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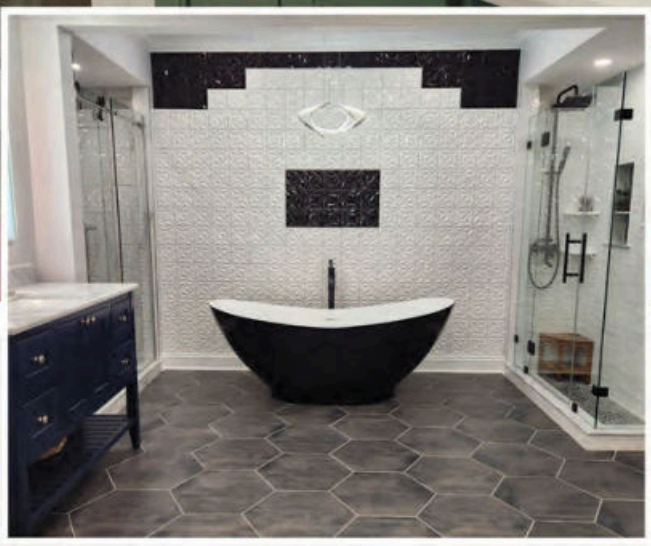
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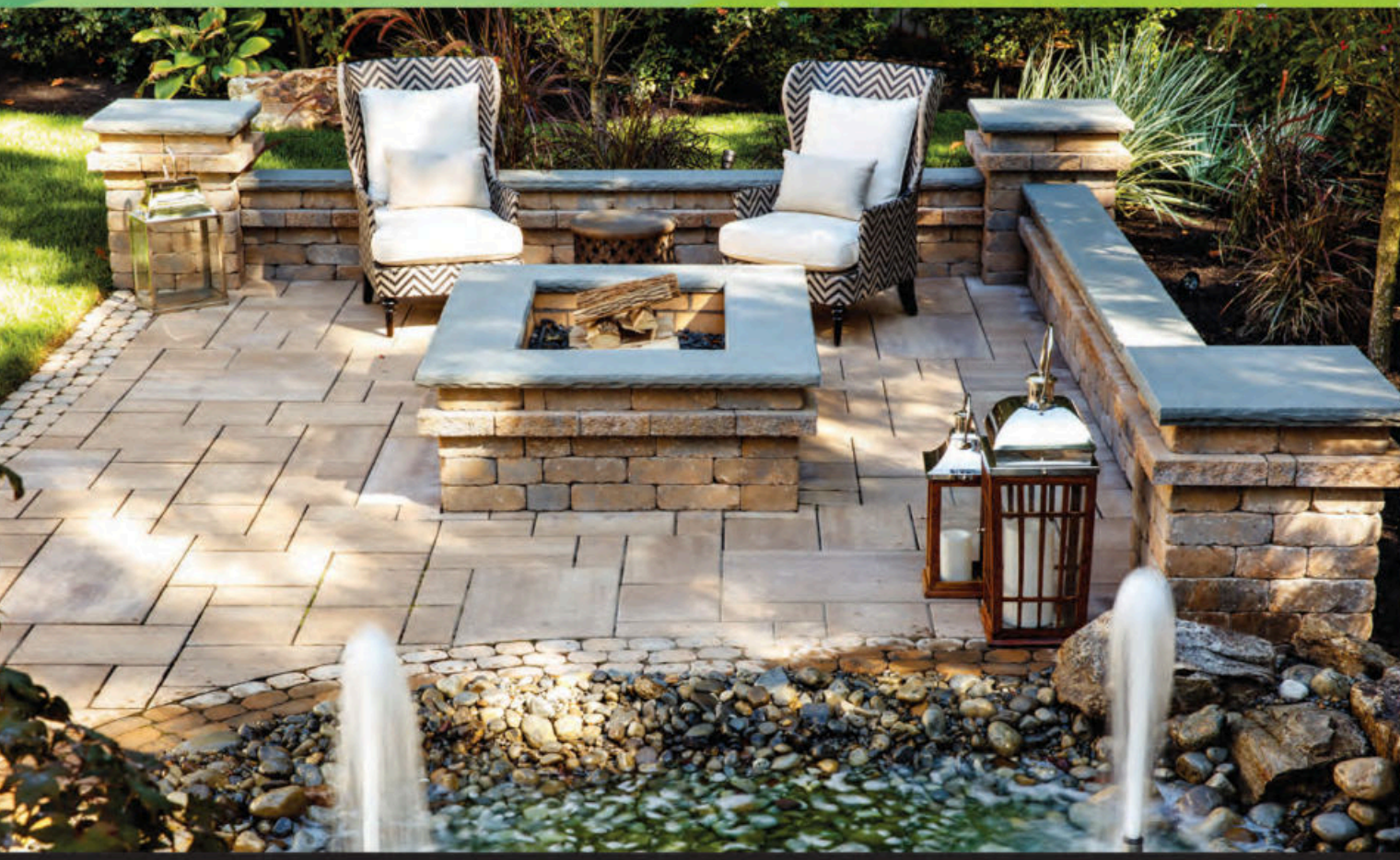
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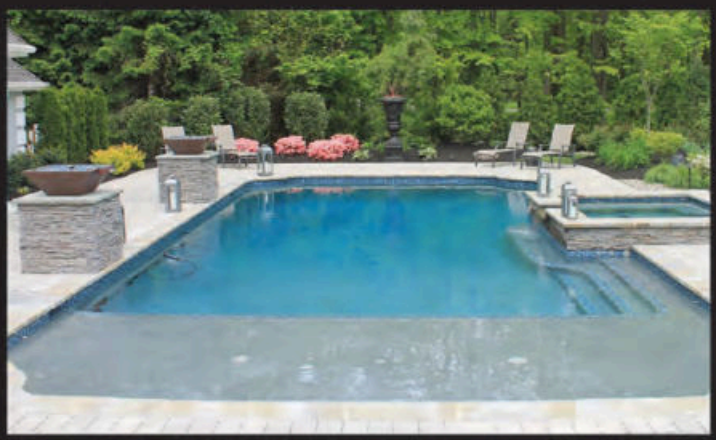
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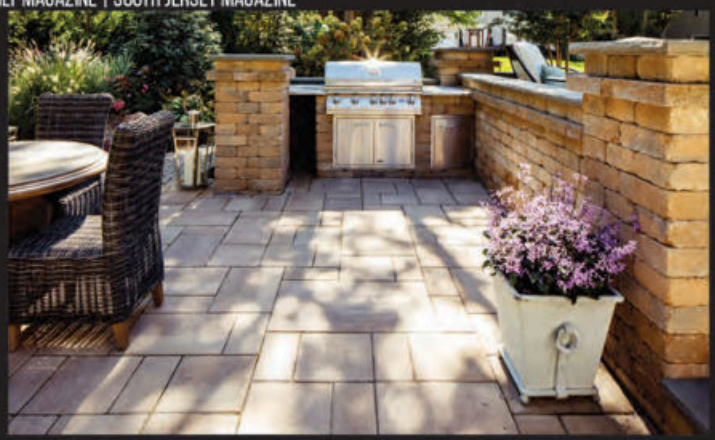


