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Deck & Fence Superstore

Helping homeowners create their
dream outdoor projects with unmatched
products, service and prices. *page 13*

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EXPERT**



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BUILDERS**

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builder* page 15



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*What a certified designer can bring
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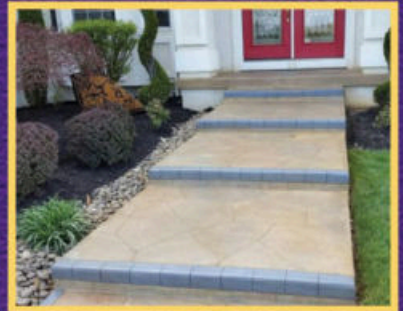
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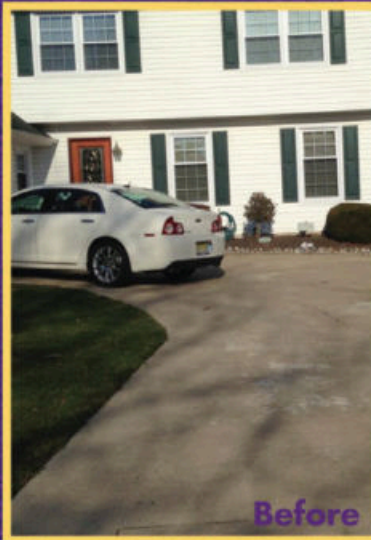
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On the cover:

Deck & Fence Superstore has been an industry leader in fencing for over 20 years, supplying high-quality products and exceptional service to the trade. The company has now added decking to their list of services, supplying well-known brands such as Trex and Fibron, at a fraction of the cost. To find out more about their product line and commitment to customers, turn to page 13. Cover image courtesy of Deck & Fence Superstore



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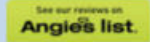
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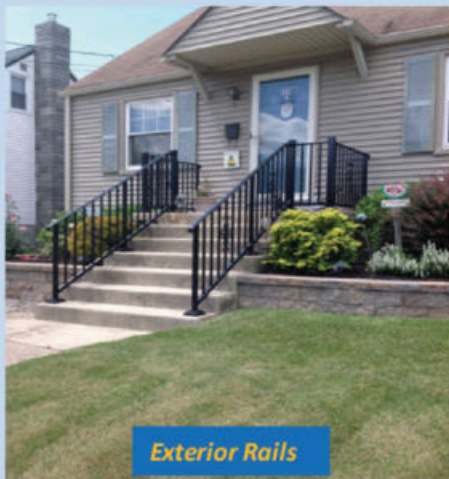


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Peter Proko

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Liz Hunter

ASSISTANT EDITORS

Matt Cosentino, Sydney Kerelo, Julie Shannon

CONTRIBUTORS

Lindsey Getz, Amanda Hamm Hengel, Daniel Sean Kaye, Brittany Ann Morrissey

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Hank Alspach

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Brian Mikulski

DESIGNERS

Nicole DiPace, Abby Lurty, Rachel MacCord, Dori Shields, Lisa Zollinger

ACCOUNTING DIRECTOR

Darlene Versak

SALES DIRECTOR

Lindsay Gonzalez

SALES MANAGER

Jim Romano

NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPER

Chuck McKane

MARKETING CONSULTANTS

Rochelle Dodge, Frank Liantonio, Rommel Magana,
Susie Smith, Laramie Traina, Amy B. Weiss

ACCOUNTANT

Max Haggerty

DIGITAL MEDIA DIRECTOR

Leigh Stuart

PUBLISHER EMERITUS

Bob Doran

EXECUTIVE PARTNERS

Gerry Haggerty, Edward P. McCartney

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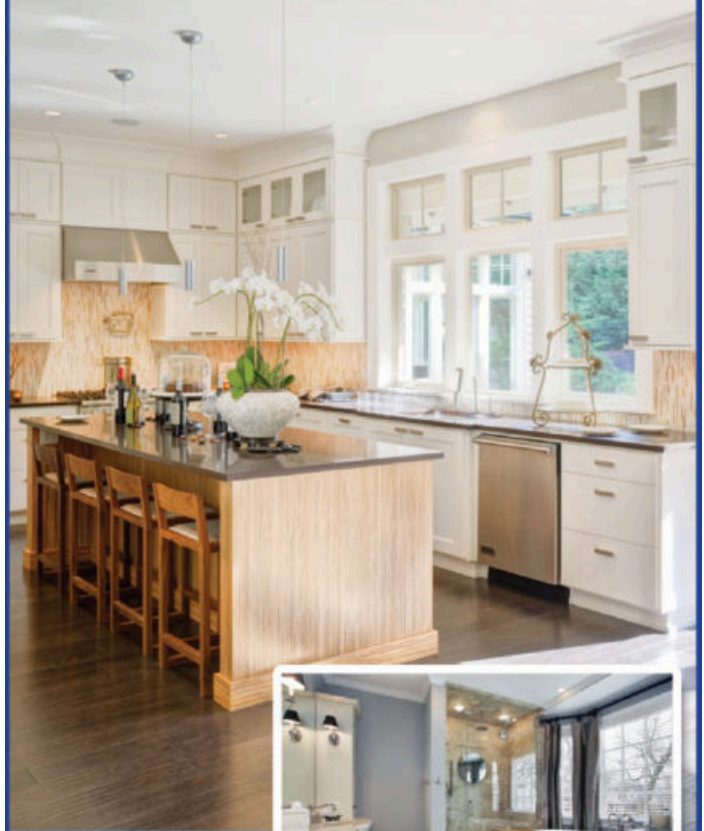
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H&H profile

Window Ware is a local Hunter Douglas dealer, providing the best in quality custom window treatments to bring a stylish, innovative look to your home.

by Julie Shannon

Investment in Beauty and Quality



Hunter Douglas Pirouette® window shadings



Hunter Douglas Silhouette® window shadings

There are many companies that say they offer the largest selection of window treatments, but there's one company in the area that is a Hunter Douglas Dealer who provides the best quality of service and products—Window Ware. Tom DePalma founded Window Ware in 1998 as a shop-at-home service offering window blinds and shades.

