

# HOUSE & HOME

South Jersey

Your #1 Resource and Design Magazine

Volume 22, Issue 10



## Amiano & Son

Bringing South Jersey's construction visions to life with a people-first philosophy *page 11*

### *HOT SPOTS*

*Sheds and pavilions have become the latest must-haves for the backyard*

### *INSIDE: THE 2022 ANNUAL RESOURCE DIRECTORY*

*The most comprehensive collection of local home improvement companies* *page 12*

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## Blue Tree Builders

Helping homeowners reimagine their homes *page 23*

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## Emmons Remodeling

A company you can trust for  
both your exterior and interior  
projects *page 25*

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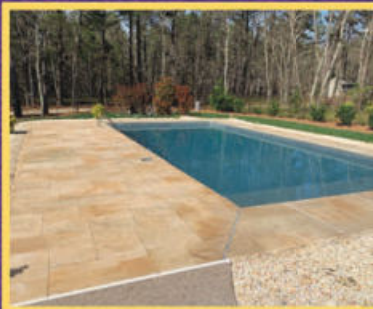
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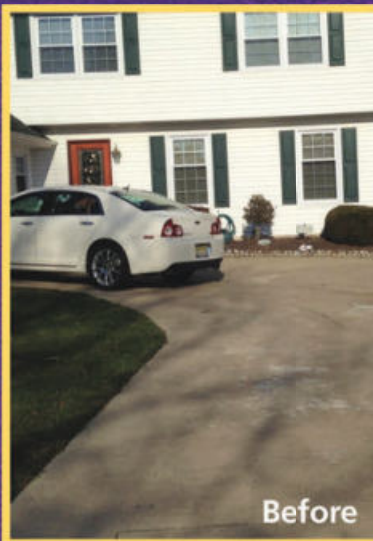


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# Building Relationships

Two South Jersey locations help **Amiano & Son** bring South Jersey's construction visions to life with a people-first philosophy to doing business. *by Madeleine Maccar*

**A**miano & Son has been serving South Jersey's construction needs since 1968, or for three generations of Amianos. In that time, the company founded on the strength of Louis Amiano Sr.'s masonry has grown with new team members, new technology and even a new location.

But one thing never changed as its services expanded to include home additions, full-home remodels, kitchen and bathroom renovations, and outdoor-living concepts: Relationships come first.



That people-first perspective deepened as the company developed a distinctly family feel. Louis Amiano Jr. assumed his father's president role in 2009, his wife Wendy joined the team to handle marketing and client relations, and their daughter Sophia is bringing her color-certified interior-designer's eye to the company as she attends the University of Wilmington. The Amianos' nephew, Joe Clymer, is also part of the team and has worked his way up to sales manager.

Being family goes beyond blood, though. "We have a staff where everyone is on the same page because we're so close and connected," Wendy says. "If anything happens to one of our people, they have this whole family who's there for them."

After years of "doing everything in the company," Wendy says her husband eventually wanted to spend less time working in the business as a jack of all trades and more time working on it as an owner. "Lou Jr." has since surrounded himself with people he trusts, with millennials accounting for much of that 19-person team.

"Our staff is very millennial-heavy," Wendy notes. "We have people like Keith Blose, who worked his way up to field manager and still jumps into any role we ask him to. We're at the point where we have longevity with our younger staff. I look at our team and I get excited about the future."

As he planned his transition, Lou Jr. started working with Clymer, who thrived under that guidance. And when Amiano & Son expanded beyond its Southampton office and showroom to a second location at the Shore two years ago, Clymer was the obvious choice to lead it.

"Joe started off in the field right out of high school. When there was a crawl space to go in, we sent Joe," Wendy laughs. "Then he self-trained on interior design, he was doing sales here and there, and he had a real knack with people. Now he's an award-winning salesperson with a strong future."

Treating employees like family and developing their strengths is how Amiano holds onto top talent, like accountant Mary Beth Brodtman, who has been with the company for more than a decade and Wendy swears is so integral that "we all feel it when she's out on vacation." It's also how the company assures its staff is organically invested in the company's future.

