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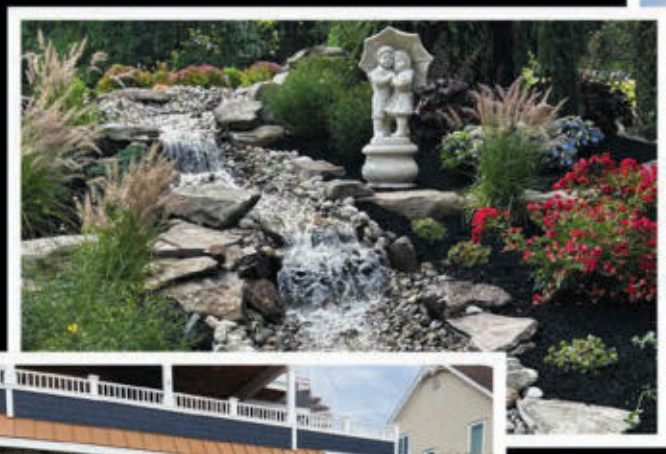
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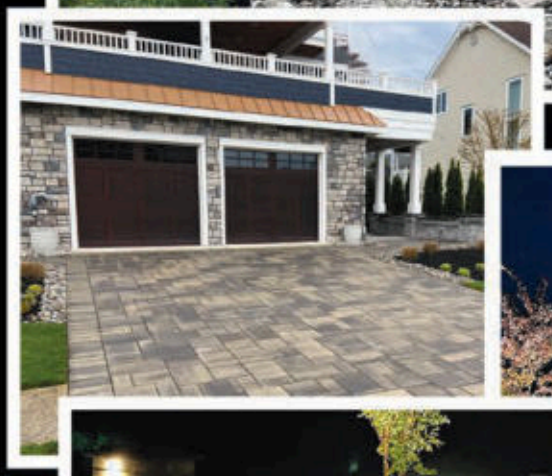

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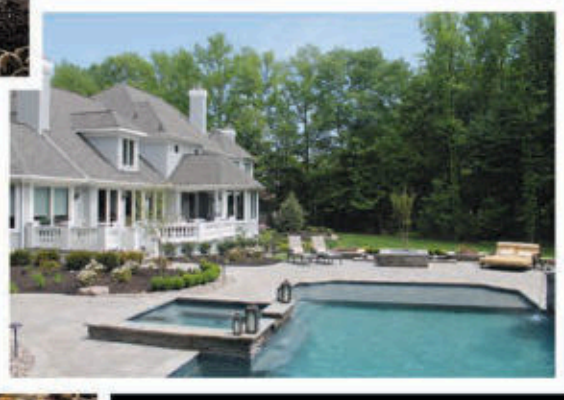








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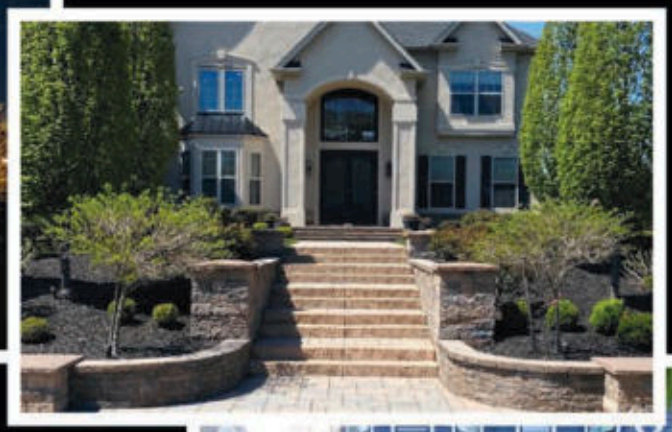