Over the past 22 years, DePalma has grown the business substantially to now include a retail gallery featuring displays of the latest in Hunter Douglas products, in addition to a department offering an extensive selection of over 10,000 designer fabrics and custom textiles, such as drapery, valances, window treatments, headboards and bedding.

"We have built a reputation for providing our clients superior service while also developing strong relationships with area designers," DePalma says. "A large portion of our business is generated from referrals and repeat business from satisfied residential clients."

Window Ware is committed to service and quality. They offer a large selection of custom Hunter Douglas window treatments, including designer roller, woven wood and Roman shades, in addition to shutters and blinds. Hunter Douglas products are not just aesthetically pleasing to the eye, but designed to provide energy savings and function more efficiently.

"We are proud to be an exclusive Hunter Douglas Dealer," DePalma says. "We made the decision to exclusively offer our clients Hunter Douglas products because they are truly the best-in-class window fashions. You can feel confident that each is designed with exceptional quality and industry-leading innovation, style and versatility. Compared to all other competitors, Hunter Douglas has mastered the art of window dressing by

engineering innovative functions into stylish versatile looks for every window in the home."

Window Ware also offers the most up-to-date products on the market, including PowerView Motorization—an advanced wireless system that allows homeowners to control any powered Hunter Douglas window treatment with smart devices.

"For example, you can precisely tilt the vanes of your window shadings to soften harsh light, or optimize the energy efficiency of your shades by setting a schedule to automatically move your shades according to the sun's daily patterns," DePalma says. "Even when you are away, you can adjust your window fashions via the RemoteConnect feature. Our system easily integrates with other smart home devices to deliver a complete in-home automation solution."

"Many of our window treatments are designed with remarkable insulating properties that can help lower your energy consumption and costs," DePalma continues. "With energy efficient styles available in a range of insulation levels, our products let you create inviting environments regardless of the season. Hunter Douglas products are designed and custom assembled in the United States and Canada, which results in shorter lead times from order to installation. The majority of our products are able to be installed within two weeks of order placement."

"Additionally, Hunter Douglas stands behind their commitment to quality with a lifetime limited warranty that comes with all products, many of which are GREEN GUARD certified, meaning they have met stringent indoor air quality guidelines."

Last spring, DePalma and his wife, Amy, expanded Window Ware's operations to

include a full-service Hunter Douglas Gallery. The gallery displays the full line of Hunter Douglas products in addition to an entire department that is devoted to custom textiles, such as custom window treatments, blinds and drapery, and bedding with over 10,000 designer fabric to choose from.

"The whole textile area adjacent to the gallery is designed to allow our customers to touch and feel the products and let their inspiration take over," DePalma says. "We have a large section of wall fabrics and samples for customers to choose from. They can visit and take their time reviewing options in our comfortable design area. We help guide them along the way to find exactly what they are looking for to create their own unique vision."

Window Ware has a dedicated trained team of installers as well as a full-time project manager—Sharon Scriboni. "Sharon's role supports our operation by working closely with Hunter Douglas, our clients, installers and designers to coordinate seamless execution of the details of each order and installation," DePalma says. "Our team's sole focus is ensuring that Window Ware continues to build and maintain our reputation for seamless operations and exceptional customer service."

From the first consultation to the last step of the design process and installation, Window Ware's professionals are there for you and strive to provide superior, personalized service during the entire window fashions purchase process.

"Our business has been built over the past two decades by personal service and making our focus to always exceed our clients' expectations from selection to installation and beyond," DePalma says. **H&H**

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THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT OUTDOOR LIVING SPACES have become more important in our lives, and having a comfortable area to relax and grill with family and friends is on the top of our to-do list here on the East Coast. Deck & Fence Superstore understands this and brings you the highest quality products at the lowest prices in the area. They have three New Jersey locations that allow them to easily service your needs.

Deck & Fence Superstore has been an industry leader in fencing for over 20 years, supplying high-quality products and exceptional service to the trade. Around 10 years ago they started to enter the railing market by offering maintenance-free vinyl systems and ADA-compliant hand rails. Since then they have added the decking component to the equation.

They now offer all of the products direct to the homeowners at a fraction of the cost.

They offer composite Trex and Fiberon deck kit packages starting as low as \$800 and can customize any of their deck kits to suit your project's needs. So whether you are planning to redo your existing deck or need a brand-new build, Deck & Fence Superstore has you covered. No project is too big or small. They offer in-store pickup or jobsite delivery—whatever you need they will work it out to ensure your project stays on track and within your budget.

Their DIY deck kit packages are a convenient bundle of products that give you a great starting point for your project.

"We have exceptionally low prices for an all-in-one system," owner Mark Patrick says. "Customers can come in and pick out the materials, size and color for their deck, and we have a kit ready to go for them. It will include all of the undercarriage framing and pressure-treated wood; it will include all of the composite deck boards; and it will include a vinyl railing system. It's everything they need in one gift package delivered right to their house, whether they want to build it themselves or hire a contractor."

Everything that Deck & Fence Superstore sells—including fencing of all styles and materials—is direct from the factory and up to 40-60 percent less expensive than industry standards. Compared to the amount spent using an established deck builder, it makes sense for many who are handy to complete the job themselves.

"Obviously, with a lot of home improvements, the labor is very, very expensive these days," Patrick says. "But you can get a deck kit from us for under \$1,000 for a small deck, and some of the bigger kits are in the \$2,000-\$4,000 range. To save \$10,000 for a couple weekends of work, and get a low-maintenance deck board with vinyl railing for a few thousand dollars is a

no-brainer. We offer an incredible value to the homeowner."

Deck & Fence Superstore has longstanding relationships with the biggest names in the industry and offers products from all the major manufacturers including Trex, Azek, Fiberon, TimberTech, MaxLife and Zuri. It has hundreds of options and dozens of colors in stock.

"Nowadays, nobody wants to go with pressure-treated wood deck boards that splinter and need a lot of maintenance," Patrick says. "So we try to give people tips on which composite or PVC boards are better for their situation."