"We work hard to retain our younger employees because they're the future of this company," Wendy says. "The benefit to the client is that they're working with a team that's knowledgeable, detail-oriented and proactively trouble-shooting even before the onsite project starts."

What Amiano does is deeply personal work, and the team takes that responsibility seriously. Wendy describes an internal quality-assurance process that engages clients throughout every phase. Pre-construction meetings set expectations; site visits establish familiarity; project managers oversee a project throughout its duration; Blose ensures nothing is left unexamined, right on down to contracts and budgets.

"It took a long time to perfect our process," Wendy admits. "We learned throughout the years that communication with clients is extremely important. We've set up on a cloud-based system so that anyone on a job can take a picture and upload it so the client can see what's going on in their home at all times."

And it's not just about delivering top-notch service. Amiano is discerning in the products it uses, too, interviewing suppliers to ensure everything from the tile and siding it stocks to the tried-and-true brands it builds with to the budget-conscious options it offers all deliver the quality Amiano promises. That's where working with other builders, remodelers and construction-industry peers is especially advantageous.

"You'll always get what you pay for but this industry is constantly changing," Wendy explains. "The Builders League of New Jersey really helps bring everyone together, and Lou's constantly learning something new through NARI (National Association of the Remodeling Industry) and NKBA (National Kitchen & Bath Association)."

That always-evolving education, as well as tapping into its team's range of expertise and soft-skill professionalism, is all part of what makes Amiano & Son special.

"The feedback I get is that everyone loves working here, everyone wants to come into work," Wendy says. "Our clients know that they're working with professionals who really care about the job—which is someone's home—and not just the sale." **H&H**

