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Spring PLANNING GUIDE

Volume 23, Issue 4



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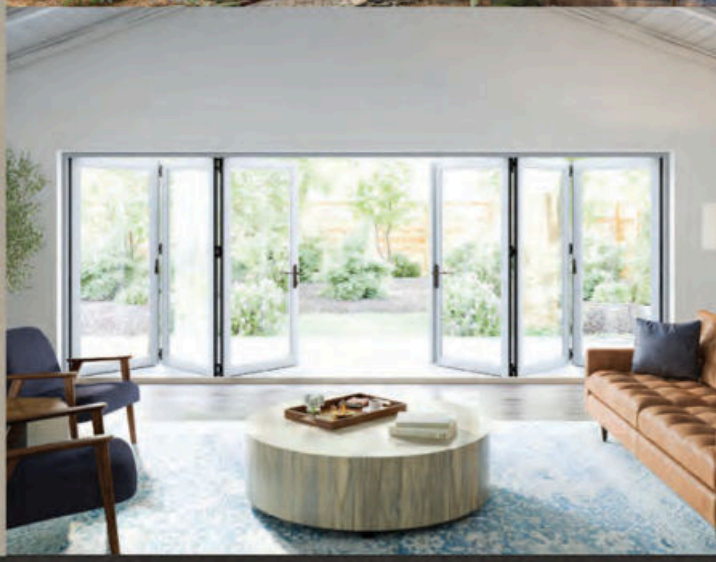
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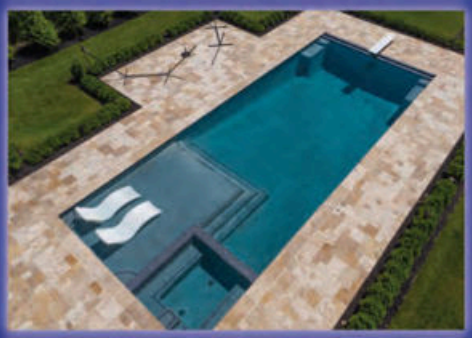
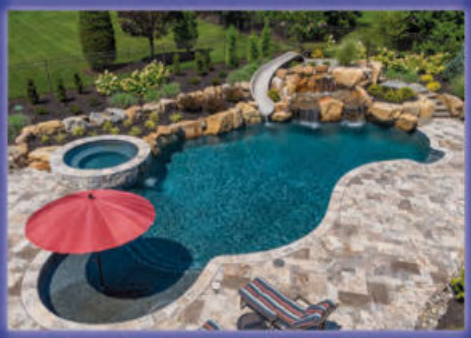
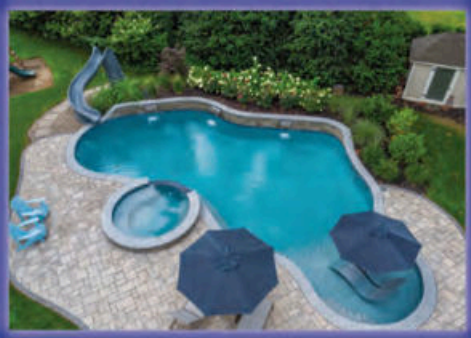
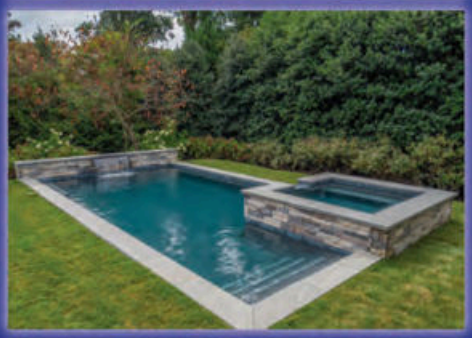