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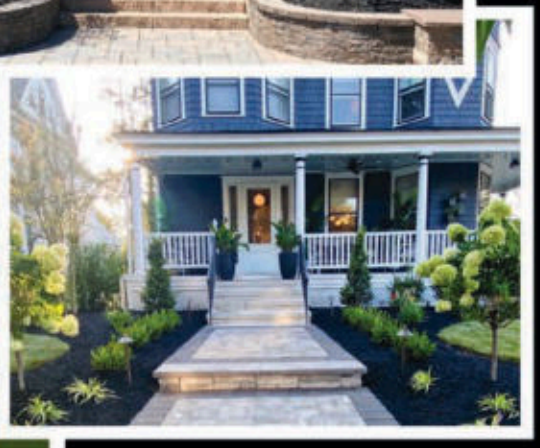
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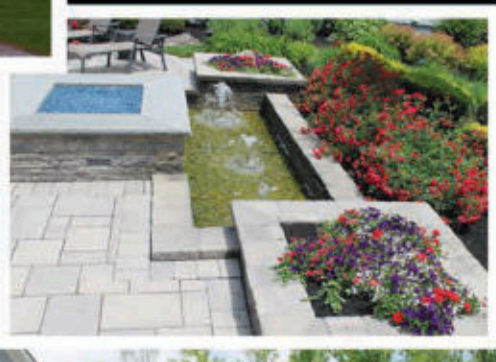


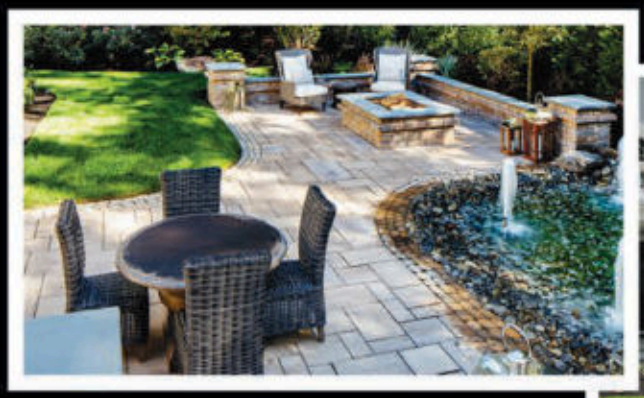


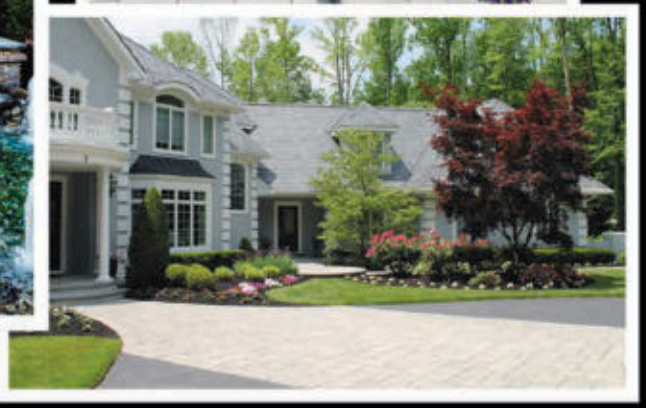


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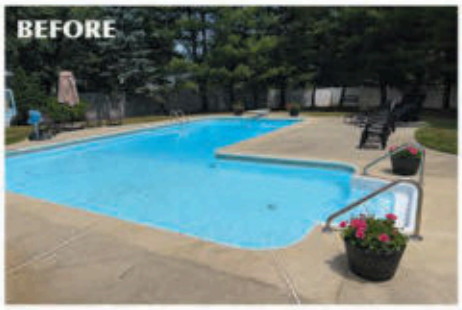
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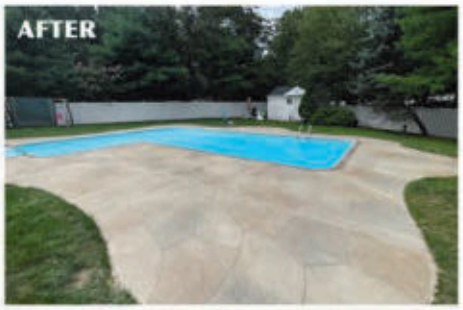
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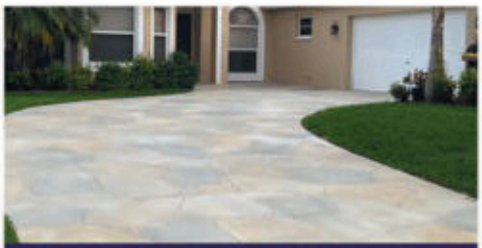
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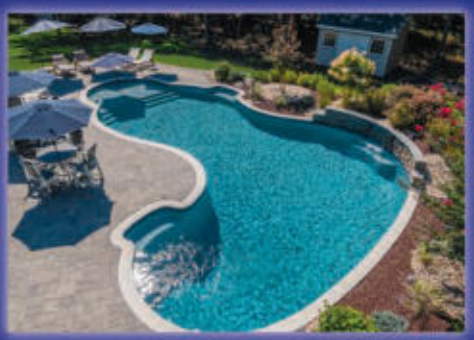




