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Why concrete resurfacing is an attractive alternative to replacement page 41

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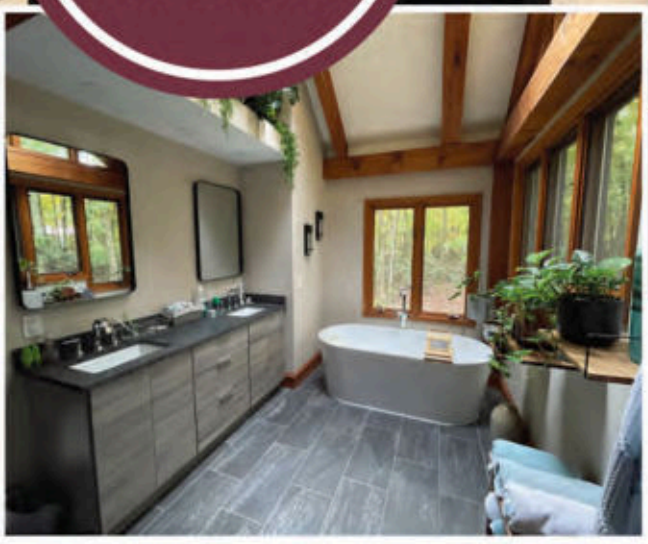
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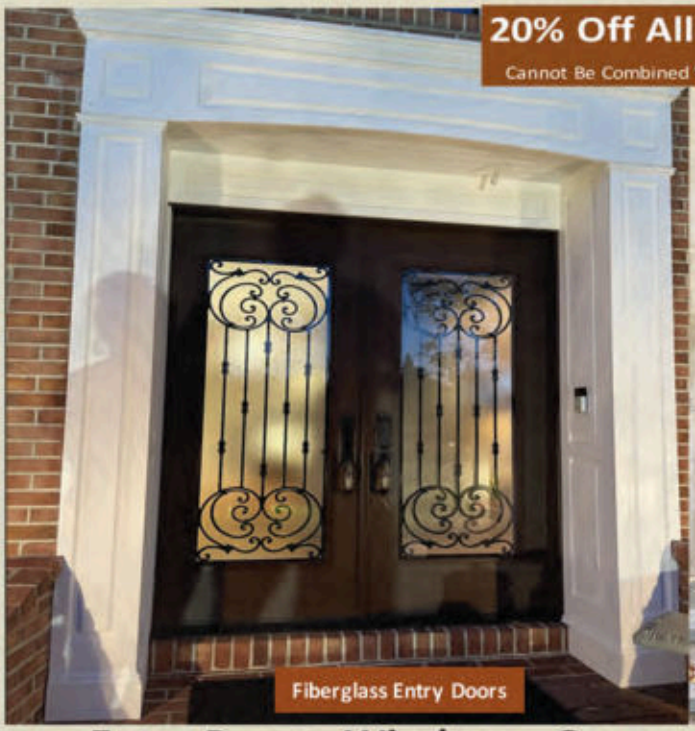
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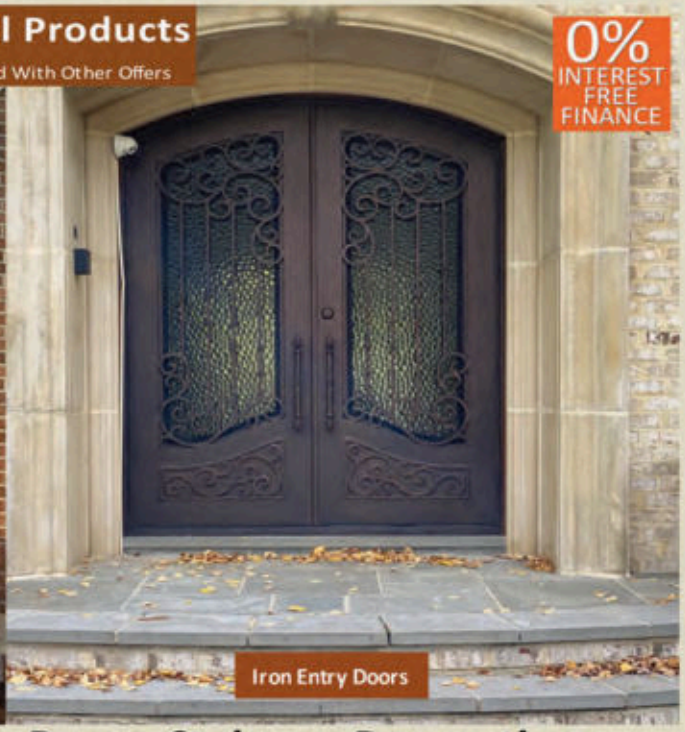
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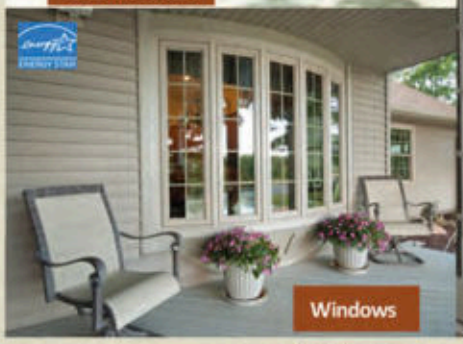
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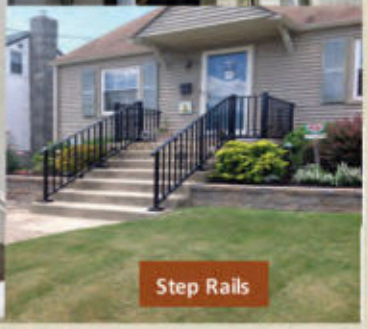
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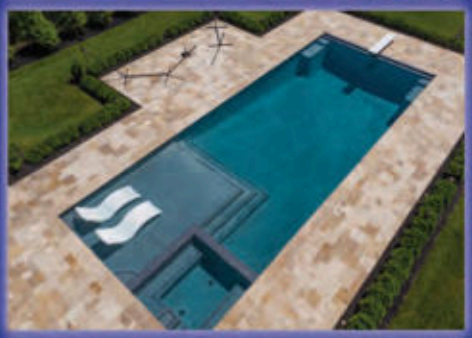
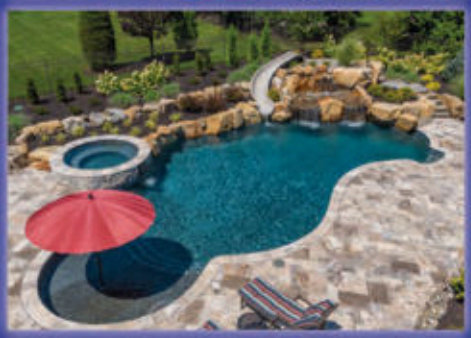
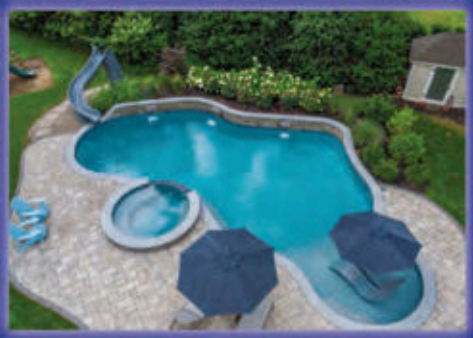
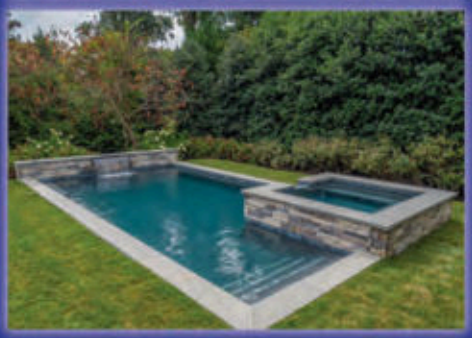
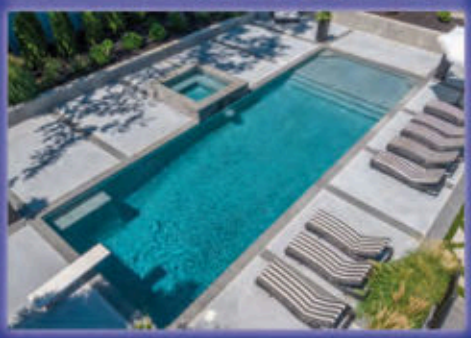
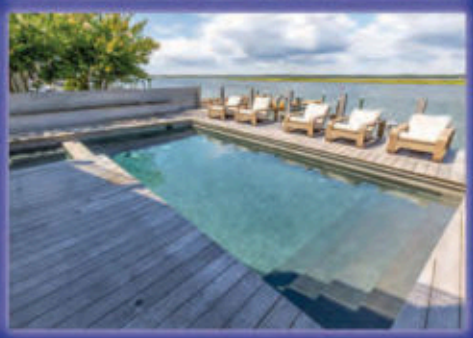