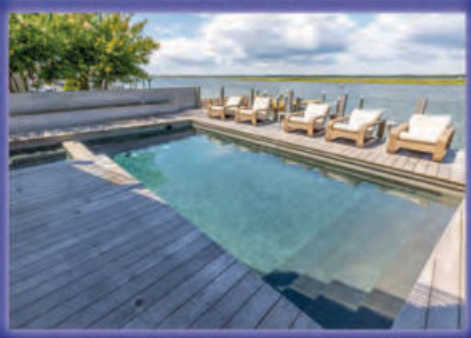
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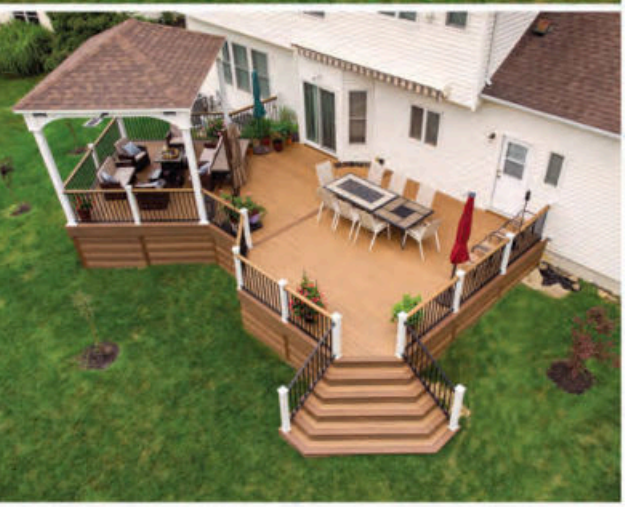
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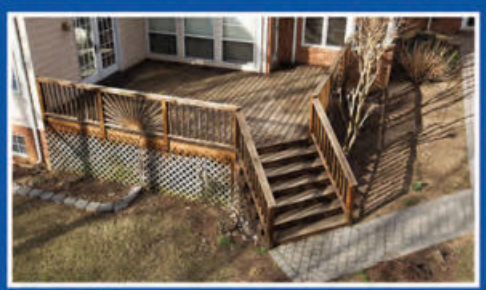


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Restoring *from the Inside Out*



New Castle Artisan transforms aging concrete into beautiful surfaces that will last. *by* **Liz Hunter**

Most home improvement projects come with their share of hassles, from permitting to disrupting daily routines. For this reason, homeowners often put them off. However, New Castle Artisan has a better way.

Family-owned and -operated, New Castle Artisan is helmed by Gwen Kunkel and her brother Paul Randall, who have 30 years of experience in the industry. Its core business is concrete resurfacing, a technique that can breathe new life into almost any existing concrete surface, whether it's your driveway, pool deck or patio. To ensure the project is the right fit for the process, the company offers a free inspection and estimate.

Concrete projects can be invasive on a property, and pouring new concrete doesn't guarantee the same problems won't occur down the line. "Instead of the usual repairs made to cracks, pitting and other issues, our resurfacing allows us to hide all of the repairs in a beautiful, custom upgrade," Kunkel says. "You avoid all the hassle and mess of the demolition and repouring. With resurfacing, we add designs and carve the cracks into the existing pattern after we repair them, so you've got something that is more valuable financially and aesthetically."



Projects typically take three days to complete and don't require township permits—another headache avoided. Kunkel also says one day of bad weather won't set the project back either. "Each day is independent of each other, so if it rains one day, we extend the project one day. We don't need three consecutive sunny days."

Resurfacing has been used since the 1960s, and if applied properly, it will last a lifetime with some routine resealing maintenance. "We use polymer cements because they resist erosion. They are absorbed into the existing concrete, grow spines that expand, creating a new cement surface that is incredibly durable, as well as stain and chemical resistant," says Kunkel.