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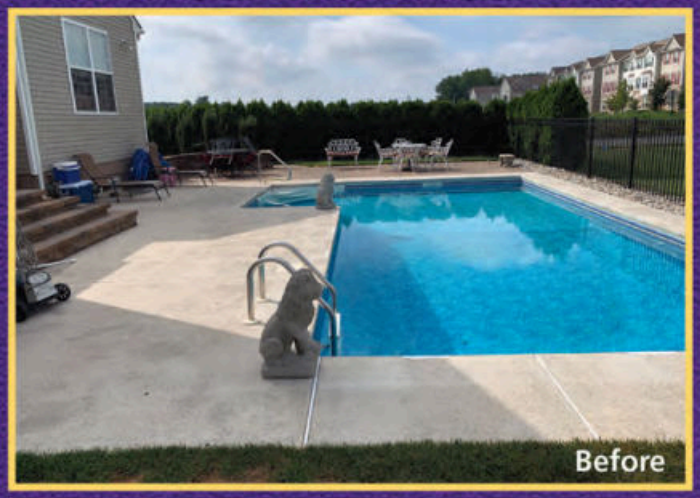
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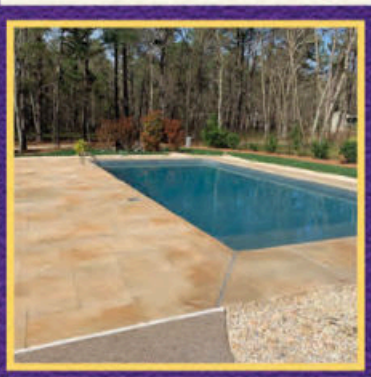


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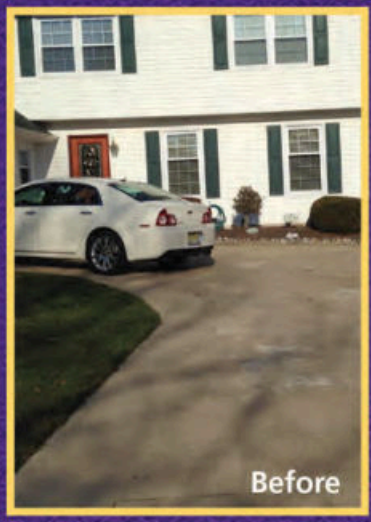
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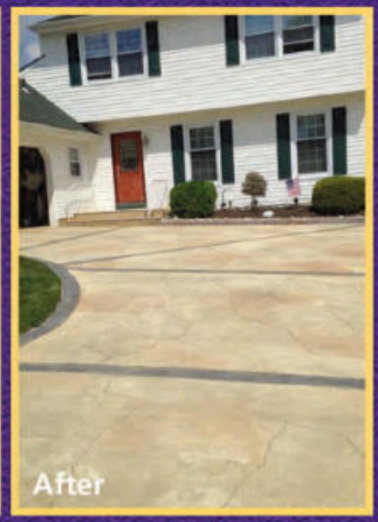






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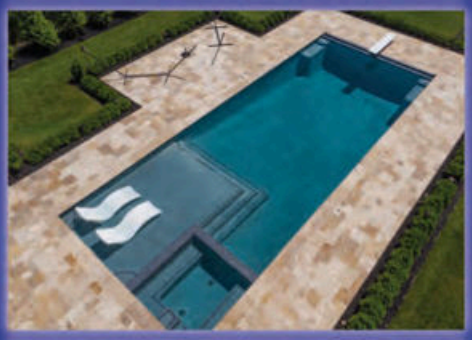
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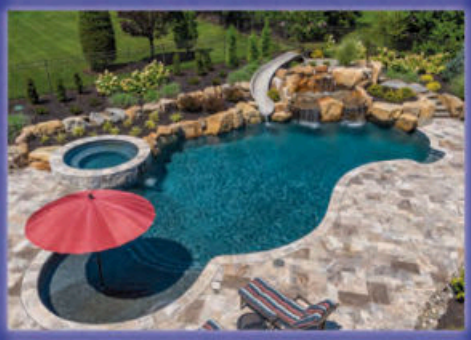
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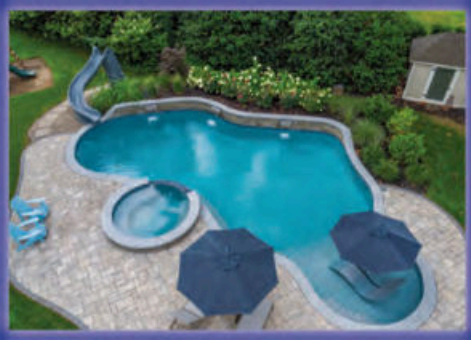