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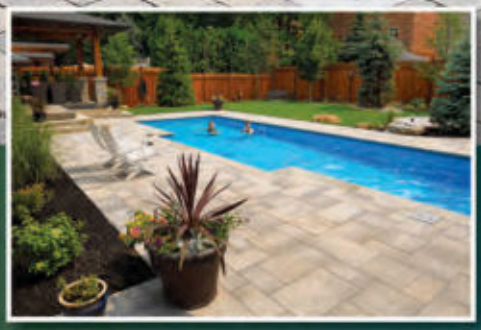
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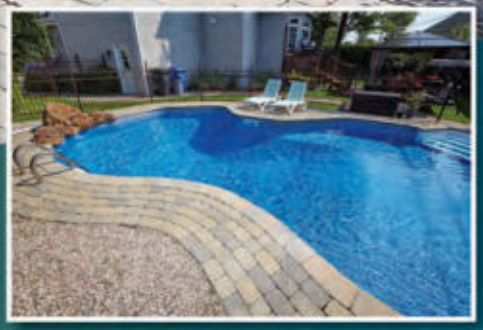
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SWIMMING IN STYLE

WITH THE RIGHT GUIDANCE, YOU COULD BE ENJOYING LIFE POOLSIDE FOR MANY YEARS TO COME.

BY PETER PROKO

Though it may be hard to recognize after the extremely mild winter we experienced here in the Northeast, spring is in the air. With the flowers in full bloom and the temperatures getting warmer and warmer by the day, we are all looking forward to spending increased time outdoors as we gear ourselves up for the sun-drenched days of summer that won't be far behind.

And while countless folks will enjoy tending to their landscaping or perhaps spending time enjoying a glass of wine on the back deck while watching the sun go down, many others will be eagerly awaiting the return of swim season and the chance to cool off by taking a dip in the pool.

It's no secret that pool ownership skyrocketed during the onset of the pandemic, with homeowners opting to create their own backyard resorts rather than travel on vacation. While the industry has seen that intense demand lessen somewhat, the fact is with each passing year, more and more people are looking to transform their outdoor living space into a staycation destination, and in many cases it all starts with the pool.

But there's a lot to consider and know about pool ownership, and if you're not fully prepared you could find yourself treading water as you desperately search for answers. Luckily, this region is full of skillful pool builders who can guide you through each step of the process, and in turn help make your visions of an outdoor oasis a reality.

We spoke to several industry experts to get some tips and advice on what you need to know to make a real splash this summer, no matter if you're considering a new pool for your yard or are simply looking for ways to enhance your current swimming experience.

SETTLING ON A STYLE

When it comes time to picking out a pool, the first place to start is deciding on what style is right for you between vinyl, fiberglass or concrete. Each one has their pros and cons—and price point for that matter—and what may be appealing to some may not necessarily be so for others.

Vinyl liners, which come in a variety of colors and styles, are by far the least expensive avenue to becoming a pool owner. As a result, vinyl pools remain popular and the advancements made in recent years have only increased their favorability in the marketplace.

But while the cost may be initially lower, depending on several contributing factors, the lifespan of a vinyl liner can vary dramatically and thus may need to be replaced more frequently. That could mean shelling out another $5,000-$6,000 periodically throughout the course of owning the pool.

"The cons of a vinyl pool is the liner is temporary. It could last 15 years or maybe five years," says Scott Payne, dubbed as the chief backyard fun specialist with Scott Payne Custom Pools. "At some point, what happens here in the Northeast with the freeze and thaw is that the liner is going to shift a little bit. And it's going to deteriorate [over time]. The sun's UV rays are going to degredate it and at some point

SWIMMING IN STYLE



you are going to have to replace it."

Meanwhile, fiberglass pools come in preformed shells allowing for a quicker installation process than other styles, with many pools being able to be completed in a just a day's time as opposed to the much lengthier process to install a vinyl or concrete pool.

Derek Blasker, president of (Fiberglass) Pool Designs, says the lifetime structural warranties and relatively low upkeep make fiberglass pools an attractive option for many.

"With a vinyl liner pool, you will always have the concern that you could tear the liner or the liner rots within five to 10 years. With concrete, you need to acid wash, paint, patch and resurface the masonry work. This usually runs at least $15,000 over a 10-year span. With the Latham fiberglass pools we install, you do not touch the surface," he says.

Blasker adds that fiberglass pools are a natural insulator, reducing the energy costs to heat and maintain the pool.

Jon Wilson, director of operations at Ordini's Best Fiberglass Pools, also touts the benefits. "Fiberglass pools are installed in one day, while vinyl and concrete pools can take weeks or months to build. The smooth gelcoat finish of our fiberglass pools are much easier to clean than the rough, porous surface of concrete pools."

With regard to concrete or gunite pools, while they are the most expensive choice for pool owners, they also offer the most customizable options in terms of freeform shapes and added amenities.

"With concrete pools, you can really go from mild to wild in terms of shape. And you could add sundecks, spas, loveseats; it's really only limited to your imagination," says Payne.

Speaking of shapes, the rumors of the death of rectangular pools have been greatly exaggerated, according to Andrew McFarlane, president and owner of California Pools Philadelphia.

"I thought [rectangular pools] were kind of a dead thing, but a lot of our higher-end customers are bringing them back," McFarlane says.

Payne has also seen an uptick in rectangular pools making a strong comeback, saying it's a matter of history repeating itself.

"Twenty-five years ago, people were tired of seeing rectangles and you saw the kidney bean and other freeform shapes, but I'd says we are close to 50-50 between installing rectangular and freeform pools now," he says.

Ultimately, the right shape should be dictated by each individual client's desire. Are they looking for a pool to swim in or is it more of a social gathering place? Do they want a diving pool? What will create a more seamless transition with the rest of the backyard?

"If clients want a clean look, they go with rectangles. And if they want more of the natural resort-type feel, then you see the freeform pools with the rock grottos and waterslides and that sort of stuff," says McFarlane.

A TOUCH OF SALT

Think back to your childhood days spent at the pool and you're likely to invoke memories of the smell of chlorine on your skin and irritated red eyes. And so it's no wonder that the industry has evolved over the years and in doing so has seen salt-generated chlorinator systems become the prevalent choice for pool owners. With benefits ranging from making the water gentler on the skin to reduced maintenance costs, salt systems have become the standard in the industry today.

"Just about every pool I install is saltwater; I haven't probably put in a chlorination pool in five years," says Walter Beyer, owner of Stardust Pools. "There's a lot less upkeep and the temperature doesn't affect it. It could be 105 degrees or 65 degrees; it could be sunny or it could be rainy; your pool is always going to have the same level of chlorine. … As long as the pool is running, it will be crystal clear all the time."

"Salt will also reduce your ownership costs dramatically. Instead of spending $500-$600 a year on chlorine, you might spend $40 a year on salt and achieve the same benefits," says Payne.

But while the salt systems make pools easier to balance and maintain, there can also be some negatives associated. "The upside is that you do not need to play with tablets and powders, the salt will be gentle on your skin, you can open your eyes underwater without the burn, the salt will not bleach anything, and blonde hair will not turn green," says Blasker. "The downside is that the salt will produce an alkaline effect that raises your pH and salt will have an adverse effect on steel railings, ladders, etc."

Also something to take into consideration is that "homeowners like the 'set it and forget it' aspect of a saltwater system, but it is an added expense, and the salt cell requires maintenance and eventually will need to be replaced every handful of years," says Wilson.

And no matter if you have a salt or chlorine pool, maintaining proper water chemistry is crucial. While some DIY-ers may attempt to handle balancing things on their own, it is truly best to get your water tested by a professional to assure you don't cause damage to your pool.

Tracy Bond is the president and owner of Great Valley Pool Service and says at the very least, weekly water testing is recommended. Sometimes even more frequent tests are needed if the pool is heavily used or has been recently built or refinished.