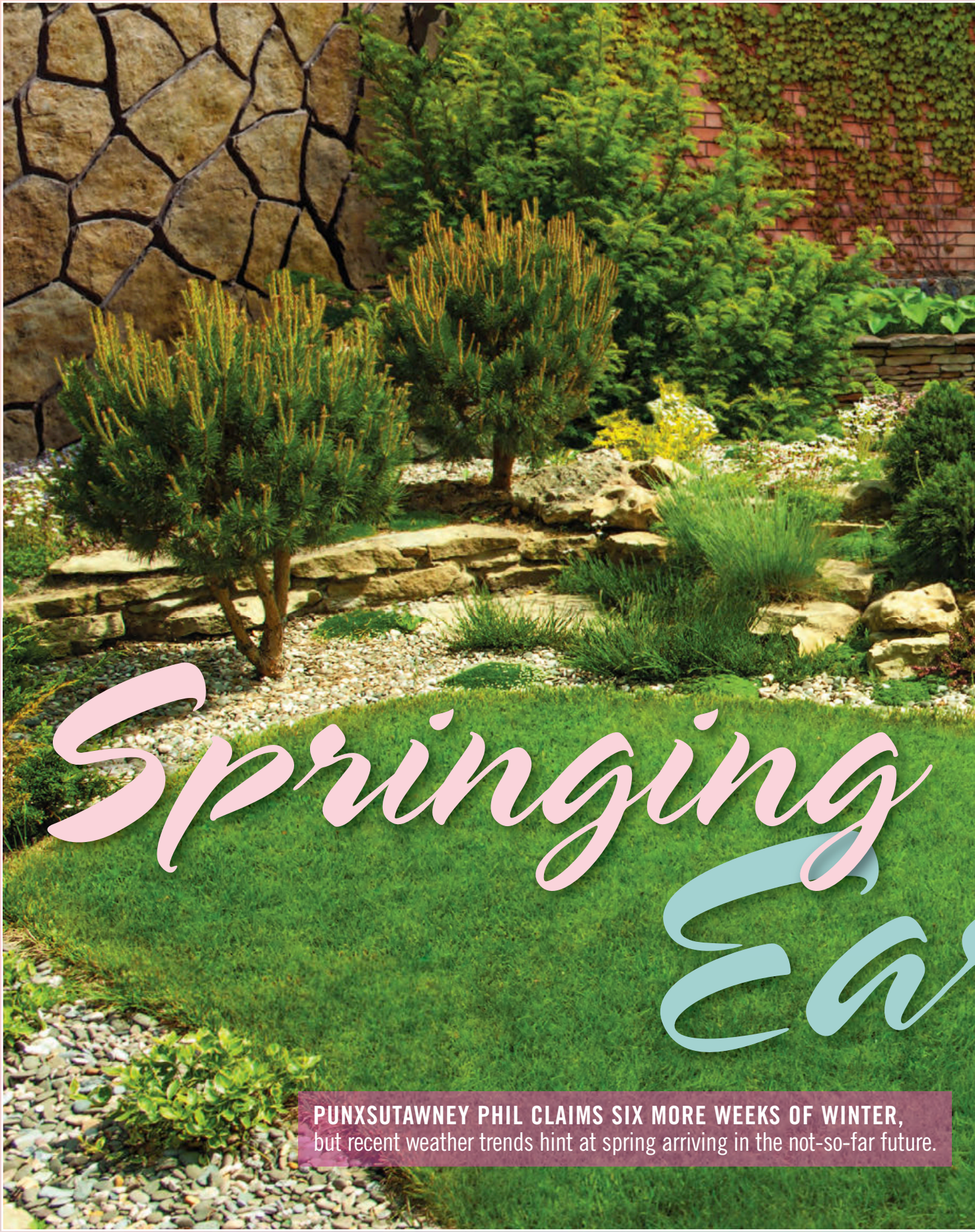
One of the most important aspects of the product used by New Castle Artisan is that it's naturally textured to be slip resistant, making it an ideal choice for pool decks.

Resurfacing a pool deck also comes with significant cost savings. "Pool decks, as they age, can have movement, creating cracks and unlevel pads. The heavy equipment required to bring new concrete into a backyard is labor intensive, which makes the cost higher," she says. "On top of that, your landscaping and grass are damaged, your fence has to be taken down—our process is no mess. We use small pieces of hand equipment that can be carried in and out, causing no impact to your landscaping."

There is also a level of artistry with resurfacing. "Our products are applied by hand for a look that can be customized however you would like. We can add colors and sealants to make it look appealing," says Kunkel. "We utilize design to incorporate the repaired cracks into a pattern that can be managed. Should cracks reappear, they are blended within the design. If you try to repair other products, like stamped concrete, you'll never be able to match the color after five years. ...We've perfected this method, not only providing quality installation, but an investment that can always be remedied or managed." H&H



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Springing Ea

PUNXSUTAWNEY PHIL CLAIMS SIX MORE WEEKS OF WINTER, but recent weather trends hint at spring arriving in the not-so-far future.

rly

by **Katie Francis**



WE'VE BEEN FORTUNATE THIS WINTER WEATHERWISE, with only a few snowfalls and some unseasonably warm days. Though relatively insignificant to us, fluctuating conditions take a considerable toll on our outdoor spaces, which haven't been adequately tended to since the fall. *House & Home* spoke with local experts to find out what proactive homeowners should be doing to get a jump-start on spring cleaning.

According to Keith Frederick, owner of ELA Outdoor Living, one of the biggest landscaping mistakes that homeowners make is not performing a proper fall cleanup.

"If you have a heavy buildup of leaves on your lawn and you let it sit there all winter and it gets snowed on and matted down, it'll effectively choke out your turf," Frederick explains.

As the owner of Rock Bottom Landscaping & Fencing, Chris DeMato sees people overlook the importance of fall cleanups often and says that this mistake could end up taking a huge toll on your wallet.

"If leaves are left to linger and sit on the lawn, they do more damage and therefore you'll need more repair work. If you don't address those leaves until April, it could end up costing a lot more in expenses," DeMato says.