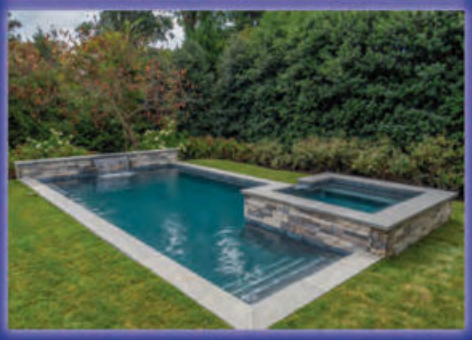


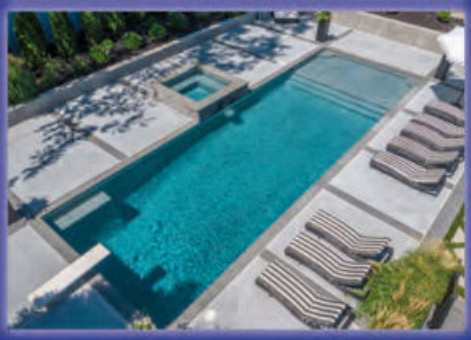


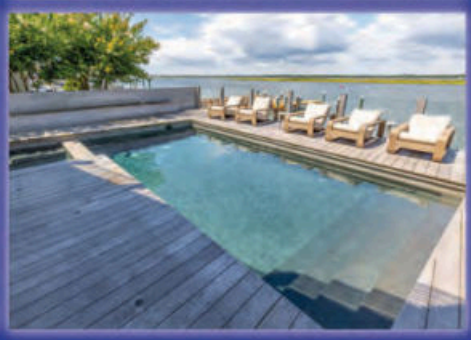












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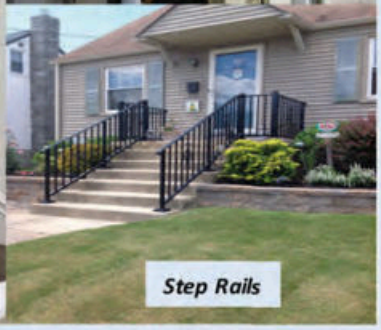
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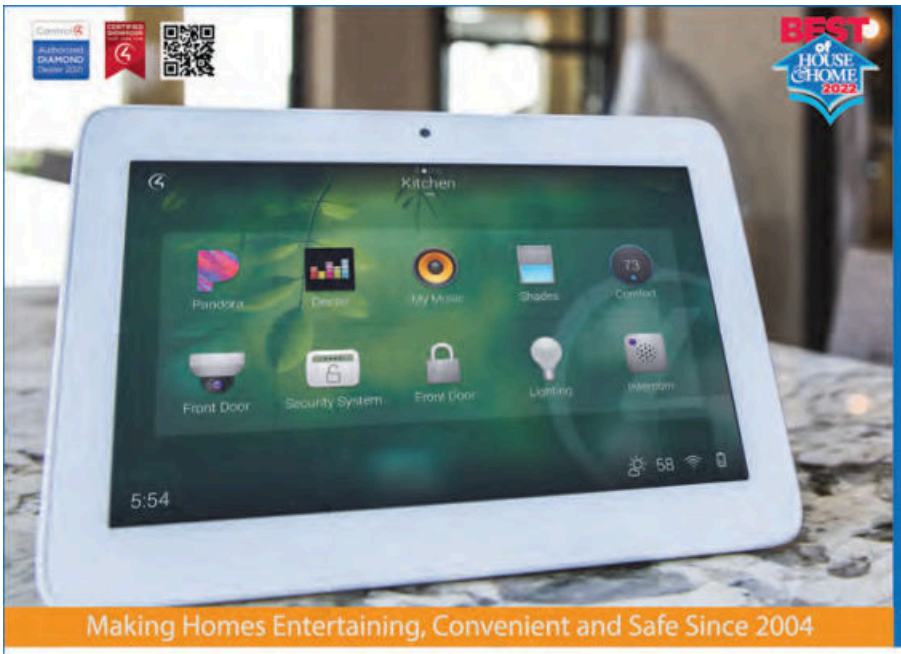
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National Sales Office:
HOUSE & HOME Magazine, LLC
700 E. Main St.
Norristown, PA 19401
Phone: 610-272-3120 Fax: 610-272-2805
Email: info@housemagazine.com

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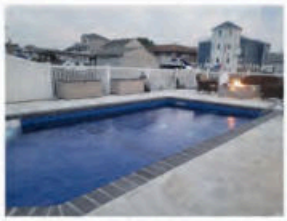




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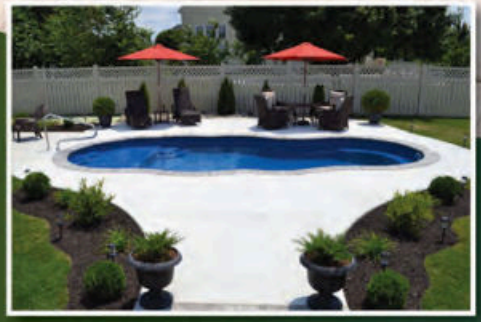
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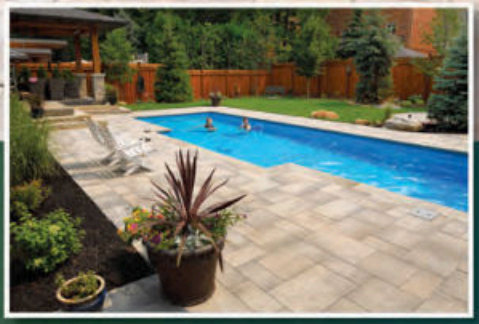
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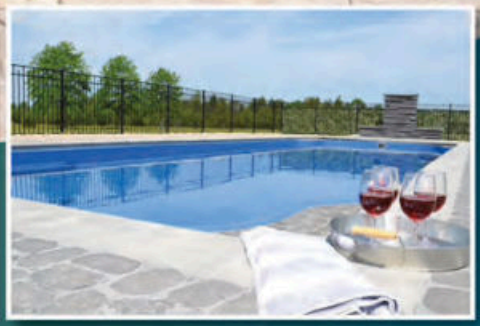
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HARD CHOICES



When it comes to choosing the right **stone for your project,** experts can help you navigate the many options.

By Carly Murray

CUSTOMIZED STONE RENOVATIONS AND ADDITIONS DO NOT HAVE TO COME AT THE EXTRA EXPENSE OF STRESS. With the plethora of options available in design and functionality, the most difficult step can be deciding what works best for the consumer's ideal space and lifestyle. However, local design experts are there to help from the beginning of template creation to the finished product.

Choosing the right style

This year, complements of blue and green are trending in kitchens and bathrooms to add a pop of color. For instance, blue or green cabinets or backsplash can be brought out by a material with patterns or textures that match. In contrast, natural choices like soapstone and granite can achieve a more traditional and classic look. Ultimately, it comes down to individual taste, and what fits with the ideal finished product.

"Whether someone is looking for colorful granite from Brazil, white marble from Italy, or white, gray or gold quartz countertops, we have something for everyone," says Kristine Kzelian, a sales representative and designer at Imperial Marble & Granite.

Online visualizers can assist in planning, and serve as tools for determining a color palette while experimenting with elements such as countertops, backsplash, floors



HARD CHOICES

and cabinets. That way, remodels don't have to be a risk—and the result doesn't have to be a surprise.

"Since we sell only quality cabinetry and countertops, any materials from inexpensive to expensive that customers select will be durable and attractive. While customers selecting the most expensive custom cabinetry we carry can be startlingly beautiful, the greatest impact making a kitchen renovation valuable is always the design first and the materials second," says Paul McAlary, president of Main Line Kitchen Design.

What's more, stone installation isn't limited to a bathroom or a kitchen, and can be a charming addition to outdoor bars, fireplaces and laundry rooms.

"We have state-of-the-art machinery that allows us to create intricate fireplace surrounds and mitered countertops," says Dino Vogia, president of Stone Tech Fabrication.





Choosing the right functionality

Design professionals can recommend materials to match visual and practical preferences. While quartz countertops remain the most popular choice in material, quartzite is gaining traction for its natural patterns and colors. No matter the preference, every material has its own set of advantages that, when combined with a favored visual aesthetic, can create the best possible result.

"Quartzite is a material that can kind of give you the same aesthetic look of a marble and that kind of soft pattern, but it has the density and durability that lends itself more towards granite. So it's kind of one of those materials that's the best of both worlds," says Mike Werner, sales manager at AAA Hellenic Marble.

As each individual is different, so is each material. Granite kitchen countertops are known to be great for people who like to cook because of their durability and heat resistance. Quartz, however, is easy to clean, and won't stain from oils or spices. And for a household with children, quartz can be favored because of its resistance to spills.

"Granite and quartzite are very popular choices for countertops due to their durability. Like all natural stones, they have to be sealed to prevent stains, which is always done by our team. Natural stones should be resealed once a year to make sure stone is protected from stains. Since quartz [countertops] are man-made materials, they do not require sealing. They are ideal for homeowners with busy lifestyles," says Vogia.

