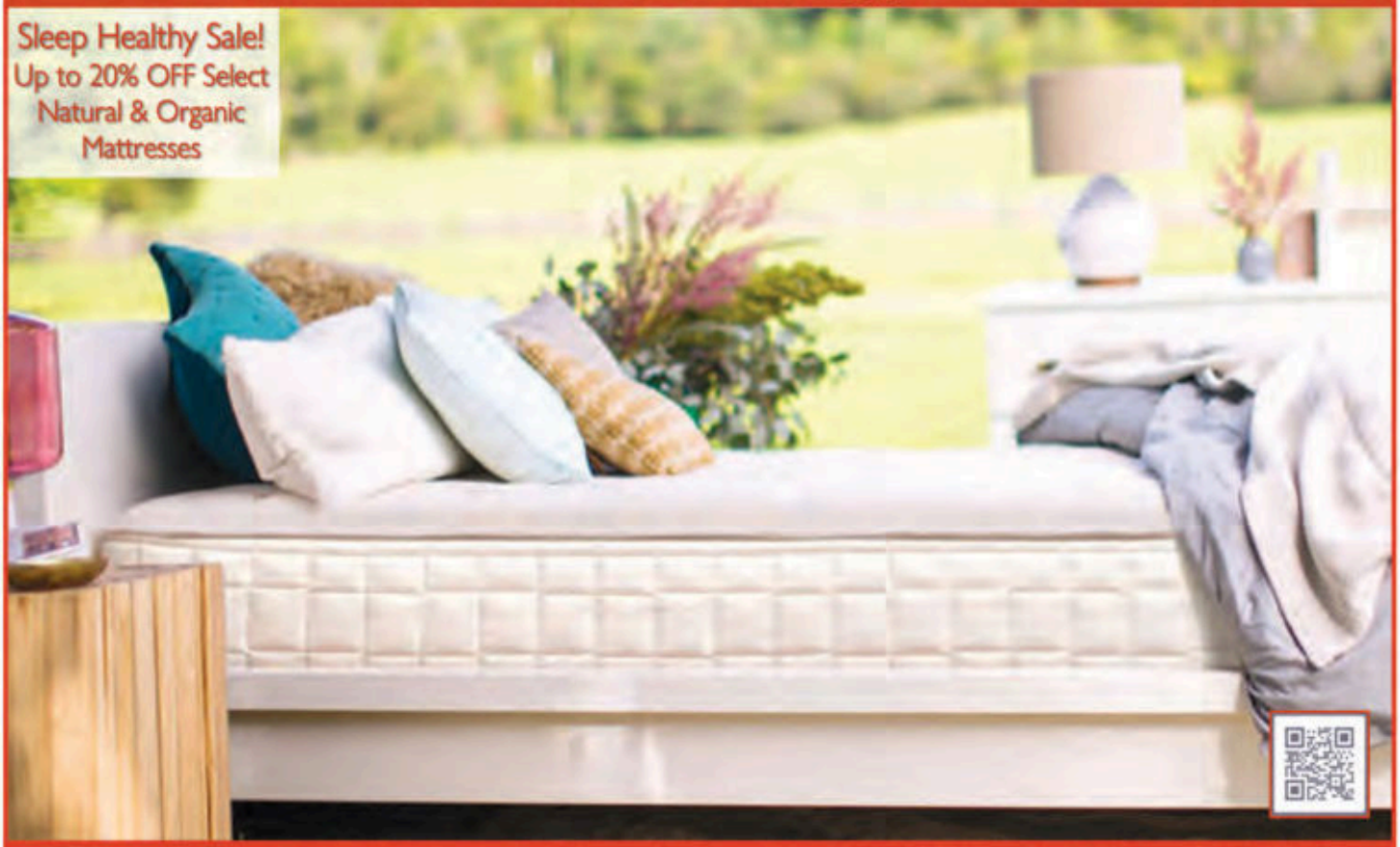
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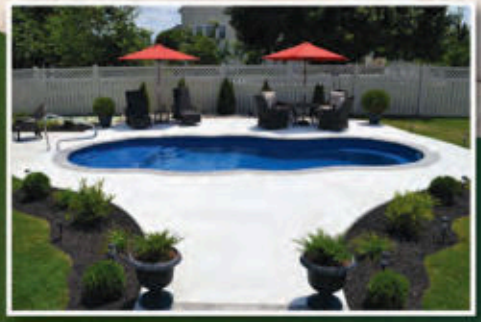
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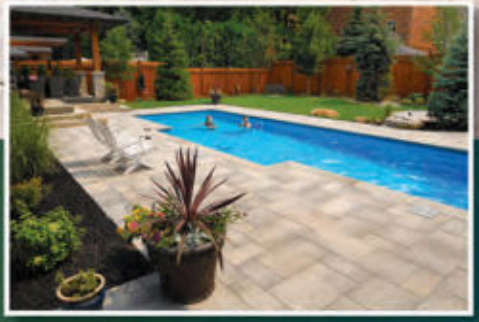
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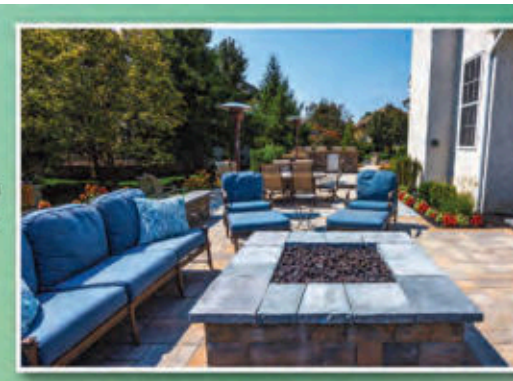
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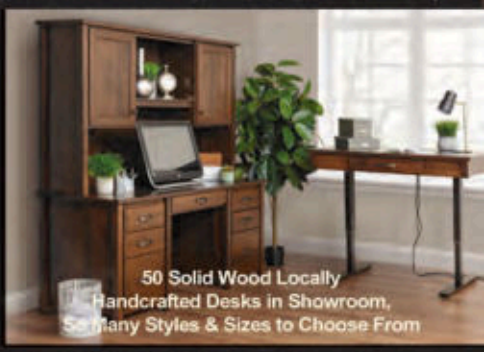
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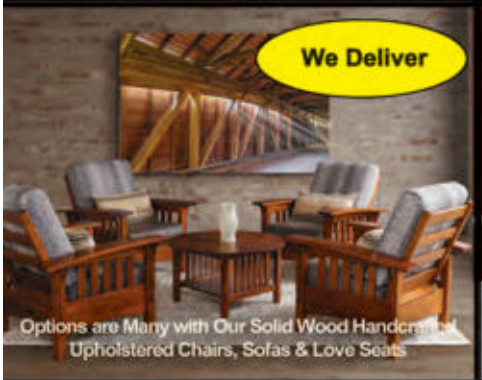

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An Outside View of Things

PROTECTING YOUR SHORE HOME'S EXTERIOR SHOULD BE AT THE TOP OF YOUR SEASONAL CHECKLIST.

By Peter Proko

FOR MANY FOLKS, the Shore is their home away from home. A place to escape from the doldrums of everyday life and enjoy time with their loved ones as they dip their toes in the sand and soak up the sun. And with folks spending more and more time at their favorite seaside retreat, it's become increasingly important to bring all the comforts of home along with them.

But while homeowners may have recently installed new kitchens, laid down new flooring or added touches of décor to enhance the inside of the house, it's equally important to be mindful of the outside of the home as well. After all, being exposed to the Shore's elements—from the salt air to heavy winds and driving rains—can take its toll and so protecting your property's exterior is of the utmost importance.