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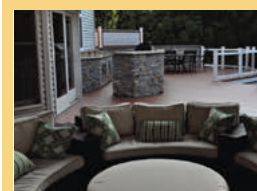
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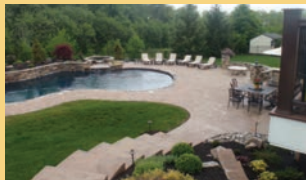
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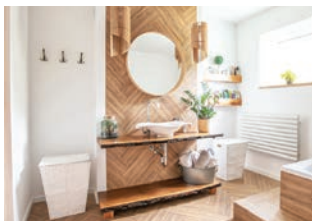
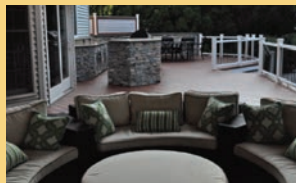
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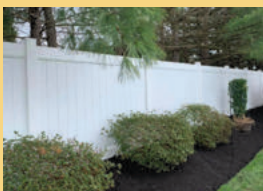
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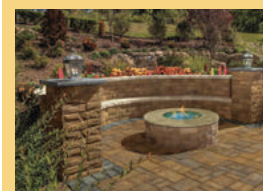
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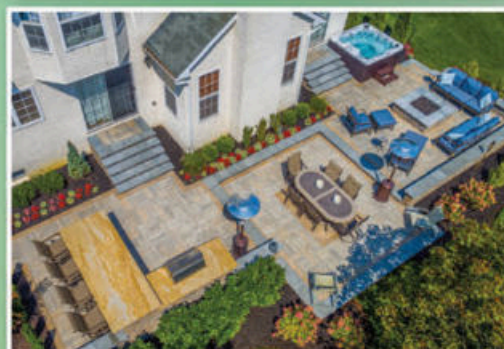
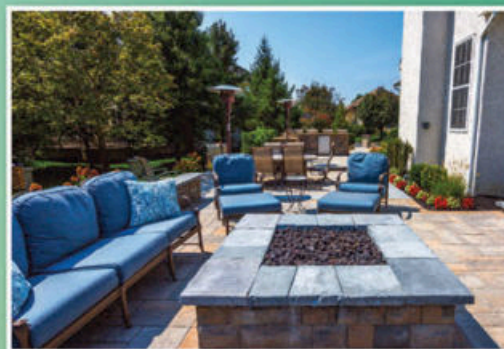
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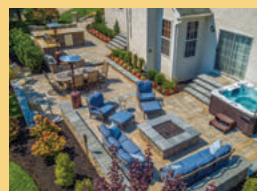
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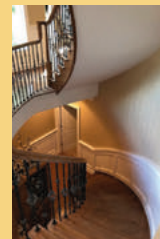
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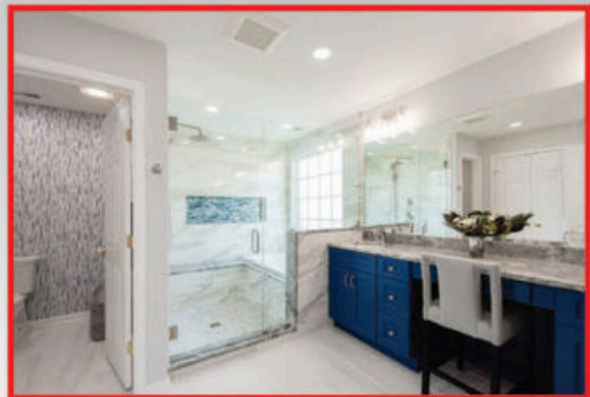
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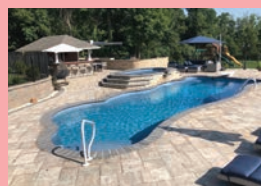
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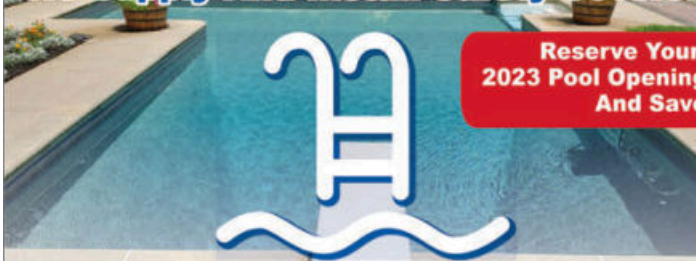
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HOMEOWNERS THROUGHOUT SOUTH JERSEY TURN TO BLUE TREE BUILDERS TO REIMAGINE THEIR HOMES WITH INTENTIONAL GATHERING SPACES THAT EMPHASIZE “A REFRESHED DESIRE FOR COMMUNITY.”

# Gather Around

by Bill Donahue

Over the past two years, many homeowners have looked around their homes and come to the conclusion that their living spaces no longer accommodate their changing lifestyles. Some have decided to live with the compromise, while others have opted to move to a new address in search of a better situation.

Brian Iwano cites a third group: People who have chosen to reimagine their existing homes by partnering with home-improvement professionals known for their skill, vision and expertise. In South Jersey, many homeowners have accomplished this goal by turning to the team of craftspeople led by Iwano, the founder and project manager of Cherry Hill-based Blue Tree Builders.

“Coming out of 2020, we started noticing a recurring theme: ‘We need more space,’” Iwano says. “[In light of the pandemic], we all were forced to first figure out how every aspect of our lives could all coexist in a space that was never meant to accommodate such a task. This then evolved into, ‘How can we improve what we have to make it awesome and we wouldn’t have to go anywhere?’”

Iwano has since noticed “a refreshingly new perspective” among members of his growing client base. Homeowners have shifted to wanting more intentional gathering spaces, a trend he refers to as “a refreshed desire for community.” Examples of these spaces include kitchen islands, sunrooms, outdoor living spaces, combined kitchen/living/dining areas, and extended family rooms, as well as different types of home additions.

“It’s about whatever we can do to satisfy the customer’s needs for more and better use of space,” he says. “That’s why we’ve invested in



the resources to be able to drive the entire process from start to finish. We’re different from other companies because of the hands-on experience we have at the leadership level and the heart we put into our projects. We only take on projects we believe in, which makes the end result that much better.”

