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South Jersey

Your #1 Resource and Design Magazine

Volume 24, Issue 7

HOUSE & HOME 25 YEAR ANNIVERSARY EDITION

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New Castle Artisan

Why concrete resurfacing is an attractive alternative to replacement page 21



Daniel Robert Remodeling

How to breathe new life into a historic home page 27

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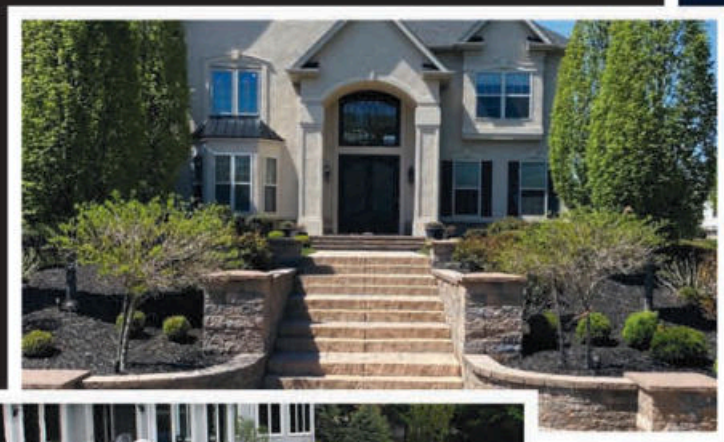
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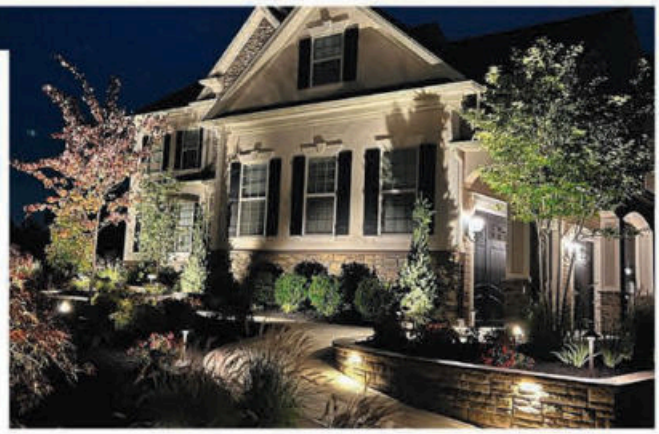
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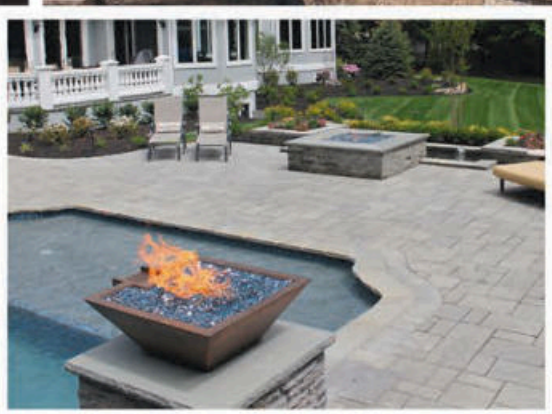
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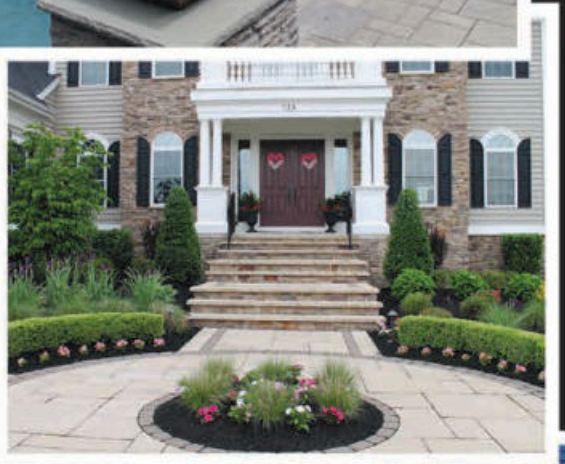
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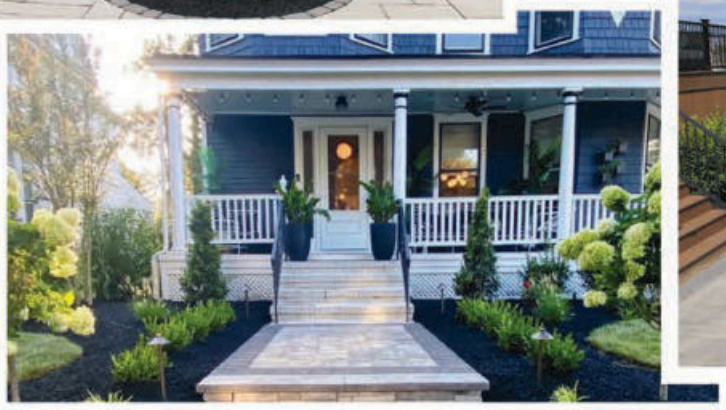


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H&H profile

By Liz Hunter



Creating a Serene Summer Space

Let the experts at **Gill's Landscaping** take care of your outdoor space while you enjoy the weather.

Summer is in full swing and chances are, you want to spend every spare moment outdoors. Wouldn't it be nice to simply enjoy your outdoor space without having to worry about keeping it looking good?

Enter Gill's Landscaping. An industry leader in South Jersey for more than 30 years, Gill's Landscaping has carved out a niche as the consummate full-service landscaping and maintenance company in the region, transforming yards into lush landscapes with blooming flowers, perfectly manicured trees and shrubs, tranquil ponds and accent lighting as a finishing touch.

Whether you require a comfortable garden or an outdoor entertaining space complete with a kitchen or a poolscaping project, Gill's can tackle projects large and small, including landscaping, irrigation, hardscaping and more.

One of the biggest differentiators with Gill's is the fact that they don't subcontract any work. "From start to finish, from design to the final piece of mulch, your project is done 100 percent through Gill's," says owner Brian Gill.

"Unfortunately, a lot of people are misguided by the 'fly-by-night' operations that offer to do the job 'at a great price,'" he continues. Gill's Landscaping's customer-oriented design process is meant to produce the best long-term implementation of a customer's vision. That's how they consistently produce results they can be proud of today, and customers can be proud of for many, many years.

Gill's offers free consultations with certified horticulturalists and landscape designers to help clients with the details of the space. They suggest ideas that can make the space unique to a homeowner's style of house based on their expertise. "It's important that our customers are never left out of any step in the process of their project," says Brian Gill. "Collaboration with the client is key."

