# HOUSE & HOME

South Jersey

Your #1 Resource and Design Magazine

Volume 22, Issue 8


# Sequoia Out Back

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## ASK THE EXPERT



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*Keeping up with the current trends in kitchen and bathroom remodeling* page 19



### *Victorian Flooring Finishing*

*How to choose the right flooring for your style and budget* page 23

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Volume 22, Issue 8


# Hargrave Contractors

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ASK THE EXPERT



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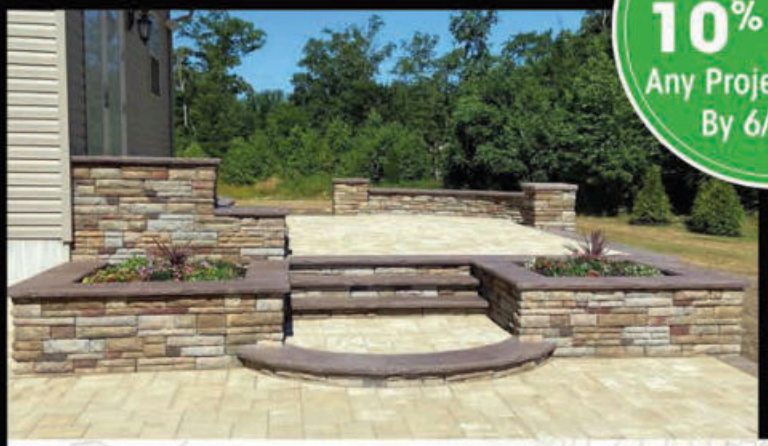
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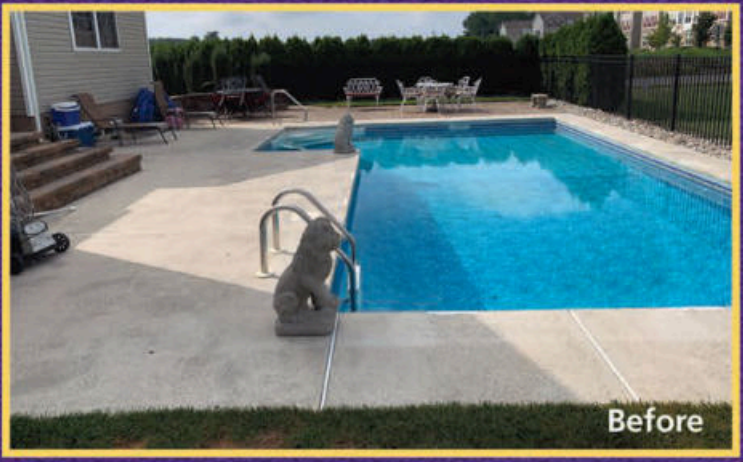
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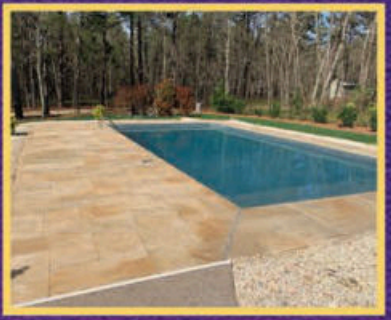


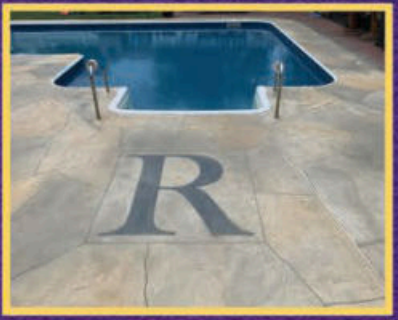
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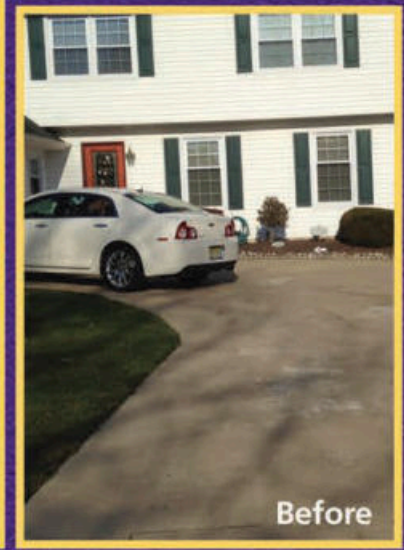

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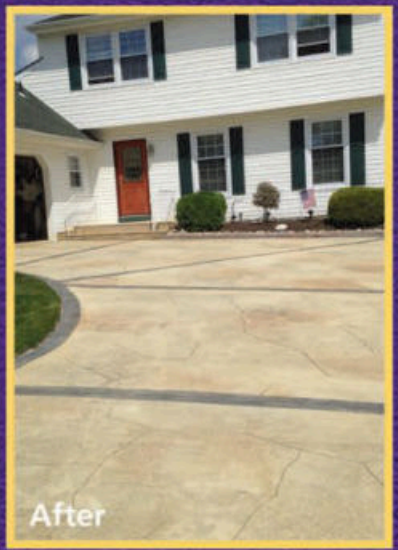