As a full-service design-build firm, Blue Tree Builders takes a collaborative approach to working with homeowners throughout the Garden State. The firm partners with each client to understand their specific wants and needs, and then guides the client through each step of the process. Iwano does not expect clients to know everything about a would-be project. In fact, he describes his ideal client as someone who is serious about the project and has the willingness to trust the professionals to guide them to their ultimate goal.

“It’s normal for you to not know exactly how to pull it off,” he says. “That’s our job. We do this every day.”

One might describe home construction as a “second act” for Iwano, who began his career in the hospitality industry. He spent many years working in restaurants, mostly in the back of the house, acquiring experience in virtually every aspect of the business. Although he enjoyed the artistry and hands-on nature of the work, he came to the realization that his life was meant for something else.

“From the time I was a kid, I can remember seeing a guy getting out of a lifted pickup dressed in jeans and work boots and thinking to myself: That would be cool if I did that,” he recalls. “Obviously I had no idea what a career in construction would look like back then, but we’ve definitely figured out a couple things along the way.”

In 2006, he started taking jobs as a part-time handyman through his newly formed company. He also took on jobs from other area home-improvement professionals purely to “fill my week.” His business grew quickly, mainly by word of mouth, as homeowners were drawn to his responsiveness, honesty and the quality of his work. By the end of his first year, he was working on his own full time. The rest, as the saying goes, is history.

“We’ve been fortunate enough to have grown to where we are today,” he says. “In many ways, I feel like we’re just getting started.” **H&H**

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**W**hen 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 Stephanie 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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**SHEDS AND PAVILIONS** have become the latest must-haves for your outdoor space.



# Backyard Hot Spots

by **Liz Hunter**

If the recent heat wave was any indication, trying to sit in your backyard with only an umbrella for coverage isn't going to cut it. To truly enjoy your outdoor space even in summer's harshest days requires larger shade structures to provide relief. From pavilions to pergolas and even multi-use sheds, homeowners have several options to consider, so *House & Home* spoke with a few local companies to find out how these structures have evolved to become must-haves in any yard.

## Party Pavilions Prevail

Those within this part of the home-improvement industry witnessed unprecedented demand during the pandemic, and it continues still. While wait times for materials have improved, plenty of homeowners are putting in orders for backyard structures.

"People value outdoor time much more, and they want to permanently improve their outdoor space," says Pete King, director of sales at Country Lane Gazebos. "They don't want something from Costco that won't last, they want a structure that will be like a destination in their own yard."

King says most customers will come into the showroom with a general idea of what they want, but many are surprised at the sheer size

of the structures. "We'll spend time with them, asking their needs and what kind of space they have available, and of course do site visits for measurements," he says.

It's not uncommon for people to change their mind once they see the options. "They might come in thinking they want a gazebo, but then they realize how much more use they'll get out of a pavilion. Or they think a pergola is a good option for shade, until we show them it's not full shade, unless you add a canopy," King explains.

Dan Stoltzfus, manager of Country Tyme Sheds, says pavilions are by far the popular structure right now. "Gazebos are not as useful—they are more aesthetic. With a pavilion, you can set it on a patio or next to your pool and put everything underneath it and fit all of your party guests," he says. "It's the hot spot for hosting."

He would also place pergolas in the aesthetic class of outdoor structures. "You can put fabric on it for shade, but how long will it last? Not as long as a real roof," Stoltzfus says. "That's why it's important to find out every customer's needs."

Customers also have to determine the materials for their structure, whether wood or vinyl. King says it depends on where they live, but many people end up going with vinyl. "Some want the natural wood-look if it complements their house, but once we start talking



about maintenance, they consider vinyl because it can withstand so much.”

Although companies do offer standard pavilion designs and models, further customization can be done with the shingle colors, roofline and accessories. King says they wire many of their pavilions for customers to hook up TVs, ceiling fans, lighting and more. “We love seeing their ‘after’ photos. It’s amazing how they transform them,” King says.