"PVC is typically a little bit more money, but it's much cooler on your feet. Composites tend to get hot on sunny days with direct sunlight. The PVC boards have a harder surface too, which leads to a longer lasting and more scratch resistant surface. They're both going to stand up to wear and tear better than an old-fashioned wooden board."

Customers can browse Deck & Fence Superstore's website for a multitude of deck kit packages. If the options don't fit their specific needs, any kit can be customized for their project. The company also has three convenient showroom locations for homeowners to get a better idea of the available products.

"Long gone are the days when people want to go to a big-box home center and see piles of materials that are picked through, twisted and scraped up, while getting no help or service from the retailers," Patrick says. "They can visit our showrooms and walk on the boards, look at the railing options, and pick out their post caps and lighting choices."

"We educate the customers on all of their options and answer any questions they might have. We're giving them better pricing with hands-on service."

The same applies to fencing, as Deck & Fence Superstore carries the largest selection in the tri-state area with the same service. "We have vinyl fencing in all colors, wood fencing in all heights and grains, ornamental aluminum fencing in black and bronze, and we even have chain link fencing for those who want security or commercial work done," he says. "It's all in stock and ready to be delivered in 24 to 48 hours."

Whether homeowners are finally ready to pull the trigger on their dream deck project or seeking privacy and security with a fence, now is the time to visit Deck & Fence Superstore.

"It's been a pretty mild winter and the orders are flying in," Patrick says. "We're stocked up and ready for a huge spring and summer. People want their money's worth, and that's what we offer: expertise, value and savings." **H&H**

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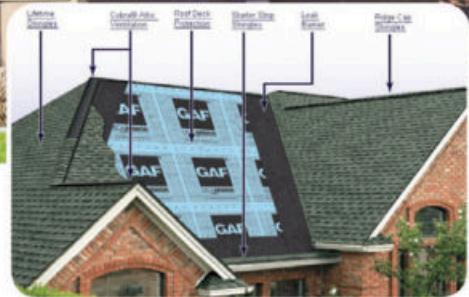
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Blue Tree Builders

by Sydney Kerelo

With over 14 years of experience under his belt, the owner of Blue Tree Builders, Brian Iwano, has taught himself everything he knows about home remodeling. With a background in the restaurant industry, Iwano didn't know much about remodeling until he bought his first home with his wife. After fixing it up on his own, he was drawn to do more, eventually starting his business as a part-time handyman and evolving that into the full-service custom remodeling business he has today.

As summer approaches, the team at Blue Tree Builders has shifted its gears to focus on the exterior aspects of homes—building decks. *House & Home* spoke with Iwano about what homeowners should consider when deciding to build an outdoor living space and how to hire the right company to fit their needs.

What qualities should a homeowner look for in a deck builder?

When a homeowner is looking for a deck builder they need to not only consider the price but also the company. A deck builder needs to really understand the entire deck-building process, from design to zoning, drawing, permits, building and finally finishing the project. A deck needs to be planned intentionally and properly so that the homeowner is able to fully optimize utilization of the space. In order to accomplish this, the builder needs to be attentive and listen throughout the process. This puts the builder in tune with the customer's "wants" in order to give them the very best personalized product.

I encourage all of my customers to meet with various builders before they decide whom to hire. In advance of these meetings, homeowners should collect pictures and ideas. Pinterest is a great resource for this. They can also browse the projects on our website. If there is a project they like, I can put them in contact with that customer so they can discuss the experience they had with us and how their project ideas were gathered. I'd like potential customers to know they are working with a company that will finish the project well, but also give them an experience they deserve.

What makes your design and project processes unique?

Each customer is given our full attention. We want to ensure that their experience with us is the best it can be. During our discovery meetup, we work one-on-one with them to discuss their design ideas and budget, guiding them through the process, and trying to work

in as much of their wish list as possible. We don't oversell if it doesn't make sense for the customer, the budget or the property. We provide color renderings and walk customers through all of the selections so they know exactly what the project will look like before we start. Once the project starts, we are in constant communication regarding progress and any scheduling changes that may come up. Rain (and sometimes snow) puts a damper (pun intended) on most exterior work.

When it comes to adding accessories and additional features into a deck, what should homeowners consider?

Lighting is important. It can offer ambiance, provide safety at night, and light a path for your guests to show them the way. There are countless ways lighting can enhance your deck project just like it can any other home improvement project.

Structural covering can allow for the space to become more usable year round or on very sunny (or rainy) days.

There are numerous different color combinations that can be attained with various decking and railing material that can make it stand out and make it your own. We are working with a customer now who has some pretty elaborate plans for an outdoor living space with a pool, a swim spa, an outdoor kitchen, a portico and of course lighting.



Brian Iwano, owner

Railings are another important feature that we have to consider. Not every decking product has the exact matching railing material. In this case, we can consider using metal, vinyl, glass, cable or a combination of these.

What are your recommendations for choosing deck materials?

Decks are all built with concrete footings and structural lumber, most commonly pressure-treated pine. That's our department. To finish their deck, most of our customers choose a composite material like Trex. There are many manufacturers today putting out some great products to meet virtually any design requirement and budget. Composite looks great, comes in various colors, lasts a long time and requires very little maintenance. Composite material can be considerably more costly to purchase and install but our customers see the value in that.

Wood is still a great option for deck purists; and there are some really great finish coatings available on the market today to help wood decking last longer. Although maintenance can be more involved for wood decking depending on certain environmental conditions, there's still a lot to love about a classic wood deck.

Summer's coming. Let us build that deck for you that you've always wanted. **H&H**

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DREAM-WORTHY DECKS

If you're thinking about having a deck designed and built, then you're likely looking for tips and ideas. We've rounded up lots of advice from local experts who can help guide you to building the deck of your dreams.

By LINDSEY GETZ



Start with Your Wants and Needs

"Deciding on what size, shape and type of deck you want starts with asking some important questions. What do you want the deck to do for you? Do you want a private retreat for your immediate family or an oasis for extended family and neighborhood parties? This will dictate where to begin."