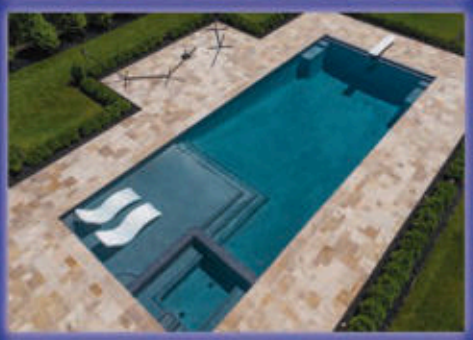
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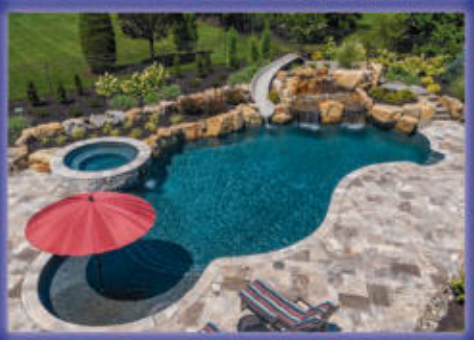
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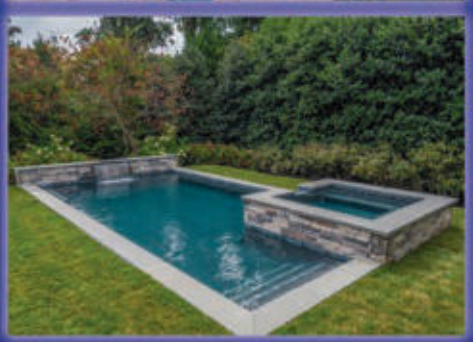




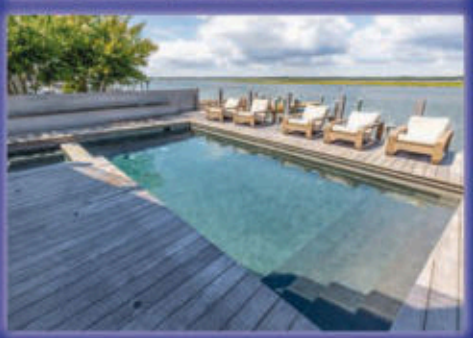












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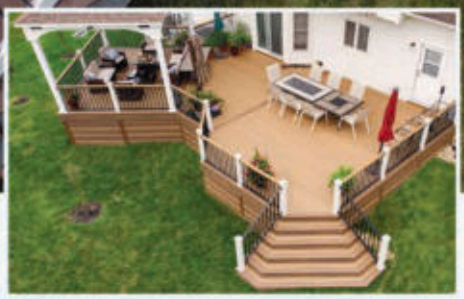
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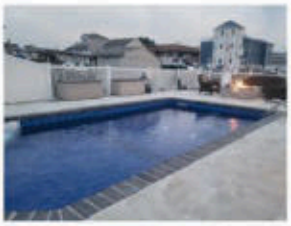




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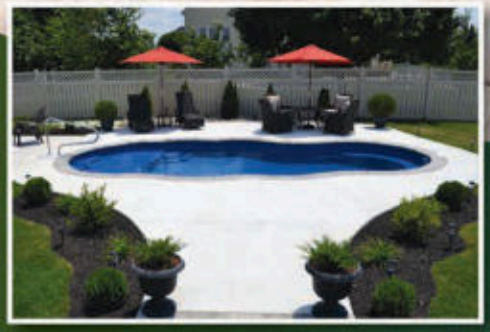
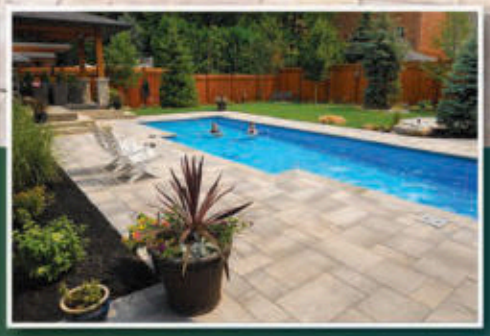
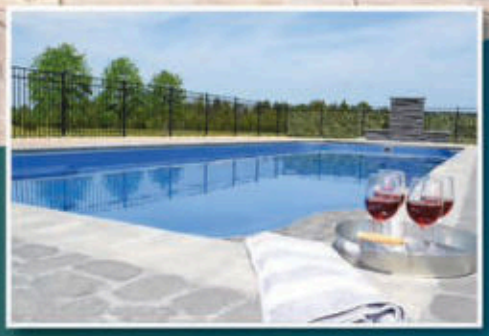
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The company's commercial work includes projects at Moorestown Eye Center, St. Joan of Arc Parish in Marlton, St. Thomas Church in Brigantine and Whistlers Inn in Cinnaminson.