Ed Swietanski, Gill's sales manager, says, "We first want to meet with the client at their home and walk through the property. We'll discuss their vision for the space and bounce around ideas. This initial meeting should not be one-sided. We want the customer's interaction. It's important to know what they like, and probably just as important to know what they don't like. We're here to solve a problem, which might be adding curb appeal or replacing plants that have not grown properly. We'll put together a plan with materials we know will do well on your particular property."

Gill's wants to create a successful harmony of plantlife and outdoor living areas.

"Our goal is to create visual interest throughout the year," says Swietanski. "We don't want to create a static landscape that never changes. We try to choose materials that will bloom at different times. You might have a rose bush blooming in the summer, but then in the fall something else is providing that life and color to the yard.

"We're also doing a lot of hardscaping, replacing walkways with paver materials from Techo-Bloc or EP Henry. LED night lighting is also another popular feature that is becoming more economical and adds visual interest at night."



One of the most important aspects of any landscaping project is the materials used. Gill's ensures that each customer receives only the highest quality plant and bedding materials, says Swietanski. "Inferior materials and mulch can lead to gardens with a short life expectancy and beds filled with unsightly weeds. Repair and replacements for shoddy work end up costing the customer more in the long term."

Gill's prides itself on educating clients on the best flower, plant and tree options for their specific property to ensure they will last for years to come.

"We treat every yard like it's our own," says Brian Gill. "Curb appeal is everything, especially if you're thinking of selling your home, and we will use the best quality products and plants that will thrive for decades."

Swietanski adds that it is important for anyone considering hiring a landscaper to check they are certified and licensed. Gill's Landscaping maintains a New Jersey Home Improvement Contractors License, DEP Pesticide License and an IANJ Irrigation license to ensure quality service and much-needed expertise.

That experience truly sets Gill's apart. "We have a full staff in the office to answer calls or questions, and Ed and the guys in the field are dedicated and knowledgeable." The company makes sure all of its staff take continuing education courses and are properly certified in all aspects of the job.

Gill says he attributes much of the company's success to hard work and determination, but he puts a bigger emphasis on the commitment and dedication of his staff. "For any business to succeed, you need to surround yourself with good people," he says. "My staff is the backbone of this company and my customers always have nothing but good things to say about them and I truly appreciate everything they bring to the business." H&H

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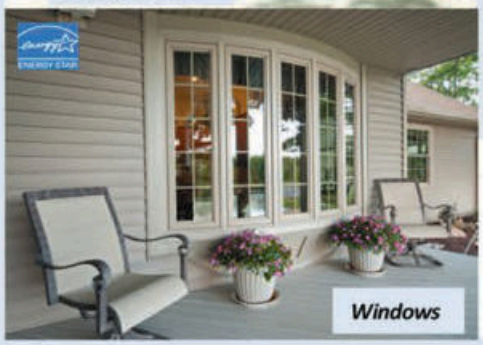
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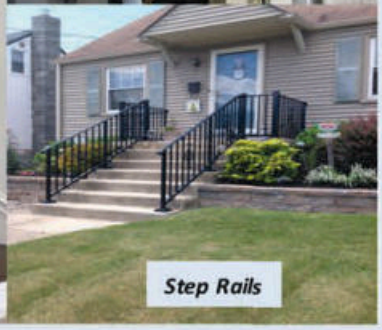
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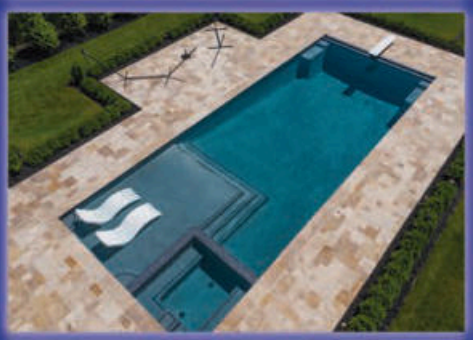
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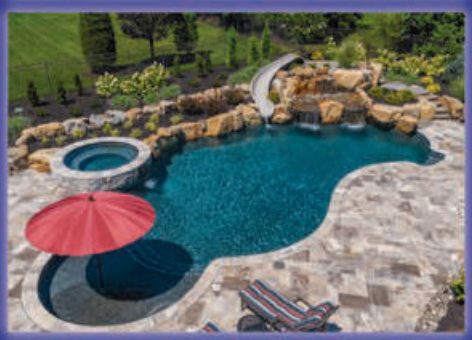
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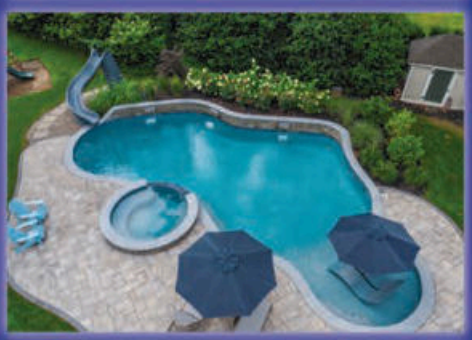