Omar Stoltzfus,
director of sales and marketing
Deck Craft Plus, LLC
Honey Brook, Pa.
(610) 273-3317
DeckCraftPlus.com

Image courtesy of Deck Craft Plus, LLC



Keep it Dry

"Here in the Northeast, we've recently seen the wettest weather on record. Naturally, rain can limit enjoyable time on an open deck or patio space. We design covered decks, patios and outdoor kitchens to maximize time outdoors. A permanent roof structure will keep your deck dry and usable for more days during the year. Add ceiling fans, heaters and lighting and you can extend the number of pleasant months on the deck as well. Our premier Equinox Motorized Louvered Roof offers maximum versatility in the form of a solid roof with innovative, tilting louvers. You simply close the louvers to keep your space dry and shady, or tilt them open to let the warm sunshine in. You truly have the best of both worlds with a louvered roof—a covered space and open outdoor space. You get both with the effortless push of a button. Our louvered roof or motorized pergola will take your outdoor space to a new level of beauty and functionality."

Sean McAleer, lead designer
Deck Remodelers
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Creating an Extension of the Home

"What people want most for their decks is to make it a true 'outdoor living area.' That usually means a kitchen and a roofed-in area. Some homeowners want a pergola with louvered roof; however, a solid roof is honestly more versatile. It's attached to the home and therefore makes the area a true extension of the home. It can even be screened-in or surrounded by glass to make it an all-weather room. We can attach a fireplace or add more features in the future. It's a little bit more cost-wise but in terms of the enjoyment factor, it greatly increases the use of your space, making it worth the investment."

Bill Lecorchick, founder
Legends Home
Improvements
East Brunswick, N.J.
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LegendsBuilt.com



DREAM- WORTHY DECKS



Beware of Fly-by-Night Deck Builders

"When choosing a contractor, it's important to make sure that the contractor has a place of business and does not work out of their home. Over the years I have dealt with dozens of clients who have lost deposit checks because they gave it to a contractor in a pick-up truck—never to see their money again. Owning a place of business is much preferred to leasing because it shows an outstanding commitment to their clients."

**Robert Lascelle, owner
My Deck, LLC
Flemington, N.J.
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MyDeck.com**

Image courtesy of My Deck, LLC.



Materials Matter

"The Trex Transcend product line is the material I like to work with most. The available colors with the Trex Transcend product line seem to be a perfect match to our customers' palette. The durability is the No. 1 reason we like the Transcend line. Decks we have built several years ago still look like they were completed yesterday."

**Ed Fulmer, sales
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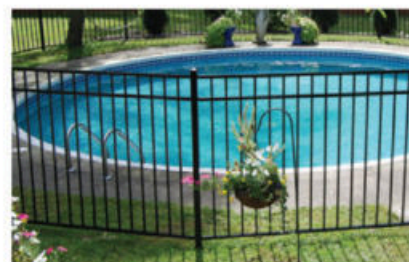
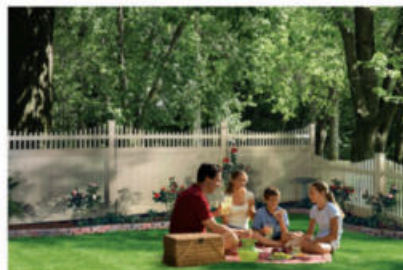


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Begin with a Fresh Start

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Winter's dreary weather—high winds, ice, snow and hail—can cause serious damage to a home's exterior, causing shingles to fly off, roofs to leak, gutters to split and so much more. And while this past winter was relatively mild in our region, it's still important to ensure your home's exterior is equipped to handle spring's elements.

House & Home spoke with local experts on ways homeowners can detect and repair areas of their

home's exterior just in time for the spring season.

CHECK THE EXTERIOR

As the weather begins to warm up, the first thing a homeowner can do is go outside and inspect their home. Check the roof, the siding, the gutters, the windows and the doors to see any signs of damage.

"If you walk around your house and you see missing granules, that is a tell-tale sign of when your roof

needs to be replaced," says Dave Lyons, owner of DNA Roofing & Siding. "See if you have missing shingle pads—sometimes you can see them in your yard if they blew off."

A lingering moisture issue or obvious leaking in the attic or upstairs are other signs of a roof gone bad, but could also be caused by damage to the siding rather than the roof.

"The most important thing is to check for any winter weather

damage,” Adam Parnes, vice president of marketing at Global Home Improvement, says. “Ice can destroy gutters and melting snow can cause leaks to your roof or get behind your siding.”

Gutters can be tricky because ice can build up behind the downspouts causing them to separate, which will eventually fold the gutter off the home entirely, allowing water to get behind the siding and cause a leak.

If there are no obvious signs of damage, a homeowner should consider freshening up the exterior anyway. After months of built-up ice and snow, the siding will look faded behind a layer of dirt and grime.

“One of the big things you can do is to power wash your home on the outside because dirt can build up throughout the winter and then in the summer months, that’s where you get mold,” says Jaime Fiel, production director at Renewal by Andersen of Philadelphia and South Jersey. “Check your shutters and the weather stripping on your windows. Everything should have a thorough cleaning every spring for sure.”

DO YOU NEED ROOFING OR SIDING REPAIRS?

When it comes to exterior repairs, the two major projects are replacing the siding and the roof. Although the roof may not be leaking, there are signs to look out for that could cause problems later down the road.

“Roofing should always be replaced before you have serious leaks,” Parnes says. “Some signs to look for are curling shingles or shingles that are missing granules. You can also take a peek in your attic to see if the plywood has any signs of water damage.”

If there are any signs of damage the best thing to do is have a professional inspect it and either replace or repair it. A reliable roofing contractor would ensure all layers of the roof are inspected before installing new shingles.

“What we would do is go in and tear off the old roof down

to the wood deck. Then we would inspect your existing wood sheathing and see if any of that needs to be replaced,” Lyons says. “We always do ice and water shields to the eaves and valleys to see if there’s any roof penetration and check around chimneys. Then we use some type of synthetic felt or regular felt depending on what kind of price point you are looking at for your roof. We make sure all the flashings are right, replace flashings as needed, new pipe collars, the chimney, and then start installing the roof. We always install to the manufacturer’s specifications depending on which shingle you’re purchasing.”