These days, with the Shore's landscape lined with decades-old rancher homes sitting alongside sprawling, modern multi-story properties, there's no singular way to combat the elements since every home has different needs. But one thing that is clear is that without the proper planning, homeowners could be left to deal with the damage and quickly find themselves faced with several costly repairs.

"With all the different construction methods used over the years, there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to the challenges many homeowners face down at the Shore with trying to protect their investment," says Chuck Rood, construction operations manager with Seashore Construction. "It's critical that they are working together with their contractor of choice and that price should never be the sole determination of that process."

Steve Hauck, president of SJ Hauck Construction, says a good place to start is by choosing the right materials. While folks may gravitate toward certain looks or products, the truth is the Shore's environment may not be conducive to their longevity.

"When talking about exteriors, you want to try and avoid wood products. Instead, you want to use a low-maintenance material," Hauck says. "[For instance,] when you talk about soffits, you'll see people will use actual mahogany wood; the weather at the Shore is really going to put a hurting on that quickly. Instead, there's a material called Versatex; it's a vinyl product that looks exactly like mahogany wood."

Hauck also advises against things like steel garage doors as the metal will rust over time. That also goes for nails used in projects elsewhere along the perimeter of the home, from the porch to the back deck. "Anything steel needs to be stainless steel or at a minimum it needs to be galvanized," he adds.

UP ON THE ROOF

Perhaps the most important exterior protection one can focus on is the roof. And there's much more involved than just choosing the color you think gives your home greater curb appeal. Everything from a high-quality, protective underlayment to the proper trim can be just as important.

But when it comes to the cosmetic side of choosing a new roof, there are options. Adam Parnes, vice president of marketing with Global Home Improvement, says the ideal approach for any homeowner is to match aesthetics with performance.

"The goal is to have a durable exterior that also adds to the home's curb appeal and summer vibe. Due to high winds, asphalt roofs may require additional maintenance. We recommend metal roofing for the longest-lasting, maintenance-free solution," says Parnes.

While standard seam metal roofing has grown in popularity in the past 10-15 years, asphalt shingles remain the most prevalent choice due to their affordability and long-standing benefits. Jeff Kay, president and CEO of East Coast Roofing, Siding & Windows, is quick to point out that not all shingles are created equal.

"When it comes to roofing specifically, the challenges in that environment are the wind and the rain. What happens if you don't install a proper roofing system is that you're almost guaranteed to run into leaks and have problems," says Kay. "It depends on what type of asphalt shingles you use and how they are installed. And the reason that matters is the wind. The wind takes a toll on anything, but if you use a low-quality asphalt shingle, it will not last down the Shore."

As more folks look to replace their old three-tab shingles with new architectural shingles, Kay recommends installing products made by GAF, North America's largest shingle manufacturer, which come with a 50-year warranty and are considered the industry standard today.

And for those looking to combine the look of both metal and shingle roofing, there are options according to Rood. "Using the metal on smaller, decorative areas, such as entryways and porches, can definitely add a nice look to the exterior for a reasonable cost vs. installing on a whole roof."

A CLEARER VIEW

Another key area to pay attention to when considering a Shore home's exterior are the windows. Cheaper, builder-grade windows may be friendlier on the wallet, but you will lose things like energy efficiency and increased functionality. You'll also want to look for specially rated windows that will stand up to the elements now and well into the future.

"Windows are pretty important, and something to consider is the DP rating. Standard windows come with a DP rating of 30, the ones we sell are 50—they are hurricane rated. When you have the wind and those extreme elements, you want something that is rated to deal with that stuff," Kay says, adding that the installation and insulation of the windows, as well as the flashing details are other key areas to pay attention to.

With so many options available, it's best to do a little homework to get a better understanding of what's out there and know that while cost is certainly worth considering, it shouldn't be the overriding factor in helping you make your decision.

"A good quality manufacturer of the products is the key here," Rood says. "While you may be tempted to get a cheaper big box product that has a similar style, the construction of the products is usually much different."

EXAMINING THE REST OF THE EXTERIOR

Elsewhere on the home's exterior, there have been great improvements over the years in vinyl siding and its ability to withstand extreme weather conditions. And some homeowners are getting creative, adding accents and different facets to make their property stand out. This could mean using cedar shake on the dormer of a house or maybe using board and batten where strips of wood molding are placed over the seams of wide boards.

"It's more about the design and the textures than it is about the colors right now," Kay says. "Homeowners will typically contrast the roof and the siding, there's a lot of designing that goes into it."

Bold color choices may seem appealing for your Shore home, but Parnes feels it's best to strike a balance between wanting something that pops and something



An Outside View of Things



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that is practical.

"You have to be careful when choosing dark, vibrant colors because the salt air can cause fading over time. Pastels are great options for standing out and blending in at the same time," Parnes says.

Rood has noticed a trend of folks going with different, accenting styles of siding in more conservative colors to give a home a timeless look.

"Highlighting certain areas of a house's architectural design elements adds to the character of the home without using bold, loud colors. I think that adds more value and curb appeal at the end of the day," he says.

Gutter systems are also crucial in helping protect one's home. Because roofs are not waterproof, gutters play the role of catching the water that runs down the shingles and directing it. If the water were to pour directly onto the ground below due to faulty gutters, over the course of time the ground surrounding the foundation would get soft and start to sink.

"You'll see cracks in the foundation, basements get wet and then you get a bug infestation. It's a slippery slope and the longer you go without proper gutters, the worse it is," says Kay.

A HIGHER GROUND

One of the more common problems homeowners at the Shore are faced with is flooding. Ever since Hurricane Sandy, there has been a large increase of homes along the coast being raised up higher in an effort to avoid water penetrating the home and causing significant damage.

Home elevation has been a major part of Hauck's business for years and he says the current demand is high as folks look to raise older homes or are tearing down properties to build a newer residence that will sit up higher off the ground.

"Home elevation protects against flooding, but also the wind because it's put on a stronger foundation, one that can handle hydrostatic and hydrodynamic pressure," says Hauck.

With that being said, it's apparent there are lots of things to consider when looking to protect your Shore home against extreme conditions. But with the right planning and the guidance of a trusted contractor, you can increase safeguards while also improving both the appearance and functionality.

"Most homeowners need to be educated and aware of how the home's exterior envelope—roofing, siding, windows, doors, gutters, etc.—must work together as a system so that they are all in concert with each other," says Rood. **H&H**

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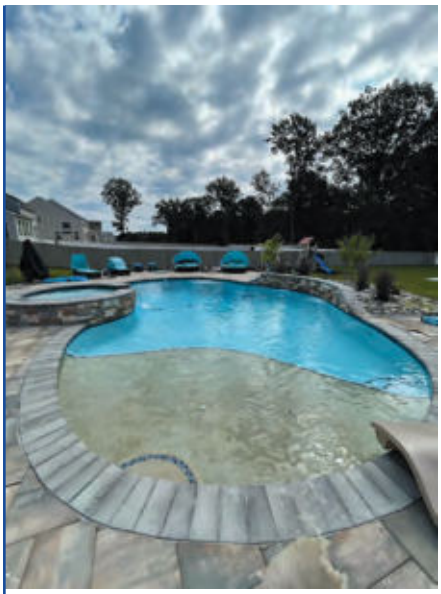
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ask the expert
by Chelsea Valcourt

Del Val Pools & Spas

BUILDING A POOL NEAR THE SHORE CAN PROVIDE EVEN GREATER ENTERTAINMENT, accessibility and privacy options than a trip to the beach while still providing that signature getaway feel. A personal pool not only improves property value, but also is a relaxing hideaway from the crowds and noise of the busy tourism season. The sand terrain, however, brings along its own unique set of challenges.

Bryan Hull, co-owner of Del Val Pools & Spas, says there are a few important strategies for tackling these challenges, including good planning, regular maintenance and working with an experienced and professional pool planner. *House & Home* spoke with Hull about best practices when building a pool by the Shore and how to keep costs down while avoiding any unnecessary surprises.



WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES PEOPLE FACE WHEN DECIDING TO BUILD A POOL AT THE SHORE?

Building a pool at the Shore requires a high level of expertise and a great deal of planning. In most cases, the footprint is small, access is difficult and what is under the sand is always a surprise. In many cases, the pool pilings and beam structure must be tied into existing structures, requiring careful planning and execution. Del Val Pools & Spas brings the essential experience to complete a project at the Shore whether oceanfront, bayfront or in between.



Bryan Hull, Partner

HOW CAN FOLKS BEST PREPARE FOR THESE CHALLENGES?

If building a new home, working with your Del Val Pool representative early on can minimize expenses by maximizing access and completing construction simultaneously. If adding a pool to an existing home, knowing the history of the lot helps everyone prepare for what is hiding underground. When working on the coastal islands, we have found cars, rocks and even pieces of ship under the sand. Del Val has the experience to minimize surprises when installing a custom pool in a not-so-custom terrain.

HOW DO GROUND MATERIALS LIKE SANDY SOIL AFFECT POOL DEVELOPMENT? HOW DO YOU HANDLE THAT?

Hurricane Sandy in 2012 was a big teacher in many ways. The storm's hydrostatic pressure popped many pools out of the sand. A new name came about to describe the innovative ways to engineer in-ground pools using pilings and grade beams. It's known as "Sandy-proof," and it's the standard Del Val lives by when constructing pools at the Jersey Shore.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BEST WAYS TO MAINTAIN YOUR POOL BY THE SHORE?

Daily attention is the best practice, and it's important to keep both the pool and deck clean. The sun can be a little stronger by the Shore, so ensure water levels are at the appropriate level and check chemicals frequently. A little attention each day will minimize maintenance and maximize fun time. **H&H**



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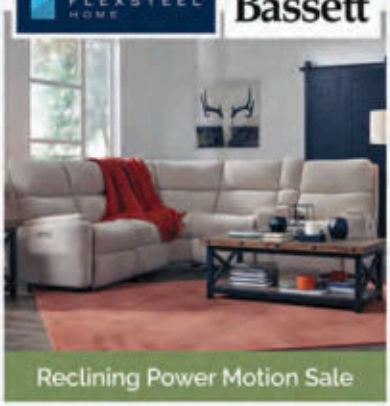
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When you need work done on your home—expected or not—you want to know that you can trust the contractor you've hired to get the job done well. After all, you're not an expert on what's involved in services like roofing, siding or windows and you don't want to get taken advantage of as a result. Because of that, it's important to choose a company that you can feel confident is reputable.

But how exactly do you know a company can be trusted?

One important factor in choosing the best contractor is longevity. Only a company that performs great work is going to be able to stick around for the long haul. That's exactly the case with Emmons Roofing & Siding, a company that has been offering expert care for South Jersey and the Jersey Shore area since 1996. They are a well-known name in the region—and for good reason. Their success was built upon a reputation of honesty, integrity and good work.

In fact, the company is an Owens Corning™ Platinum Preferred Contractor. That's not a designation that any old company can have. Platinum Preferred Contractors are in the top tier of a premier network of roofing professionals. In order to achieve this title, they must have passed a workmanship inspection, been professionally screened for financial stability and customer service, and continue to adhere to stringent guidelines set forth by Owens Corning. Fewer than 1% of roofing contractors in the United States are Owens Corning Platinum Preferred.

"It's a title that backs up our already strong reputation," says Stephanee Kelly, co-owner of the company along with her husband Matthew. "Only the most reputable companies are able to earn that designation."

Besides being able to feel confident that you've hired a contractor you can trust, this designation benefits homeowners in a more tangible way as well. That's because Platinum Preferred Contractors are able to offer 50-year warranties on their work—much longer than other companies can offer. According to Owens Corning's website, "because we stand behind these warranties, we need to make sure that we are backing up the best roofers in the business."

AN INSIDE LOOK

And while Emmons are trusted experts you can count on for your exterior projects, their skilled interior remodeling team has also built up a solid reputation thanks to its more than 30 years of experience providing fine craftsmanship and exceptional customer service.

In fact, the family-owned company has grown, as several talented remodeling industry professionals have recently joined Emmons to help serve its more than 6,000 existing customers.

And Emmons' interior expertise is not limited to kitchens and bathrooms, as they also provide full-service remodeling and construction services for additions, interior renovations, porches, decks, windows, doors and basement finishing. The design team works with clients as a trusted advisor to help them make the right decisions on products, materials, colors and selections using a proprietary Curated Design Concept, which is an industry first. It's an easy way to quickly get a custom-designed project without the heavy cost of a design-build process.

It's all part of the company's desire to make remodeling one's home easy and affordable with exceptional financing programs and realistic pricing. The high level of expertise that Emmons brings to each and every project is backed by a 5-year warranty and a lifetime service guarantee, further illustrating why they continue to be leaders in the field.

CHOOSING WISELY

At the end of the day, your choice in finding the right contractor can be the difference between good, quality work and a big headache. Kelly says that the last thing Emmons wants to see is people in their local community get taken advantage of by unscrupulous roofing, siding and window contractors.

"You should be able to feel confident that you've chosen a contractor that you can trust—not one that is going to leave you with problems to fix after they've gone," she says. "At Emmons, you are not only investing in a new roof, new siding or new windows—you're investing in peace of mind." H&H



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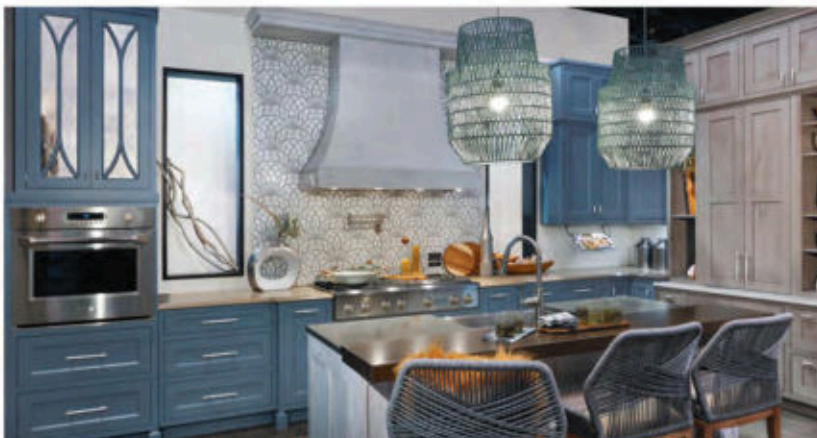
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H&H POOLS

INSTALLING A POOL IN A COASTAL COMMUNITY COMES WITH ITS SHARE OF OBSTACLES, but with the help of an experienced professional, Shore homeowners can have the backyard they desire.

Up to the Challenge

by **Matt Cosentino**

For many years, finding a home at the Shore with a swimming pool in the backyard was a rare occurrence. After all, the thinking went, the ocean is just a short walk or drive away—is a pool really necessary?

That mindset has started to change over the past decade or so, with new construction sprouting up all over the coast and homeowners desiring the same amenities that they may have at their primary residences. If the property is one they will be renting out as well as enjoying themselves, the existence of a pool will certainly add to its appeal.

There are different challenges to building a pool in a coastal community compared to inland, to be sure, but fortunately this region is home to many qualified contractors who have experience with the obstacles that may arise. Take Tom Braun, for example, who started his company, U.S.A. Pools, in Pennsylvania in 1989 and worked mostly on the Main Line until moving to the Jersey Shore with his family in 2002. Now, he's installed hundreds if not thousands of gunite pools in Shore communities.