"There are many different things that can impact your water chemistry from the weather to the number of people using the pool to things like pets, pollen, fertilizer drift, grass clippings, etc.," says Bond. "It is important that your water is regularly tested and adjusted to avoid damage that can occur to your pool's finish, to your pool equipment and to ensure that your water is properly sanitized for your bathers to prevent illness. Proper balancing also prevents problems from occurring like algae and cloudy water as well."

And for those who don't have the time to wait in line at the shop, Bond's crew will come to you. "We offer a recurring service where we clean and chemically balance the pool each week. This includes testing and balancing your water; emptying all skimmer and pump baskets; backwashing and cleaning the filter as needed; as well as skimming, brushing and vacuuming the pool," she says.

ENHANCING THE EXPERIENCE

While seeing the kids do cannonballs into the deep end or waking up early each day to swim laps may be a welcomed aspect of owning a pool, these days owners are looking to up the ante with plenty of bells and whistles.

"Maybe someone doesn't have kids and they want their backyard to be a place to gather with other adults for happy hour or dinner, and so they want a sitting area. And perhaps they don't want to have giant waterfalls, but would like to hear the sound of water, so we'll add a couple deck jets so they can hear the water trickle,"

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SWIMMING IN STYLE

McFarlane says. "And then you have other people who say they want to have a water slide and a jumping rock for the kids."

And technology is playing a big part as well. Robotic cleaners, variable speed pumps and LED lighting have become the norm and growing automation capabilities are allowing folks to control many aspects of their pool's upkeep right in the palm of their hand.

"Automation is probably the most popular added element today. [These] systems allow the homeowner to control pumps, lights, heaters, deck jets and other pool accessories from their smart phone," Wilson says.

COVERING THE BASICS

Another area not to be overlooked is whether a mesh or solid safety cover is the right choice for you. Mesh covers—the less expensive of the two options—are lighter, easier to maneuver, but do allow some light and small debris into the pool, although recent advancements have increased their effectiveness in combatting these issues. On the flipside, solid covers do not allow any water, debris or UV light into the pool. This eliminates all algae growth during the winter, so you need less winterizing chemicals and the spring cleanup is easier.

Ultimately, it comes down to the preference of the homeowner on the level of maintenance they wish to take on.

"Solid covers are a little more expensive and there's also a little bit more maintenance involved. You have to manage the water on top of that cover because it's not going to go through it, so you have to maintain a surface pump on there and through the winter you have to make sure the pump is working," says McFarlane.

"The solid covers have a lot of benefits in that the way you close the pool is typically the way you open the pool," says Beyer. "When you have a mesh cover, when the leaves fall off onto the cover and they disintegrate and it rains, that filters through the cover and so the pools don't open up as clear."

Bond cautions that owners of solid covers remain vigilant on keeping an eye on their pumping system to make sure that all of the excess water is being funneled off of the cover.

"Excessive weight will cause the cover to sag," she says. "A saggy safety cover is more likely to fail over time."

No matter what kind of pool you purchase or what extra elements you consider, the key is to do your homework before you put pen to paper on a pricey contract so you feel confident you are hiring the right contractor instead of finding yourself with a money pit in the backyard for years to come.

"No company is perfect, but the difference in contractors is made when an issue arises, and how that contractor handles that issue," says Blasker. "You want a contractor who is going to take your call, present you with a plan and execute upon that plan in a timely manner." H&H

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Making a Splash

When it comes to custom-built gunite pools, Del Val Pools & Spas brings decades of expertise to an ever-evolving industry.

by **Bryan Hull**
Co-owner, Del Val Pools & Spas

THE OTHER DAY I BUMPED INTO A LONG-STANDING CUSTOMER AT THE GROCERY STORE. WE HAVE BUILT POOLS FOR HIM AND HIS WIFE, THEIR FAMILIES, AND THEY REFERRED US TO THEIR NEIGHBORS AND THEN ON TO FRIENDS WHO HAD SHORE HOMES. Like any business, we grow by word of mouth. He's a good customer, and more importantly, he became a great friend. He asked me what was new for the coming year in the pool industry. Usually, I can rattle off a bunch of technology and design changes that are trending, but I realized the answer to his question required a bit more reflection than a few sentences about lighting, waterfalls, pool bars and sun decks.

While I am not qualified to say COVID is "behind" us, I can say a certain period, 2020-2021, is in the rearview mirror. Like many industries, it changed us, and it changed me, as COVID took my brother. COVID changed how we vacation, how we utilize our homes, and hopefully, how we value our time with loved ones. I'd like to think that 2023 is the season we move forward—as opposed to last year—which felt more like the beginnings of recovery. Three things, however, are distinctly different from our pre-COVID business model.

Del Val Pools & Spas invested in gunite trucks last year, so every aspect of the pool build is controlled in-house. There are no "sub-contractors," which means we control the schedule—Mother Nature permitting of course—and it means we control the labor and associated overhead. We are known for over-engineering pool construction with thicker walls, deeper keel, more rebar, more gunite. Translation: We build pools that last.

Over the past few years, the cost difference between pools with liners and custom gunite has been closing. Shooting our own gunite with our own trucks allows us to close that gap even more. We are designers, and we recognize each job is unique and reflects a dream and vision of the homeowner. Gunite construction allows us to be completely custom and the best process to align with the customer's goals.

Costs for just about everything seem to be spiraling out of control, from eggs to batteries to plastics. Keeping costs down is a science, not an art. With the third generation coming through the ranks at Del Val Pools & Spas, I can say we saw the gyrations coming, initially occurring because of COVID, and we knew there would be ripples in a pond spreading outward for years to come. We now buy supplies and materials in bulk and a year in advance at a minimum. With three locations, we have plenty of storage, so the monthly ups and downs of related industries do not affect us. Also, simply put, after decades of building pools, we know how to do this, and we know how to do it well. Efficiency and experience allow us to have a very sharp pencil when bidding on a new project.

We are building more pools at the Shore than ever before. They are custom, intricate and require special engineering considerations. Realtors, builders and local municipal authorities frequently consult Del Val on projects on the barrier islands in South Jersey. Pools at the Shore require careful planning and frequently are integrated into the piling structure of the home. Plus, you never know what one will find under the sand. Much of the bayside and ocean front are various forms of "fill" depending on when the land was developed. It's an art form building at the Shore, and it's where we get to showcase our work since homes are closer together. Sometimes we start a project and find ourselves still constructing pools on the same street months later because one neighbor sees what another neighbor is doing and our capabilities spread down the block. We don't see it stopping.

So, in response to my friend asking me what's new for 2023, the answer is a whole lot. The answer is also we are doing the same thing we've been doing for decades—three generations of the Hull family building pools, and we it do it better each year because time yields to experience, and experience yields to expertise. We build custom gunite pools, and simply put, we build them better than anyone else. **H&H**



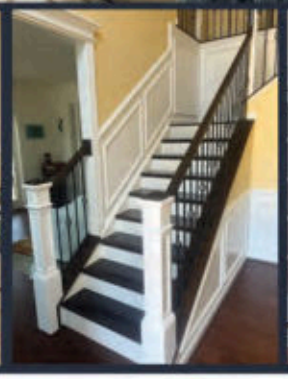
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Led by a desire to take care of their community by providing high-quality work, the team at East Coast Roofing, Siding & Windows treats every client—and the homes they love—with a respect befitting family. *by* **Madeleine Maccar**

Where the Heart Is

Your home isn't just four walls and a roof: It's a treasure trove of memories, a meeting place for your nearest and dearest, a collection of lovingly selected and generationally passed-down items.

When exterior repairs and upgrades are necessary, you want to trust your beloved home with contractors who will also regard it with the respect and love it deserves, which is the philosophy at the heart of every job East Coast Roofing, Siding & Windows proudly puts its name on. In fact, every member of East Coast's more-than-200-person team treats each client like they're guests in their home, according to East Coast President Jeff Kay. "We typically leave a property better and cleaner than we found it," he says while describing the award-winning customer service that East Coast has unfailingly offered for more than 40 years.

A "detail technician" will start the project with an on-site assessment that includes taking measurements, preparing material orders and staging the worksite. When it's time for the work to begin, a dedicated installation team takes over, headed by a project manager who will also serve as a client's constant point of contact.

"That's how they get that personal attention, and that level of organization is what makes the process a painless one," Kay says. "Sixty percent of our business comes from referrals, and I think that speaks volumes to the customer experience."

East Coast hasn't just earned recognition and rave reviews for how it treats clients, though. For more than 10 consecutive years, it's won The Press of Atlantic City's Best of the Press awards in roofing, siding, windows and contracting. "That is voted on by the residents of Atlantic County," Kay points out. He adds that East Coast has also won the nationally ranked Best of the Best Television with Rich Noonan for three years in a row.