"Our scope is a good mix of everything," says Quinn Harbright, Brindisi's son-in-law and a project consultant who specializes in kitchen design. "It can be as small as changing a front door to as large as building a house."

Brindisi Builders stands apart from similar firms for a number of reasons, starting with its experienced in-house design staff that can transform clients' ideas for a brand-new kitchen or master spa from their wildest imagination to reality. They also offer a two-year warranty compared to the standard one-year warranty, and a five-year structural warranty.

The team is a true family affair. In addition to Harbright, Mike's brother Steve has worked for the company since 1982 and serves as the manager of field operations. Mike's wife works alongside his office manager Ardis and many of the staff feel like family, having worked for the company for 20 years, and some even longer.

That continuity results in a worry-free experience for clients and clear lines of communication, even when the inevitable speed bumps arise in a project.

"While we have foremen at every job site, Steve has oversight of all of the projects," Harbright says. "Everything goes through him, and obviously Mike and I work with him as well. We don't have five different people giving information: It all filters through Steve, so there's no chaos. He handles the ordering and all of the logistics for every job."



Continuing education is stressed throughout the company and it begins at the top with the owner. Rather than resting on his accomplishments, Brindisi is constantly attending trade seminars and work-study groups to further his skills. He was a prominent member of the New Jersey Remodelers Association, including many years as president and chairman of the board.

Whether it is Brindisi himself or someone else from the team, clients can expect a knowledgeable and friendly representative to guide them through the process. During a trip to the showroom, for instance, they can get a feel for products up close and have all of their questions answered.

"The showroom is by appointment only and we use the kitchen vignettes to show cabinet construction, door style and color options," Harbright says. "But you're not limited to only what's there, because we have custom manufacturers where you can pick any paint color or stain that you can find. It's beneficial to see things in person, especially on the cabinet construction side so they can see the difference in the styles and quality of cabinetry."

The strong relationships that are built early on remain through the duration of the project and beyond. It is common for past clients to call the company for advice or information about their project and, not surprisingly, a significant percentage of Brindisi's work comes from repeat customers or referrals.

For those homeowners who are entering into a major project for the first time, Harbright encourages them to do their homework.

"Do your research on the contractors you're initially looking to talk to," he says. "See if you can get references, find out how long they've been in business, find out how many jobs they've done. The biggest thing would be to research who you're bringing into your house and making sure they're someone you actually want to be working there for potentially three to four months."

Brindisi Builders checks off all of those boxes and more, which is why they have a proven track record of success for nearly half a century and show no signs of slowing down. H&H

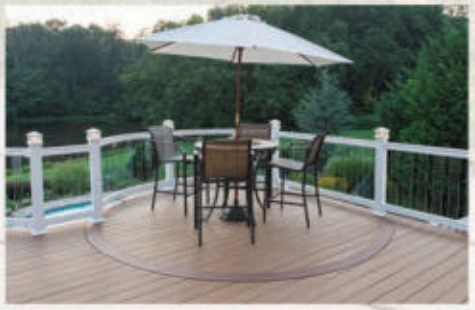
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Artistry Plus Honesty

Since 2004, **Deck Craft Plus, LLC** has been providing area homeowners with impeccable craftsmanship and customer service.

by **Carly Murray**

Commitment, honesty and expertise are the defining characteristics of Deck Craft Plus, LLC, and those values are evidenced in the decks built for homes throughout Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. That is why those who choose Deck Craft Plus, LLC leave glowing reviews and entrust the team with the longevity of their deck and with future updates. Jon Carola is one such example, who owns the property pictured.