When it’s time to replace the roof, a homeowner should think about what type of shingle they want, whether they are only interested in the most cost efficient, if they want a certain aesthetic or simply the shingle that will live up to its lifespan. The three most popular shingles and roof styles are asphalt, wood shake and a metal slate roof.

“We replace roofs with either asphalt for a more economical option or metal slate roofing if you want that wow factor for your roof,” says Parnes. “Metal is the best material because it has three times the life expectancy of asphalt, doesn’t stain or discolor and looks great too.”

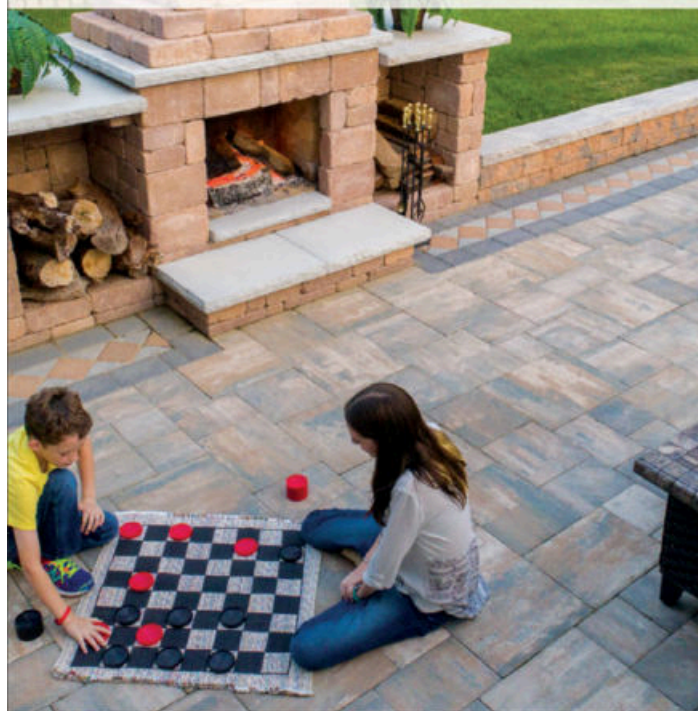
But there is more to consider than just the shingles during a roof replacement. Everything underneath the shingle needs to be installed correctly and made of the best materials to allow the shingle to withstand its lifespan.

“We install all our jobs with GAF Deck Armor, an underlayment that goes under shingles. It’s the most premium stuff. It’s moisture proof, UV proof and breathable,” offers Mike Iannelli, owner of M&J Roofing. “It’s important to have not only the shingles but the important accessories of the roof—the premium materials such as underlayments, ice and water shield and the drip edge.”

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Begin with a Fresh Start

time to replace it is when it is no longer functioning the way the homeowner wants, if it is fading, has been damaged, if it is dated, or even if it has asbestos shingles.

"[Asbestos shingles] should definitely be replaced with high-quality vinyl or fiber cement siding depending on your aesthetic goals and price range," James Russo, owner of Lawrenceville Home Improvement, says. "Older vinyl or aluminum siding can also suffer from fading or wear and tear, which also makes a siding project something to consider. Siding technology has really advanced over the past 20 years and homeowners can take advantage of the energy efficiency attainable through insulated siding."

ARE THE WINDOWS AND DOORS INTACT?

One of the biggest tell-tale signs that a home is in need of new windows or doors is if there is a



noticeable draft throughout the home or if the glass begins to fog. If a window is over 15 years old and has a frame made of either vinyl or wood, then it is definitely time for a replacement.

"Drafty or noticeably leaky windows are easy [to identify]. Fogged window units can be a sign of further issues, rotten wood or sills, and any kind of poor performance with hardware—latches, balances, tilting, etc.," says Ben Weaver, general manager of Alderfer Glass.

If a window is no longer functioning the way it is made to,

then it is time to replace it before further damages ensue.

"You want to make sure your windows work the way they're supposed to, that they slide up and down and the locks work properly," Lyons says. "And if the window is fogging up, it's no longer a Low-E window—it's not energy efficient anymore."

Low-E windows are made to reflect heat, either by reflecting the heat back outside during the summer months or keeping it indoors during winter. But there are other options that could be more suitable for homeowners' needs.

"[Andersen] developed a product called Fiber-x. It's a composite material that stands up to all kinds of different types of climate," says Fiel. "It's almost indestructible and they created it to be part of the original windows and doors."

When it comes time to replace the window frames, there are numerous aspects to consider such as the material used—wood, aluminum, fiberglass—the type of style, the function, how easily it can be installed and so forth.

"Our Marvin Signature line, with wood interior and aluminum-clad exterior offers the largest number of options for colors, styles and functions," Brian Finley, owner and president of SpringHouse Window and Door, says. "Marvin's Elevate line is constructed of high-quality fiberglass with wood interior to give the look, feel and warmth of a traditional wood window at a lower price point. If you're looking for a vinyl window, Sunrise Windows are the best that we've found."

"We offer wood, vinyl, and

Image courtesy of Global Home Improvement

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fiberglass replacement windows. Of the three materials, fiberglass is clearly the strongest, most energy efficient and most sustainable," offers Russo. "Once you replace your windows with fiberglass, you will never need to replace your windows again."

Doors can be analyzed the same way that windows can, by making sure they are functioning properly, they are not creating any drafts and that they are not out-dated.

"One of your key things to look at is when you close the door, look in the bottom corner and the top corner to see if you see any daylight. If you do, there's a good chance that the panel is warped and moved," Lyons says. "Check the weather stripping and see if it is cracking, check the lamination on the panel, see if it is coming apart. If it's a sliding door, check how it's rolling; if it's not rolling nicely anymore then it's time to replace it."

ASK ABOUT WARRANTIES

Whenever a home is about to un-

dergo major repairs, the homeowner should consider what types of warranties are offered so they are best protected in the future.