"I had to adapt and learn how to dig with water filling in the hole," he says. "Aside from that, it's pretty much the same process, but the biggest difference is, we're working on 50-foot lots, sometimes 25-foot lots, as opposed to working on a property that's an acre or several acres. Trying to do something custom in a small area takes a lot of thought in order to come up with something that doesn't just look like a cookie-cutter rectangle."

House & Home spoke to Braun and several other professionals to learn more about the important steps to take when installing a pool at the Shore.

Adjusting to the site conditions

One of the major issues when adding a pool in a coastal community, and the first to address, is the differences in the land it's being built on because of its proximity to the ocean or the bay. This shouldn't deter homeowners from beginning the process, according to Walter Beyer of Stardust Pools, but he recommends doing your homework to find the right contractor.

"It's all sandy soil, so the closer you are to the ocean, the higher the water table is," he explains. "A lot of pool companies stay away from doing it, because it's a lot more work. You need to put a dry well under the pool to control the water and to build the pool. So it does take longer, and it is a little more expensive, but not dramatically more—maybe $5,000 or $10,000, tops, if the water is real bad. … We've been doing it for 63 years and we deal with water every day, so it's not an issue at all."

Nick Erman of Evergreen Pros agrees that knowing the site conditions is critical and adds that conditions may vary by property, with homes by the bay often experiencing a higher water table than those that are oceanfront. His company specializes in fiberglass pools, which join gunite, or concrete pools, as the best options for the Shore.

"When an experienced pool contractor begins the excavation process, they may experience high water table conditions at depths between 3 to 5 feet," Erman says. "When this occurs, the contractor begins a process called dewatering. The contractor installs a high-flow water pump in the hole and the water is removed from the hole. Stone is added to secure sand walls from falling back into the excavated area.

"Once the area is excavated, the fiberglass pool is immediately installed and filled with water. The weight of the pool water keeps the pool from lifting or popping out of the ground. Lifting or popping occurs when the groundwater beneath/around the pool is greater (hydrostatic pressure) than the volume of water in the pool. [If that happens], the groundwater pushes the pool shell upwards, at which time the pool shell must be lifted and re-excavated and leveled."

Managing the water is an ongoing process, Erman says, and can be monitored by installing a permanent wellpoint system, which consists of an 8-inch plastic pipe installed a foot beyond the deepest end of the pool and later capped.

"The wellpoint will be used in the future to remove the groundwater under the pool with filter fabric and clean stone," he says. "The wellpoint is used before a homeowner or contractor removes the pool water (to add tile design, for example). This ensures no lifting or pool popping issues."

Working in tight spaces

Since most Shore towns have houses built right on top of each other on small lots, it can be difficult to even get all of the necessary equipment and parts into the backyard for the installation.

"For [fiberglass pool contractors], it can be a real challenge, because sometimes they have to crane in the pools since the shell is so big," Braun says. "For us, we only need as little as 5 feet, and we can get in somebody's yard with a machine big enough to dig a hole and a machine big enough to haul the dirt out. It is a challenge, it's a lot harder than it would be inland, but once you get situated and do it on a regular basis, you get accustomed to it. You

Photo (this page) courtesy, Swim-Mor Pools

just have to make sure you don't hit the neighbor's fence or damage anything—it's always a challenge when you're using machines on other people's property."

Braun does all of the design work for his company and enjoys coming up with an idea that is unique to each customer's property. Beyer also says customization makes for unusual shapes for Shore pools.

"One that I just built was 12 feet wide, then it went down 30-plus feet, then it made an L," he says. "The owner wanted to get the maximum he could out of the yard. When we sign on to do a pool down there, we send it to the engineers and then they come back with the impervious coverage and how much pool you can put in the yard."

That is an advantage to working with gunite pools, whereas fiberglass pools are limited to a certain set of sizes and shapes.

"[With gunite], the shape can be customized to fit your backyard," says Mike McCool of Swim-Mor Pools. "We can work around different parts of your backyard to create a more natural-looking backyard. And the finishing touches simply bring everything together."

Amenities and equipment

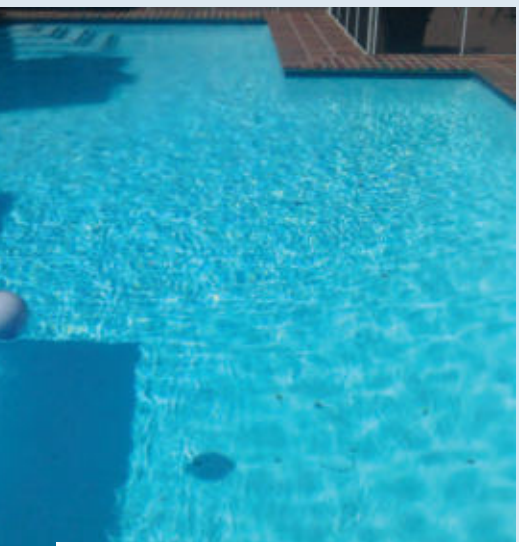
Just like with pools in other parts of the region, homeowners today are seeking a resort-style experience in their yard, and that leads to the kind of amenities they add to their project.

"The most popular add-on is a hot tub or spa attached to the pool," Braun says. "Second to that—and in our case, it's not an add-on, it's included—is a sun shelf, which is a shallow part of the pool that you can use as a kiddie pool or a place to sit in a lounge chair. My mom is 87 and she's not going swimming, but she'll sit in an Adirondack chair and have her feet in the water on a sun shelf.

"All of the LED lights are also a popular option, along with LED waterfalls. After that, it's more about designing the room to fit



Photos (this page) courtesy, Stardust Pools



around the pool. Cabanas are real popular right now with a TV outside, so you can float around in the pool while watching TV. Under-counter refrigerators and a place to make drinks or put food out are also popular."

Experts say that most of the standard equipment is suitable for Shore pools, but because of the weather conditions, checking the water levels regularly is a must. Properly winterizing the pool at the end of the season is crucial as well.

"Winterizing your pool is the process of readying your pool for winter weather when the pool is not being used," Erman says. "It prevents damage to the pool and helps the pool to be ready next season. You need to winterize your pool if you live in a four-season climate and experience snow, sleet or freezing temperatures. Winterizing involves removing all water from the pool pipes, filters and pump, [adding] chemicals and [skimming] the water."

Don't delay

On the late-summer day that Braun spoke to *House & Home*, he had already met with four prospective clients about installing a pool for next summer. Now is the time to begin the process to get full use of the pool next year.

"We do all of the permitting, so let us get that done, and as soon as we get you on the list, if we can start between October and February, the pool is going to be done before Memorial Day," he says. "If we start in March, now it might not be done before Memorial Day, and June 15 is more likely. If we start in April, then your target date is the Fourth of July.

"The volume has been incredible since the pandemic, so the earlier the better. What used to be a good year down here for us was 40 pools, and for the last four years we've built 80-plus, and over a hundred in two of those years. …. So we advise everybody to start your project now. It's a Shore house and you're not going to be here during the winter, so let us get the gunite in the ground and as much as the work done as we can during the cold months, and as it gets warm we can do the finishing details. This way, you're ready for the season and it's one less headache."

And when the pool is finally in, the results speak for themselves.

"It immediately increases the rent per week and it immediately increases the value of the home, because the average person wants to buy a house down the Shore with everything already in it," Braun says. "We've had customers who sold their townhouses side by side for literally $200,000 to $250,000 more than another house that doesn't have a pool, because people don't want to go through the aggravation—they'd rather buy it complete.