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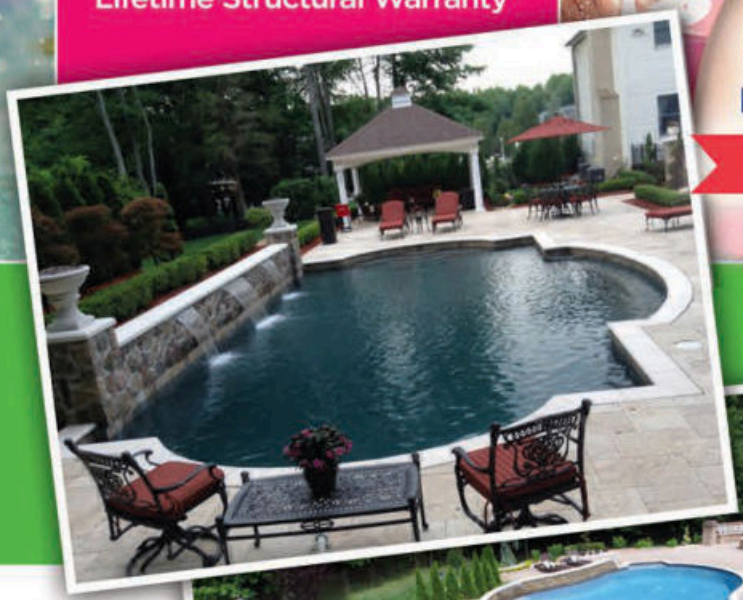
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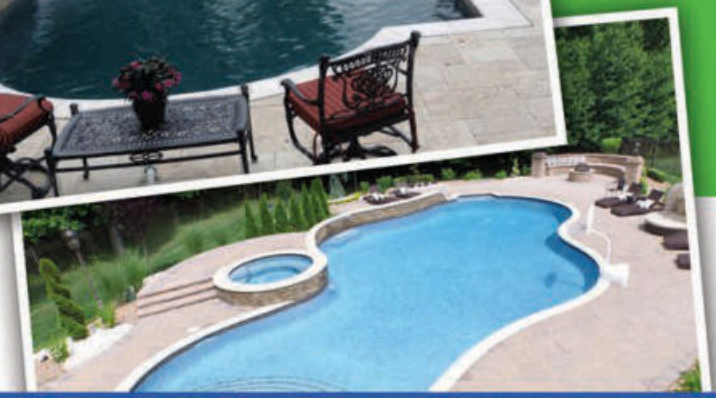
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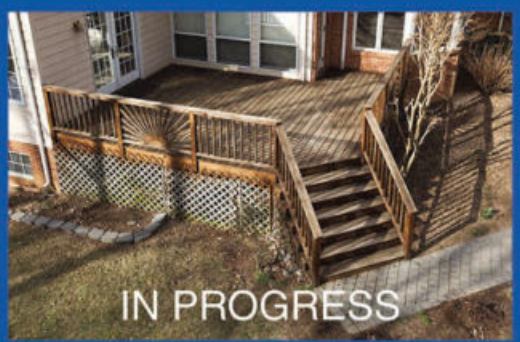
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# Take it Outside

Now that you've redone your deck, added an outdoor kitchen and created the backyard oasis you've always dreamed of, it's time to find

# the perfectly appointed accessories

to accent the exterior extension of your indoor décor.

By Madeleine Maccar

For the past two years, homeowners have been looking at their indoor and outdoor spaces with a renewed focus on making their houses feel more like a home that reflects their unique tastes and lifestyles. Rather than letting the walls close in, the pandemic has been an unexpected opportunity to assess your living spaces with a fresh perspective and clear vision of everything from simple refreshes to timely renovations and full-scale remodels.

Even as the region looks ahead to resuming long-delayed summer traditions like those much-needed getaways and sorely missed plans with loved ones, home improvement projects that extend all the comfort of the indoors to the outside are still on the agenda for many. And with all those new color schemes, new fixtures and new materials comes the accompanying new accessories that amplify their wow factor.

"The residual effects of the pandemic will be felt for some time—it is not like flipping a switch," says Craig Friedman of XO Appliances. "Since the pandemic, we have seen a higher priority given to enhancing spaces within the home or placing a greater emphasis on enjoying our backyards with outdoor cooking appliances."

"Outdoor dining is still blowing up," agrees Kristi Reading of The Buxton Complex. "It's not your standard picnic table: It's the nice, comfortable chairs, beautiful tables, all these different colors, and coordinating all that with your patio."

Whether you're looking for all-new items that complement your newly customized outdoor oasis or the one statement piece that will make your backyard pop, the region's experts know exactly how to help make your dreams a well-appointed reality.

## Your Space, Your Taste

While some design trends of the past have erred toward the year's it-color or the must-have appointment of the seasons, personal tastes have been the real driving factor recently.

"We aren't seeing a singular specific look or product category that is outperforming another," says Bobby Huber Jr. of Oskar Huber Furniture & Design. "Each person's outdoor space is unique—be it the layout, how they want the space to function or what their design preferences/styles are."

"Individual tastes and the nature of people's homes are key drivers, but in general, there is a move to expand the home by utilizing their outdoor living space more completely," adds Friedman. "With more outdoor appliance options available, backyards are becoming a home for fire pits/tables and pizza ovens,



Image at left courtesy of Oscar Huber Furniture & Design. Image at right courtesy of The Buxton Complex

# Take it Outside

as well as full outdoor kitchens."

But there are always those items making such a splash that everyone seems to be clamoring for them.

"The hottest accessories, besides cantilever and market umbrellas, have been fire pit tables and drink coolers, and we are selling some serving carts on wheels as well," adds Bruce Halpern, owner of Tropicraft by Pavillon du Soleil. "These all add to the fun of being outside. And keeping people outside adds to the convenience of the host."

"The most popular thing we have going on right now is landscape speaker systems, which are basically a combination of multiple little satellite speakers that almost looks like outdoor lights, then you bury an 8-inch, 10-inch or 12-inch subwoofer, and it gives you a really clear, full range of sound," adds Gregg Maina of Elite Smart Home, who says it's a product that largely gets installed at new-construction homes but is a comparatively easy retrofit for homeowners looking to upgrade their backyard's wireless sound system for the summer.

With outdoor accessories and furniture being more exposed to the elements than their indoor counterparts, experts advise looking for durable pieces that are built to withstand seasons of exposure.

"In outdoor furniture, the polycomposites are a fantastic investment," Reading says. "They're no-maintenance, they don't splinter, they last forever and you can get them in all kinds of colors."