An autumn cleanup is equally important for water features like ponds and their inhabitants. George Mihalchick, owner of Ponds By George, says that the decomposition of debris sitting in a pond throughout the colder months leads to excessive algae, which can decrease oxygen in a pond and block the sunlight aquatic plants need to undergo photosynthesis.

Even if you do tidy up your yard in the fall, leaves and debris inevitably build up over the winter, leaving you with plenty of work to do once the weather gets nicer.

Local experts agree that now is the best time to start fixing up your outdoor space, and the first step is going out and assessing the condition of your property.

"I would recommend that customers walk their property and make a list of any issues that may need to be addressed," DeMato says. This includes hardscape repairs, fencing repairs, dead plant materials and dead growth on trees, which could be dangerous if not addressed.

After surveying your property, DeMato recommends calling your landscaper as soon as possible, as it's never too early to get on their schedule for things like lawn repairs and tree removals.

It's best to leave these larger jobs to the professionals, but

Springing Early

there's plenty you can do right now to prepare for the spring. For one, the piles of leaves wreaking havoc on your once-lush green lawn and manicured flower beds should be removed to avoid further damage.

Secondly, perennials are in the beginning stages of revitalization. These plants can be cleaned up this time of year, but Frederick warns homeowners to be careful what they remove.

"If they prune off flowering plants, they're going to prune off all the flower buds for spring," he explains. Homeowners should only remove things like dead branches and dead plants, which take up space that could otherwise be room for the growth of healthy plants.

While flowering plants should mostly be left alone, besides a few small haircuts, now is a good time to remove any tree branches that snapped during the winter, as they could be extremely hazardous if not handled promptly and properly.

At this point in the year, there isn't much to be done about the hardscaping aspects of your yard. While it's important to note the state of your hardscape and fencing, experts advise homeowners to wait until the temperature remains steadily warm to address these issues. This includes the readjustment of rocks around water features, which Mihalchick says "could slightly shift" due to ice formation over the winter.

Whether you're thinking about making a subtle change or redesigning your entire backyard, now is a good time to start thinking about fresh ideas you want to bring to your space to ensure that it's ready to enjoy for the spring and summer.

There are so many different options for outdoor entertainment spaces today, from standard decks and patios to grand pools with flowing water features and outdoor kitchens with accompanying fireplaces.

No two yards are the same, and the same goes for households and their personal preferences. This has a huge impact on how to lay out a yard.

"Everybody's different, depending on the land and the size of your family," Don Panetta, co-owner of D. Panetta Contracting with his wife Tammy, says.

According to Mihalchick, the best way to get the most out of a space, regardless of its size, is to be mindful of location during the design process.

"Allow yourself to walk two paces away from any door before steps start. When installing a water feature, keep it close to your living space to be able to see it, hear it, and interact with it," Mihalchick says. These simple layout strategies ensure that a homeowner maximizes both the potential and experience they can get from their yard.

Along with creating a functional entertainment area with the space you have, it's critical that you find a balance between hardscape and landscape to create a cohesive and aesthetic environment that you'll want to spend time in.

> "Allow yourself to walk two paces away from any door before steps start. **When installing a water feature, keep it close to your living space to be able to see it, hear it, and interact with it."**
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Springing Early





People typically love installing hardscapes like porches and patios because they are easy to maintain, but DeMato says that too much stone and concrete can result in a "stark, cold feeling."

"It is very important that you allow space for landscaping to soften up the hardscaping. This will give you more of the garden-like feel that you want to create in your own yard," DeMato explains.

Creating thoughtful pockets of greenery breaks up the harshness of hardscaping, allowing color and life to complement and soften the space. Tammy Panetta echoes the importance of landscaping, calling it the "icing on the cake."

There are likely still a few more cold days ahead of us and maybe even a snowstorm, but before we know it, we'll be putting the winter coats away and breaking out the tank tops. It's time to stop dreaming about the warmer months ahead and start preparing for them instead. H&H

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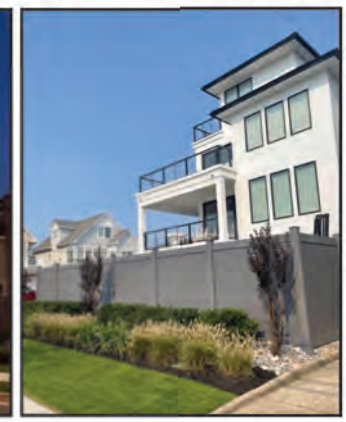