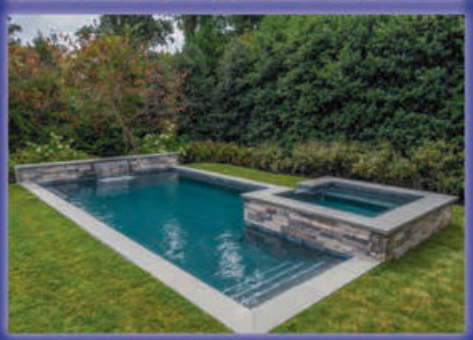


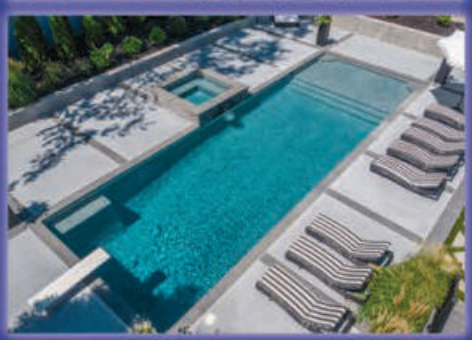


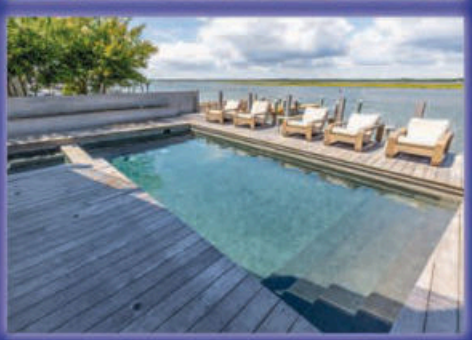












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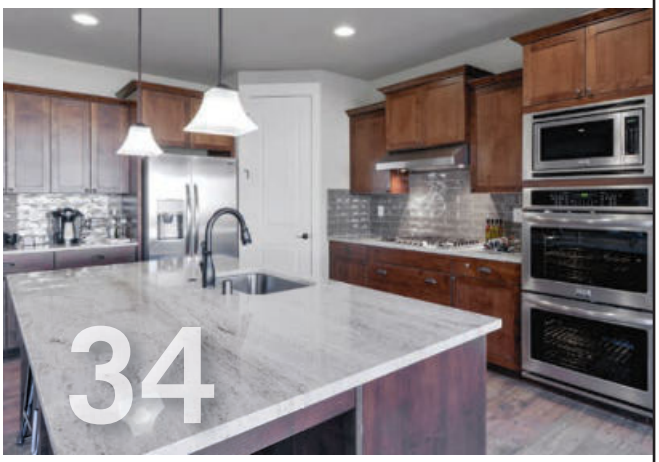
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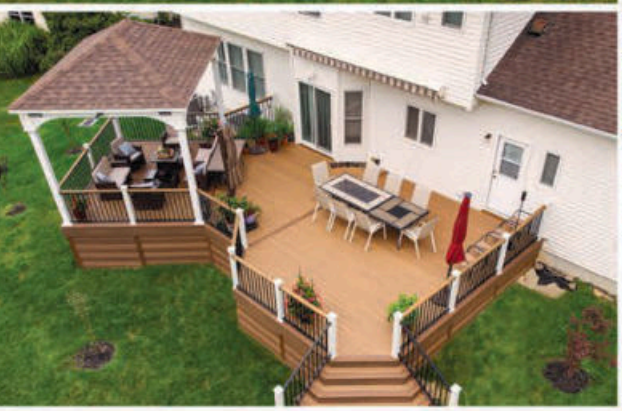
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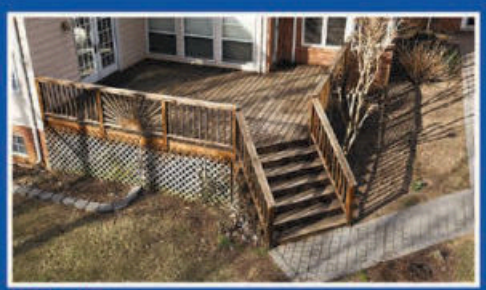




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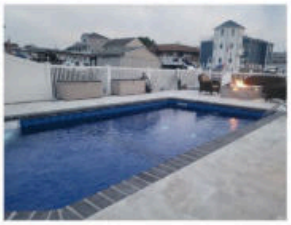




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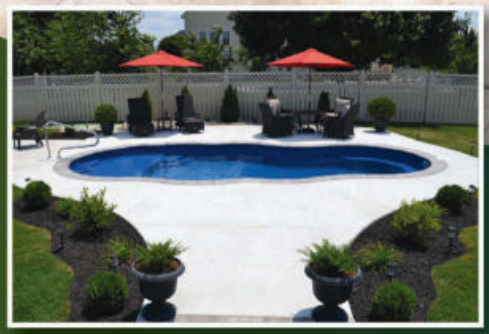
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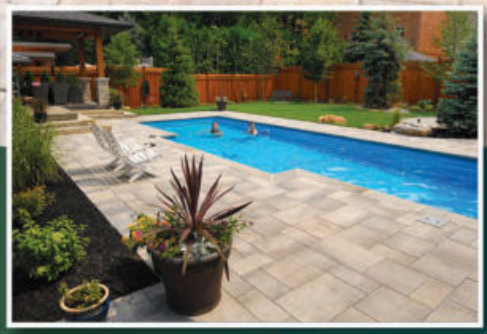
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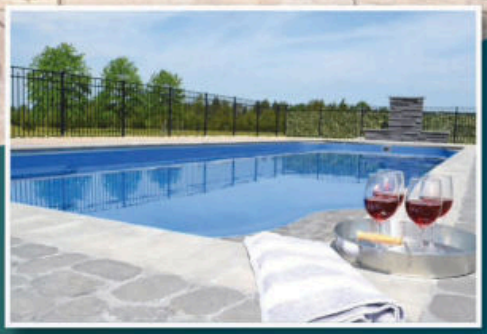
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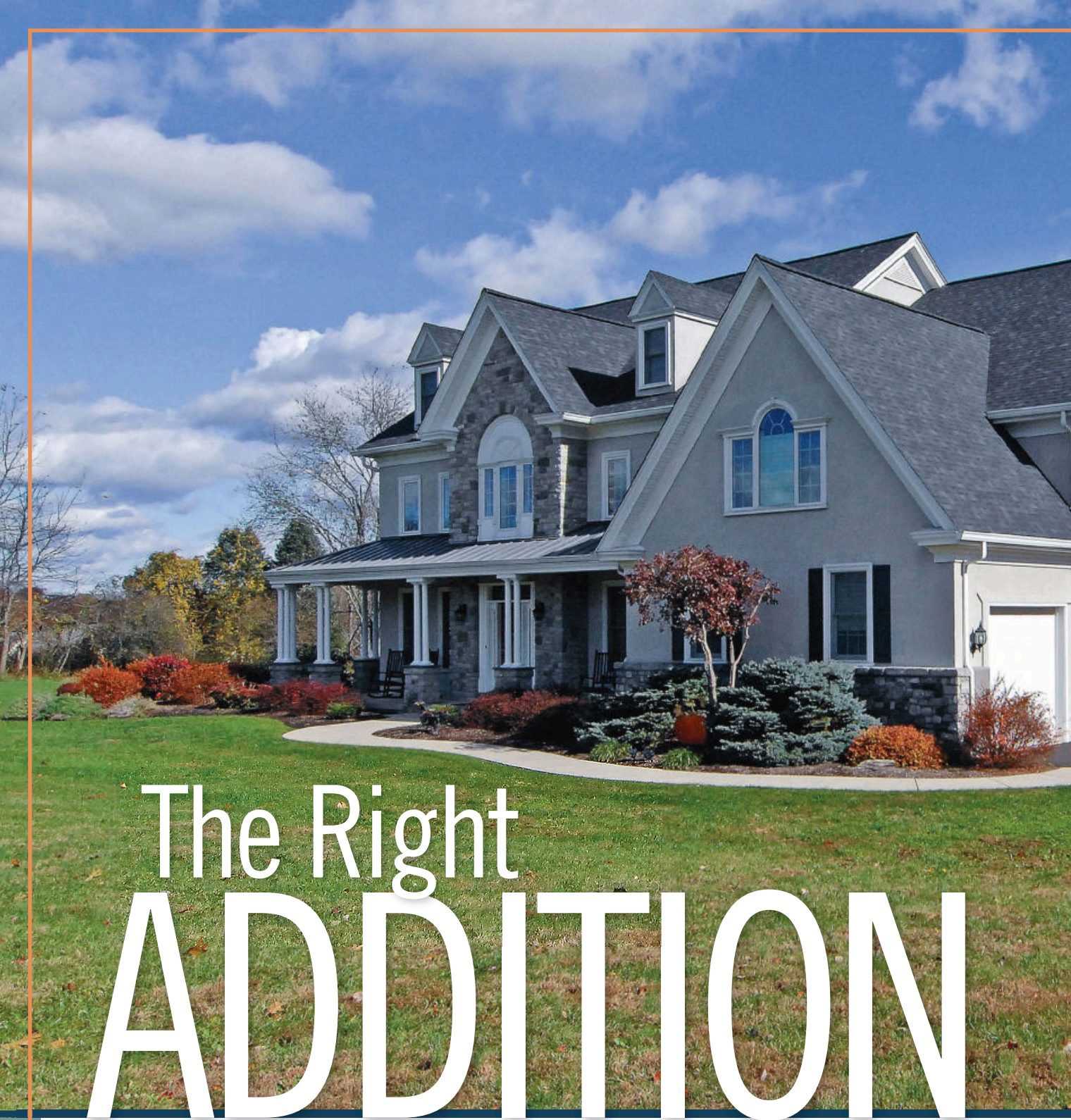
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The Right ADDITION