Huber notes that there are plenty of sturdy, aesthetically pleasing and even environmentally friendly materials for customers to choose from as they're selecting patio furniture: recycled poly lumber looks and feels like wood, and is guaranteed not to crack, splinter, chip, peel or rot for 20 years; cast aluminum is a superior-grade, molten aluminum alloy hand-poured into detailed moldings; wrought aluminum is reinforced at the piece's stress points for extra resiliency; faux wicker is both realistic and guaranteed to not change color for at least five years; and teak, which comes in both a natural finish and one that mimics the gray patina it develops with age.



"When it comes to cushions and fabrics, not all are created equal," he continues. "It's important to know you're buying something with a top-quality cushion."

Halpern, too, notes that comfort is king.

"The No. 1 thing, in our opinion, is comfort," he emphasizes. "If it's comfortable, you will want to sit there instead of staying inside. … Don't think of your outside furniture as being any less important than your living room [since] you will use it nearly half of the year."

"What I have heard is customers coming in saying they want something that is going to last, be comfortable, look good and can have delivered ASAP," Huber adds.

## Shore-to-Please Accessories

Shore homes have been enjoying their share of upgrades and reimagined exterior appointments, too, especially as the rising popularity of working from home has encouraged many families to spend more time at their Shore houses and secondary properties.

But that salty air does do a number on certain materials, and will age your outdoor accessories faster than more inland locales will.

"At the Shore, if you don't want to spend your time doing maintenance on your furniture, stick with quality aluminum, cast or extruded, that is heavy and has a finish that's guaranteed—never buy 'metal' or 'steel' furniture, it won't hold up," Halpern points out. "The many MGP (marine grade polymer) USA-made brands like Telescope, Windward or HomeCrest will endure any weather thrown at it."

Huber agrees that MGP—"the same materials they use on boats"—is made to endure the harsh salt air. "It is a refined look that offers a wide range of colors."

As Shore homes tend to be built a little closer together than primary residences, Maina notes that the landscape speakers "stay local" since they're positioned so low, meaning that you enjoy your music without imposing on your neighbors.

"You're putting anywhere from eight to 16 speakers all around your yard, so you don't have to blast your music to hear it," he says.

With many people spending more time at their Shore houses, both for a change of scenery while working from home and to get away without going far away, people are beginning to personalize their seaside residences more like their primary ones.

"Remote is no longer remote: What was



Image at left courtesy of Oscar Huber Furniture & Design. Image above courtesy of The Buxton Complex




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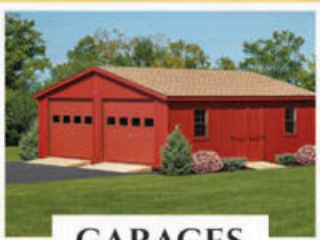



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## Take it Outside

once thought of as a place to escape to has become the place we expand to, and comfort is the key regardless of the physical address," Friedman says.

### Here to Help

While accessorizing your outdoor space isn't as high-stakes a project as home renovations and additions, area experts do have the insights, experience and dedicated team members to point you toward the right items, brands, colors, materials and more, plus the customer feedback they've received from previous buyers as well as their own experience with an item.

"It's really important that you work with someone who knows the product, who isn't just a salesman," Reading points out. "We all have our products in our homes, so I can tell you about a certain piece that I've had since 2006, and that it doesn't change colors or fade and how it's held up through the years."

Besides, testing out and examining accessories and pieces of furniture before you commit to them is how you avoid making potentially pricey mistakes or finding yourself saddled with an item that you're less than thrilled with.

"The only way to know if something is comfortable is to try it out—that's why we insist on having more than 100 different sets on the showroom floor," Halpern says. "Yes, it takes time to try them out, but it's worth it every day you're on your patio or deck, and it will be worth it for decades to come."

For backyard accessories that might come with a bit of a learning curve, showrooms not only offer expert demonstrations from knowledgeable staff but also can kick-start some inspiration.

"A lot of this stuff people have never heard of until they see it at someone else's house, so [a showroom] is a good place to show people all the different aspects of a product," Maina explains. "It's hard for me to explain what a smart home is, but if I demonstrate it, it starts clicking and people start realizing, 'I can do this, I can do that.' It's a great place to spur ideas."

As colors on a screen aren't always true to life and a material that seems like it would fit your outdoor décor might clash up close, visiting a showroom for an in-person, hands-on assessment of all your options is still the best way to decide what furniture and flourishes are most harmonious with your space.

"One thing that our designers can do today that they couldn't easily do five years ago is now we can continue your interior design aesthetic to the outdoor space," Huber says. "This helps create a connected look to the rest of your home that shows the cohesive design expression of the client inside and outside their home." **H&H**

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ask the expert by Amy Kodrich

# Matteo Family Kitchens & Flooring

**SINCE OPENING IN 1995, MATTEO FAMILY KITCHENS & FLOORING HAS EXPANDED FROM SPECIALIZING IN KITCHENS, TO ALL THINGS FLOORING, BATHROOMS AND COUNTERTOPS.** As a family-owned business, focusing on clients' needs is top priority.

"Our business model is for each designer to measure and design their client's space directly. We feel this creates a bond and allows our designer to get to know you better," says Steve Matteo, co-owner and store manager.

With new trends emerging, it can be difficult for homeowners to determine exactly what fits their living atmosphere. Kitchens and baths are two of the most popular rooms to remodel and *House and Home* spoke with Matteo to determine what direction customers should take when renovating.



Steve Matteo, co-owner and store manager

**WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MORE POPULAR NEW ADDITIONS CLIENTS WANT WHEN REDESIGNING OR RENOVATING THEIR KITCHENS?**

Farm sinks are still the build around item we are using in the majority of our designs. What's nice about a farm sink is that it doesn't have to make your kitchen a "farmhouse" kitchen; we use them in all colors and styles of cabinets and with various countertop materials. Farm sinks can be stylish and functional.