"We offer the full lifetime warranty on the whole project, so you never have to worry if there's any issues or anything that goes on with the window that's in your home. As long as you're there, we take care of it," says Fiel. "We do offer a lifetime warranty on the installation. The product warranty is 20 years on the glass and the frame. Anything that goes wrong with the product itself for 20 years, it's taken care of at no charge."

Although not every contractor may offer their own warranties, each manufacturer will carry them for the individual product. Not only should they consider the types of warranties that are offered but whether or not that company will be easily reached in times of need. They should look for a contractor who is reliable and lives up to their word.

"If there is ever an issue or problem related to the installation, we will fix it free of charge as



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long as you own the house," Finley says. "If a window or door ever needs attention for a warranty issue, we will handle it for you. If

you ever forget how to tilt your windows out for cleaning, we'll be happy to stop by and show you." **HCH**



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Restoring Concrete Patios

The experts at **The Mudjacking Guy** are able to take sinking concrete pads and give life back into them. *by Sydney Kerelo*

As the days grow longer and the weather gets warmer, being outside is crucial. Spending evenings in a beautiful outdoor space with family and friends creates memories that will last a lifetime, but if the concrete patios, walkways, driveways and even the steps are sinking it can make it harder to enjoy.

Uneven concrete slabs cause bruised toes, hard falls and the constant need to warn family and friends to watch their step, making

Mudjacking Guy comes in, drills holes into the slab—the number of holes is determined by how big the slab is—and then either injects a polyurethane foam or a mud slurry into the holes and the hydraulic pressure of the mud slurry goes underneath the concrete, bringing it back up to where it belongs. Then foam plugs are inserted into the holes so the concrete surface can be cleaned and then are pushed down so concrete can fill the hole, creating a smooth, even surface.

“Our process is quick, efficient and effective,” says Longo. “The job is completed in less than a day and you can walk on it as soon as it is done as well as drive on it after 12 hours. Whereas fresh concrete needs a cure time up to two weeks before you can walk or drive on it.”

Compared to replacing concrete, the price for mudjacking is around half the cost and it doesn’t require a harsh carbon footprint. There is no waste, minimal fossil fuel used and the materials are chemical free.

But there’s more to consider than just cost and environmental aspects. An outdoor living space should feel serene and comfortable—a place where worries melt away. The aesthetics should still be maintained which can change if a concrete pad is replaced. When a concrete area is created, the color fades over time and when a new slab is poured, the color will appear darker and will forever be a different shade than the rest. If there is a decorative aspect to the slab as well, then the new pad will not always match perfectly to the older ones.

“Patios and walkways can have a decorative appeal to them, the concrete can be stamped or colored and when you replace the sinking slab then you are losing that look,” Longo says. “The concrete patio or flatwork will never look the same, it’ll never match.” **H&H**



spending time outside unpleasant. Insert The Mudjacking Guy. Owner Michael Longo has been fixing uneven concrete slabs for over 15 years, giving his clients peace of mind without breaking the bank.

“Replacing concrete slabs can become not only costly but it can mess with the aesthetic of the patio, walkway or driveway that the homeowner is trying to fix,” says Longo. “We saw a need for it which prompted us to begin using a cheaper and greener alternative—mudjacking.”

Although it’s not a widely known form, mudjacking is the best alternative to save money and time. To fix sinking concrete, The

“Not only do we use mud to raise the concrete but we also use a polyurethane foam and the benefit of the foam is that it has a higher longevity than mud,” Longo says. “When we use foam the hole size that we drill into the concrete is also a lot smaller and it attaches itself to the bottom of the concrete once it is injected, so the foam will not come out or wash away. Whereas the mud doesn’t attach itself to anything so if there is a lot of running water underneath the concrete the mud could wash out.”

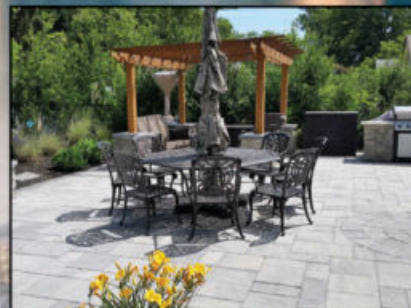
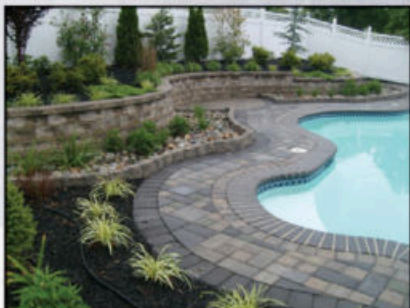
No matter what material is used, though, the process is done in a timely manner and the homeowner can begin walking or even driving on it shortly after.

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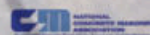
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Amiano & Son Design-Build

by **Matt Cosentino**

Amiano & Son Design-Build has been in business for more than 50 years, and one of the reasons the design/build firm has been successful for so long is the team approach it brings to each and every job.

By controlling every aspect of the project, Amiano & Son Design-Build is able to provide expertise, continuity and accountability to its clients, who often feel like members of the family when the work is completed. Those customers are also thrilled with the end result, whether it's a kitchen renovation, a bathroom remodel or a custom addition.

"We are definitely a team and it's nice because from sales to design to production, it's a seamless process," says Gianna Sweet, showroom manager/designer at Amiano & Son Design-Build. "If I have an idea for something, it's easy for me to go to production and ask the best way to get there, considering cost. We hold the hands of the client throughout the process and make sure everything gets done the right way."

House & Home spoke with Sweet about the importance in turning to an experienced design/build company and learned more about Amiano & Son's approach to remodeling.

What are the benefits to hiring a design/build firm with its own certified designer?

I am the design consultant for a local, family-owned, design/build company that combines project design, product selection and construction into a seamless process through a single company—the design/build remodeler. Many homeowners who are planning a remodeling project prefer this method because it provides them a single point of contact for all aspects of the project and better control over costs and accountability.



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Gianna Sweet, showroom manager/designer

What credentials should homeowners be looking for in their designer?