Whether you're adding an extra suite for loved ones, an entertainment room, a second kitchen or something else entirely, **the possibilities for a home addition are endless.** by Carly Murray



PREFERRED GEHMAN REMODELING

REMODELING A ROOM OR REDESIGNATING ITS GOALS MAY WORK FOR A QUICK FIX, BUT EXPERTS ARE SEEING A RISE IN HOMEOWNERS ADDING SPACE TO THEIR HOMES. This allows for full creativity in idea conceptualization as it's not only starting from scratch, but also designing an area from inception and influencing its structure. If it's realistic, and township-approved, the sky's the limit for inventiveness and artistry, especially with the guidance of a professional.

"It takes a fair amount of time to do the planning … but what can happen is, over time the more you think about it, the project sort of grows in your mind and maybe you want to add things. The better a project is planned up-front, the smoother it goes while it's happening. And for us, 99% of the time, the people are living at home while we're doing the renovations, so it's extremely important that we have things well-planned out," says Dennis Gehman, president of Gehman Design Remodeling.

The time frame for each project is different depending on lifestyle, expectations and various methods of planning. Some might like to take their time and ensure every detail is mapped out before construction begins. Others might like to decide on elements as they go after seeing their ideas come to life. It's important to remember that it is an undertaking that requires several moving pieces.

"You want to at least give yourself a good six months to basically come up with a written scope, decide on a floor plan, have material selections, and then also allow ample time for permitting and lining up your trades for construction because that can take a little time," explains Eileen Lee, operations manager of Total Home Solution.

Homeowners generally know what they want by the time they call a professional, but for those still in the brainstorming phase, there are plenty of sources of inspiration already out there. From home bars, sun rooms, libraries, kids' lounges and music rooms to a room decked out in sports memorabilia perfect for inviting loved ones to watch the game, any passion can become a reality with the help of a professional. With the internet in addition to print publications and television, there's millions of models available to spark your vision.

"Do a little bit of homework and gather some inspiration. Have some ideas and those details that you're really set on having. That way, we can give a more accurate proposal in the beginning. Because with an addition, things can get complicated and things can get missed. So, it's really good to have a little

The Right ADDITION



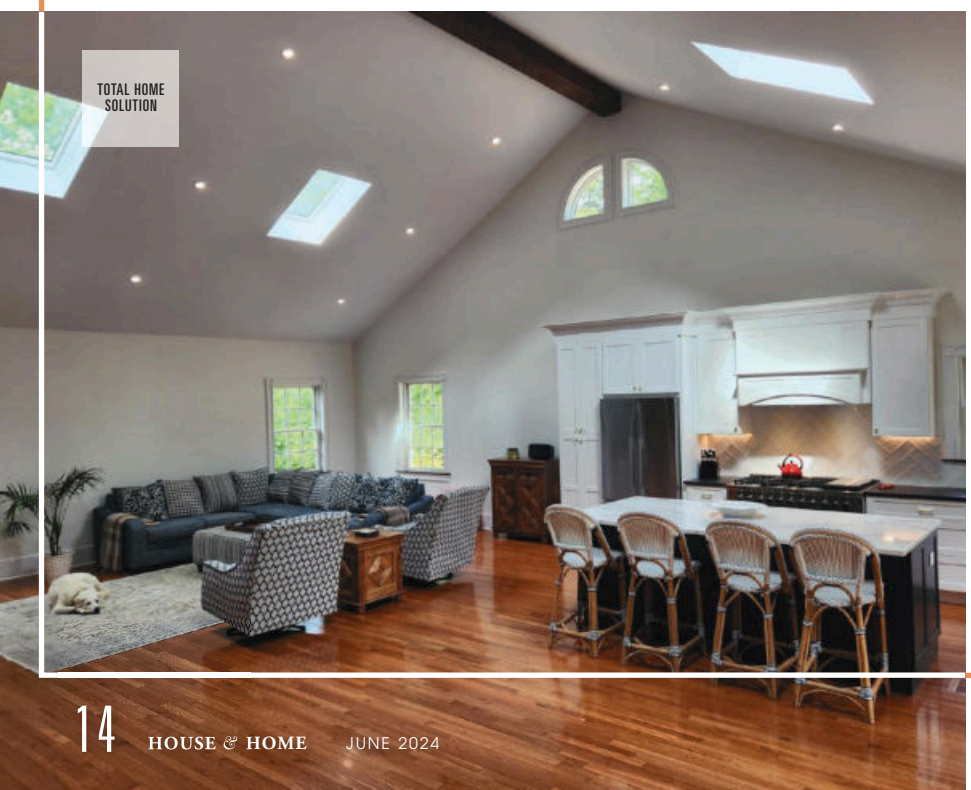
bit of a game plan before even giving us a call. That way, a vision is really understood by our salesmen and project managers," notes Jessica Jurisch, marketing manager at E&E General Contracting LLC.