Each material has its own advantages, and there are always solutions to any potential issues. Ultimately, it's about proper research and education provided by professionals.

"Within design, educating clients is extremely important. They may find a product that they absolutely love, but if you don't have the experience to say, 'This product will fail or deteriorate or discolor or have an adverse reaction due to heat' … and then a year later it looks awful, you just killed the job. I always urge any person looking to do a kitchen or bath to seek out a true experienced individual that has been either accredited, or has been in the industry for a period of time and actually is familiar with installations," says David Cerami, president of HomeTech Renovations.

Choosing the best for each budget

Just because a preferred material may not be within one's budget, it does not mean that their dream kitchen or bathroom is no longer obtainable. With all of the choices available, there are always alternatives that are more beneficial toward each individual's lifestyle. Aside from materials, pricing will depend on the level of customization. "The investment that many people don't make to get a great kitchen is often not money, but their own time," says McAlary. He also advises that the key to smooth kitchen renovation is to "plan, plan and plan some more." Part of planning and budgeting is to figure out exact measurements so there aren't extra charges for excess material.

"We have a couple of suppliers that we've been dealing with for a couple of decades [and] we have a great relationship with them. They give us great pricing and great availability, so we have a whole list of colors that we get a square foot pricing on, as opposed to the requirement of buying a whole slab," says Lorraine Farkas at Sterl Kitchens.

Pricing can also depend on the source of the material, its appearance and its rarity. Quartz, for instance, can differ in cost for attributes like pattern and color. This is where options come in handy yet again, with local, national and international stones that vary in visual effect and lifestyle practicality. "If a stone's coming from halfway around the world—from Madagascar—that's going to be more pricey than something mined in Vermont," says Cerami.

Design experts can often help to recommend similar alternatives that achieve the same look and feel without causing the price of a project to skyrocket.

Choosing everything else

While in a home renovation mindset, additional services and products can be both tempting and seem like an extra hassle, especially if the project is "do-it-yourself." However, several businesses offer either recommendations or in-store products to further streamline the process.

Top image courtesy of Sterl Kitchens. Image below courtesy of AAA Hellenic Marble


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HARD CHOICES



"Usually if there's a general contractor involved, they have the ability to have everything coordinated through that person. If they don't have that luxury, then we can help assist with plumbing services, removal and disposal of the countertops," says Werner.

It's also about knowing what products work together, and which do not.

"We also have sinks, so when they are getting their countertop, they can get their sink and their faucet. …Sometimes people don't realize they need to get a new sink just because they're getting a quartz or granite countertop, and they say, ' I have a sink already.' But it was a drop-in sink for Formica. They'll need to get an undermount sink to use with granite or quartz," says Farkas.

Compared to the limited options available in the recent past, stone renovations have been greatly innovated in the last decade. It may seem daunting to begin a room renovation, but the wide variety of both products and design experts can turn an idea into a reality. And for customers who prefer to be as "hands-on" as possible, there are stone fabricators that will allow a customer to make specific decisions every step of the way.

"Most clients have a vision for their remodel and our sales representatives offer our services to find the right countertop to bring our client's vision to life. When choosing Imperial for countertop services, we request clients to be present at both the field measurement and installation in the event questions arise from our technicians and to sign off at the time of our services," says Kzelian.

So whether you're ready to renovate the kitchen, add some modern elements to a bathroom or beyond, there's no shortage of stone and industry experts to help you create a functional space with tremendous aesthetic appeal based on your style, preference and budget. H&H

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IMGStone.net

HomeTech Renovations
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(215) 876-8413
HTRenovations.com

Main Line Kitchen Design
Bala Cynwyd, Pa.
(610) 510-2024
MainLineKitchenDesign.com

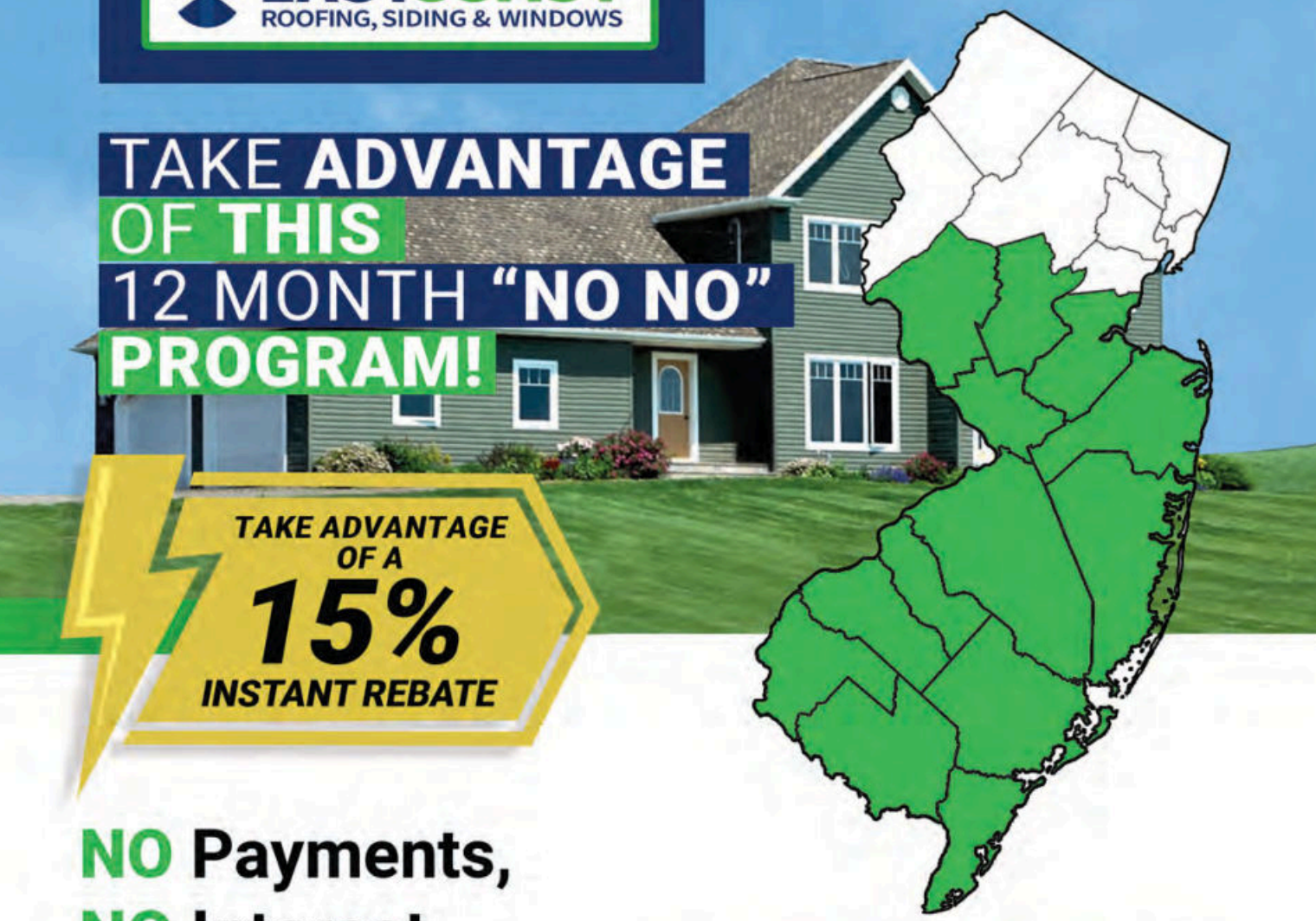
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SterlKitchens.com