"From the initial consultation to the final installation, the team at Deck Craft demonstrated a high level of professionalism, expertise and dedication to our satisfaction. Their knowledgeable staff took the time to understand our vision and preferences, offering valuable insights and suggestions that enhanced the overall design of our outdoor space," he affirms.

"The quality of materials used was top-notch, and the craftsmanship displayed during the installation process was impeccable. The team worked efficiently and respectfully, ensuring that the project was completed on time and with minimal disruption to our daily schedule. I was particularly impressed with their attention to detail and commitment to delivering a finished product that not only met but exceeded our expectations. We have already referred them to several friends and will continue to do so."

The magnificent project came to fruition with the perspective that it is a partnership between Carola and Deck Craft Plus, LLC's owner, Isaac Fisher. *House & Home Magazine* spoke with Fisher to learn more about the company and its process.



How did Deck Craft Plus, LLC begin?

We were actually building storage sheds, and one of my dealers in Maryland reached out and needed a deck on her personal house. So, we made a family trip to Maryland, we spent the week and we built a deck. Believe it or not, I declared I would never build a deck again, but that's how the first deck was built. After that and everything settled down, I started thinking, you know, maybe I could do that—and we started building decks.

How have trends in decking evolved over 20 years and how do you incorporate the latest in your work?

We have moved a lot with the trends. In the last five years or so, we are doing a lot more outdoor living projects versus just a simple, straightforward, square deck [such as] outdoor kitchens. Over the years, we moved with the pergola trend. The pergolas are not as popular as they have been, so we came and went with that. We still do pergolas, but not as many. Roofs over decks are a tremendous thing that we moved with. Masonry on decks, stone pillars, stone columns, stone chimneys, stone fireplaces—we do a lot of that.

What are Deck Craft Plus, LLC's guiding principles and how are these exhibited?

Well, one of my claims to fame is that I tell people we don't just do the project and run with the money; we create relationships. We have created lots of relationships over 20 years, where people call us back for another project, or even in the lifetime warranty that we offer. We have a lifetime workmanship warranty, and we help them with material warranty if it's a material issue, if it's a workmanship issue, we stand behind it—as long as they own the house. I think that has helped us a lot, just doing the right thing, trying to see things from the customer's point of view. And, I think that has contributed to where we are.

What are the main things that you want people to know when they start working with Deck Craft Plus, LLC?

We have a showroom that we love to have customers come and visit to get a deeper understanding of material options than we can give them on-site. We do great work. We allow enough of time for our guys to do the projects correctly. So, we can't be as cheap as some of the fly-by-nighters or the one-man shows, and we try to get that idea out quickly.

The guys out on the field are our best salespeople. They really, really do a great job. This is something that we've had to work for per se, to create a culture in the company where everybody is in it together, and these guys out there sell the company every day. They really care for the customer. They do great work, and they just do what it takes to make the job come out right and they don't cut corners. **H&H**

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Home is Where the "Hearth" is





Whether you're opting to stay warm with a **heating system or a fireplace** this winter, local professionals weigh in on the aspects to look for to ensure quality, safety and efficiency.

BY CARLY MURRAY

A home heating system is not typically at the forefront of peoples' minds, especially before the onset of winter. If there is any kind of problem with a heating system, it is usually only realized when it's turned on in the winter when heat circulation is most necessary. However, if a heating system has run its course or if a homeowner is just looking for a change, there **are plenty of different options** available that best suit the lifestyles within each household.

"Addressing your home through your insulation, your ventilation and mechanicals truly benefits everything that is essential to someone, and being able to be attentive to that with seasonal maintenance ensures the best quality of life for your loved ones and the essential belongings in your home," Allied Experts' Director Jose Diaz affirms.

The first step is to assess a home's heating system with the help of a professional to check if any regular maintenance is needed. These often-neglected checkups can save time and money before an easily-fixed issue turns into a bigger problem.

"The biggest thing is getting your maintenance, and tune-ups in general, done by a qualified professional, who will come out and change the filter, take a look at the heating system in general and make sure that it's working at peak efficiency for the next season," says Jeff Olewine, general manager of C&C Heating and Air Conditioning.

Olewine recommends having biannual inspections: one in spring and one in fall. Even getting started in August through September is better than nothing. Often a lack of general maintenance is the common culprit of issues with home heating systems.