To maintain those demanding standards, potential employees are painstakingly vetted to ensure their personality and professionalism meet the company's expectations for customer care. Once they're on the team, installers go through additional training to be certified as GAF Master Elite Contractors in roofing, CertainTeed Master Craftsman and 5-Star Contractors in siding, and ProVia Certified in windows and doors.

That additional education ensures they deliver manufacturer-specified results to ensure proper installation, as well as offer guarantees like the "Golden Pledge" warranty on every roof they do. That 25-year workmanship and leak-free guarantee and 50-year warranty is not only 100% prorated but also an offer only Master Elite Contractors can extend.

"We take our installation teams to GAF headquarters in Parsippany once a year to be retrained and certified: half the day's in the classroom, the other half is hands-on," Kay explains. "Only 2% of contractors achieve GAF Master Elite Contractor status, and we're also in the President's Club. Of the 2% of contractors who do reach the Master Elite status, only about 10% reach the President's Club."

That diligent professional training is paired with local, home-grown talent, all of whom keenly understand how the region's seasonal extremes can impact the lifetime and effectiveness of their products.

"We're able to easily identify the most vulnerable areas of your roof, your siding, your windows, your doors based on the seasonality," says Kay. "There are installation techniques we follow that are specific to the Northeast."

East Coast takes its community responsibility just as seriously as the quality of its work. Their doors have stayed open all throughout the pandemic because homes didn't stop needing repairs, even when it felt like the rest of the world stood still. Rising inflation inspired its latest promotion where **HOMEOWNERS WHO HIRE EAST COAST THIS MONTH WILL HAVE NO MONEY OUT OF POCKET FOR 12 MONTHS AND WILL RECEIVE A REBATE CHECK ONCE THEIR PROJECT IS COMPLETED.** That's right, no payments or interest until 2024. No other South Jersey contractor offers this kind of wallet-friendly promotion.

It's the newest way the team is able to step up and give back: Longstanding outreach efforts include giving away roof replacements to locally active homeowners in need every holiday season and this past year marks the 14th year East Coast assisted two deserving families in New Jersey. To nominate a family, visit EastCoastRoofing.com/RoofGiveaway.

"At the end of the day, we do what we say we'll do, and we go above and beyond to help people," says Kay. "We live and come from a place of service." **H&H**



Landscape Directory 2023

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WITH SPRING IN BLOOM, homeowners across the country are preparing to spend the coming months in their own backyards, and chances are they would like to invest in some updates. Our annual landscape directory connects our readers with local resources to consult on any project related to the outdoors. This comprehensive list includes companies that can create an oasis with a pool, patio or deck, not to mention hardscaping, water features and shade elements; or professionals who maintain landscaping, provide furniture or install fences and much more. No matter what you need, your outdoor space is in good hands.

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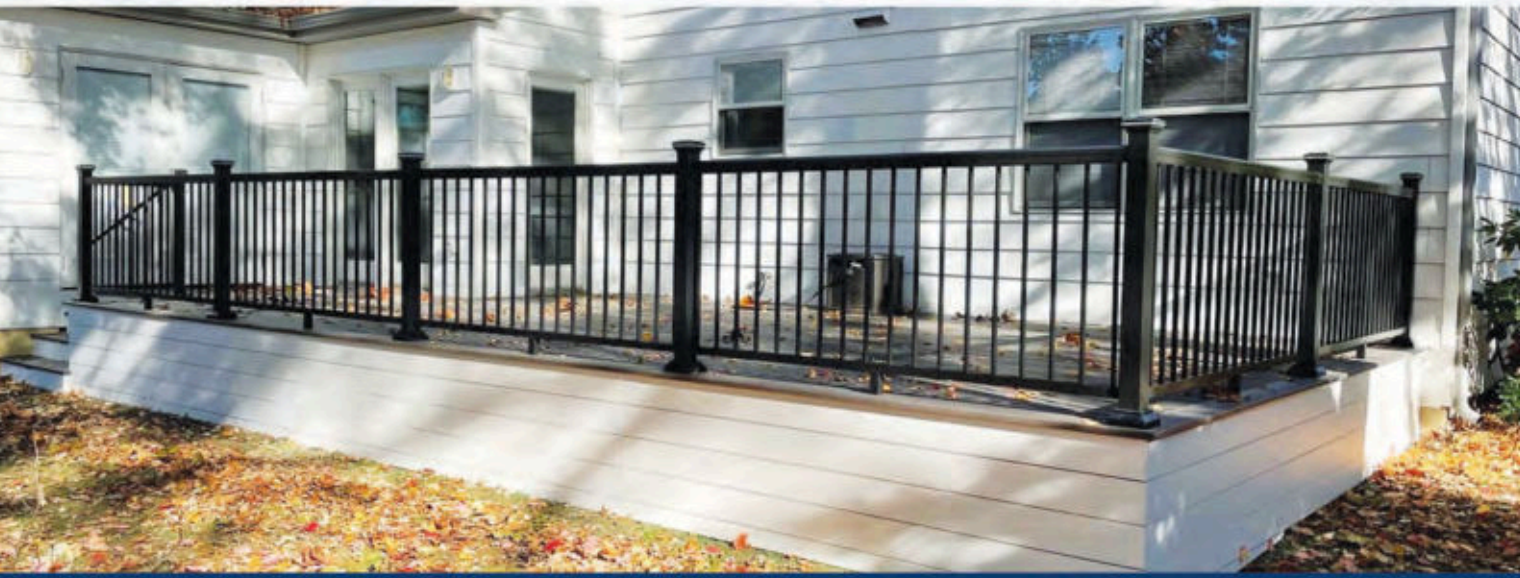
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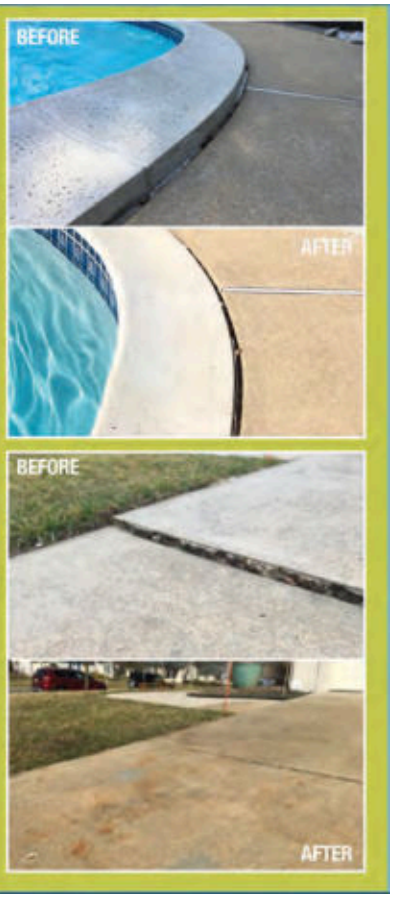
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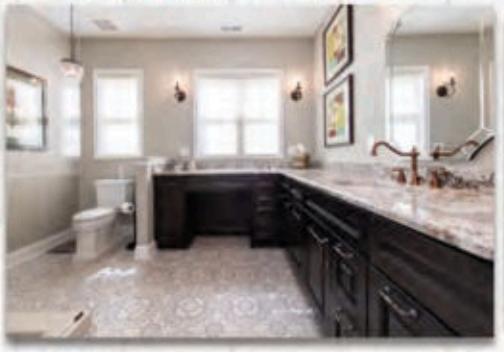
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ask the expert
by Matt Cosentino

Amiano & Son Design-Build

ONE OF THE KEYS TO HAVING LONGEVITY IN BUSINESS IS TO ALWAYS EMBRACE ONE'S ROOTS WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY REMAINING FORWARD-THINKING, and Amiano & Son Design-Build seems to strike a perfect balance in that regard. The company continues to adhere to the cornerstones on which it was founded in 1968, yet also welcomes in younger voices and a fresh perspective, and that approach has led to sustained success for more than 50 years.

With the millennial generation becoming more active in home-buying and remodeling, Amiano & Son is well positioned to suit their needs when it comes to kitchen and bathroom renovations, additions and more thanks to company leaders like Joseph Clymer. He joined the family business at age 15 as a laborer and ascended to the role of director of sales and design before his 30th birthday.