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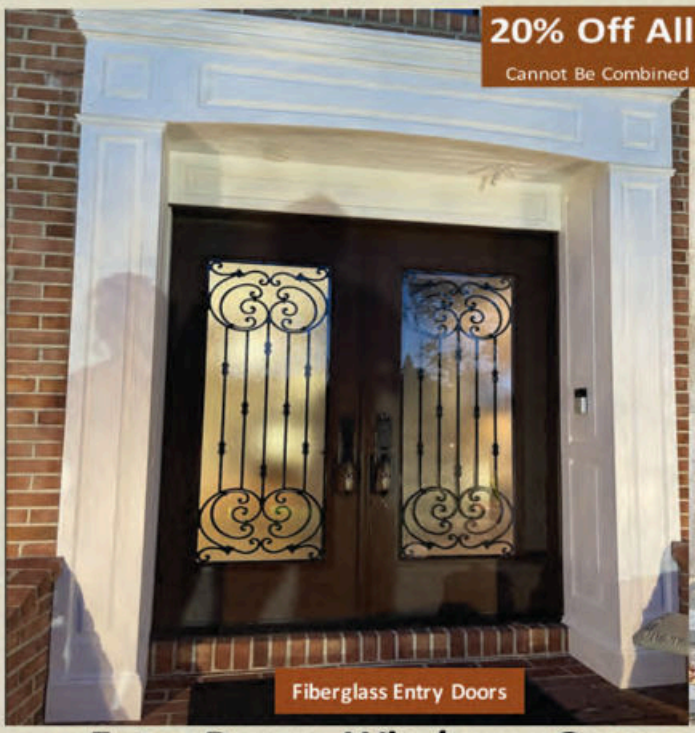
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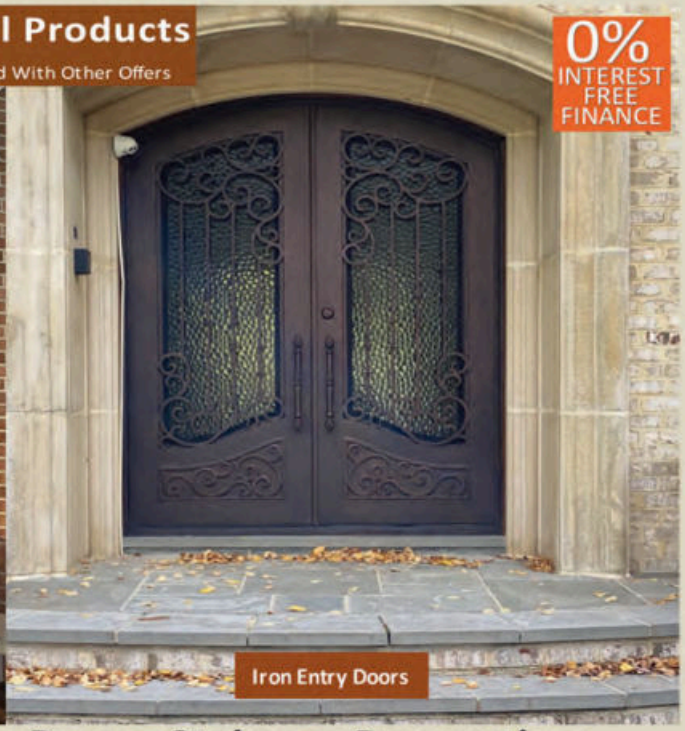
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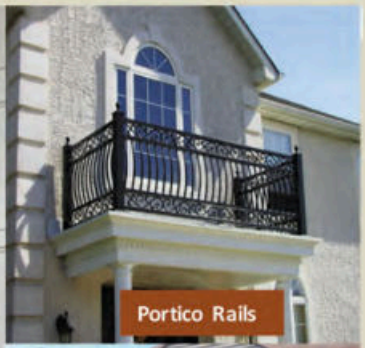