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Image courtesy of Main Line Kitchen Design

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ask the expert

New Castle Artisan

by Brittany Ann Morrisey

OVER THE YEARS, HARSH WEATHER CAN CAUSE CRACKS AND OTHER DAMAGE ON A HOME'S CONCRETE SURFACES. Homeowners may put off repairs due to cost concerns, but replacing that concrete is not always the answer. Gwen Kunkel, owner of New Castle Artisan, can breathe new life into your existing surfaces—whether it's your driveway, pool deck, patio; practically any concrete surface around your home—with improved products and techniques. *House & Home* spoke with Kunkel about the economic and aesthetic value of concrete resurfacing.

WHY WOULD SOMEONE WANT TO RESURFACE CONCRETE VERSUS REPLACEMENT?

The benefit of resurfacing is instead of just fixing a problem like cracking, pitting or damage from mold, you can make a home improvement. Right now if you have concrete that's cracked or un-level, you can repair or replace it with new concrete, but you'll just have new concrete. It doesn't increase the curb appeal of your home. It doesn't increase the value of your home. With resurfacing, we add design and we carve the cracks into the existing pattern after we repair them, so you've got something that looks like you spent money to do a home improvement and not just a home repair. That makes it more valuable financially and aesthetically.

WHY DO YOU USE POLYMER CEMENTS?

Our polymer cements are the best alternative for exterior projects because they resist erosion. Applied properly, they do not peel, flake or delaminate. 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.

HOW MUCH EXPERIENCE DO YOU HAVE?

We've been doing projects for 29 years in the South Jersey area.

HOW LONG DOES YOUR WORK LAST?

Resurfacing has been around since the 1960s. It is not new technology but I have personally had jobs down for over 25 years in South Jersey. We offer a two-year warranty that can be extended. If the bond is done properly, it will last a lifetime with some routine resealing maintenance.



YOU ALSO RESURFACE POOL DECKS. HOW COST EFFECTIVE IS THAT?

The cost to rip out and replace a pool deck is usually considerably more than resurfacing. Being that most pools are located in the backyard, just the concrete can cost up to 35 percent more because they have to wheelbarrow it in, which is labor intensive.



Gwen Kunkel and brother Paul Randall of New Castle Artisan

WILL IT RUIN MY LANDSCAPING OR GRASS?

No. As a matter of fact, aside from it being beautiful, you wouldn't even know we were there. You don't have to take down any fences. We don't use any heavy equipment. Everything we bring is carried in and carried out, so your landscaping looks exactly the same.

CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FLOORING SOLUTIONS FOR GARAGES, BASEMENTS AND SHOWER ROOMS?

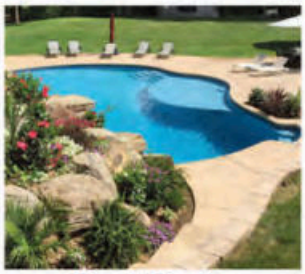
Polymer cements are good interior options because they're highly durable and water resistant, which is great for basements and garages. Our products are applied by hand for a unique artistic touch that can be customized however you would like. We offer various styles from simple solid color flooring to textured finishes comparable to brick or natural stone.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR FIREPLACE SERVICES AND ACCENT WALLS?

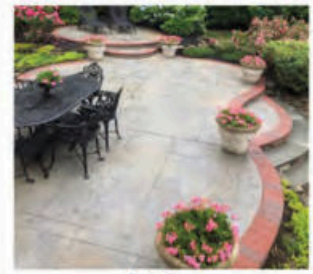
In the winter when we cannot be outside resurfacing exteriors, we do like to take on fireplace and accent wall projects. In as little as one day, we can transform an old brick fireplace to look like a beautiful stone custom centerpiece for your home. The same with our accent walls that can be designed to match existing decor or we can create a new style completely. H&H

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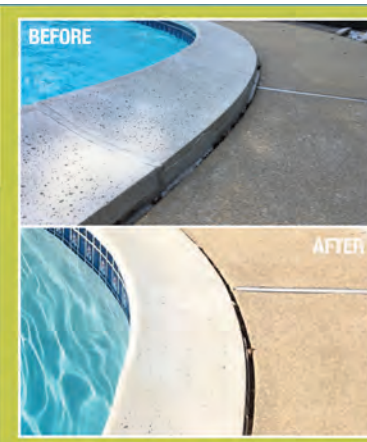
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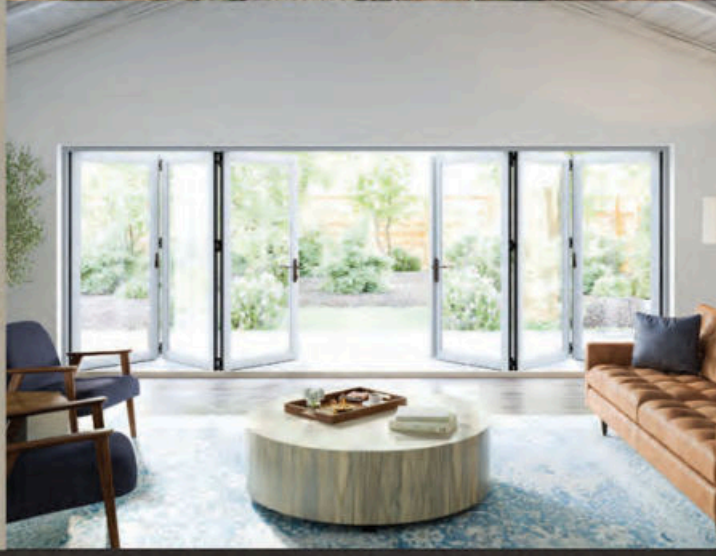
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More Than a Pool

Swim-Mor Pools & Spas elevates backyard atmospheres with quality custom designs

by **Kristen Dowd**

Swim-Mor Pools & Spas partner and general manager Mike McCool recognizes that there is a lot more that goes into a new pool than there used to be.

"The backyard has transformed over the last 10 years or so away from being just 'your yard' and into another room of your home with the same care and detail put into it," McCool says. "Because of this the design of your pool has become more than just a pool but the focus of the outdoor living room. There is a lot of coordination with creating what a customer's backyard haven is going to be."