"It has always added value here at the Shore to any house, and since the pandemic, I've read a few national publications that said it's added value to any neighborhood, because people are concerned that if there's going to be another shutdown, they want to have all of the amenities they can at their home. So now they're looking for houses with pools, whereas 30 years ago it wasn't as popular." H&H

RESOURCES

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EvergreenPros.com

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SwimMor.com

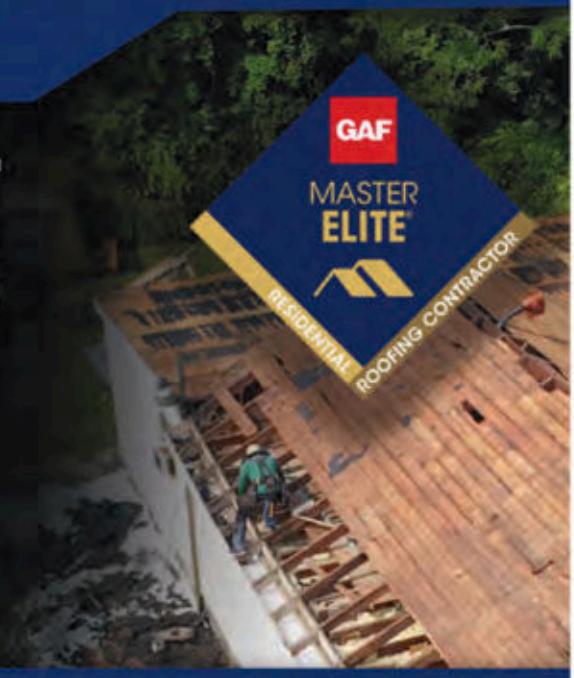
Stardust Pools
East Brunswick, N.J. | (732) 254-3330
Stardust-Pools.com

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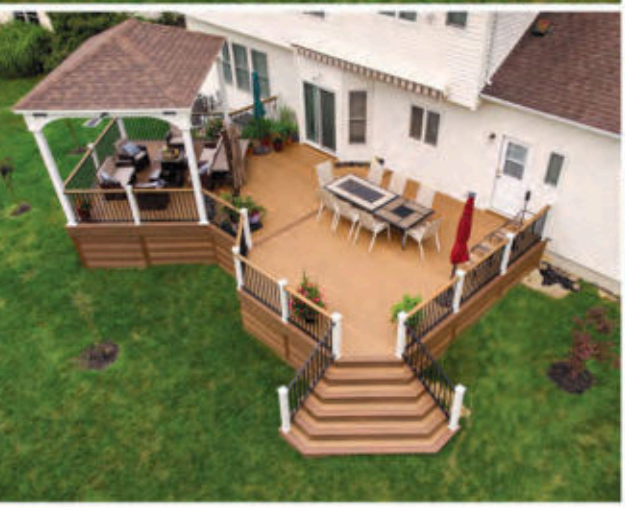
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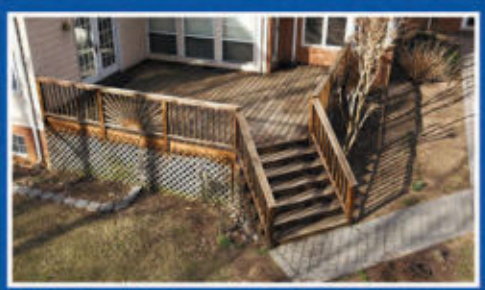


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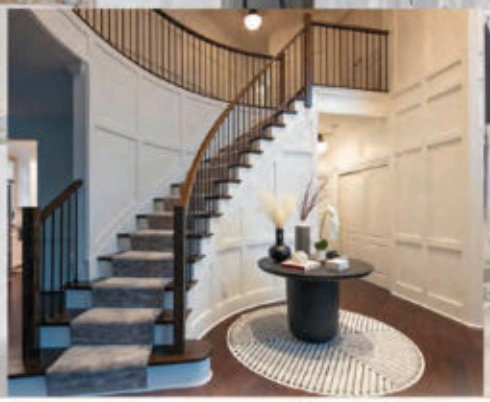


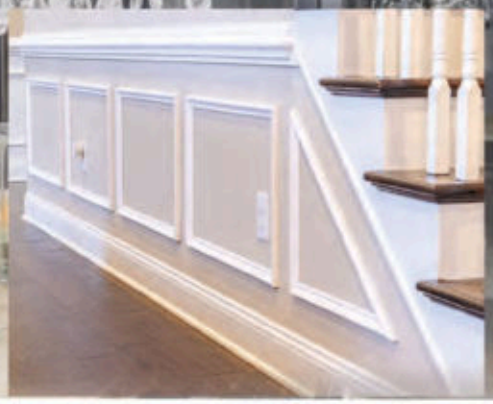
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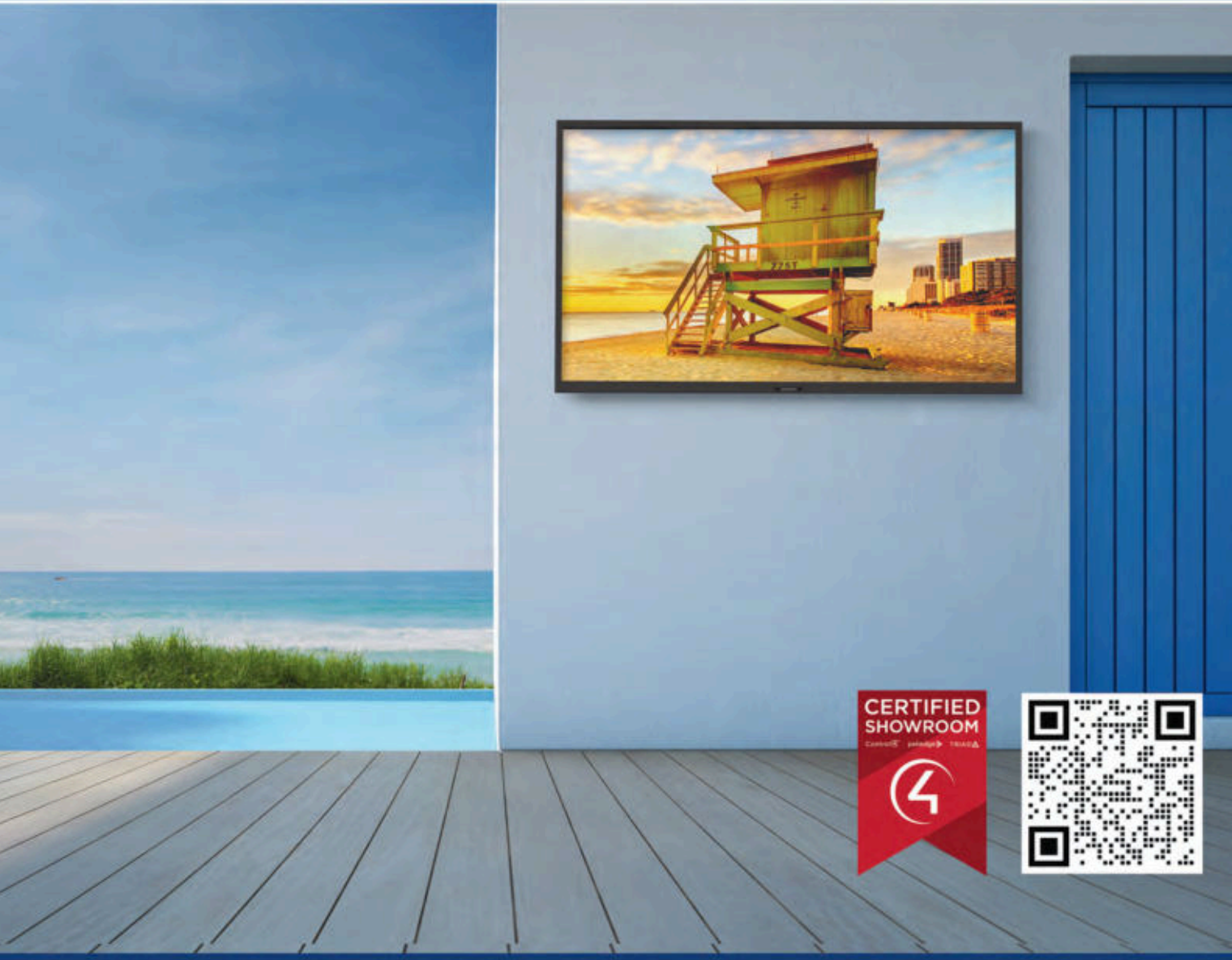
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RESEARCH BY TRAVELERS INSURANCE FOUND THAT HOMES ARE 10 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE DAMAGED BY A WATER LEAK THAN BY A FIRE. THESE LEAKS ARE NO SMALL ISSUE, IN FACT THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY FOUND THAT THE AVERAGE HOUSE LEAKS NEARLY 10,000 GALLONS PER YEAR. Without preventative measures these leaks can lead to stressful situations, resident displacement and costly renovations.