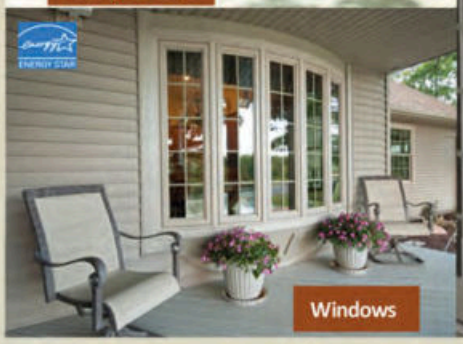
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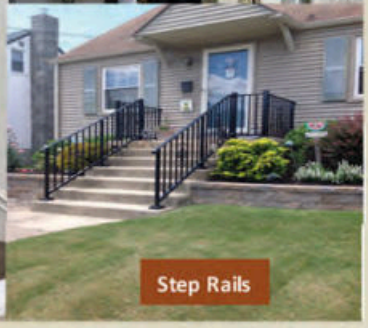
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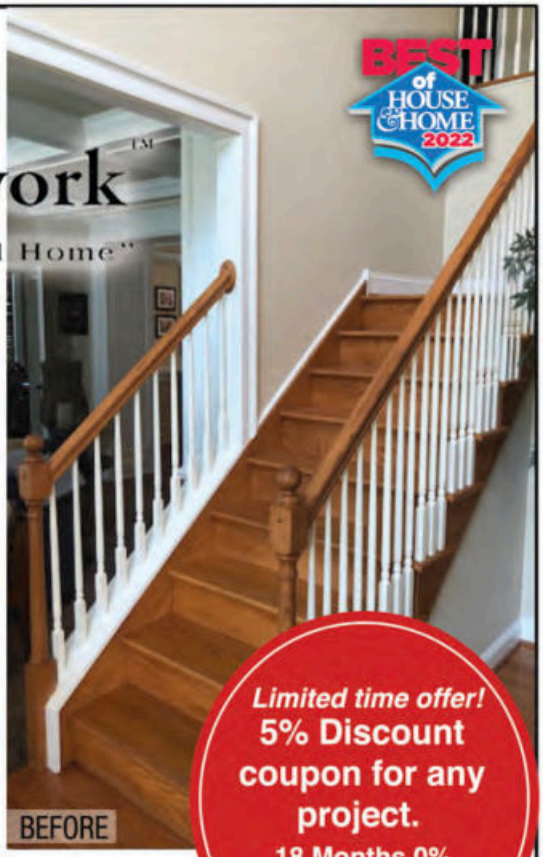


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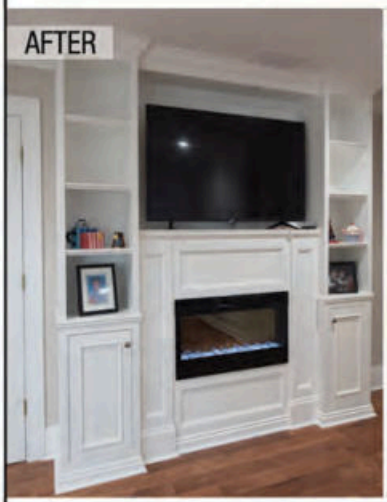
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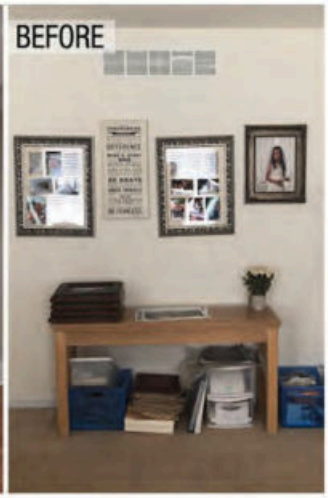


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OUTSIDE INTERESTS



Spring is usually an opportune time for homeowners to consider exterior projects, including the installation of new roofing or siding. *by* **Matt Cosentino**

Although this winter has certainly been mild by typical Northeast standards, it still makes sense for homeowners to head into spring by taking stock of their property after the ice and snow have rolled through. Whether certain exterior projects are on tap out of necessity or just because of the curb appeal they can bring, it is wise to seize the opportunity now to ensure the house is in its best condition and small issues do not become worse.

"As the weather changes and people start coming outside, they should walk around the house to see if any shingles have fallen down, if any screens have ripped or the gutters are loose, anything like that," says Gary Selleck, owner of C&C Family Roofing. "If somebody is having a problem, we work all winter long, especially this year and last year when there's hardly any snow and the temperatures are pretty good. But the ideal time is March and April to start assessing what they need done."

An added benefit of addressing any concerns early is getting on the schedule for the premier roofing and siding contractors in the area, especially since spring and fall are the best times to complete such projects because the weather is not extremely hot or cold.

"If homeowners want to get the work started and completed in the spring, they're probably better off considering which direction they want to go and which products they might want to use, and which companies they want to have in to give estimates," says Vic Fiore, co-owner of Magnolia Home Remodeling Group. "You start the process now so that when the weather breaks, the work can begin and before the spring is over all of the construction work is completed."

House & Home spoke to local professionals about the most common exterior projects and the advantages of certain products over others in regard to roofing and siding.

PROTECTION FROM ABOVE

The roof obviously plays a significant role in protecting the rest of the home, so it is crucial to have an understanding of what kind of condition it is in, especially after the winter. A regular inspection by an expert is always a good idea, but there are also clues that homeowners can look for themselves in determining if a new roof may be needed.