**WHAT ABOUT MASTER BATH REMODELING, WHAT KIND OF TRENDS ARE YOU SEEING THERE?**

Bathrooms have been the majority of what I have worked on this past year. Larger walk-in showers are more useful in most lives rather than a large soaking tub from the past. We are still using tubs in our designs, but more of the free-standing style tub which opens up the space to a more versatile shower design. Showers with niches and lights inside give you better storage and functionality.

**WITH SO MANY DIFFERENT OPTIONS OF FLOORING AVAILABLE, HOW CAN A HOMEOWNER DECIDE WHICH IS THE BEST FIT FOR THEM?**



When it comes to flooring, we like to know how you live in the house, because not every floor is for everyone. Hardwoods add value and a natural look to your house but require maintenance that not everyone wants to deal with. Laminate floors have taken a beating due to the way they used to separate and swell with water along with the cheaper market pushing these products and them not holding up. Laminates have made a full turn in quality and durability for the active family. Vinyl plank has been the overwhelming choice for a floor for our clients, the styling and durability along with ease of install make it a great do it yourself product. We really try to ask all the questions to find out which floor might be best for you and your family. Many times people come in with expectations to get a certain floor and after we find out their lifestyle we put them into something better suited for them.

**WHETHER YOU'RE LOOKING TO POTENTIALLY SELL YOUR HOUSE OR JUST UPGRADE THE LOOK AND FEEL OF YOUR HOME, HOW MUCH CAN A NEWLY REMODELED KITCHEN OR MASTER BATH HELP BOOST A HOME'S VALUE?**

Kitchens and baths are a huge difference maker in selling a home. People want to turnkey houses where they are ready to move in without the stress of purchasing a home and then finding a contractor to work with for a remodel. Kitchens and bathrooms will return upward of 80% of the cost of the remodel and in today's housing market it's producing over 100% of the cost.

**KEEPING THE CURRENT TRENDS IN MIND WITH KITCHENS AND BATHS, WHAT ARE YOU ANTICIPATING WILL BECOME THE NEXT HOT ITEM OR MUST-HAVE FEATURES IN THE NEAR FUTURE?**

Whatever HGTV wants to promote will be the next BIG item! Shaker cabinets, farm sinks, subway tile and quartz countertops are what we have been selling for the last few years directly due to the way they are promoted on all the TV home remodeling shows. I don't see these trends changing anytime soon, other than small color adjustments as we navigate the white/gray world and incorporate blues and other tones into it. H&H



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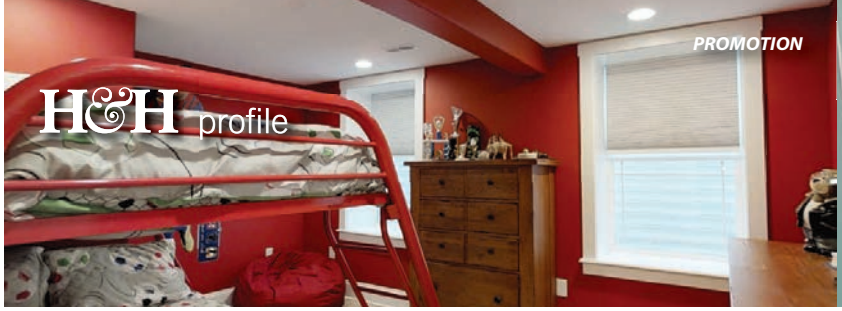
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# Creating a Safe Space

## With the installation of egress windows, Hargrave Contractors is giving homeowners peace of mind.

*by* **Melissa D. Sullivan**

**For Dave Hargrave, catastrophe has been the catalyst of success. Laid off from the finance industry during the subprime mortgage crisis of 2008, Hargrave needed to find a new way to support his new family.**

"I got married and, six months later, on a Sunday night, found out we were pregnant," says Hargrave, owner of Hargrave Contractors. "Then I got laid off on Monday morning. It was a crazy time."

Fortunately, Hargrave found work in construction. Over the next few years, Hargrave grew his construction experience into a successful real estate career, rehabilitating and selling homes.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, radically changing the real estate market. "Inventory dropped for everyone," says Hargrave. Without any purchasing options, homeowners were forced to use their existing homes differently. Hargrave realized that families pressed for space were expanding into basements that had previously been unfinished spaces, creating offices for remote workers or additional bedrooms. Forced by circumstances to pivot yet again, Hargrave decided to focus his construction business on reinventing these basements as useful, pleasant and safe spaces.

"COVID changed how we all used our homes," says Hargrave. "That change opened the floodgates to all the reasons why you would need an emergency exit in your basement."

Hargrave Contractors, located in Turnersville, New Jersey, and serving South Jersey area homeowners, now specializes in installing egress or "emergency escape" windows in residential homes. Most state and international building codes require egress windows in all basements. An egress window is mandatory if the room will be used as a sleeping space.

But an egress window is more than a regulatory requirement. An egress window will add light and air flow to a basement, creating a new, livable space without the cost and inconvenience of an addition. If a homeowner is considering selling, an egress window in a basement is an added element that may positively affect a potential sale.

Finally, an egress window is a key safety feature, allowing escape from an underground space in case of weather emergencies. Says Hargrave, "We had a tornado rip through South Jersey several months ago and a lot of people were huddled in their basement, looking around, thinking, 'Hey, I've got nowhere to go if the basement steps get blocked.'"

Home fires are another concern. "It's unbelievable how fast you can be overwhelmed by smoke," says Hargrave. "One of our co-worker's neighbors had a fire. They worked overnights, and at 10 a.m. on a Saturday morning they were asleep, and smoke was coming into the kitchen from the basement." The man grabbed a fire extinguisher and ran to the basement to put out the fire, but he was disoriented by the smoke within seconds. Fortunately, he was able to make his way to the back door of his basement and walked out to safety. Says Hargrave, "If it hadn't been for that means of egress, he could have been trapped."

The good news for homeowners is that the benefits of an egress window can be achieved in less than two days. Also, Hargrave Contractors prides itself on leaving every client's home exactly as they found it, preserving all lawn work and landscaping. "I'm a little anal about that," Hargrave says with a chuckle. "We drive heavy equipment, and we dig a big hole, sometimes up to eight feet deep." But despite the work, says Hargrave, "you can't even tell we were there."