Fortunately, the family-owned South Jersey business is more than up to the challenge of bringing a customer's backyard pool vision to life. In its 55 years of business, Swim-Mor Pools & Spas has helped to create thousands of backyard paradises throughout the region.

And what's more, they make the process as easy as possible for their customers.

"We're a start-to-finish gunite custom pool company—the design, the build and the service afterward," McCool says. "We have our own crews that handle the work which helps us control quality and makes the process go smoother."

There are six designers at Swim-Mor Pools & Spas who can help guide customers on a new pool design. The company's countless photos and 3D drawings can provide inspiration, and the final design is what best suits the backyard, according to McCool.

"Size, setbacks, elevations. We're here to help you work through that," he says.

Finding the right pool

"The first step is to give us a call. From there we'll set up an appointment to come out to your home," McCool says. "That way we can see all the aspects of the property. What the contours of the yard are. What the access is like. Even the best location based on where the sun rises and sets."

The timeline to get started is largely based on the homeowner and how decisive they are, McCool adds. Once everything is confirmed, things move to contract and Swim-Mor Pools & Spas starts working on permits.

"Time is of the essence. Permits can take from two weeks to several months, all depending on the municipality," McCool says.

Pool popularity

Prior to March 2020, business was strong for Swim-Mor Pools & Spa. That was only boosted when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the region.

"The pool business was never busier than it was in COVID," McCool says. "The lockdowns forced people to stay at home and they immediately focused on the backyard."

Although that business boom has settled down a bit, things are still busy. But pool trends, according to McCool, have held fairly steady.

Hampton-style pools have long been a customer favorite, but equally popular are the freeform designs, which can be customized to fit into any backyard environment.

"Through COVID there have not been many significant changes in the industry," McCool says, "other than the increased popularity of adding more bells and whistles to the pool."

Natural stone is popular for the coping along the pool's edge, McCool says, as well as darker finishes in the pool. A majority of Swim-Mor Pools & Spa customers are using a salt sanitation system and automated controls in their new pools, as well as choosing to add water features—waterfalls, fountains, deck jets and plenty more. The company also offers many in-pool fixtures for lounging—bar stools and benches that can tie into your outdoor kitchen or can run inside the pool, along with table areas, sundecks for your lounge chairs and custom fire features. Color LED lighting packages come with every pool, too.

The majority of customers also choose elements to lengthen their pool-enjoying season, such as heaters and spas. "It will extend your pool season by a few months," McCool says.

Why Swim-Mor Pools & Spas?

Being a local family-owned independent business makes Swim-Mor Pools & Spas a smart choice for customers, according to McCool.

"We're not national. We're not a franchise. And we do not try to sell everything. Our expertise has been building custom gunite pools for 55 years and that's what we focus on," he says.

Save for a few aspects that are legally required to be outsourced to independent licensed contractors, Swim-Mor Pools & Spas uses all of their own crews for the pool construction, which McCool says is unique for the pool business.

In addition to building new pools, Swim-Mor Pools & Spas also specializes in renovating gunite pools. The experienced team can handle everything from your standard renovation of replacing your coping, tile and plaster finish, to adding features such as raised water features, sun decks, and even spas that were not originally built with the pool. McCool says, "Even though your pool may not have originally been built with the more current popular features doesn't mean that Swim-Mor cannot add them now."

The 2023 pool season is already underway for the business, which thanks to the mild winter meant they were able to start construction early. Pool openings and service will ramp up from mid-April to Memorial Day.

But, for those looking to add a pool to their backyard this summer, it's not too late. "We're still building for this year. We're still selling for this summer," McCool says. "But don't waste time. Get in!" **H&H**

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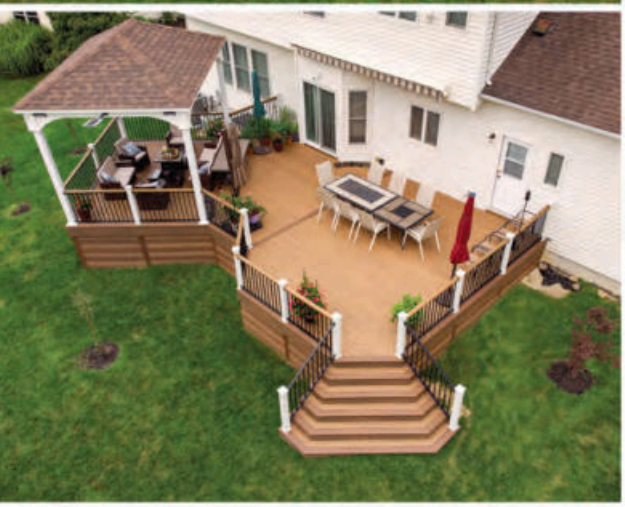
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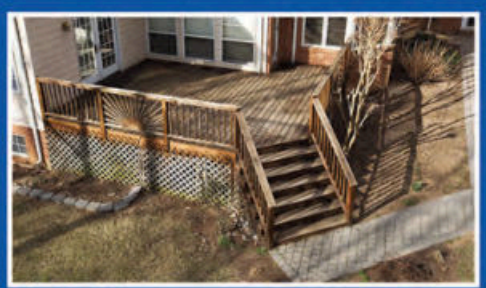


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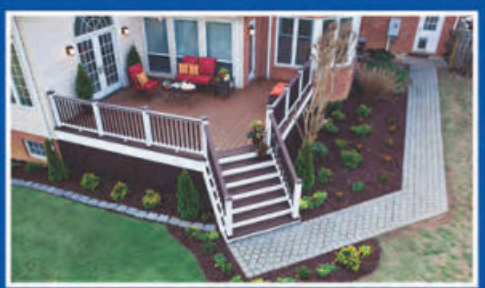
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AFTER