Greg Capizzi, founder of aquaHALT, faced the same issue after a water leak occurred at the condominium he manages which necessitated renovations of four apartments and cost the condominium $320,000 in damages. It inspired him to create and patent the aquaHALT, a leak detection system tucked discreetly behind the toilet bowl that stops water leaks by automatically cutting off the water at its source.

House & Home spoke with Capizzi about the importance of installing a leak detection system and how it could save homeowners both time and money.



Greg Capizzi, aquaHALT founder

WHAT DOES AQUAHALT PROVIDE TO ITS CONSUMERS?

aquaHALT is the first battery-operated, automatic shut-off valve for toilet bowls.When water is detected around the toilet bowl, the aquaHALT will close the water supply valve at the source without disrupting the rest of the home, building or fixtures in the unit. It provides a sense of assurance and it is a top-quality product. We provide a product that has everything you need and if water is detected on the floor, the source is turned off immediately. It is that simple. aquaHALT was designed to install it and forget about it.

HOW CAN INSTALLING A LEAK DETECTION SYSTEM SAVE HOMEOWNERS TIME AND MONEY?

We've had a lot of toilet leaks within the building we manage and typically with a water leak there's displacement. You have to leave the apartment because there are renovations happening with the contractor. Water damage can necessitate renovations including new flooring, sheetrock, and finishes as well as vital mold remediation to stave off harmful colonies that can be harmful in the air. This, plus the possibility of higher insurance rates can cause a nightmare for homeowners and renters alike. In fact, a lot of insurance carriers are now asking for some type of leak detection system. Being proactive really just eliminates the time, hassle and cost of losing that area within your apartment for weeks, possibly months, to renovations.

HOW DOES AQUAHALT COMPARE TO OTHER WATER DETECTION SYSTEMS?

There are different water-sensing devices out there, which all operate in their own function. There are water-sensing devices that are installed on the main water lines for your home that once activated turn off the entire house. Such devices are costly and sometimes come with a yearly subscription. Most are Wi-Fi based and communication could be an issue since Wi-Fi is not a stable source for detecting leaks. Water-sensing devices that are Wi-Fi based only send a notification. Once activated they send a signal to the main unit, in turn sending an alert. Therefore, these systems are sending you an alert, if Wi-Fi allows, while water is constantly flowing, creating more and more damage.

aquaHALT is a DIY water-sensing device since a plumber or electrician is not required. The device can be installed in such a way that it is barely seen upon approach. It has a hard-wired sensor to ensure a leak will be detected and stopped. It is non-invasive and is installed with 3M double-sided tape. Once the device is activated, it will beep until it is physically reset. The device comes with all that is needed—an extra stainless steel water line, wired sensor and batteries. Depending on the number of leaks detected, one set of batteries can last over two years. H&H







DREAM KITCHENS

From windows to countertops, lighting, flooring and more, your kitchen makeover can encompass all of the latest trends while achieving your household's ideal functionality.

By CARLY MURRAY



When it comes to kitchen design, many elements work harmoniously to create one unified, ideal vision. In addition to deciding on the materials, colors and styles for each fixture from large to small, those with renovation on their mind must also consider quality, durability and lifestyle functions that are best suited for their individual needs and preferences. A contemporary yet timeless design combined with local professional installation will undoubtedly result in the kitchen of one's dreams.

The first step, of course, is to plan. Every budget is different, and it's very possible that they will expand to include the accessory fixtures or luxury aesthetic you discover during the initial process. Deciding if a kitchen renovation will be



Everybody wants a giant island ...mostly just to have a gathering, some prefer everybody to gather around."

—**Brian Iwano,**
founder of Blue Tree Builders



With the popularity of home renovation projects today, there is a range of options available that can achieve a desired look at a smaller cost than expected. It's all about comparing materials, colors and styles—and experimenting. Many companies offer digital design renderings for this very purpose.

"There are many affordable options available out there without compromising function or design. Sometimes it could be choosing a cost-effective fabric, or it could be going with a more simple drapery header style, such as flat panel versus a pleated top, which requires more material and labor," agree Jessica Hagedorn and Marie Heal, senior designers for Regal Drapes.

Part of the planning process is determining if there is a preference to display a unique kitchen full of personality, or a universally agreeable style to increase a home's rental or resale value. The latter is typically the majority of clients' choice, according to the experts that spoke with *House & Home*—but it also requires analyzing the usage of a home and one's expected longevity for staying in it.

Fresh and clean aesthetics are most popular right now in kitchen design, a combination of both classic and modern that blends to meet all tastes. Large islands are also trending post-pandemic as a symbol of the simple, often taken-for-granted pleasure of congregating with family and friends—especially in a room most commonly associated with cherished memories. Entertaining and eating, or even cooking and cleaning, become more enjoyable experiences when they're communal, social ones.



"Everybody wants a giant island … mostly just to have a gathering, some prefer everybody to gather around. Wood accents have been pretty popular, whether it be floating shelves or changing the color of the island to more of a wood tone," says Brian Iwano, founder of Blue Tree Builders.

partial or complete is an excellent launching point: Thorough research can narrow everything down to the most realistic, yet ideal, financial expectations.

"We have some customers that want to salvage certain parts of their prior investments, whether it be a floor or some other element within the room that they don't want to destroy, or a countertop maybe they invested in," begins Dave Cerami, owner of HomeTech Renovations. "There's a lot of different ways that I would direct the customer but overall it's important for any homeowner to have an idea of what they're comfortable with in terms of an overall investment. I think what we as professionals try to do is try to get as much value for that customer, given whatever budget concerns that they have."

He continues, "Sometimes budgets are not in line with reality, and very often we offer a complimentary in-home consultation. One of the things that does come up, quite frankly, is: 'What's your comfort level with a level of investment?' I certainly could develop beautiful designs and specified, beautiful materials and lighting and flooring, but it all comes back to how much you're willing to spend for those things. Everybody has different thresholds and different needs. So I think understanding a comfortable expenditure budget is always helpful as you go into any process. And secondly, I think it's always best to do some research."

Images courtesy of HomeTech Renovations


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Professionals are still seeing the stalwart white kitchens and quartz countertops, but natural, wood components are being increasingly implemented as either a dominating aesthetic or to supplement pieces as a finishing touch.

"I will definitely say the trend is more transitional to contemporary presentations. These are more simple door designs, modified Shaker doors, flat panel doors, less-is-more natural woods. We see a huge movement toward a natural rift cut white oak or quarter-sawn white oak. We see just more simple designs, letting the beauty of the wood speak to the character of the design in the home. White kitchens, painted white … that's been in vogue for quite some time. But we are seeing an end to the quintessential white kitchen. We are seeing more of a migration into natural woods. We see colors being expressed—color meaning charcoal, blacks. We're seeing richer tones as accents for islands, or maybe bars or things that would play off a natural wood kitchen. If we're doing a natural maple or quarter-sawn white oak, we want to put a very interesting paint color in for an island—whether it might be charcoal or black or blue, we see an expression through unique hardware. … We see really beautiful jewel-like quality hardware that becomes a statement in a kitchen," Cerami notes.