Clymer is a member of the prestigious National Kitchen & Bath Association Thirty Under 30 program and has been recognized locally by being inducted into the SNJ Millennials 30 Under 30. He and his team have quickly become known for their unique, original designs that are appreciated by homeowners of any age.



Joseph Clymer, director of sales and design

AMIANO & SON SEEMS TO HAVE A NICE BLEND OF DIFFERENT GENERATIONS ON ITS STAFF, INCLUDING A STRONG REPRESENTATION OF MILLENNIALS. DO YOU THINK THAT'S IMPORTANT?

As a company, more than half of our staff in the office as well as in the field are millennials and we've been trying to emphasize the importance of having younger people within the industry. I am the director of sales and design and I'm 27. We have two other designers in their 20s as well. We bring a fresh, new look to all aspects of remodeling, including kitchens and baths. We all do extended learning to keep up with current trends and also what's traditional. It makes for a good balance, because our owner, Lou Amiano Jr., has been doing this for 25-plus years now, so we get a lot of guidance from him and he brings a whole different outlook on styles and the approach to a renovation.

ARE MILLENNIALS STARTING TO BECOME A LARGER PIECE OF YOUR CUSTOMER BASE?

Yes. We're working with a lot of younger families and younger couples who are looking for our expertise about what's current and for us to guide them to what will work for them and their family. For example, if it's a younger couple and they're planning on growing their family, then we're going to design the kitchen around growth for them. We keep different things like that in mind because we're at a similar point in life ourselves so we know what to look out for.

HAVE YOU FOUND MILLENNIALS TO BE MORE OPEN TO BUYING FIXER-UPPERS AND UNDERGOING REMODELING PROJECTS SO THEY CAN GET THE SPACE THEY DESIRE?

We've definitely seen that. This is the first generation to have technology at their disposal from a very early age. A lot of people we work with within that age group are utilizing things like Houzz and Pinterest, idea books or mood boards and sharing Instagram photos with us and using that as an inspiration for their project. They can say they really like this cabinet color or this cabinet style or the way the backsplash flows with the countertop. When the design team sits down and goes through these pictures with them, we can pick and choose which components from these inspiration pictures we want to pull into their remodel. The younger generation is definitely more proactive when diving into a project and doing a lot more legwork, sometimes before they even make the call to a contractor.

THIS GENERATION SEEMS TO BE INTERESTED IN ROOMS THAT ARE RICH IN CHARACTER AND HAVE UNIQUE FEATURES TO THEM. DOES THAT MAKE IT FUN FOR YOU AS A DESIGNER?

Yes. Trending materials are definitely a hot commodity right now. What I mean by that is, instead of doing something more traditional like a raised panel door or a natural stone backsplash, we're doing something like an exotic wood floor or white shaker cabinets with quartz countertops and a blingy backsplash. That's a whole different clientele and a whole different style than what we were doing even five or 10 years ago.

ALONG WITH YOUR COUSIN SOPHIA AMIANO, WHO IS A DESIGNER AT AMIANO & SON, WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE USHERING IN THE NEXT GENERATION OF THE FAMILY BUSINESS?

It's very important to us. We've seen the blood, sweat and tears that went into it from our grandfather to my uncle and her father. We don't take that lightly. We want to make sure that the hard work and dedication to our clients over the years gets handed down. We want to bring a new approach, bringing different design ideas in and bringing in new materials to our showrooms in Southampton and Barnegat Light. We're trying to keep everything going but also keep adapting to the times as well. H&H





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Outdoor Entertaining

Does your space have what it takes?

by **Michael Pasquarello, Degreed Landscape Architect, Elite Landscaping**



Outdoor living continues to be the main driving force behind many residential landscape projects and will strengthen and grow throughout the years to come. The demand for innovative products which can be incorporated into the landscape and create spaces of refuge and entertainment has led the resurgence to bring people back outdoors and enjoy what Mother Nature has to offer. The following elements are must haves when planning and designing these spaces:

PAVILION ROOF STRUCTURES. Open-air, pavilion-style, solid roof structures are the ultimate way to create an outdoor shaded room which can be utilized in any weather. Pavilions have vertical posts/columns and can be tied into a home façade or built freestanding. They are a framed solid roof which allows for the incorporation of recessed lighting, fans, audio-visual, not to mention a force field from those burning UV rays. Shade is not the only way these roof structures can provide refuge from the sun. Misters can even be integrated into the soffit overhang to offer added relief.

OUTDOOR KITCHENS. The home kitchen always seems to be the main area of gathering during any holiday, birthday or party. Why? Food. There's no reason why a kitchen with all the same amenities (and more) can't be created outdoors. Grills, warmers, side burners, refrigerators, sinks, ice makers, pizza ovens and even beverage dispensers can all come together within your patio space. Most of these kitchen structures come equipped with natural gas, electric and plumbing. Granite countertops, stainless steel cabinets and drawers can also add to the gourmet cooking experience. Food has the capability to make families friendlier and turn friends into family. So put away those frozen hotdog and hamburger packets and prepare a spread worthy of a five-star restaurant!

FIRE FEATURES. Since the beginning of time we have always been captivated and mesmerized by fire. A fireplace is typically the main focal point of a home's family/living area and has a mystical power to bring people together. Roasting marshmallows by camp fire or huddling around a fireplace hearth can easily be recreated right out your back door. The trend of incorporating an outdoor fireplace, fire pit or element of fire has become increasingly popular over the past five years. Wood, natural gas or propane can all be used to fuel your inferno based upon preference. These structures are available in kits for ease of installation or can be custom designed to fit specific needs. Natural stone, clay brick or manufactured block and veneer are all used in construction. Whether it be warmth, utility or just plain beauty, fire has always proven to be a part of our lives in one form or another.

LED LANDSCAPE LIGHTING. LED technology in landscape lighting has come a long way since its inception. The initial cold, bluish LED lamps are now warm and inviting with the added option of and array of vibrant colors. WiFi driven transformers are capable of grouping light fixtures throughout separate outdoor spaces and adjusting light intensities as chosen through a phone or tablet. Presets can also be programmed into the smart device so lighting will automatically turn on or dim when it detects the device within that space. The ability to change colors on individual fixtures right from the palm of your hand I find the most versatile in creating the mood. The overall appearance of an outdoor space can be changed multiple times throughout the evening, captivating your audience and intriguing them to wonder what's next.

Outdoor living should be a seamless blend of architecture and landscape reflecting style and creature comforts from interior to the exterior of the home. It is the integration of elements as outdoor kitchens, fireplaces and roof structures which in all essence create additional rooms of relaxation and entertainment. Especially with our region having such drastic climate changes throughout the seasons it's essential to maximize use time with these features. In the near future I see homes being listed for sale not only with the interior square footage, but also with that of exterior spaces as well. **H&H**

Michael Pasquarello is a degreed landscape architect with ***Elite Landscaping****. Email him at MPasquarello@EliteLandscaping.com or call (856) 753-1944. Visit EliteLandscaping.com for more information.*



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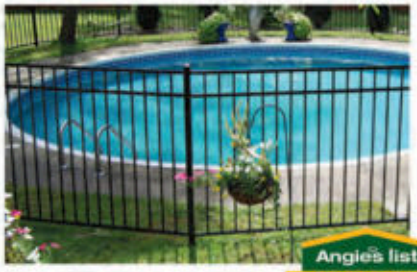
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More Than a Pool

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

by **Kristen Dowd**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Finding the right pool

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

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

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

Pool popularity

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Why Swim-Mor Pools & Spas?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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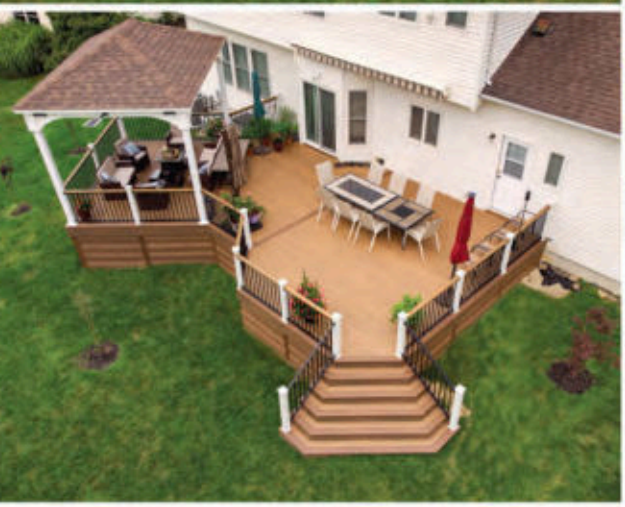
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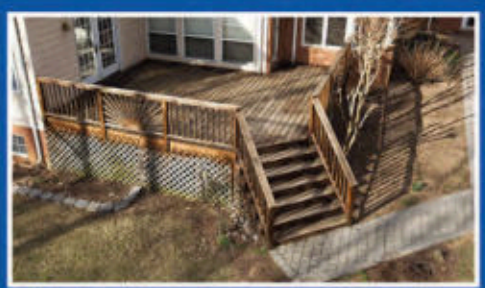


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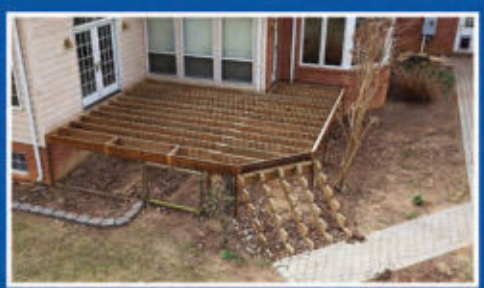
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Let us make your outdoor living dreams come true!

by **Lindsey Getz**

Set Up Your Space for Summer

At **Sequoia Out Back**, customers can find endless inspiration for their outdoor dreams.