Hargrave Contractors also wants to offer its clients the best customer experience. "I don't ever want to be a salesman," says Hargrave. "I just want to be able to provide knowledge to people and have somebody else make the educated decision from there."

To facilitate the decision-making process, Hargrave has developed a thorough intake process. Compared to other contractors who may appear for initial consults and then fail to follow up, Hargrave's employees will spend considerable time on the phone with a client, discussing needs and options, making sure the project is a good fit for both parties. The last thing he wants to do is run out to a homeowner's property just to have to say that their work won't adhere to a certain application. "We value our time and we value yours,'" says Hargrave.

At the end of the day, Hargrave Contractors is focused on creating safe spaces for families. As a father of three, the most rewarding part of Hargrave's work is knowing that, after a new window is installed, there is a means for everyone to get out in an emergency. Hargrave recalls a recent project where a landlord was installing an egress window in a rental property. After the install was done, a young child was laying on a mattress in the finished room, playing video games.

"I had the feeling of knowing that I could sleep at night," says Hargrave. "There's no price tag to be put on that." **H&H**

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ask the expert by Amy Kodrich

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**FOR OVER 32 YEARS, VICTORIAN FLOORING FINISHING HAS SPECIALIZED IN PROVIDING EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE TO HOMEOWNERS FOCUSING ON WOOD FLOORING FINISHING, RESTORATION, INSTALLATION AND POLISHING.**

The company works with customers to provide a personalized experience and their hands-on team ensures a quick turnaround. Educating customers during the process is important to the owners Mr. Marcelino and Mr. Silva.

The team at Victorian Flooring has the experience and skills to take on all types of jobs—whether working with new flooring or old and historic floors. For example, they were trusted with the flooring of a house that was originally a hotel built in 1893, located on Lakeview Avenue in Laurel Springs.

*House & Home* spoke with Victorian Flooring further about all the important details customers should consider when updating their floors.





Gilmar Marcelino, owner

### WHEN WOULD BE A GOOD TIME FOR CUSTOMERS TO UPDATE THEIR FLOORS?

Floorings should be updated every eight to 12 years. Once homeowners are looking to sell, and customers to buy, that's a good opportunity to refresh or sand the floor to create more value for the house.

### HOW DO YOU HELP CLIENTS MAINTAIN THEIR NEW FLOORS?

We recommend paying attention when moving the furniture around. Felt pads are always a good option to use to prevent scratches on the floor. We also recommend using Bona cleaner products.

### WHAT ARE THE LATEST TRENDS ON THE FLOORING MARKET?

When it comes to wood selection and coloring, red/white oak and natural colors are a symbol of what is traditional in the flooring industry. On the other hand, the latest trends are darker flooring colors. With regard to wood selection, it would be red oak, white oak, hickory, maple, yellow pine, red pine, Brazilian cherry, mahogany, birch and walnut. Those are the most popular wood selections in the flooring industry.

### HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO CONSIDER FINANCIAL PLANNING BEFORE RENEWING THE FLOOR?

It is extremely important because dreams matter. The more prepared you are financially, there will be a greater chance of getting the final result you are looking for.

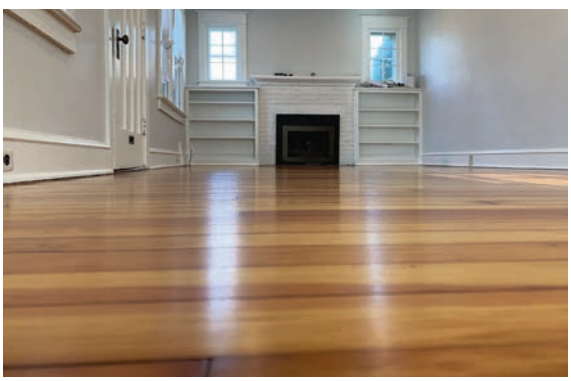
### DURING THE PROCESS, HOW SHOULD THE CUSTOMER PROCEED REGARDING THE TIMING AND MOVING FURNITURE?

There's a process: 2,500 square feet usually takes about five days. During that time, the furniture should be removed in order to proceed with the job.

### HOW DO I DECIDE BETWEEN WATER OR OIL BASE COATS FOR MY FLOOR?

Victorian Flooring is specialized in both. Water and oil base coats bring shine to the floor and bring it back to life. Both are good options and can be used for all types of finishes, such as semi-gloss, satin and matte. When using an oil base, it is a longer process, taking 12 hours to dry. On the other hand, water base coats take about three hours to dry. The other aspect to be considered is the smell. A water base coat is non-flammable and virtually inodorous. The odor of the oil base coat will remain for a couple days. Due to the density, an oil base coat is recommended when you have large pets. H&H








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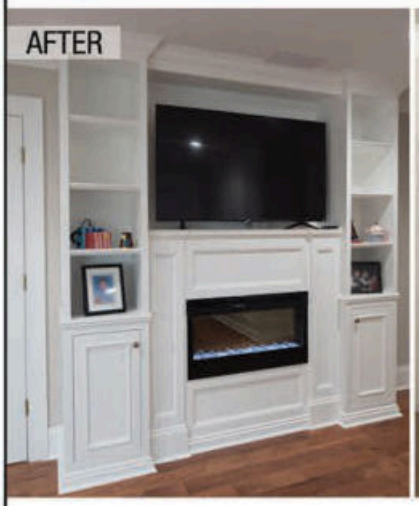
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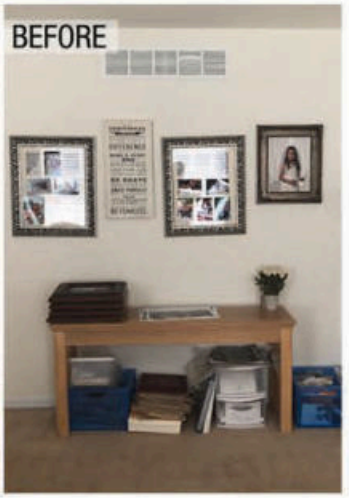



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**TAKING KEY STEPS NOW** will have your landscaping looking its best when summer arrives.