"The shingles lifting, shingles breaking off, the granules of the shingles wearing off the face of the shingle and sitting in the gutter. All of those are good signs, and of course a leak," Fiore says.

"Age is probably the thing you want to keep an eye on the most. If you have a roof that is 20, 25 or 30 years old, you're nearing the end of its life expectancy."

Because a new roof is a major investment, some homeowners may want to put if off as long as possible, and in certain cases a repair will buy them time.

"We don't replace every roof," Selleck says. "If one part of the roof is bad and some shingles blew off, they're wearing a certain way or there's a flashing that's not right, we do a lot of repair work and they can last for years and years. You don't necessarily have to put a whole new roof on. The good thing is, we're a family company, so if we tell people we can get them through a repair and it will last another three or four years, then they'll call us back when they need a new roof because we were honest to begin with."

When it does come time for replacement, there are several options available, with a large majority of homeowners choosing traditional shingle roofs.

"We do shingle, we do some metal, we do rubber and there are some synthetic products that we can work with," Fiore says. "A shingle roof is the most cost-effective. The warranties are excellent and there are some real solid companies like

Photos courtesy of Magnolia Home Remodeling Group.

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GAF and Owens Corning that we work with that offer all different colors, designs and styles."

Global Home Improvement has had great success over the years with the installation of metal roofs and recommends that option because it is more durable than a shingle roof. Instead of having to be replaced in 25 years or so, metal roofs will usually last a lifetime for a homeowner.

Metal roofs are also eco-friendly and add an aesthetic appeal.

"Asphalt roofing can show its age quickly," says Adam Parnes, marketing manager for Global Home Improvement. "It may last 15-plus years, but typically after five it will show discoloration and staining. Metal roofing has no discoloration issues and will last longer and look better on your home. Metal slate roofing turns your boring asphalt roof into a dynamic and aesthetically pleasing focal point of your home."

Fiore agrees that metal adds a nice decorative touch.

"A lot of people want to use metal as an accent on a front porch roof or something along those lines," he says. "Once in a while we'll do a whole house in metal but it's expensive and the cost becomes prohibitive."

Because it is a one-time job, metal roofs make financial sense for some, but others do not want to pay the extra money up front compared to a shingle roof.

"It's expensive and when it rains, it's very loud," Selleck says. "When the snow lies up there, it slides off at a fast pace, and if you don't have the snow guards at the bottom, it can really do some damage if somebody is walking under there. There's not much call for it—in the suburbs, people want to replace the roof with shingles because it's cost-effective and the shingles now are a 50-year shingle, which they call a lifetime shingle. The price is right and you can get the job done on most houses in a day."

WOW FACTOR

Just as with the roof, the siding is important to keep a house protected from harsh weather, but a new project can also provide a much-needed facelift to a home. There are plenty of options to add curb appeal, including the always in-demand vinyl siding along with James Hardie fiber cement siding.

"[People love] the look and the durability of the James Hardie fiber cement, but the downside is that it's very expensive compared to vinyl siding," Selleck says. "And if vinyl siding is put on right, it will look beautiful and stay for years to come, especially if you put insulation behind the siding. There's only a certain amount of homes that we ever put the Hardie on—it's all very upscale homes because of the expense."

If homeowners can afford it, Fiore is a big fan of the fiber cement siding and other products from James Hardie. He also has high praise for Ascend from Alside, which he explains is a composite siding that is installed similarly to vinyl, making it a quick project at a lower price point than James Hardie. Magnolia also works with well-regarded companies like CertainTeed and Azek.

"There are lots of options that work well with any budget," Fiore says. "It's just a matter of budget, style and color—those are probably the things that factor into the decision the most.

"If homeowners are purchasing a higher-end product, they also need to make sure that





the install is done by somebody capable, knowledgeable and well versed in what the manufacturer is looking for, so you're not voiding warranties and creating a problem down the road."

As for colors, Selleck says grays, whites and earth tones are popular at the moment, and Fiore has had clients ask for darker hues lately.

"The last five-plus years, the trend has been toward these darker architectural colors—the deep blues, the dark grays, there's even some charcoal and black options now," he says. "[Manufacturers are] able to roll those colors out now because of the technology—they don't have to worry about the color fading because of the advancements in their manufacturing process. Years ago, they weren't able to put out a dark color and guarantee against fading. Today, they're able to do that."

THE FORGOTTEN EXTERIOR PROJECT

While roofs and siding will get most of the attention, Selleck warns homeowners not to forget about another aspect of their house's exterior.