### Supercharged Sheds

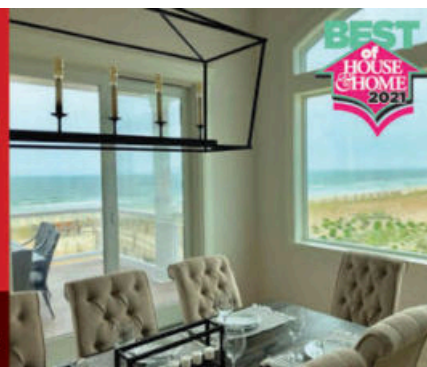
This humble backyard structure has gone from the place to keep rakes and snow shovels to a man cave, she shed, home office and even backyard bar. Professionals say these structures are built with as much detail as a house.

Starting with the materials, Stoltzfus says, there are wood options, but LP Smart Siding has been their No. 1 seller. “It holds up really well and doesn’t absorb moisture as much as a plywood product,” he says. “It also comes in as many options, colors and planks that you’d have for a regular house, so you could have it match your home. It will last just as long, too.”

Kristi Reading, managing partner of The Buxton Complex, adds

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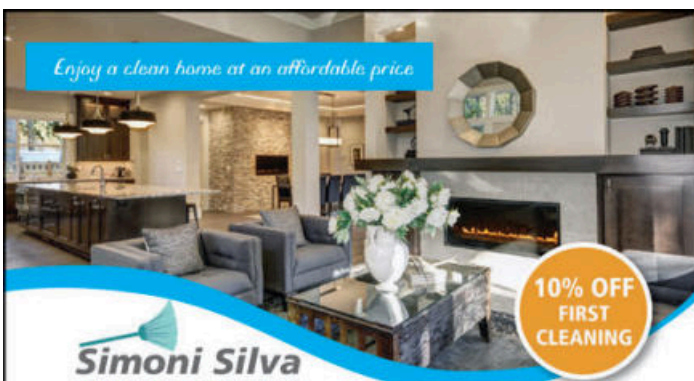


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Hardie plank siding, stucco and brick are also options for exteriors.

If using the shed year-round, it needs to be insulated. Next would be finishing the interior walls and floor. Reading recommends sheet rock. "You can install pegboards for hanging items, or paneling. There is even horizontal paneling to get that popular shiplap look," she says.

## Backyard Hot Spots

Then come windows and a sliding door, or a regular door, whichever you choose, Buxton continues. Stoltzfus says there is HVAC to consider and even a bathroom depending on your township's zoning and sewer limitations. "Basically, you could live in these things," he says. "If

you get the permit for it, we can build it."

For inspiration, we asked these experts about some of their recent projects. Stoltzfus says seaside bars are in demand, even if you're not near the ocean. "It's more like a pool house area where there's a pavilion connected to the shed, and you can make a little bar area under the pavilion with a fridge and TV," he says.

Reading recounts a project that was half barn, half pavilion, as well as a shed/sunroom with three glass walls and dark brown siding.

No request is too extravagant. "We offer everything from floor to ceiling," Reading says. "If you want it and it's not necessarily listed in our catalog, we can often go to the manufacturer directly. We're working with a customer who wants an insulated glass garage door. It's not in our catalog but we were able to order from the manufacturer."

Stoltzfus says, like most projects, be sure to check with your township before getting too excited. "You have to know the limits and obtain permits. Start there and find a nice way to ask about your options," he advises.

"Contact a local supplier before designing the whole project," King says. "You want to make sure it's going to work with your property layout, and your local companies take pride in their experience and knowledge." **H&H**



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## The Finishing Touch with Turf

Now that your pavilion or shed is installed, keeping the ground around it looking neat may be a challenge. Artificial turf is something to consider, says Luke Ribeiro, manager of New Jersey operations for Artificial Grass Turf Warehouse.

"After all your effort of installing this structure, you want the grass around it to be nice and flush with the surface. That's difficult to do with real grass, not to mention you constantly need to maintain it with cutting and trimming," he says.