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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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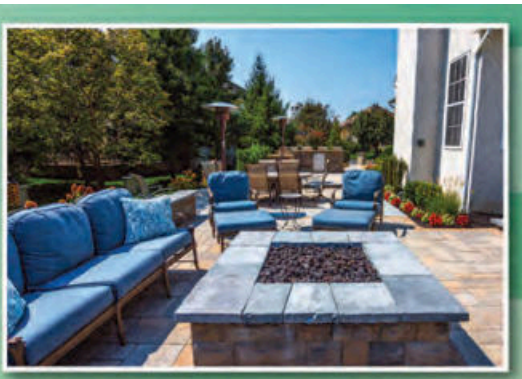
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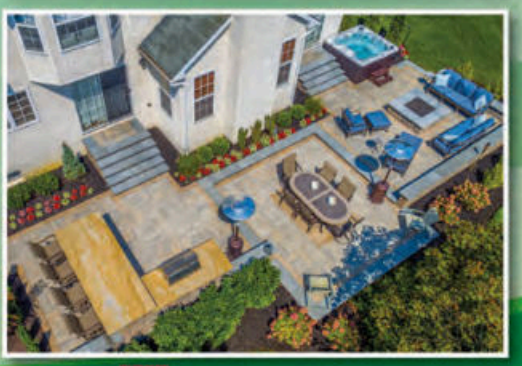
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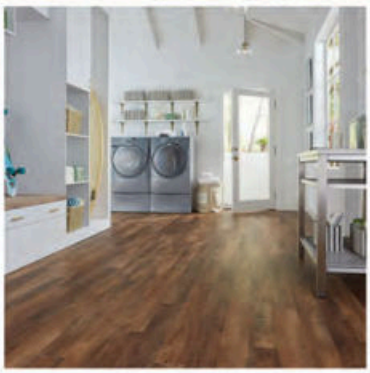
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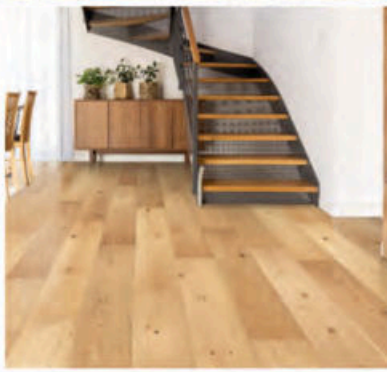
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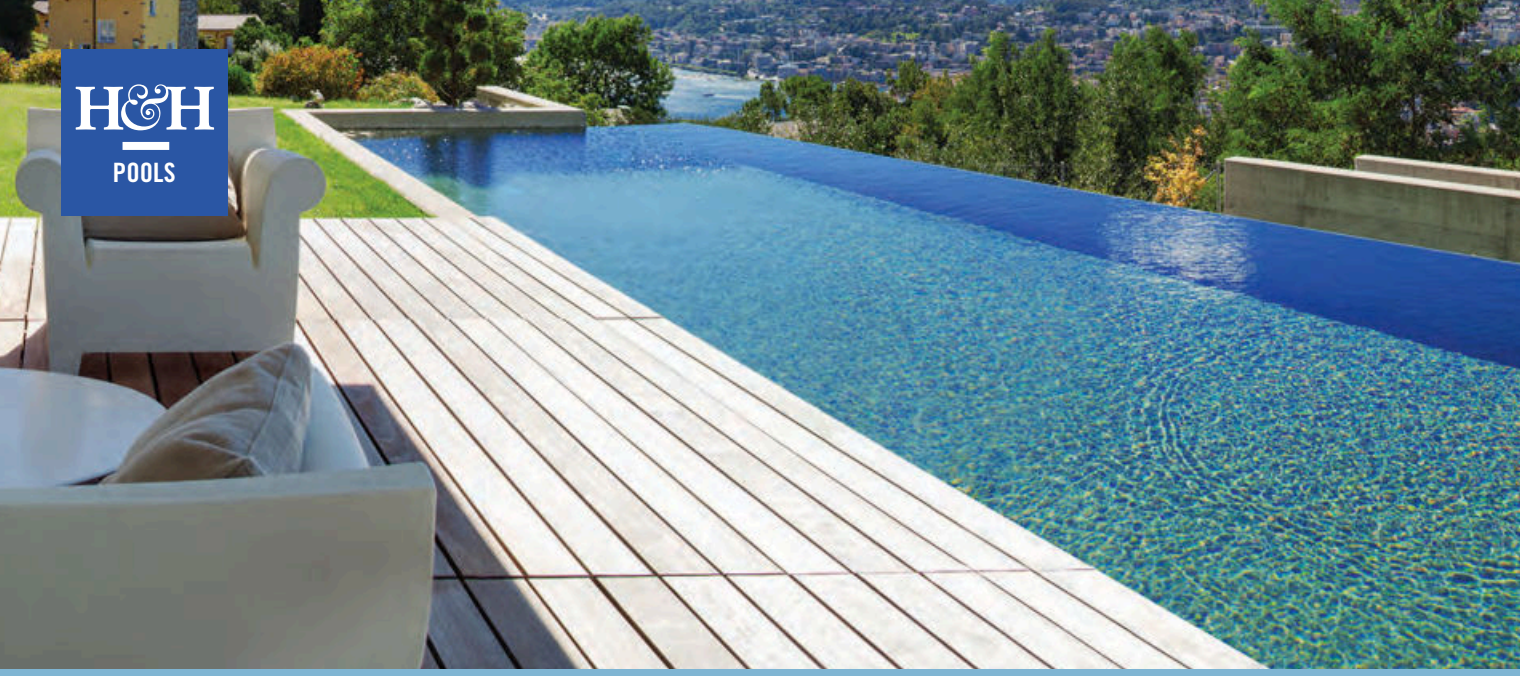
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DIVE INTO THE EXTRAORDINARY:

Exploring the World of Extreme Pools

by **Kristen Jorgensen**

When it comes to swimming pools, most people envision a rectangular body of water surrounded by deck chairs, a place to relax and cool off during hot summer days. However, there is a breed of swimming pools that transcends the ordinary, pushing the boundaries of design, engineering and imagination. These extraordinary marvels are known as extreme pools. Join us as we dive into the world of extreme pools, where creativity knows no limits and aquatic adventures await.

Take the Plunge

Since living in a post-COVID era, homeowners are still finding the appeal in investing in home projects and creating escapism right in their own backyards. According to industry professionals, pool installations and custom design projects have increased over the last five years. "We have seen a vast range of projects over the past few years," explains Sam Waddell from SLS Landscaping. "We've designed and installed pools as small as 10 feet by 10 feet and as large as miniature water parks. It really comes down to the interest and budget of the client."

Bryan Hull from Del Val Pools & Spas concurs. "There are many new amenities from sun decks to swim-up bar tables that can be shared with people out of the pool, to gas-driven creative fire illumination. Waterfalls and fountains are long-lasting staples. It's about how to get the most out of your pool oasis."

A unique style of pool that seems to be growing in popularity is the plunge pool.









While traditional backyard pools are typically 15 feet wide and 30 feet long, plunge pools tend to be no larger than 10 by 20 feet. They are also flat-bottomed and shallow, usually around five feet deep, and less expensive to maintain and easier to build. "A plunge design allows for a pool to fit snugly into a sloped backyard without interfering with a 100-year-old live oak on the property," Waddell explains. "I think people that are drawn to plunge pools are looking for a smaller footprint because maybe they have more functional areas in their yard, which is also a more modern look."

Larger swimming pools don't allow for much else in the typical backyard, Waddell adds, while plunge pools leave space for dining and play areas. They can also "make your yard look and feel like a staycation spot."

Tanning Ledges

Don't let the name fool you, the shallow entry design of a tanning





H&H POOLS

ledge, or often referred to as a sun shelf, offers plenty of entertainment and options for adults, as well as kids too. So while you can use this feature as a spot to relax and to work on your tan, the benefits of a tanning ledge go beyond just catching a few rays.

For families with young children, tanning ledges offer babies and toddlers a place to splash and play without having to be fully submerged in the pool. It also gives little ones an easier entryway since pool steps can be difficult for young swimmers.