It's safe to say that the pandemic has taught us to appreciate the outdoors even more. While backyard outdoor living areas have been soaring in popularity for years now, for many, the stay-at-home orders and the experience of being stuck indoors for so long have made homeowners absolutely crave these spaces more than ever. They are truly a must-have—a fact that's been increasingly evident at Sequoia Out Back, where owner John Keller says that he's seeing even more people come into the showroom than ever before.

From the moment that homeowners walk through Sequoia Out Back's front doors, the experience is really unlike any other. The 30,000-square-foot showroom has everything you could want for your personal oasis on display so that you can envision it in your own backyard.

When you walk through a typical patio store or a big-box store, items aren't usually set up or paired together the way they would be in your backyard so it can be difficult to visualize your finished space. At Sequoia, you can see an entire outdoor living space the way that you might set it up on your own patio. It inspires so many ideas.

The goal of the showroom has always been to make homeowners feel like they're stepping into a real-life outdoor space. This helps homeowners to make the best choices when it comes to furniture and decking supplies that will work for their own projects.

Pair these gorgeous displays with the knowledgeable and helpful team members who are ready to assist—and homeowners can really appreciate the showroom visit



At Sequoia, you can see an entire outdoor living space the way that you might set it up on your own patio. It inspires so many ideas.

experience. Customers always leave Sequoia with a lot of great ideas and information.

Of course, in general, inventory has been a major issue since the start of the pandemic. Homeowners who have tried to purchase furniture and decking may have noticed limited stock. But Sequoia Out Back has been fortunate to be able to keep a lot of inventory in stock thanks to its relationship with manufacturers and its purchasing power, as well as having a large quantity from the start. Even so, with so many people coming through the doors, now is the time to start planning for the spring while inventory is still available.

After all, before you know it, the weather will be consistently warm, and we'll all be spending even more time outdoors. Homeowners want to make sure their space is ready now!

"The sooner you can start planning, the better," urges Keller. "The number of visitors coming to the store right now is higher than ever for this time of year. It's definitely not too early to start thinking about setting up your outdoor space."

As you start planning, Sequoia Out Back has all of the amenities that you might want to consider. This includes fire pits, patio furniture and all of the material supplies including decking and railing and hardscaping. Sequoia works with all of the leading manufacturers including TimberTech, Wolf, Trex, Zuri and Fiberon—all of whom continue to offer innovative products.

Whether you're a do-it-yourselfer or someone who was sent by their contractor to look for materials, Sequoia's showroom can accommodate everyone.

It's all about making the experience as easy and as enjoyable as possible for homeowners. As the true outdoor living experts, Sequoia and its team are ready to help make homeowners' backyard dreams come true.

"Outdoor living has been a trend for a long time but it's hotter than ever," Keller sums up. "I think we're all ready to start spending more time outside." **H&H**

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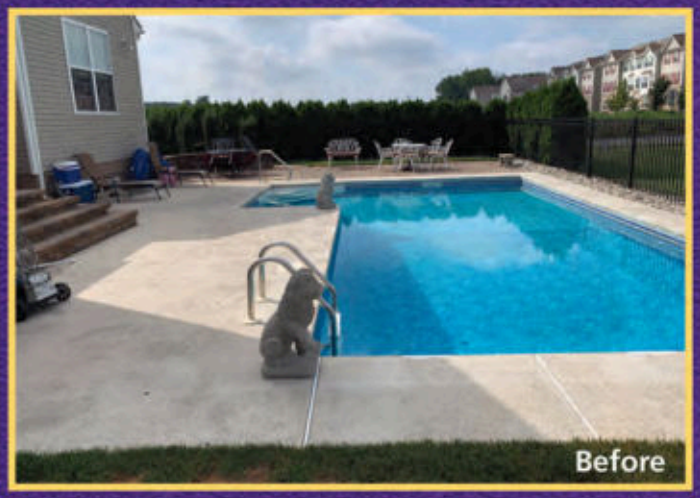
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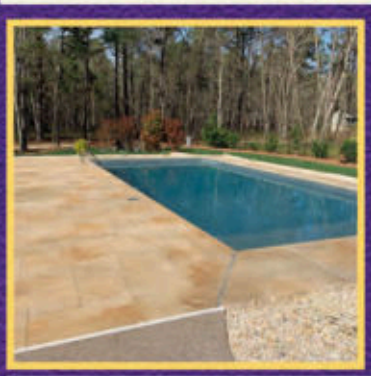
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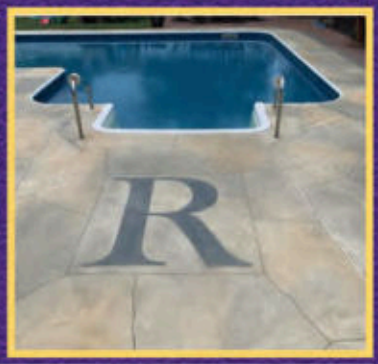
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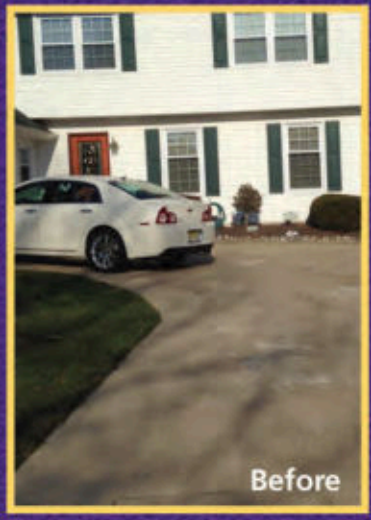
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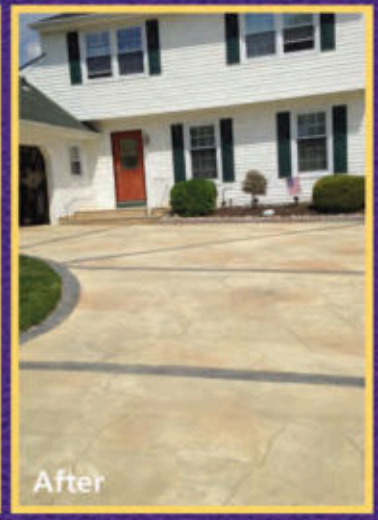






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by Brittany Ann Morrisey

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

WHY WOULD SOMEONE WANT TO RESURFACE CONCRETE VERSUS REPLACEMENT?