"The most common issues revolve around the blower assembly in the furnace or a dirty air filter. Air filters are often forgotten about," says John Laphen, service manager with Doylestown Air.

Every circumstance is different, so having a professional check the system before it is fired up—especially after not

Home is Where the "Hearth" is

using it for several months—is always safest. A neglected heating system doesn't necessarily indicate danger, but it's always best to prepare for and to have a plan for the unexpected.

"The biggest [safety] concern would be being without heat during a cold snap. Another potential risk is the heat exchanger cracking, which can allow carbon monoxide to be released," Laphen continues.

An unexpected broken system—especially during the holidays when spending is maximized—may leave household occupants shivering in what is supposed to be the comfort of their homes until they can find the time availability and funding. In such an urgent situation, it may be difficult to properly assess the next steps, but each situation has a different, more cost-efficient option.

"If someone's looking to replace their system, typically it's when they have a certain amount of issues with a unit that needs repairs and it doesn't make sense to put money into repairing it," says Olewine.

If efficiency, sustainability and cutting costs are of interest, a newer model might be the best solution. Companies like Allied Experts offer innovative products that are easier to manage while being kind to the environment. The best option for each home can be determined with full home evaluations. In addition to working to assess the needs of your home, an experienced professional may also help cut down on costs as they are knowledgeable of financing options within the industry.

"There are beneficial tax breaks that customers should be made aware of with the Inflation Reduction Act. Utility programs and the Department of Energy [within the] federal government are going to be very active in pursuing options to help with energy efficiency and savings in the home. Homeowners should be aware that they have options for assistance," Diaz explains.

Beyond accessibility to cost-saving and government assistance programs, upgrading your system increases efficiency of your home, in turn lowering your heating bill.

Smart home models have heightened connectivity to other devices and are designed to provide a higher performance quality and energy efficiency. These electric "smart" heaters can connect to WiFi and can be controlled through phone and voice apps, some have room sensors to optimize usage and allow for programmable cycles.

Compared to home heating systems, fireplaces are more geared toward enjoyment, providing heat to only those nearby. Undoubtedly, a burning fire creates a picturesque holiday atmosphere.

"It's more fun than beneficial, because 80% of people are using fireplaces to heat the room a little bit and also to enjoy the fire, smell and noise of the wood when it burns," says Ardian Bejita, owner of Doctor Chimney.



Burning wood requires a supply and it's best to have experience or practice. It is not as cost-effective or sustainable to use wood compared to gas or electricity. Although wood-burning fireplaces are harmonious with nostalgia, they too have seen a technological upgrade with dozens of choices.

"First-time buyers really need to consider their lifestyle and their time commitment," Chris Olsen, owner of Newtown Fireplace Shop describes. "Are they looking for ease and convenience, or do they really love the smell and the natural crackle of real wood? Do they have the time to burn, to stack and store wood, or are they going to find more value in having ease with the use of a remote control for gas?"

Olsen and his team strive to customize the aesthetic of new fireplaces to fit the style of each home. Many of the Colonial- and farmhouse-style homes in the New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware regions are already equipped with built-in fireplaces. However, these still need to undergo some considerations before they are used.

"Homes that were built any time before 2010 have a very high chance of having a negative efficiency appliance and solvent, meaning customers don't even realize that it's taking the heat out of their home rather than adding heat value to the home," says Dave Rettinger Jr., owner of Rettinger Fireplace Systems. "And when it's not used, it's just a big hole for cold air to pour into the house. So, we have products that solve that exact problem that many thousands of homeowners, either knowingly or unknowingly, are challenged by today."

Fireplace inserts can help with efficiency and are a great way to upgrade a decades-old, wood-burning fireplace to a safer and more energy efficient option. They will convert an existing fireplace opening to wood, gas or electric and will still release smoke through the chimney. If using a fireplace this winter, one should assess the system itself and the chimney.

"People need to inspect the chimney smoke chamber and the lining. So, they need to go in the house, take a look if there are any cracks, any holes, any missing lining—that's very important," advises Bejita.