It's important to look for a designer who is certified. According to NARI (National Association of the Remodeling Industry), 80 percent of homeowners prefer to work with someone who is certified. A designer should have education and training to help them choose products that meet the functional needs of the user. Certifications and continuing education are huge; interior design legislation sets standards of practice to protect consumers. I am a Certified Interior Designer (CID), a Certified Kitchen and Bath Remodeler (CKBR) and I'm in the process of becoming a Universal Design Certified Professional (UDCP). This helps me and Amiano stand apart from other design/build remodelers that only staff design/sales consultants.

What exactly does a certified designer bring to the project?

There are so many misconceptions out there about a designer compared to an interior decorator. Interior decorators pick furniture, paint colors, fabric and window treatments; a lot of people associate that with the television remodeling shows. A certified designer will understand safety codes and the necessary processes to design an effective space, so they're thinking about accessibility, they're thinking about products and they're thinking about concepts like aging in place, which is really big right now. When I go into people's homes I take into account ideas like removing

a wall or adding windows. It's not just the decorating part of the business, although I can do that too.

What is the design process like at Amiano & Son?

As a full-time designer for Amiano, I am part of a team creating interior design concepts, presentations for clients and technical documentation for manufacturers. This includes site measures, creating options for floorplans, selecting fixtures and finishes, outlining budgets, as well as following up on production and installation. I stay involved in the progress of work throughout all phases of design, fabrication and construction, working closely with sales and production each step of every project. I am on site as necessary to meet with contractors during construction, ensuring all work is being executed per my drawings and specifications.

Do you think the experience and passion you bring to your work is appreciated by your clients?

Absolutely. I have a design degree from the Art Institute of Philadelphia. Before I came to Amiano & Son Design-Build I was working with general contractors, and then I had my own boutique studio, so I have a diverse background. Knowledge and experience are everything in this industry. I always knew I wanted to do this kind of work. You have to enjoy what you do in this industry because the hours are so long. If you don't love it, the clients can tell. **H&H**

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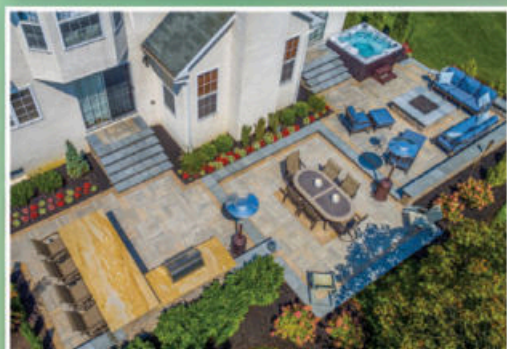
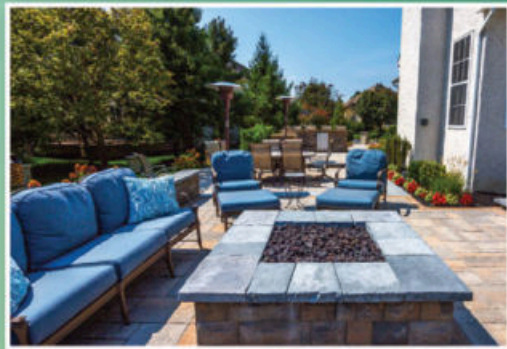
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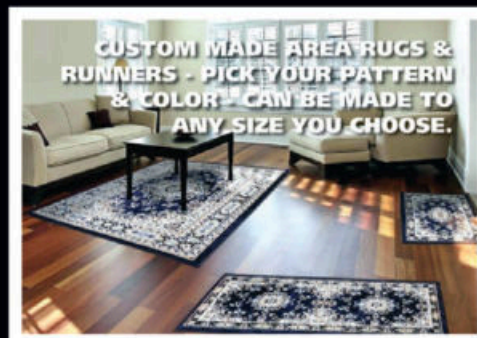
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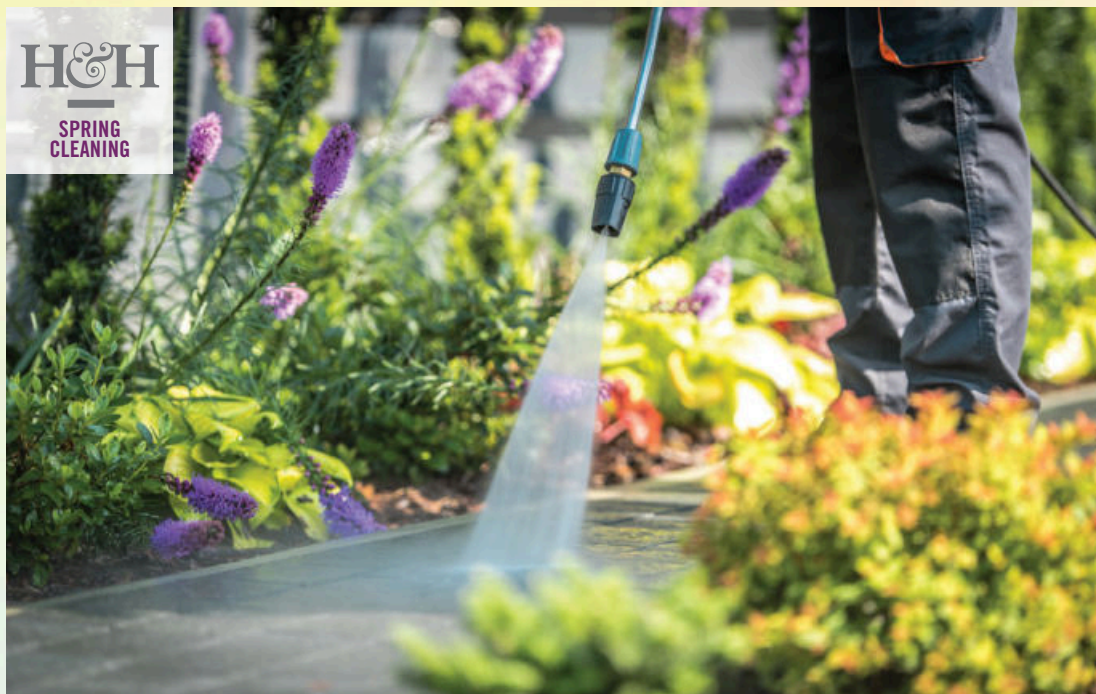
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WASHING WINTER AWAY

Bringing back the sparkle in
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by Daniel Sean Kaye

It's that time of year again! The sun is warming us up, grass is turning green and flowers are blooming—in short, it's spring. What better way to embrace the transformative power of this time of year than a little outdoor cleaning?