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

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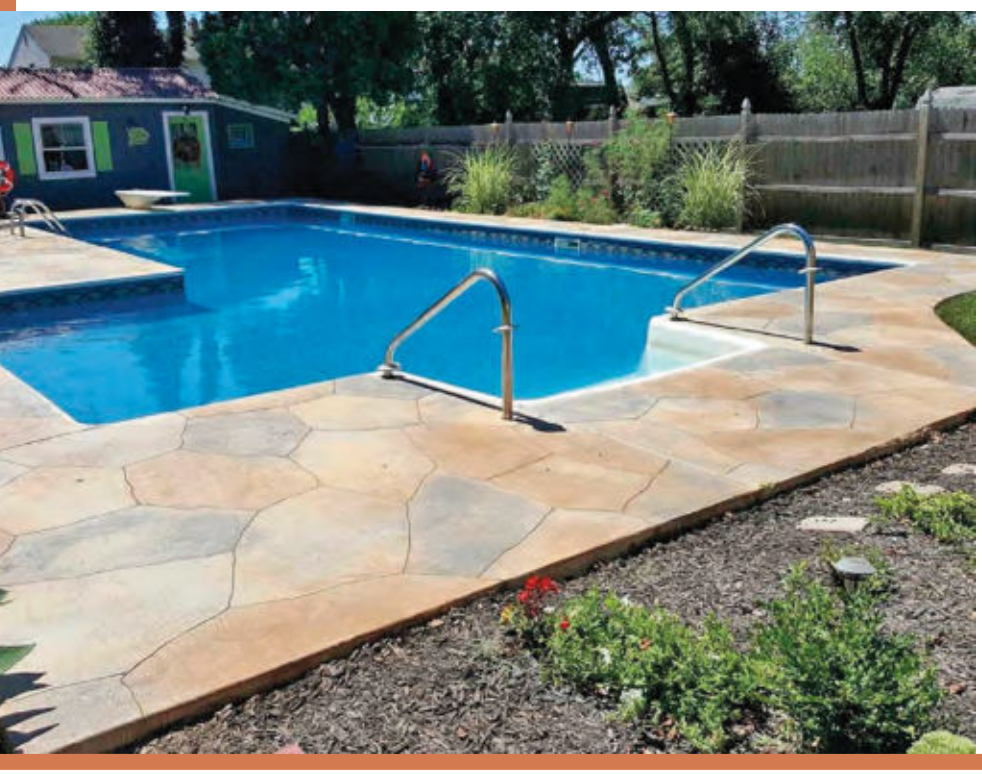
Our polymer cements are the best alternative for exterior projects because they resist erosion. Applied properly, they do not peel, flake or delaminate. They are absorbed into the existing concrete, grow spines that expand creating a new cement surface that is incredibly durable as well as stain and chemical resistant.

HOW MUCH EXPERIENCE DO YOU HAVE?

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

HOW LONG DOES YOUR WORK LAST?

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



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

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



Gwen Kunkel and brother Paul Randall of New Castle Artisan

WILL IT RUIN MY LANDSCAPING OR GRASS?

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

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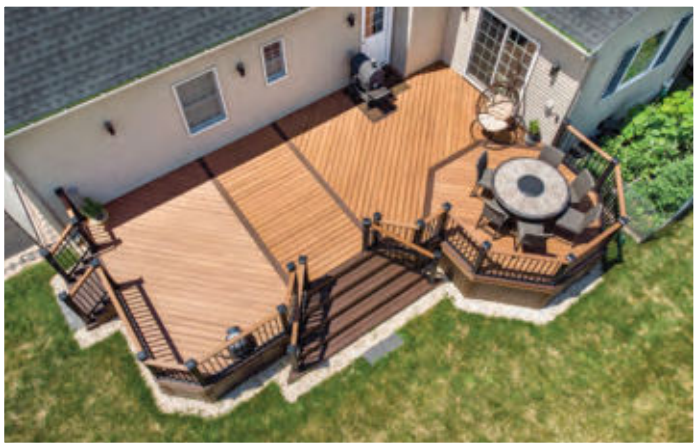
Polymer cements are good interior options because they're highly durable and water resistant, which is great for basements and garages. Our products are applied by hand for a unique artistic touch that can be customized however you would like. We offer various styles from simple solid color flooring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

WHAT ABOUT YOUR FIREPLACE SERVICES AND ACCENT WALLS?

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



STACKING THE DECK



Creating the perfect backyard space takes careful planning and research into the best materials, the trends that will have staying power and the amenities that will truly enhance the outdoor experience. *by* **Matt Cosentino**

Spring's arrival and the promise of warmer weather means that deck season is right around the corner. Soon enough, friends and relatives will be catching up in the backyard over an adult beverage or two and outdoor kitchens will be fired up to feed the guests at a summer barbecue, and although visitors may marvel at the craftsmanship and special features of the space during these gatherings, rarely will they think about the attention to detail that went into the finished product they are enjoying.

The truth is that designing and constructing a deck that will give the homeowners an outdoor area to cherish for years to come takes extensive planning and serious consideration about a number of questions. From materials to colors, unique shapes to multiple levels, and must-have amenities to those that are probably an unnecessary luxury, sometimes all of the concerns that must be addressed can be overwhelming.

That's where an experienced deck contractor—who has likely run into every kind of situation under the sun—can step in and be of major assistance. *House & Home* spoke to several local experts to get their insight into the process and their tips for creating a backyard oasis.

COMPOSITE VS. WOOD

There was a time when most backyard decks were built with pressure-treated wood, and even as composite materials skyrocketed in popularity in the late 1990s and early 2000s, there were still sentimental homeowners who went with wood because of the lower cost associated with it or just because they preferred the look to the still-developing synthetic market.

Recently, however, the low

maintenance, along with the improved aesthetics and more affordable pricing now being offered by the leading composite manufacturers, have just about made wood decks obsolete.

"In the past three or four years, I would say 99% of the decks being built are using synthetic products," says Jack Cameron, a designer at Deck Guardian. "There is a lot of variety as far as the brands and the qualities and properties the materials have, but everybody is doing synthetic materials, no wood. Some people are looking for entry-level and some are looking for the best out there, and there are boards that will do the job for everybody. People just need to educate themselves on what, how and when."

Ray Ebersol of Decks R Us adds that the most recent surge for wood decks eventually declined because the materials became too costly.

"Five, six, seven years ago, it was kind of a cool thing to do exotic hardwoods—ipe was a big one, which is Brazilian walnut," he says. "But that's kind of faded out because it got so expensive with shipping and everything. It's priced out of the market for most people."

Randall Yoder, a designer with Keystone Custom Decks, has some clients who ask about vinyl, but in general the company steers them toward composite decks, which account for 95% of their projects.

"There are a lot of different levels [of composites]," he says. "The higher-end option is a lot more durable over time and prone to less fading. Sometimes with the lower-end composites, if it's poorly made there will be a lot of fading."

It's important for contractors to ascertain the lifestyle of the homeowners and then helping them determine the best materials for the job. Those who entertain often, for example, may want to go the extra mile.

"Obviously, some people can spend $50,000 on a deck and some people only have $10,000 to spend on a deck, and materials can make or break the deal in some cases," Cameron says. "We have boards that are entry-level, boards that are mid-range and boards that are high-end. It's all over the place when it comes to synthetic products these days.

"The biggest [advantages to higher-end boards] would be longevity, look and performance with high traffic. The entry-level board is not for somebody who's going to have 20 people on the deck every day, running up and down the stairs and all of that. It's for somebody who wants to sip a glass of wine over the weekend and not abuse the deck too much. For high-traffic areas you need a more durable board that won't get so much wear and tear over time."

As Ebersol points out, the higher-end composites will cost more now, but in the long run might actually save the customer money compared to less expensive vinyl-wrapped composites, which he notes come with a 25-year warranty and fewer color options.

"The higher-ends, the solid vinyl boards from an Azek or Wolf, they have a lifetime warranty and there's a lot more color selection," he says. "We like those materials because they're easier to install and they're nicer to work with. It's almost just a price point—do you want to spend the money for Azek and get a lifetime warranty so you'll probably never have to worry about it? Or do you want to save yourself some money now and go with something that's not going to look as nice? It's going to move a little bit more when you walk over it and you're going to be able to tell that it's not the same quality."

COLORS AND OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

As for the most popular colors, there has been a major shift since composite decking first broke into the mainstream.

"Everybody is looking for lighter colors that don't get as hot on your feet when you're outside," Cameron says. "Ten years ago, people were just looking for dark chocolate colors and dark grays, and then everybody realized that those get too hot in the sun. Now manufacturers and homeowners are all shifting gears to light, neutral colors that perform much better under the sun."

Ebersol still sees some demand for darker browns and grays, but

Image top left courtesy of Keystone Custom Decks. Image below courtesy of Deck Guardian





one trend coming on strong is the two-toned deck, which will feature boards of varying colors.

"We do a lot of those," he says. "The main floor will be in one color and the border will typically be a darker color. Sometimes it's a darker floor and lighter border, but I would say probably 90% of the time it's the lighter color in the middle and the darker color on the border."

Some projects seamlessly work in multiple kinds of materials, especially the resort-style spaces that may include a composite deck with a roof overhead and a fireplace.