Jurisch encourages those interested in a home addition to call sooner than later, as the permitting process is different in every area. Sometimes approvals take up to six weeks, and the entire build requires the collaboration of a permitting project manager, an engineer, an architect, the homeowner and the township. There's a lot involved in the process of a home addition, but those who go through it find it worth the time, planning and effort, as additions can suit any range of needs or desires, both practical and recreational.

"A very popular development is multigenerational living, so some type of in-law suite. We've been seeing a rise in that in the past few years or so," says Lee. "We've also seen a lot of conversions or additions based on specialty needs like saunas and gyms or she sheds. We've also seen a lot of spaces for hobbies or crafting, gaming rooms and man caves."

With the housing market especially difficult to afford or to navigate for young adults, that multigenerational living trend has also extended to creating expanded spaces for adult children to live at home and still have their space and privacy. Although additions take work, the result is a place that makes life easier by adding accessibility. Gehman has helped homeowners who want to stay in place as they age, so adding space to the first floor makes doing so safer.

"A first-floor bedroom, like a master suite, is almost more of an aging-in-place kind of thing. People who are getting older realize they like their house and neighborhood; they want to stay there, but getting on the stairs to the second-floor bedrooms is becoming more difficult. So, we've done a number of bedrooms and bathroom additions," he says.



Other pragmatic uses for an addition include a place for pets, an extra kitchen or a home office. It really depends on the unique personality of each household. The more personalized a project is, the more special it will become. That is just one of several benefits to adding space instead of moving to a larger home. Another is the cost comparison: Although construction for an addition is an investment, many feel that the aforementioned modern housing market is not worth the hassle of a transition.

"The benefits of adding space as opposed to moving are pretty obvious. First off, moving stinks. It's a lot of work. Leaving the home, neighborhood, and potentially schools that your family knows could be challenging and emotional. You know what you have with your home and you've put in a lot to get it to where it is today," affirms Brian Iwano, owner of Blue Tree Builders.

And if you decide to move in the future, additions benefit both property value and curb appeal. After all of the planning, permitting, construction and decorating, an addition will be advantageous due to its fulfillment of relaxation, convenience or entertainment; but it can also be profitable one day. Especially if equipped with the utilities or organizational structure for a walk-in closet or another bathroom, for example, the expansion will be



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a selling point when placed on the market.

"Depending on the type of addition that it is, you can generally see between like 50% and 80% return on investment. That's just in the current market, so who knows what that would be in a few years. Square footage is always a good choice when looking to add property value [especially] depending on what type of addition you're wanting to do. So, the most return on investment you're going to get is with a kitchen space," Jurisch explains.

If practicality isn't the ideal vision, a homeowner can still get a return on investment. The interior may be out-of-the-box customization to the extreme, but design-build companies are skilled at making the exterior match the original structure while making the entire house look better than before. Jurisch compares addition construction to a "mini house build," and recommends that homeowners treat it as such.

"Additions can increase curb appeal as these projects typically [require] significant exterior remodeling as well. During this process, it's the opportune time to make updates to siding, roofing, landscaping and other finishes that definitely help curb appeal," adds Iwano.

It is never too early to get started and to let ideas flow, no matter how inventive. There are so many renovation solutions to transform a space, but building from the ground up guarantees that every detail will fit household preferences. The finished product will be an evolution in enjoying everyday life, right at home. H&H

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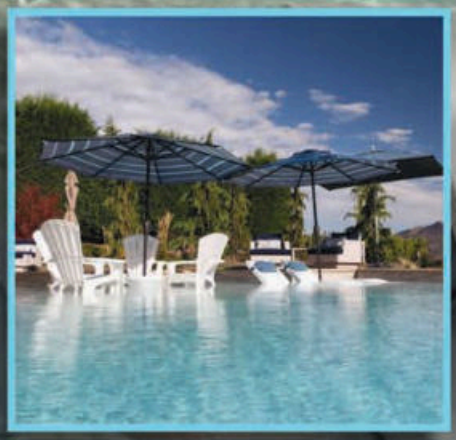
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ask the expert

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 CHOOSE RESURFACING OVER REPLACING THEIR CONCRETE?
The benefit of resurfacing is that instead of just fixing an issue like cracking, pitting or damage from mold, you are also making an improvement that boosts your home's value. Right now, if you have concrete that's cracked or not leveled, you could opt to repair or replace with new concrete, but that won't increase the curb appeal or value of your home. With resurfacing, we can add design elements and carve the cracks into the existing pattern after we repair them. The result is more valuable both 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 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.


Gwen Kunkel and brother Paul Randall of New Castle Artisan

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.

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.



DO YOU DO CUSTOM COLORS AND DESIGNS?
Yes! New Castle Artisan offers you a variety of shades and textures for your concrete resurfacing project. Plus, you can choose from a large selection of design templates, or even submit your own! It's our passion to ensure we create something you'll love to live with!

HOW MUCH EXPERIENCE DOES NEW CASTLE ARTISAN HAVE?
The experts at NewCastle Artisan have over 30 years of experience in the concrete resurfacing industry. Our family-owned and operated business has locations in both New Jersey and Florida. We work daily with multiple generations of artisans to ensure your property gets the best of our expertise. H&H

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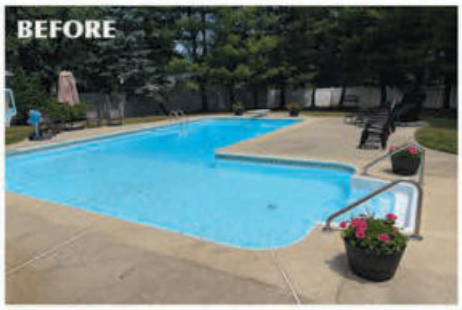


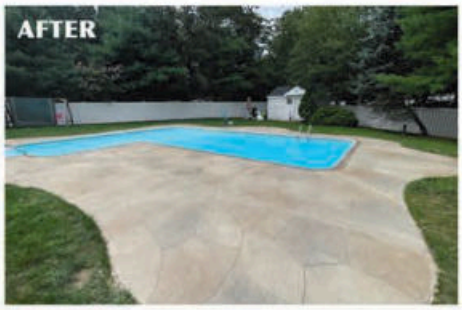
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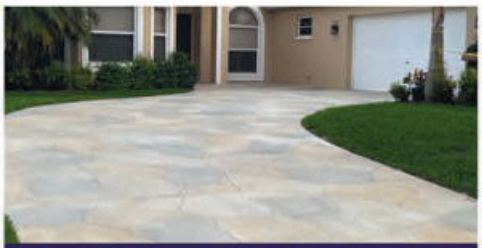
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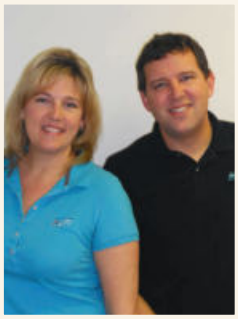
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GWEN KUNKEL AND HER BROTHER PAUL RANDALL OF NEW CASTLE ARTISAN



This year you celebrate your 32nd anniversary. What thoughts and emotions come to mind when you think about that?
We are grateful to have a service that is continued to be needed, regardless of the economy.