Looking around your property, there are quite a few areas that may need TLC before they have their time in the spotlight. Not only does your yard need its usual attention, but so do your siding,

sidewalks, patio, deck, roof and even driveway. Our trusted experts offer their advice on how to tackle these tasks without getting overwhelmed.

LANDSCAPING AND HARDSCAPING

"A spring cleanup is the best way to get your property looking good for the season," says Chris DeMato, owner of Rock Bottom Landscape and Fencing. "First, clean all the debris, leaves and

general garbage that may have accumulated over the winter. Raking is the best way to clean your lawn and get rid of any loose debris that can be damaging it," he says, adding that leaf remnants can create bare spots in your lawn. "Planting beds should be re-sculpted and mulch should be cultivated (turned over with a heavy metal rake) at this time. You can judge whether or not you may need fresh mulch, and prune any dead branches."

Hard surfaces around your home should have regular maintenance too. "Power wash hardscape surfaces such as patios, walkways, pool decks and driveways," says DeMato. "This extends the life and the look of a brick paver, stone or asphalt surface. ... After power washing pavers, revitalize your surface with new poly sand and sealant products, which also extend the life of the product. Also, any repair work to patios, steps or walkways should be done prior to power washing."

Beyond just cleaning, Steve Compton, general manager of CKC Landscaping (Paver Restoration too), says to focus on restoration and enhancement. "Whether it's stone, paver work, decking or older projects once done by contractors, we clean them, treat organic stains and pressure wash. For flat surfaces such as

decks/patios/pavers we remove organic debris often sitting there for months, staining the surfaces. We clean it to restore luster and take years off the look by removing dirt and gunk out of the pores."

DECKS

"Clean your deck. If you don't, the shady parts get slippery and the wood on the sunny side can dry out and split. If the boards are damaged, you'll have to replace them. You'll also have to re-stain everything since it hides the difference between new and old boards," advises Matt Gallagher, owner of Squeaky Clean Services.

Use someone who understands restoration/enhancement, says Compton. "Our crews are certified craftsmen who can make repairs on decks, retaining walls and patios. Get a company that can do minor and major repairs. It'll save you from getting rid of everything and starting over from scratch. If something during the winter made things bad or weakened an area, this work stops it from getting worse," he says.

ROOFING, SIDING AND MORE

"Winter wreaks havoc, so you may have a lot to do to get your house looking good," says Deven Robillard, owner of Bright Services. He suggests power washing the house and gutters, but also fixing and staining to add longevity to your home's materials.

"It's important to get rid of the algae, mold and moss," explains Shawn Tiller, owner of Sparkling Image Roof and Exterior Cleaning. "Do your basic window washing, maybe wash off the roof and clean the gutters."

"For gutter cleaning, you need to flush everything out with water, repair seams that have worn since parts lose their seal over time," he says. "Cleaning extends the life of stucco, so waterproof it, bridge hairline cracks, use uniform coating and patch water stains."

While there are many areas to deep clean, Tiller says many roofs don't need to be cleaned that often. "Yes, they will be dirtier on their north side, typically the most shaded side of the house, but once

every 10 years should suffice. More serious fixes include cracks in siding, gouges in wood, holes in stucco, etc.," he says.

USING PROFESSIONAL HELP

Many people think they can handle these tasks themselves, but that can only lead to more damage.

The main reason for using a professional is peace of mind, says Robillard. "Professionals minimize the damage. So often, homeowners do things themselves that end up costing them big down the road. If they use a trained, affordable service now, they'll spend hundreds but will save themselves from paying thousands."

This couldn't be more important than when it comes to power washing. "When you get into power washing, you need to use low pressure," Robillard says. "No matter if it's vinyl, steel, stucco or other products, deep cleaning doesn't mean blasting or using high pressure. Professionals know to rely on cleaners and using the power washer to rinse things off. If you use a company that relies on high pressure instead of detergent because it's cheaper, they could damage everything."

Many homes in this region have stucco exteriors, which require special methods for cleaning. "Professionals know it's very important to 'soft clean' stucco, since high-pressure power washing can seriously damage the material," says Gallagher. "[Professionals know how to] spray on cleaner at a higher concentration, and then use high volume of water at low pressure. That's the best way to clean stucco as high-pressure can create damage." Stucco also can get dark stains on areas that get wet and stay wet, resulting in fungus. On the sides that get sun, the UV can take away the color and break down the material. "If you don't take care of it, you won't be able to fix it without extensive work," he says.

In addition to exterior power washing services, it's crucial to find a company that repairs and

seals areas that may have been damaged over the winter, says DeMato. "A beginner may waste a lot of product while learning how to install it properly," he says, adding now is the time to have an expert address your brick paver and step sinkage, which is very common with our region's changes in climate.

For the vast majority of homes, expert cleaning and professional repairs make a huge difference. "Don't think you have to replace everything and start over," says Compton. "A trained specialist knows how to clean things right and repair things so they last." Find someone with many years in the field who uses products with long lifespans. "If you're sick of how dirty and grimy things are, let an expert fix it and seal it properly so you can enjoy your property for years to come," Compton says. **H&H**



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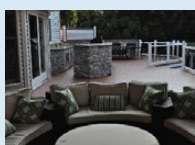
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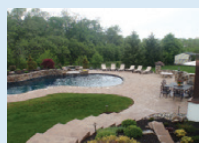
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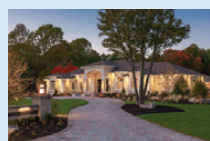
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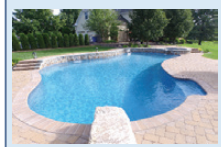
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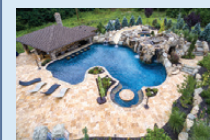
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