# Always be *Prepared*

by **Matt Cosentino**

Entertainment season is fast approaching, and before long homeowners will be welcoming in guests for summer barbecues and pool parties. They will surely want a yard to be proud of on these occasions, and even when there is not a special event going on, pulling into the driveway and admiring a lush, green lawn does wonders for mental health. Of course, the extreme heat of July and August can put a tremendous strain on the landscaping, which is why it is crucial for homeowners to take certain steps in the spring to ensure that they and any visitors will have a beautiful property to look at all summer long.

"You have to prepare right now with fertilization, seeding and really getting it ready to be able to take on the heat in the summer," says Michael Tarleton of TLC Landscaping. "The optimal time for growing seed is the fall, but you also have to maintain what you have and keep it where it is."

Adds Michael Pasquarello of Elite Landscaping: "Spring is the ideal time to thicken up the density of a lawn and to establish a deep root system so come summer when evapotranspiration is at its highest, the individual blades of grass can survive on less available moisture."

*House & Home* spoke to several local professionals to find out some helpful tips about preparing the lawn, flowers and planting beds for the harsh summer months to come.

## Get a lay of the land

An important stage in the spring cleanup process is to assess the yard and see what kind of shape it is in heading into summer.

"My first suggestion would be to walk around the property and inspect your plants and your garden for any dead plant material and any dead growth on the plant material," says Chris DeMato of Rock Bottom Landscaping & Fencing. "If you have any other structures or fences or things like that, inspect everything and get a good list of what you need. Of course, you can decide what you can manage or if you need a professional to come in and take care of it.

"The next step, assuming you have dead growth, broken branches and plants that do not look well, is those portions of the plant need to be pruned off and cleaned up. Any ornamental grasses or other plants that were not cut back in the fall should be cut back before the summer season. Obviously, clean out your planting beds of any weed growth and any undesirable grass growth that has spread into the planting bed."

Often, dead leaves that were not removed during the fall have gathered in clumps around the yard and can be a hindrance to the spring awakening.

"It's very important to clean leaves thoroughly," DeMato says. "Allowing leaves to form in a planting bed or your grass can create a covered mat when they harden and settle. They essentially smother whatever they're laying on. If they're on the lawn, they're going to kill the grass, and if they're on the plant, they will smother the plant."

## Do's and don'ts heading into summer

After a rough winter, there is an inclination for many homeowners to rush out the first mild weekend of the spring and immediately start thatching, aerating and seeding. But it's



Photos courtesy of TLC Landscaping

not always necessary.

"The fall is a more popular time to perform these tasks, however they can be beneficial to complete in the spring as well if they have not been done in a while," Pasquarello says. "Seeding is the one item I would definitely wait until the fall as you will be competing directly with any pre-emergents applied to the lawn. They will adversely affect the grass seeds in the same way as they do the weed seeds."

DeMato advises to not get carried away with fertilizing. Too much fertilization can actually result in less growth and leave grass and plants vulnerable to pests or disease.

"Homeowners tend to overfertilize a lot," he says. "Overfertilizing your plants and your lawn is not good; it's essentially no different than a human being overeating. You're not allowing those plants and the grass to strengthen on their own from the ground up. They don't have to search for a whole lot because you're overfeeding them."

Mulching planting beds is always a common chore in the spring, and local big-box stores and garden centers will often have sales on mulch at this time of the year. Tarleton warns to be careful about not going overboard.

"Basically, I always say clean it up, weed it and mulch it," he explains. "This way the mulch will help absorb the water and retain the water. But don't overmulch—mulch is there to help your plants, but too much mulch will kill your plants."

DeMato adds that cultivating the soil is also important. "Essentially, you take a heavy, metal garden rake and loosen your soil and mulch," he says. "This allows plant material to get the proper watering when it rains, and it also allows oxygen to get to the root system a little easier—it aerates the soil, which is very important. Cultivating means mixing and turning over your soil with a heavy metal rake and preparing your soil for growth and to allow the









watering to seep in properly around the root system."

## Addressing the lawn

Cutting the grass in the middle of the scorching summer can be a laborious activity, but many homeowners look forward to it at this time of year when it's not as hot. It's typically best to resume mowing in early spring.

"In our region, historically the second week of April is when lawns are due for their first haircut," Pasquarello says. "First, be sure to remove any leaves, branches and debris from the surface of the lawn in order to give the ability to breathe and cut freely."

"It depends on the lawn," adds Tarleton. "You don't want to let it get too long before you cut, because then it builds up thatch. But at the same time you don't want to cut too much where you're cutting it too short and burning it out. You have to base it on your lawn. Sometimes people cut too often but it's OK to take a week off here and there and let the lawn establish, and not just beat the lawn up by running a machine over it."

Because of the constant April showers that usually carry over to early May, homeowners must monitor their watering of the lawn.

"Overwatering is a big mistake," DeMato says. "It's the same concept as overfertilizing.



If you overwater a plant or your grass, it does not allow the root system to really strengthen up and search for the water on its own. So be very careful and be very regimented in your watering—it should be a scheduled watering system. It's a common mistake where a home-




owner may miss watering for three or four days when they're newly seeding a lawn, and then they water for three hours and overwater. That's the worst thing you can do, so try to be scheduled with your watering. [Do it] every other day and make sure it's the same amount of time, and the same principle with your plants."

"Most established lawns can flourish in the early to mid spring with just the help of Mother Nature," Pasquarello agrees. "The temperatures on average are still on the cooler side and the lawn is not demanding a tremendous amount of water. [But] there still have been some very dry, hot mid-May years where you will need to crank things up a bit."