What made you start New Castle Artisan?
Bad experiences after several concrete installation failures.

Where did you draw inspiration in order to start and build this incredible business?
Our father.

In what different ways have you grown New Castle Artisan over the past 32 years in business?
Four years ago we expeanded to a second location in Southwest Florida to create a 12 month business.

What do you see as the biggest accomplishment since your start in the industry?
We have a successful, reliable family business.

What products/services do you currently offer that you think a homeowner values the most?
Concrete repairs along with resurfacing.

What is your favorite part of the job and what excites you the most?
We love that our end projects make people incredibly happy

In what ways do you expect to continue to grow?
I hope to teach my second generation our customer service skills and allow their fresher perspective to help grow the business.

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Amiano & Son Construction

What made you decide to pursue a career in the industry?
After graduating college, I went on a lot of interviews for everything from investigator jobs with the district attorney's office in Camden as well as private investigator positions. After going on the interviews I talked to my Dad about the construction company he had.

Where did you draw inspiration in order to start and build this incredible business?
After speaking to Lou Sr. about the construction company I grew up with, the one I worked in during the summers. He was hesitant at first. He wanted me to do what in his mind was the right thing, which was to use my degree to get a job. I, however, saw the possibilities of growing his construction company into a design-build concept, which was unheard of in the late '90s. I began to work with my Dad on ideas I learned from business courses.

What were your visions when you started in 2000 and how have you met them or even surpassed those goals?
In 2000, we incorporated and rebranded our company. The rebranding was that we could offer design concepts during the sales phase. Clients worked with myself and eventually the staff we hired to create the concept of the remodel we were hired for. At first I did everything—I was the bookkeeper, I did marketing, served as production manager, carpenter, laborer, salesman, estimator and office manager. In 2006, I brought in my wife, Wendy Amiano, to take over the office positions. Her marketing and public relations background helped take my vision to the next level.

In what different ways have you grown Amiano & Son over the past 56 years?
There are so many ways my company grew to where it is today. Prior to my partnership with my dad, his company was much different. He took on mostly masonry work. From time to time, he would do general contracting on a small project. My father, like many from his era, was a self-taught tradesmen. I can proudly say the men who worked with my dad were some of the best quality tradesmen I have ever met. They were the men who helped to build South Jersey. The skills and attention to detail they had always stuck with me.

When I look back at my career as an entrepreneur, I cannot believe the journey. It took me from my many hats I had to wear, to a company that successfully employs over 20 local residents. I look at a company that went from one or two projects at a time to an eight-to-12 project at a time company. I went from a zero award company—which bothered my competitive nature—to a national and regional award-winning company. I went from working in a home office to two full-service design-build showrooms. One of the first in our area back in 2011!

What do you see as the biggest accomplishment since your start?
Being able to offer good careers to good people is a huge accomplishment for Amiano. Wendy and I worked hard to create an internal brand for our staff. It took some time but it has paid off. We have a wonderful team that includes family of mine and family of our long-term staff whose kids we watched grow and they wanted to work with us! That is a huge compliment to a small business. Being able to offer such diverse and good career opportunities is because of the success of Amiano as a premier design-build remodeler in New Jersey. Studying and learning from some of the best in the industry is what kept driving my passion for more. Seeing ideas from business leaders in the construction industry nationally gave me the confidence to take Amiano to the next level every time. Making my motto, "We can always improve."



LOU AMIANO OWNER
AMIANO & SON CONSTRUCTION

What is your favorite part of the job?
I enjoy going to conferences and learning new things. The new trends in both business and construction are paving the way for better living. Staying on top of new trends keeps my newest staff engaged and motivated. I am very process oriented. I actually enjoy creating processes to solve problems. When you combine learning environments, such as conferences, with the creativity of a process to implement, you as a business owner are literally taking your entire staff to the next level. That is what we strive for, constant improvement.

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A Matter of Trust

When it comes to finding the right contractor for the job, **Emmons Remodeling** offers clients both expertise and peace of mind.

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 Remodeling, a company that has been offering expert care for South Jersey and the Jersey Shore area since 1996. They are a wellknown 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."

Emmons Remodeling has been providing interior remodeling service throughout New Jersey and Pennsylvania for more than 30 years. The company has built its solid reputation on craftsmanship and exceptional customer service.

As the family-owned company grows, it has expanded the team that is available to help design and build your projects. Several talented remodeling industry professionals have recently joined Emmons to serve its over 6,000 existing customers and help expand the growing number of satisfied customers throughout South Jersey.

And the expertise is not limited kitchens and bathrooms. Emmons provides full-service remodeling and construction services for additions, interior renovations, porches, decks, windows, doors and basement finishing. The design team acts as your trusted advisor to help you make the right decisions on products, materials, colors and selections. They make it easy using a proprietary curated design concept, which is an industry first. It's an easy, affordable way to quickly get a custom designed project without the heavy cost of a design-build process.

You can always trust Emmons to provide exceptional value and design with quality project outcomes. Now with Krista (lead designer/project planning manager), Rebecca (project design consultant), Frank (construction project manager) and Pete (director of operations) teaming up with seasoned vice president of construction Chris Kelly, key project manager Eric Gilham and 20 trade professionals, you can rest assured that your project is designed and built right. A five-year warranty and a lifetime service guarantee back up the claim of quality and craftsmanship, while providing you with peace of mind that you made the right decision.

The experts at Emmons are always ready to help you with kitchen, bathroom, additions and deck solutions. They make remodeling your home easy and affordable with exceptional financing programs and realistic pricing. Trust Emmons with your next project.

After all, the Emmons' mission statement is: "Our customer's experience builds our business and defines our reputation, which is one of trust, reliability, integrity and value for every customer we serve."