Then, of course, carefully selected details will complete or expand upon a room. Necessity fixtures, like drapes, should complement the walls, floors and countertops. Like any home renovation project, natural factors can either make or break the idealized finished product.

"We partner with our clients to help them determine which type of window treatments would be best for their functional needs as well as their design aesthetic. For example, we offer multiple lining options based on the client's light filtering needs as well as privacy needs," say Hagedorn and Heal.

It truly is all in the details when it comes to design, and small pieces can turn a solid, neutral-colored structure into a statement piece.





Each coordinated decision can lead to previously unthinkable results to truly make a kitchen one-of-a-kind.

"It's all in the finishes and lighting; cabinet finishes, countertops, tile, floor, it's all the finishes that they choose. And the sky's the limit really. There's all kinds of stuff they can do," says Iwano.

Whether homeowners decide to incorporate trends or a style completely their own, the first step to a perfect kitchen is to get in touch with local professionals. An expert opinion in culmination with each client's expectations can yield the epitome of one's vision for an impact on the entire home. H&H

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ExperienceBlueTree.com

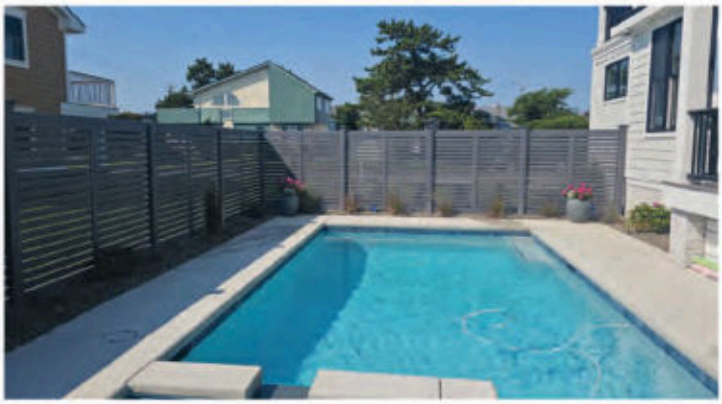
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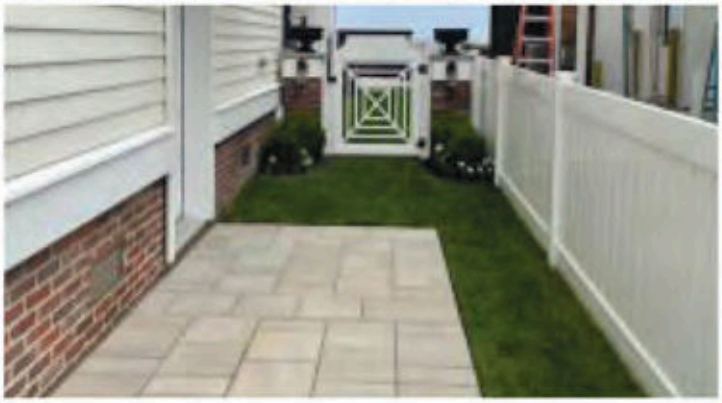
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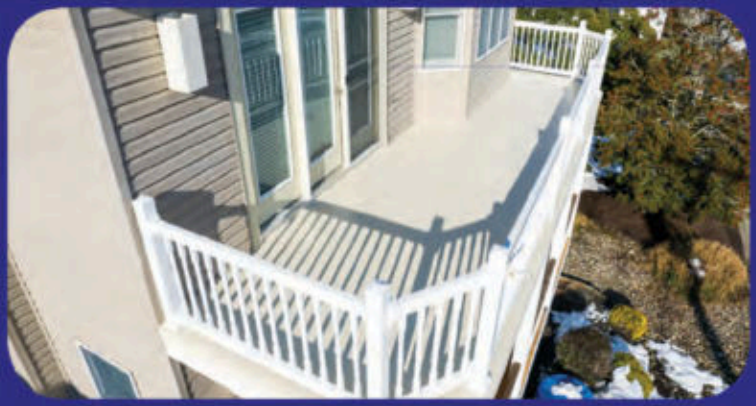
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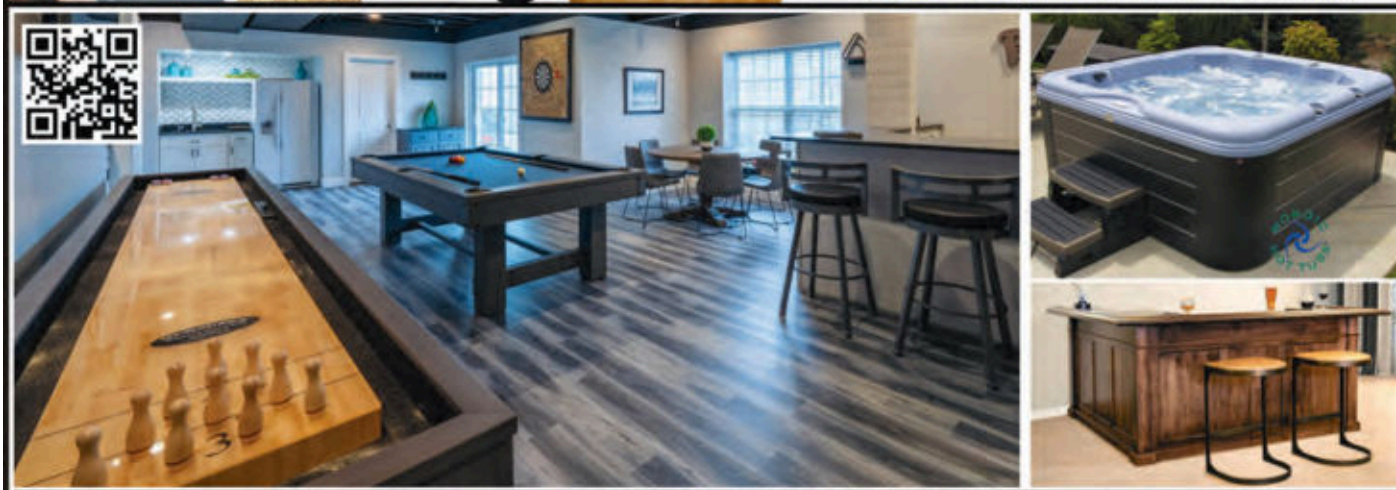
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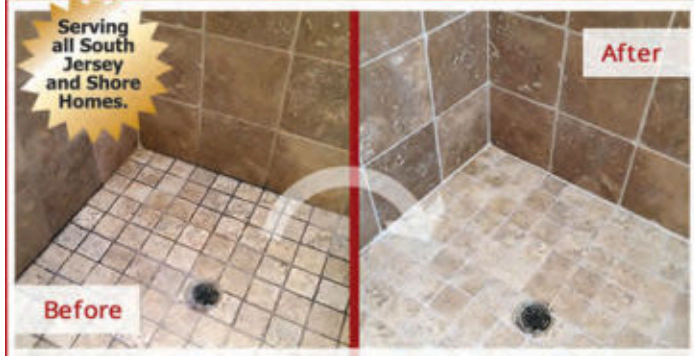
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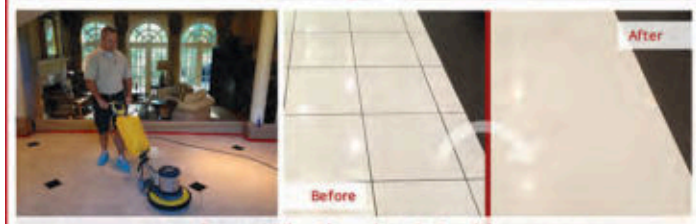
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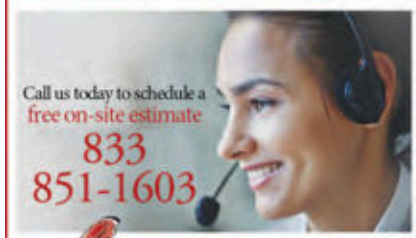