Real grass also creates dirt and wears down with foot traffic. Whether it's kids running in and out of the pool from the pavilion or your family dog jumping on your outdoor furniture, grass clippings, dirt and mud can get tracked onto the floor of the pavilion, creating more cleanup for the homeowner. Using artificial grass eliminates that stress.

And there's no need to be concerned about how it looks. This is not the same artificial grass from a decade ago, Ribeiro says. "It doesn't even look artificial anymore. The styles we carry are so realistic and soft, so it won't scratch your skin. It's highly durable and toxic- and chemical-free, so it's safe for kids and pets."

Ribeiro recommends pairing the turf with a complementary hardscape border to help define the transition from natural grass to turf to finish the look.



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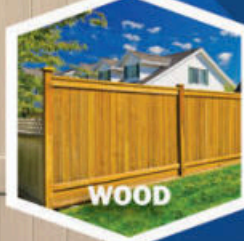
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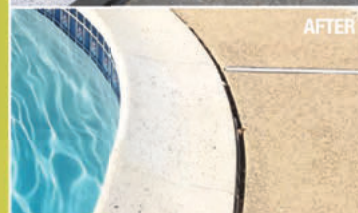
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# Making a Splash

## In many ways,

COVID-19 forced countless folks to fall in love with their house all over again. The increased amount of time spent indoors during the early stages of the pandemic caused a major spike in home renovation projects as homeowners looked to adapt their living quarters for work purposes or perhaps simply felt it was time for an upgrade.

And while kitchens, bathrooms, basements and other remodeling projects were in high demand, the installation of new pools also saw a meteoric rise. As families decided to trade in their vacations for staycations, they began to envision their outdoor living space in a new light. Even those who may not have otherwise considered adding a pool to their backyard prior to the pandemic began to gravitate toward the idea of creating their own oasis at home.

Along with his brothers Thomas and David, Stephen Fahs co-owns Country Club Pools, a company established by their late father in 1965. As part of a second generation of pool builders, Fahs has seen a lot during his time spent working in

the industry and acknowledges modern-day pool owners are thinking bigger than just a prototypical rectangular pool where they can cool off during the dog days of summer.

Instead, installers are being tasked with using added design elements to create truly one-of-a-kind and distinctive pools that seamlessly blend aesthetics with functionality. Popular choices of late include the additions of a sun shelf, a long ledge that allows owners to place chairs, and in some cases even umbrellas, directly in the pool so they can lounge comfortably in the water. Stone perimeters around the pool have also become more commonplace and the inclusion of various water features can give an otherwise ordinary pool the look and feel of one you may find at a 5-star resort.

As homeowners get more creative with their wish lists, installers are in turn finding themselves working on some unique projects.

"We are under construction of a 20-by-40-foot mountain pond-shaped pool that has a hidden swim-out area under a grotto waterfall," Fahs says of one of his current jobs.

Derek Blasker, owner of Pool

Designs Inc., has also noticed folks wanting show-stopping bells and whistles for their pools, citing an increased interest in rock waterfalls and the popularity of LED deck jets with laminars, which can provide added tranquility and ambiance.

"We just did a project where it was a pool/spa combination and they put a giant rock waterfall on the one side, with like 5,000 pounds of rock. Then we added a full paver job going around it with a beautiful border; it was really quite the project," Blasker says.

But because owners would rather be enjoying their pool than constantly tending to it, the thing that nearly every customer wants is to make ownership as maintenance-free as possible. Robotic vacuums and automated technology systems have certainly made that much more obtainable as has the growing presence of salt chlorination systems. "Everyone is looking for salt," Blasker affirms.

A saltwater system works to only produce chlorine as it's needed, resulting in much less upkeep than traditional chlorinated swimming pools, not to mention eliminating the need

**Pool ownership has skyrocketed in recent years and there's no shortage of ways for homeowners to construct something unique and pleasing to the eye.**

**BY PETER PROKO**

to keep and store lots of chemicals to help balance your water. And the salt systems produce water that is gentler on your eyes and skin. As a result, Fahs agrees with Blasker that salt is the preferred method for most customers.