Choosing Wisely

At the end of the day, your choice in roofing, siding and window contractors can be the difference between good, quality work—and a big headache. Stephanee 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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Daniel Robert Remodeling

A PROJECT IN CAPE MAY IS UNIQUE DUE TO THE TOWN'S HISTORICAL PRESENCE WITH MORE THAN 300 YEARS OF HISTORY, STEMMING BACK TO THE EARLY 1600'S. While Cape May is well known for its rich history and architecture reflecting the Victorian Age, it also played a pivotal role during the Civil War. Designated as a National Historic Landmark on May 11, 1976, many of its buildings are original and often new homes are reflective of a traditional style.

Every part of a home—even a historical home like those in Cape May— is open to renovations, and decisions are carefully made to include style and functionality. There is one part of the home however that is often overlooked, despite its large importance and looming presence—the roof.

There are plenty of options available in terms of roofing including different colors and materials that can truly make or break the exterior design and effectiveness of a home. Furthermore, a solid roof can prevent catastrophic financial issues steaming from leaks, collapses, increased heating and air conditioning bills and more.

All of these considerations were carefully planned out by the team at Daniel Robert Remodeling when working on their recent roofing project in Cape May.

House & Home spoke to Frank Redrow, Vice President of Daniel Robert Remodeling to learn more about their process and the often under-discussed world of roofing design.



HOW DID CAPE MAY'S DISTINCTIVE AESTHETICS PLAY INTO YOUR PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS?

A roofing project, especially in a town like Cape May, is much more than slapping on a few shingles and calling it a day. There are numerous decisions that need to be made. For example, shingles can be installed in unique color patterns or chosen to highlight the specific details of the house.

Some historical homes have blue tile roofs that can be replaced with an Atlantic Blue architectural shingle. This keeps in with the theme of home, provides better ventilation when installed correctly, increases property value, and can be seen dotting the New Jersey shoreline on many of the historical or historical-look homes.

For this particular home, the architectural shingle and color was picked to keep with the traditional look of the home and with the original siding color while pulling in the view of the bay.

WHAT OTHER OPTIONS FOR SHINGLES DO HOMEOWNERS HAVE?

There are many colors shingles can come in from the Atlantic Blue architectural shingle to asphalt shingles meant to resemble wood. Max Definition shingles are architectural shingles that contain color variations that give a three-dimensional look to the roof - almost like it's popping out at the viewer.

CAN A HISTORICAL SOCIETY OR A TOWN AFFECT YOUR ROOF?

A town and even a historical society may publish certain guidelines that need to be followed on roof color, appearance and even materials.

IN TERMS OF FUNCTIONALITY, WHY ARE PROPERLY INSTALLED SHINGLES IMPORTANT?

Unless they own a historical home which traditionally uses Cedar Shake shingles, most homes use asphalt shingles which need to be vented. To accomplish this, some homes have a ridge vent that goes on the peak of the house and pulls air up and out of the attic. Other homes have an edge vent or a soffit vent which pulls the air through the edge of the roof. A hip roof, where all four sides gently slope down, will require an attic fan because the ridge lines on the house are not enough to keep up with the gutter lines of the house.

If a home does use Cedar Shake shingles, it's important to regularly maintain them or else a build of moisture can occur and encourage mold growth.

Because of the potential for error, it's important to work with a trusted and experienced company that will guide you through the process. H&H



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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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H&H STONE

Choosing the Right Stone

Trends in kitchen countertops, backsplashes and flooring.

by **Kristen Jorgensen**

THE KITCHEN IS OFTEN CONSIDERED THE HEART OF THE HOME, and choosing the right materials for countertops, backsplashes and flooring can significantly impact its aesthetic appeal and functionality. In recent years, there have been exciting trends and developments in these areas, driven by advancements in material technology, evolving design preferences and a growing emphasis on sustainability. In this article, we dive into the latest trends with insight from local experts in our area and examine whether granite still reigns supreme, what's popular in colors and patterns, the evolution of backsplash choices and the latest options in kitchen flooring.

Countertops: Is Granite Still King?

For years, granite has been the go-to material for kitchen countertops, valued for its durability, heat resistance and natural beauty. However, recent trends suggest a shift in preferences. While granite remains a popular choice, it is no longer the undisputed king. That crown now goes to quartz, and our local experts agree with the masses.

"Quartz countertops have gained significant traction, offering a non-porous, low-maintenance alternative to natural stone. Unlike granite, which requires periodic sealing, quartz surfaces are highly resistant to stains, scratches and bacteria," shares David Cerami, president of Home-Tech Renovations. "It also offers a uniform appearance, which appeals to those homeowners who might be looking for a sleek, modern look."

Another industry expert, Vic Fiore from Magnolia Home Remodeling Group, weighs in on the desirability of quartz. "Quartz's ability to mimic the appearance

of natural stone, combined with its practical benefits, has made it a favorite among homeowners for many different kitchen designs and styles."

Backsplashes: Elevating Kitchen Design

Backsplashes have evolved from purely functional elements to key design features in the modern kitchen. They protect walls from spills and splashes, but they also offer a canvas for creativity, allowing homeowners to express their style. With a plethora of materials, colors and patterns available, backsplashes can transform the aesthetic of a kitchen.

Subway tiles have long been a staple in kitchen design, known for their simplicity and versatility. While the classic white subway tile remains popular, new variations are emerging that breathe fresh life into this timeless choice.

"We're still seeing the use of subway tiles, but with more personality in the design," offers Cerami. "Homeowners are selecting colored grouts or opting for more adventurous patterns of installation like herringbone or a staggered design."

Another option to jazz up a standard subway tile is selecting one with a textured surface or embossed patterns, offering a modern take on this classic look. Cerami elaborates: "Think tiles with a beveled edge, a wavy texture or a patterned surface. These tiles add dimension and visual interest to the backsplash without straying too far from tradition."

Another popular choice for a backsplash is large format tiles and slabs offering homeowners a seamless and sophisticated option. These options provide a sleek, continuous look that enhances the overall aesthetic of the kitchen.

"The larger slabs are particularly appealing in minimalist and modern kitchen designs. Their clean lines and expansive surfaces contribute to a streamlined, uncluttered appearance that emphasizes simplicity and elegance," says Fiore. "And it's also great for those who want easy kitchen cleanup."

Kitchen Flooring: Trends and Considerations

When it comes to kitchen design, flooring plays a crucial role in setting the tone of the space. It's a high-traffic area that demands durability, ease of maintenance and, of course, aesthetic appeal. With myriad flooring options available, each with its own set of benefits and styles, selecting the right one for your kitchen can be both exciting and overwhelming.

Sophia Amiano, designer with Amiano & Son Design-Build, eagerly shares her insight on the latest trends within the industry.