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amianoandson.com

Gehman Design Remodeling
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Nastasi's Carpenters & Builders
856-466-5156
nastasibuilders.com

Clock Repair
Antiques And Clocks
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antiquesandclocks1@gmail.com

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tailoredcloset.com

Concrete, Decorative
Architectural Concrete Design
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BQ Polylevel Systems
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bqhouseandhome.com

Concrete, Resurfacing
New Castle Artisan
856-725-3333
newcastleartisan.com

Transylvania Concrete Coatings
856-212-1109
onedayfloors.com/house-and-home

Custom Cabinetry/ Molding
The Cabinet Shop
609-463-0400
cabinetshopnj.com

Home Trimwork
610-287-1100
609-206-8621
hometrimwork.com

Decks
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732-927-6224
acryfincoatings.com

Deck Guardian
908-332-8616
deckguardian.com

Deck Remodelers
973-729-2125
deckremodelers.com

ELA Outdoor Living
215-794-2400
elaoutdoorliving.com

Sequoia Out Back
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866-650-DECK (3325)
sequoiaoutback.com

Elevators
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info@abbylifts.com

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610-738-1214
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superiorfencenj.com

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ajcarpet.com

Artisan Floors & Interiors
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artisanfloorsandinteriors.com

Filling Marble and Tile
609-593-3386
fillingmarble.com

Matteo Family Kitchens & Flooring
856-769-2490
matteokitchens.com

Flooring/Floor Refinishing
Victorian Flooring Finishing
856-858-6465
victorianflooringfinishing.com

Furniture/ Accessories
Blue Ridge Furniture
717-445-6596
blueridgefurniture.com

County Lane Furniture
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countylanefurniture.com

Hibernate Bedding
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hibernatebedding.com

Nastasi's Furniture
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nastasisfurniture.com

Oskar Huber Furniture and Design
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Garage Floor Coatings
Premier Garage of South Jersey
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premiergarage.com

Transylvania Concrete Coatings
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Game Rooms
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215-997-7777
royalbilliard.com

Generators
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844-376-9374
colonialgenerators.com

Grills/Fireplaces & Inserts/Outdoor Kitchens
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Home Audio/Home Automation/Smart Home Audio/Video
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s2cinema.com

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visitsoundadvice.com

House Lifting
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sjhauckconstruction.com

Interior Design
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Kitchen/Bathroom Design-Build
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swimmor.com

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gvexteriors.com

Hynes Construction
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Paramount Home Solutions
856-602-6600
paramounths.com

Preferred Home Improvement
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preferredhomeimprovements.net

Seashore Construction Corp
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info@abbylifts.com

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shorecans.com

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AquaHalt by Water Automation
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Window World of Atlantic City
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windowworldac.com

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doylewindowtinting.com

Jersey Shore Window Tinting
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jerseyshorewindowtinting.com

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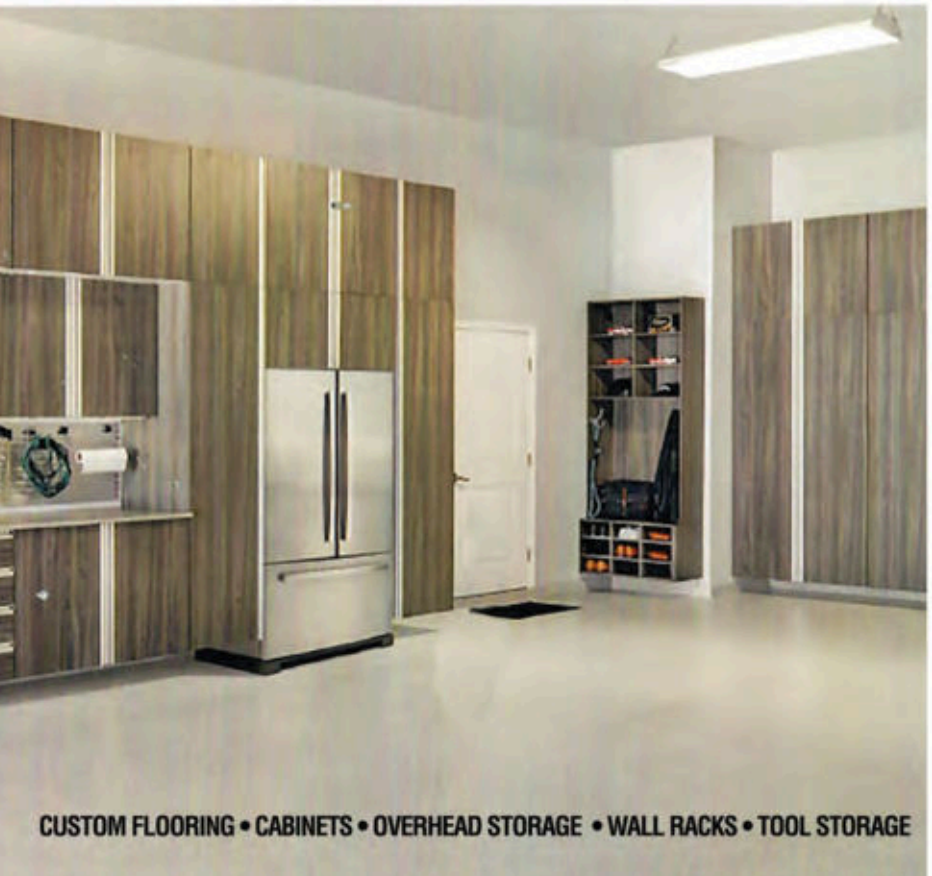
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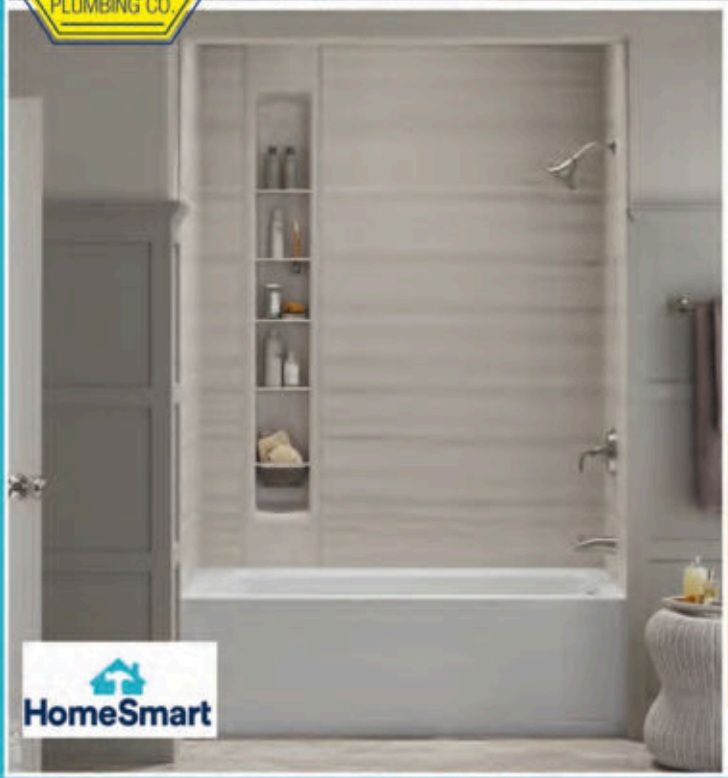
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