"People really overlook the gutters, but gutters are kind of the lifeline of the roof and siding, and over the years they start to drop a little bit," he says. "If the water is not being taken off quick enough, or the gutters are clogged, then the water backs up and it rots the fascia out and it can get underneath the roof. Not to mention, when it snows and the gutters are not pitched the right way or the gutters could be clogged, the snow builds up and you get ice damming, which could get into people's houses."

Repairing or cleaning gutters can be a dangerous DIY project, but fortunately there are experienced professionals ready to help.

"We have thousands of customers who bring us in to clean their gutters and get the leaves out," Selleck says. "We tighten them, we clean them and we make sure the downspouts are all clear. Gutters are very important for a home." H&H

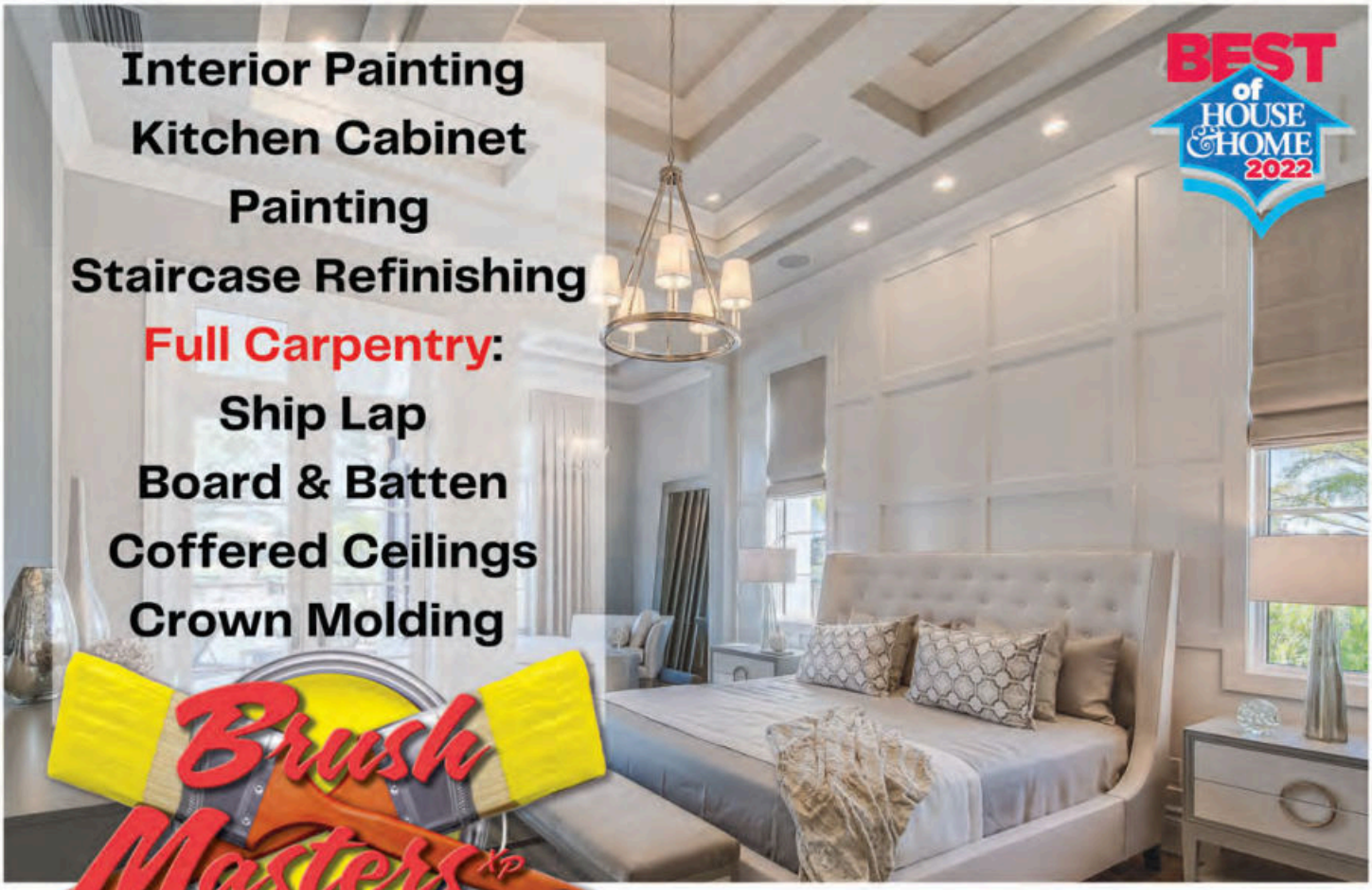
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