DeMato concludes that homeowners know their properties best and can use their judgment about watering, with specific areas needing more water than others.

## Final touches

Most homeowners have dealt with unsightly crabgrass in July and August, which can ruin a landscape that was impeccable just a few months before. Weed control is critical in the spring.

"You should be doing preventative measures now to minimize that in the summer months," Tarleton says. "It's hard when the weather gets to be 100 degrees out; it's really tough to spray for weeds then because you can kill the grass too."

DeMato shares his recommendations for perennials and ornamental grasses.

"If you have any overgrown perennials or ornamental grasses, if you feel they're too large you can divide them," he says. "That should be done prior to the summer months. You can simply split an ornamental grass down the middle and divide it and plant the other half somewhere you may have space. You can do this with many of your perennials that will be coming in during May and June.

"Quite often there are perennials that are very flimsy and the growth is wispy," he continues. "You may want to secure them with stakes and other garden rings or plant rings. You simply stake it down over the plant and it gives a little support to those flimsy plants such as peonies, mint and delphiniums. This will encourage a much stronger root system."

Finally, Pasquarello points out that spring is always a great time to add plants or flowers to the landscape.

"Planting earlier helps flowers, shrubs and trees establish a root system and get acclimated to their new area prior to the heat setting in," he says. "They will be able to uptake water more easily when needed." H&H

Photo courtesy of Elite Landscaping

## RESOURCES

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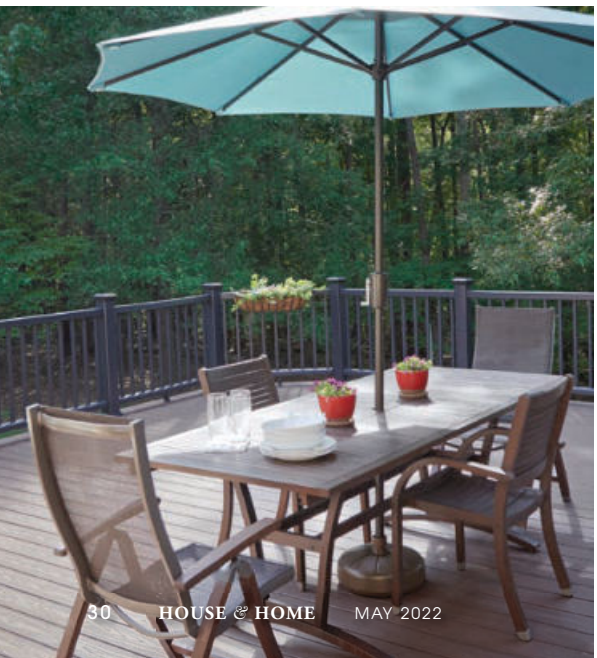



by Lindsey Getz



# 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



**[H]ere, 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."**

**—John Keller,** *owner*

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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# Breaking the Mold

**Architectural Concrete Design** brings unmatched expertise and a designer's eye to your decorative concrete projects. by **LIZ HUNTER**

*Crafting the perfect outdoor space* is a careful orchestration combining function with aesthetics. How the space will be used determines every material installed, especially for hardscaping, and it takes an experienced industry veteran to make the best recommendations and to ensure every detail is considered.

One such consideration homeowners should make in the planning stages is the beauty and durability of decorative concrete. The product checks more boxes than you can imagine, including being low-maintenance, cost-effective and able to withstand the elements of the Mid-Atlantic. Not only does it make sense from a functional standpoint, concrete is incredibly versatile, and can mimic nearly any material, such as flagstone, brick, tile, slate, fieldstone, cobblestone and granite pavers—at a much better price.

Working with a product like this and achieving a client's desired results comes down to expertise and technique. It's not as simple as showing up with a concrete truck and pouring a slab. There's a finesse to it, and one company in particular has built its reputation on exceeding expectations in the industry of decorative concrete: Architectural Concrete Design (ACD).

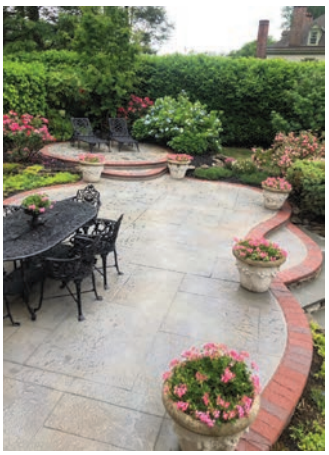
Founded in 1993 by Christopher McMahon, ACD has been the go-to company for major projects, from the Pennsylvania Turnpike, Philadelphia casinos and Longwood Gardens, to malls, schools, multi-family housing developments and more. Their ability to handle projects of this size and scale truly sets ACD apart in the residential space.

Clients have access to a comprehensive team that includes designers, foremen with over 100 years of collective experience and office staff dedicated to the process. Steve Abel recently joined the company as vice president of business operations and says the diverse backgrounds of the team members contribute to the customer experience.

"We have an eclectic team like myself who comes from a commercial banking background. We have designers with experience in interior architectural design and landscape architecture. We all bring a unique approach to the industry and our customers," Abel says. "We are obsessing about the customer experience. When customers call us, they can reach the right people on the phone.

"That has contributed to our high referral rate. Our installers are the best in the business and if and when an issue arises, we're there to handle it."

From the initial design to installation, there are quality checks in place to ensure a customer has the most functional design for the space, he continues. "Not only are our designers looking out for any potential concerns in the process, but the installers have 25 years' experience and have seen nearly every imaginable circumstance. They are the final layer to make sure nothing was missed," Abel says.



Concrete is unique in the sense that it can truly go as far as an installer can take it. "There is a wide range of approaches to making concrete look decorative, from applying stains and dyes, to using color hardeners, or coloring the concrete integrally. When done correctly, these various techniques can allow for concrete to stand out as a showpiece or incorporate surrounding colors and textures into the slab to complement existing stone, stucco or siding. The materials have certainly advanced over the years which makes the design possibilities even more expansive," says Abel.