"As a home remodeling designer, I'm thrilled to share the latest trends shaping our spaces. The design world today is all





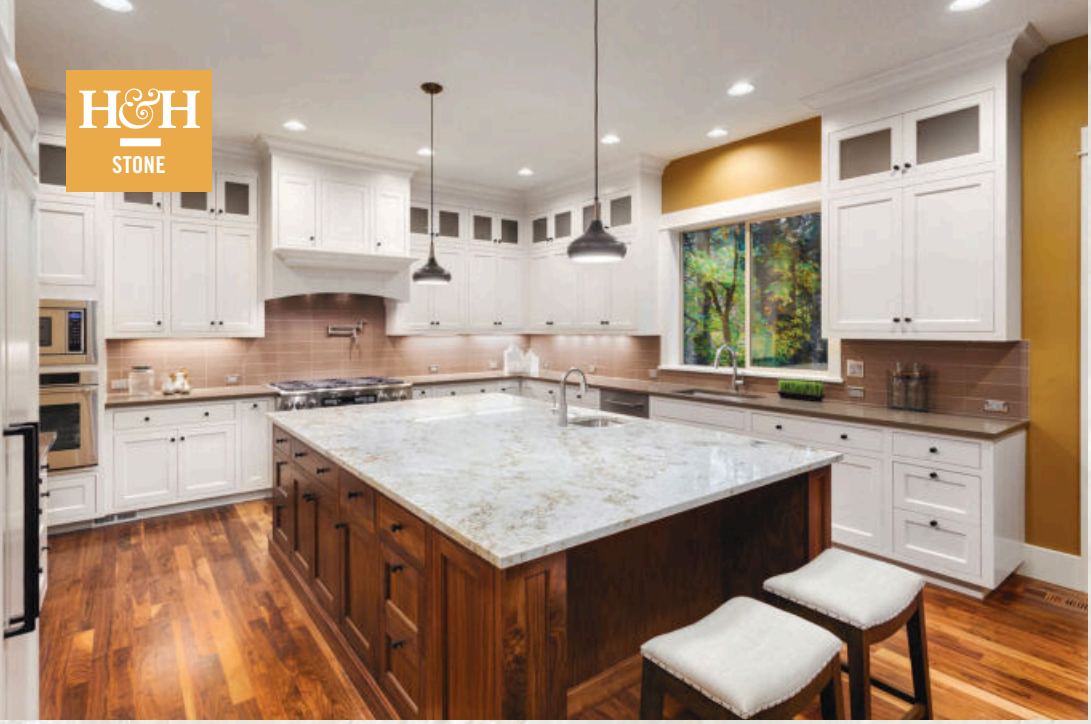
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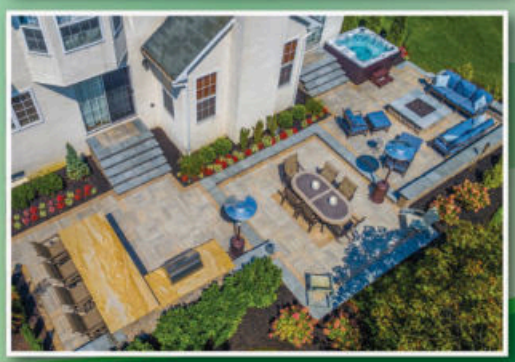
about embracing organic materials, raw textures and calming palettes," she says. "In kitchens and bathrooms, we're seeing a surge in linen-inspired tiles, basketweave mosaics, and classic black-and-white patterns. The modern farmhouse look has made way for tailored traditional designs with a rustic twist. Think rich wood tones, moody office spaces and playful laundry rooms."

Terrazzo and concrete floors are making a comeback, particularly in modern and industrial-style kitchens. Terrazzo, with its speckled appearance and diverse color options, adds a spirited yet sophisticated touch. Concrete floors, on the other hand, provide a sleek, minimalist look that complements contemporary designs. Both materials are highly durable and can be customized with different finishes and treatments.

Engineered wood flooring is also still popular, combining the beauty of hardwood with improved durability. It consists of a top layer of real wood veneer over a plywood or high-density fiberboard (HDF) core, which makes it more stable and less prone to warping than solid wood.

"For kitchen flooring, many homeowners are choosing warm wood to extend the cozy feel throughout their most-used spaces," says Amiano. "Additionally, concrete-inspired, sleek patterned tiles are becoming a highly sought-after look in contemporary kitchens. To add a personal touch or a dash of whimsy, incorporating fun, bold colors in select areas can bring a delightful pop and invigorate the overall design, making each space uniquely yours."

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In conclusion, it's safe to say that the world of kitchen design is ever-evolving, with new materials, colors and patterns continually emerging. Quartz is growing in popularity for countertops, offering unique benefits and a universally pleasing aesthetic appeal. In the realm of backsplashes, homeowners are embracing more intricate patterns, unconventional shapes and elevating the classic subway tile. For kitchen flooring, durable and stylish options like terrazzo and concrete are leading the way, with a growing emphasis on larger formats and unique patterns. Some homeowners, however, take a warmer, more traditional approach by opting for natural and engineered hardwoods.

Ultimately, choosing the right stone and flooring for your kitchen depends on your personal style, practical needs and the overall design vision for your space. By staying informed about the latest trends and innovations, you can create a kitchen that is not only functional but also a beautiful reflection of your taste and personality. H&H



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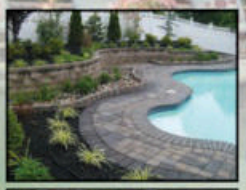
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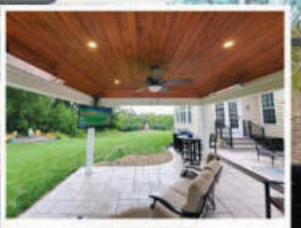


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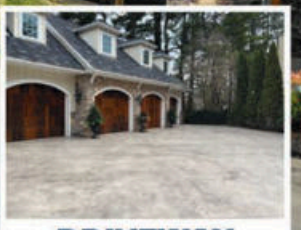


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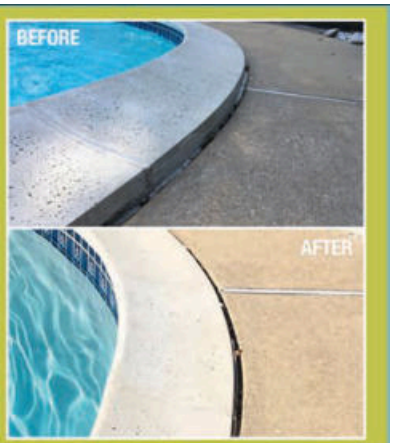
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