"A salt system is the best way to sanitize a pool, period," Fahs says. "It makes the water soft, it has no negative effects on vinyl [liners] and saves a lot of money due to the fact that chlorine prices have increased substantially due to the pandemic—if you can even find it."

For those who may be allergic to a salt system, Blasker says they are likely also to have a reaction with a chlorine system as well, and so they may want to consider UV or mineral systems instead.

And though the pools in this area don't get the year-round use they do in other parts of the country, having the ability to heat the pool is also a desired amenity. Natural gas heaters are the most popular, followed by heat pumps and then propane heaters. But choosing which one is right boils down to how each person likes to use their pool.

"I ask the person what kind

of individual they are. If you need instant gratification, you'll want a gas heater. If you are more patient and thrifty, then the heat pump is the way to go. It takes longer to heat up, but once it raises the temperature, it will keep it there," Blasker says, adding that you also have to factor in how early you open or how late you close your pool, as the temperature outside will play an obvious role in any heater's effectiveness.

D. Panetta Contracting is a landscape design and construction firm that specializes in helping pool owners bring the area surrounding their pool to life. The company's Tammy Panetta says current clients are upgrading their backyard because they know the money is being well spent and that they will undoubtedly enjoy it more while getting a lot of return on that investment. "They feel it's a safe haven for their family," she says.

And it's not just new pool owners looking to transform their backyards. Many existing pool owners are eagerly giving their pool decks and gathering areas outside of the water a facelift.

"The bells and whistles are not only in the pool, but around the pool. A lot of people like to add features like an outdoor kitchen area, TVs to watch the ballgames or outdoor lighting, which can be used year round," says Panetta. "But what's most popular is a fire pit; there's nothing better than family and friends sitting around a fire and enjoying life."

While things like better filtration systems and heaters will allow you to keep your pool up and running longer, there will come a time when you will have to close it down for the season. In recent years, there's been a lot of discussion on whether a mesh or a solid safety cover is best in keeping your water in prime shape during the off-season. The pool experts we spoke with say there are benefits to both, but they prefer the mesh option in the long run.

"Some companies offer a tightly-woven mesh that allows for water to get through, but not light. It's the light and debris that cause problems [to the water]," Blasker notes. "With a solid cover, you need a pump on top of it [to filter off the excess water]. And if it snows and everything gets frozen, the pump is submerged in ice and will need to thaw out before anything can be done. The mesh cover will allow the snow melt to seep through and you don't have to worry about the pump getting frozen and locked."

"I prefer the ultra-mesh," echoes Fahs. "It keeps the pool relatively clean and is easy come springtime to remove and store. A solid cover needs to be monitored closely over the winter season due to the snow or ice build-up and it's very heavy."

Regardless of what options one considers for their pool, it's become quite clear that what was once considered a luxury has now become a necessity for many homeowners. And with seemingly no limits to how one can customize their pool to their liking, the trend of new pools being installed in backyards across the region doesn't appear that it will be slowing down anytime soon. **H&H**



## RESOURCES

**Country Club Pools Inc.**  
Feasterville, Pa.  
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CountryClubPools.com

**D. Panetta Contracting, LLC**  
Randolph, N.J.  
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**Pool Designs Inc.**  
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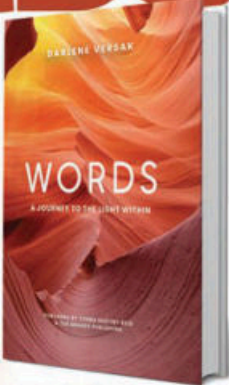
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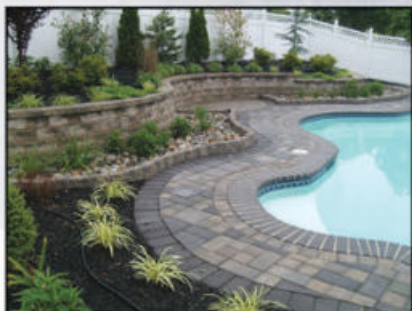
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# Designing a Harmonious Home