"For the interior of the roof, we use our own products and it's a cedar," Yoder says. "We do our own custom blends and stains and it works well for us. PVC is also very popular at the moment. Masonry on our projects is also very big, and I feel that's what sets us apart. The columns, fireplaces and outdoor kitchen areas stand out. Everyone wants to be at home right now, so more and more they want to bring indoor space to the outdoors."

MAKING A STATEMENT

While a majority of decks remain rectangular or square, there are designs that stand out by bending boards and incorporating circles.

"It's mainly aesthetic and there are some pros to it as well," Yoder says. "Little bump-outs help out for bar areas, so you can still get some extra dining behind it. We have our own guys who bend the boards, so that kind of sets us apart because we can do it all in house."

"Our designs are unique," adds Bill Wilson, one of the owners of Amazing Decks. "We do a lot of curves—we have the equipment to curve boards, so a lot of our decks are free-flowing curves. We also integrate other materials, like paver patios or bluestone. Maybe the backyard doesn't just call for a deck; maybe it calls for a combination of the two. Even though we're a deck company, we have to be honest with the customer and tell them what will work best."

Ebersol still gets requests for round areas of the deck but it is starting to be few and far between.

"That little fad kind of faded out," he says. "We just finished a pretty large project that had a circle front, but it's not as popular as it once was. We still do a handful a year, maybe even a dozen, but not like we used to."

Another trend that was hot for a few years but has cooled off is the multi-level deck. It may lead to "oohs" and "ahs" when guests first lay eyes on it, and it will certainly look spectacular on Instagram, but for practical, everyday use it can be a safety issue. As Cameron points out, that is especially true when parties are occurring and people are enjoying alcohol on the deck.

"Most people settle on a single level just because they have more flexibility when joining two or three tables together for a large gathering rather than having three corners where people are separated," he says. "Also, multi-level decks were popular back in the day but people realized that after you get a couple of drinks in, you're walking backwards and before you know it you're flipping upside down.

"So now people are more conscious of a single level being much safer. We still do some multi-level but not to the extent that it used to be, when we would do as many as four levels on a deck. The maximum someone would do now is two levels—the dining and lounging on one level and then the cooking and bar area on the other."

Another way to show off decorative flair is through the railings, which can have functional uses as well.

"The most popular railing requests we get are the flat-top drink railing options," says Mike Jerminski of Get Decked. "We take the same material used on the decking and place it on top of railing to provide a nice, flat, 6-inch surface perfect for drinks, bird feeders, etc. Also, the aluminum square balusters used vertically are a great architectural look that combines a sleek, see-through modern design that is still fully code compliant."

Finally, LED lights have become almost a must-have, and can be used in several areas of the deck to provide



not only safety but ambiance.

"In the last few years, we have installed lights on almost every single deck that we do," Cameron says. "It used to be a commodity, and now it's just part of it—when people get a deck, they automatically think about lights. In some states across the U.S., having lights on the stairs is actually code required. In New Jersey it is not, but people understand that having lights is really going to save people from tripping. At the same time, in the evening it creates a really nice resort-style, laidback atmosphere because the lights are not too bright in your face, but you can turn off the overhead lights and have the low-voltage ones while you're enjoying dinner or a glass of wine."

"The LED lighting has become way more affordable and lasts a lot longer than the old lights did," Ebersol adds. "Probably 80% of the decks we build have lights on them, maybe even more. Typically it's on the side of the posts, about 6 to 8 inches down from the top of the railing. That's almost like a triangle-shaped light and it will shine down toward the deck floor. And then we'll put them on the risers of the stairs pointing down so it shines on the tread where you're stepping as you're walking up the stairs. Those are the two most typical locations; we do post-top lights sometimes as well."

SPECIAL FEATURES

Fully loaded decks featuring outdoor kitchens, bars and entertainment areas with televisions may not be quite as in demand as a few years ago as a result of concerns over the economy, but these amenities are still popular for those who can afford them.

"It's been affected a little bit, but for the most part, most people know what they're getting into," Yoder says. "As designers, the big thing is setting expectations ahead of time and making sure the clients are aware of the costs going into it. Just a couple of years ago, everybody wanted to add on, add on, add on. It has taken a step back a little bit, but we are still doing those extras if we set expectations correctly."

Some form of protection from the elements is also beneficial, although Cameron gives a word of caution.

"Pergolas are not going to do much other than decorate the deck," he says. "But people who are serious about using the space outside need a roof, because it's either too hot or it's drizzling, so you never get the perfect weather outside. A lot of people are using the roof so they can have shade or protection. Those things have really good ROI unlike a pergola, which only gives you the look. Having a roof over your deck is almost like an addition to your house and you get 85% return on it."

In the end, homeowner heeding the advice of experienced designers and builders when it comes to materials, colors, trends and amenities will usually be thrilled with the final results.

"It's great for both us and them to see a project come to life," Yoder says. "You see the pictures that get posted by the families and you create a relationship with them. It's a lot of fun and very rewarding." H&H

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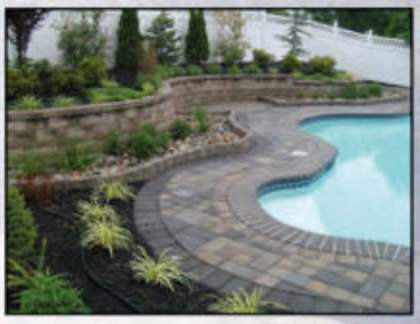
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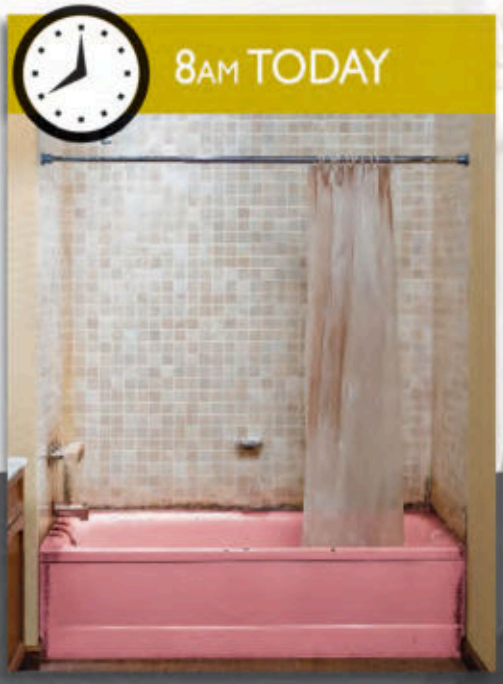
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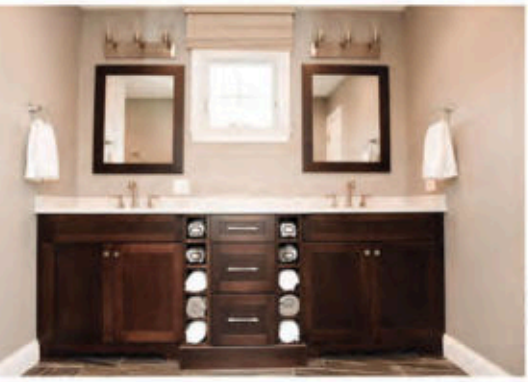
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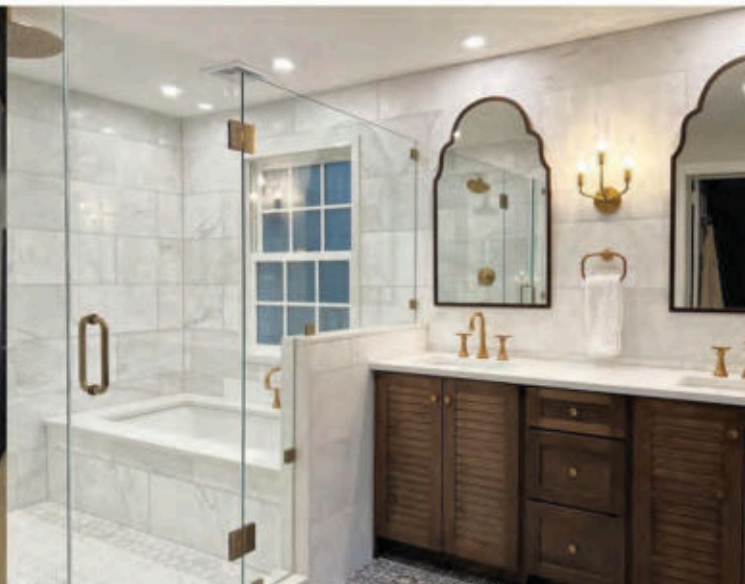
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