"However, we truly believe the real secret sauce is the expertise of the installers," he continues.

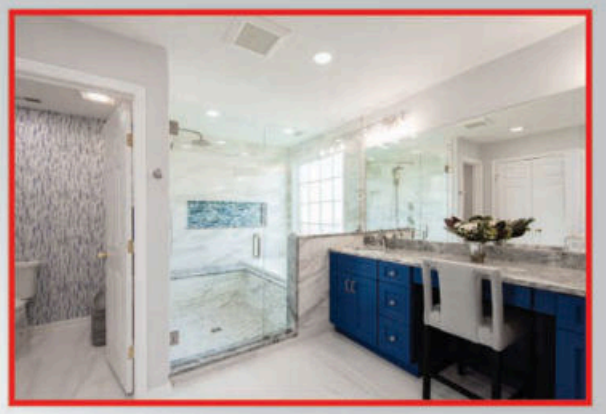
It's something clients notice as well, including Bob Nonemaker, founder of OuterSpaces Inc., a high-end landscape architect. "Concrete is one of those things where if everything doesn't go right, it can end up really wrong, but with ACD, it's like a ballet for them," he says. "They know exactly what they're doing and they have tremendous productivity. It's pretty much impossible to find a flaw. They're just really good at what they do."

Abel says, in the residential space, the appeal and practicality of decorative concrete comes down to quality, value and maintenance. "It's the perfect low-maintenance complement to a well-manicured home. Time is scarcer than ever, and our customers continuously find the maintenance of natural stone to be either cost prohibitive or time consuming. This makes decorative concrete the perfect material for them."

With summer approaching, another benefit to using ACD is that their product is readily available. "Unfortunately, due to global supply chain issues you will find pavers and natural stone difficult to come by these days. Prices change monthly and the availability of the product seems to change by the minute. We have found ourselves insulated from most of these issues," Abel says. "We work with several suppliers in our service area who have moved mountains to keep their product available. This enables us to be there for our clients, which in today's market is very appealing." **H&H**

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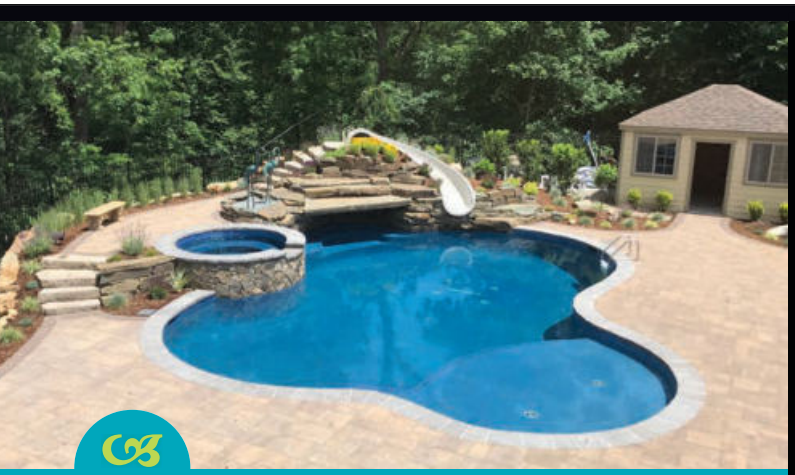


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BEST of HOUSE & HOME 2021

# Picturesque Pools

## Cooling off in the backyard never felt so good

**DURING THE PANDEMIC, POOL OWNERSHIP SKYROCKETED** as many folks spending increased amounts of time at home decided to extend those comforts to their outdoor living space. For those who may still be considering adding one to their backyard or are perhaps looking for new elements to enhance their pool, **we contacted some area experts to find out what's hot and trending.**



Our designer Ryan Panetta did a 3D design of the vision the customer was looking for and brought it to life. The first picture is of a natural pool setting with a grotto waterfall, a slide that was built into a rock setting with a soft planting area. Attached is a hot tub that was placed into the pool, which helps gives it a warm, spa feeling.

We also did a 3D design and installation for a relaxing backyard area with a fireplace and outdoor grill area. Everyone has different ideas of what they want for their home oasis and it's a great opportunity to become a part of their vision and to see it brought to life.

**Don Panetta, owner**
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Integrating a water slide into a rock waterfall grotto is a superb design approach. The kids can engage in sun-splashed fun while the grown-ups enjoy the eye-catching, multi-level stone structure.

**R'nelle Lazlo, vice president, national marketing and business development**
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This year's pool-building season was unusually busy. It seems that many people are still planning to spend more time at home, less foreign travel, fewer kids going to summer camps, etc.; all of which make it more attractive to own a pool.

Clients are looking at incorporating some upgrades such as sun shelves (a shallow area in the pool that is suitable for a lounge chair or play area for kids), upgraded coping to granite or stone, and stamped concrete for patios and walkways. Salt chlorine generators that turn salted water into chlorine are also becoming very popular due to the high cost and scarcity of chlorine.

We believe that this trend of spending more time at home will continue with folks working from home several days a week as well as the high cost of vacation travel and summer camps for the kids.

**Walter Beyer, owner**
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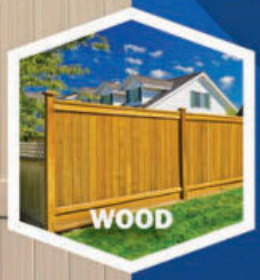
The footprint of this pool was small, the access limited and we were building on a combination of sandy soil and mud with hydrostatic pressures that fluctuate with local tides. Did we mention the pool needed to be anchored to grade beams that attached to pilings driven 30 feet into the ground?

We started from a drawing on a piece of paper and finished with an architectural gem the owners use daily. The 12-by-22-foot pool is a walkout from the house and overlooks the bay. It is fully automated with bubbler lights, a raised spillover spa, travertine coping and an automatic vacuum system.

**Bryan Hull, co-owner**
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