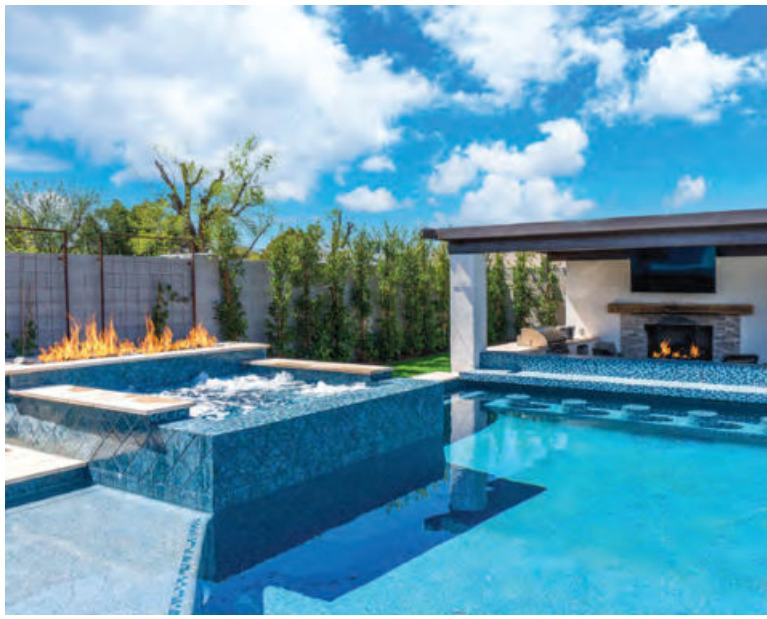
Tanning ledges can also be large enough for several pool-friendly lounge chairs to be partially submerged in the water, and umbrella stands can be incorporated into the design. It's like having a resort in your backyard.

Pools That Are Making a Splash

Freeform pools have also skyrocketed in popularity over the last few decades, and for good reason—they are a beautiful pool design concept. The freeform pool design is meant to mimic a natural body of water and to blend in with its surroundings, contributing to a more peaceful and natural backyard landscape.

"The benefit of freeform pools is the overall design flexibility. It doesn't matter what shape your backyard is, how much space you're working with, or whatever other unique requirements you have—a freeform design is a blank canvas, and you can make just about anything work," explains Andrew McFarlane of California Pools.

Another benefit of a freeform-style pool is all of the additional features you can add to the design. "We build a lot of freeform pools that feature everything from a classic large water slide to more unique additions like grottos. We also completed a project which was a freeform pool with a vanishing edge that looked off the top of the hill into the hillsides: A really stunning design and one of my favorite builds," says McFarlane.



Fire and Water Features

While outdoor fire features, like fireplaces and different varieties of fire pits, tend to be located on patios and decks, the latest pool design trends blend fire and water together. Both elements add drama that can elevate the look and feel of your pool. Whether you are looking for some added ambiance, warmth and lighting for nighttime swims, or a place to roast a few s'mores, there are plenty of ways to incorporate both fire and water features into your overall design.

"Rectangular pools with entertaining spaces, sunken bars, or fire pit areas, seem to be popular



and are also creating those social spaces homeowners are looking to gain when designing their pool," McFarlane adds.

Walk-in Pools

One of the most obvious upsides to a walk-in pool is the fact that you can just walk right in—it's right there in the name! You're replacing corner stairs with a long, wide slope. The slope in these types of pools means that it will get gradually deeper as you go. It's a lot like a wave pool you might see at an amusement park, minus the waves.

There's also no denying that walk-in pools can be aesthetically pleasing. Depending on what sort of patio you choose, you could make the whole space look just like a beach in your backyard.

The Spool

By blending the words spa and pool, you get a "spool." In recent years, pool builders have increased business with homeowners with tighter budgets and smaller properties who request water features that are smaller than traditional swimming pools but larger than standard spas. Many homeowners use a spool mostly for relaxation and entertaining—a place to soak and cool off on hot days or to enjoy drinks with friends on pleasant evenings. Spools may even have directional jets against which you can swim.

"Depending on how you outfit your spool, this type of pool will cost significantly less than a standard pool installation. Maintenance is also usually easier than with larger pools, but you will still have water chemistry and filter equipment to manage," explains Wadell.

Classic is Still Cool

With a world filled with architectural aquatic marvels, the classics have also had a resurgence according to Mike McCool from Swim-Mor Pools.

"Exotic pool styles are trending, but I have seen a major comeback in the classic Hamptons-style pool. Homeowners who are investing a lot of capital into their backyard projects are looking for longevity of style."

A great way to complete the Hamptons style aesthetic is to incorporate complementary landscaping. "We typically deck out the yard with landscaping and hardscaping native to things you would find in the Nantucket area. Plants like manicured boxwoods, hydrangeas, and variations of roses," says McCool

Extreme pools are not merely places to swim; they are architectural masterpieces, audacious experiments, and gateways to new experiences. From suspended transparent pools to infinity pools blending with the horizon; from natural wonders to underwater kingdoms; and urban oases defying conventions, these extraordinary aquatic creations take swimming to a whole new level. Whether you seek adventure, luxury or a harmonious connection with nature, extreme pools are designed to captivate and awe. So, dive in, explore the extraordinary, and let the magic of extreme pools transport you to a world where dreams become a reality. H&H

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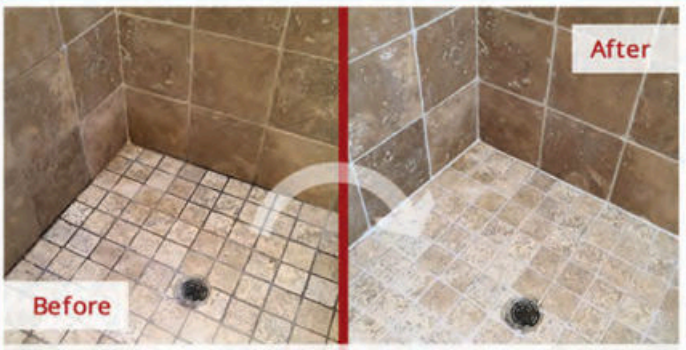
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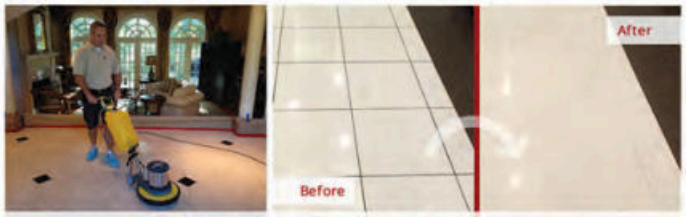
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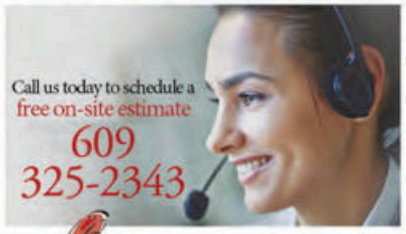


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