**AT THE FAMILY-OWNED F+S KITCHEN AND BATH DESIGN STUDIO, LISTENING TO AND EDUCATING CLIENTS ARE KEY IN ENSURING THAT EVERY JOB IS A CHANCE TO BUILD EVEN STRONGER CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS.** *by Madeleine Maccar*

**H**elping people renovate and remodel their homes isn't a science: It's an art, and one that requires an experienced, expert eye and a dedicated team to nurture an intangible vision into a fully realized dream come true.

It's also a gift to share with others.

"I'm able to detect what a customer likes from the moment I walk into their home, especially if they have lived there for a little while," says Guy Ndandji, owner of F+S Kitchen and Bath Design in Voorhees. "By the end of the conversation, I know what to pull from our showroom for you and 95% of the time, you will like it."

The team effort it takes to deliver breathtaking renovations isn't just about bringing together talented designers and contractors, though. Homeowners themselves play a critical role in turning the creation process into a successfully completed project, as their lifestyle and tastes erring toward historic, contemporary, classic or modern decorating are what guide Ndandji's expert recommendations.

"It's about really understanding the client, listening to them and letting them express themselves," he says. "The first piece is the first free estimate, our first conversation, and that can take one to two hours, sometimes three hours if the

kitchen is big and complicated."

For Ndandji, it's of the utmost importance to start by facilitating a "space of confidence" that encourages clients to trust his expertise—and also allows him to speak frankly about the ways individual tastes, current trends, functionality, spatial limitations and the overall harmony of home design might be at odds with what an optimally completed project looks like.

After all, he wants F+S's clients, as well as the future occupants of the home, to be happy looking at the final result every day. That's all hinged upon maintaining the harmony of the home, inside and out, even if he has to steer clients away from popular trends they'll regret spending money on once they see how it was a better idea than a reality they have to live with.

"Clients are paying me to help them, not to agree with them," Ndandji points out. "If you're spending money, you should let me, as a professional, help you out, to bring something that will pair well with your style, and your living style. I'm here to help them, and I can help them because I have the talent for it."

He continues: "If you attach yourself to a trend just because you've seen your friends' new kitchen, it may not pair with your style. The

trends come and go, but your taste doesn't."

To that end, Ndandji believes in educating clients about why certain materials, colors and fixtures might create a clashing décor. And that's where F+S's 1,500-square-foot showroom is an invaluable bonus, providing customers with a streamlined, thoughtfully organized array of options showcasing the domestic and imported kitchen, bathroom and other interior appointments available to customers.

"From the outside it looks like a little box but, because of my design experience and how we were forced to think about the ways we should set things up since we didn't have a bigger space, when you walk in, it feels like a mall because everything is synchronized to perfection," he says. "People are very impressed by the setup, the cleanliness and the way everything is arranged. We didn't want anyone to be disoriented by their options."

A true full-service, one-stop shop, F+S stays with clients once they've selected the colors, materials and items to refresh their homes' designs, with its in-house construction team of licensed contractors guiding the project from demolition to site cleanup, whether they're fully responsible for the entire project or assisting a particularly handy DIYer.

"We plan with the customer, we design for the customer, we budget with the customer and we build for them," says Ndandji.

Ndandji doesn't just educate his clients: He stays on top of industry trends, reading and learning about the developments and advancements he and the F+S team can utilize to customers' benefits.



But nothing beats that old-fashioned human touch of attentive customer service and diligent, genuine relationship-building that extends the company's family-owned feeling to each and every client.

"Our clients become family," Ndandji says. "We're a small family business, and we believe in working for the clients, and especially creating a strong relationship. ... We believe that in doing so, it will open up the way for a future to work together again. If you want to grow, you have to believe that everything's possible to satisfy the needs of your clientele." **H&H**

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