Chimneys need to be cleaned and inspected before fireplace use. Chimney liners reduce utility costs, streamline maintenance and cleaning, and allow for more safety. Depending on home- and township-specific codes, different types of liner may be installed, often depending on the type of fireplace and the size of the chimney flue. Liners can be made of stainless steel, high thermal re-

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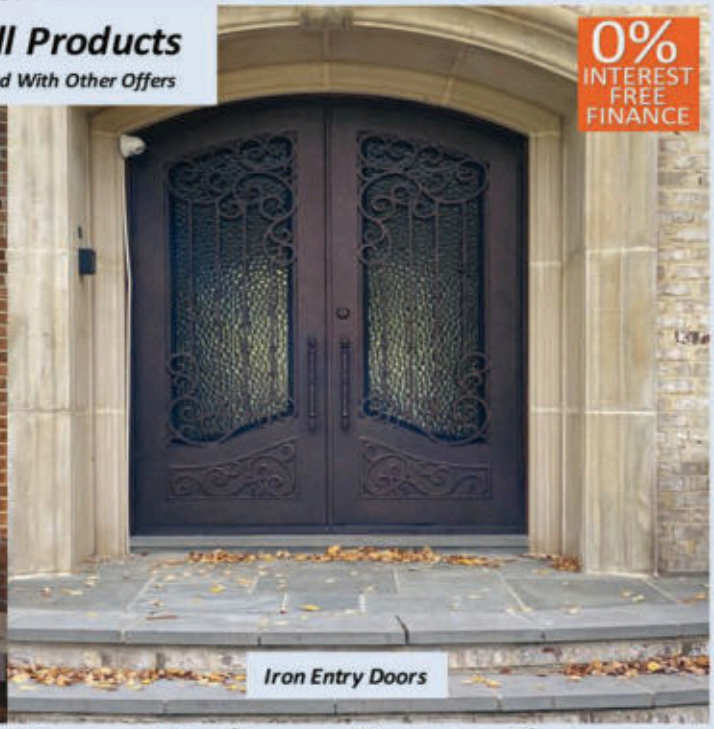
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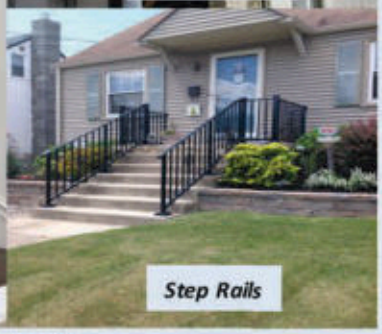
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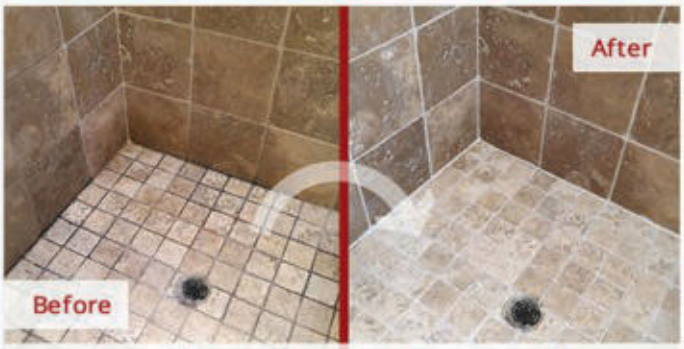

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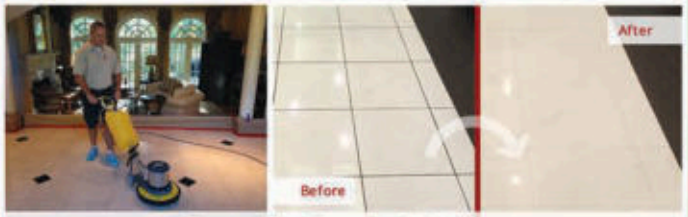
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Due to all of the necessary aspects that go into a fireplace system that may have to be divided among multiple specialists, some companies will act as a one-stop shop to fully guide a customer through the multifaceted process. Chimney sweeping is required for any system update, which Rettinger Fireplace Systems provides in conjunction with its concierge service.

"If we need a licensed electrician or plumber on the job, we'll hire them for you. If you need permits and inspections, which almost all jobs do, we'll take care of the permits, we'll arrange for the inspections," says Rettinger. "You cannot do anything to an existing fireplace without getting a Level 2 inspection."

The wide range of product options available for heating a home today allow for different types of operation, effect and maintenance. Ultimately, though, warmth in the home is primarily about comfort.

"Homeowners should really take a look at their fireplace to make sure that it's creating an inviting, warm environment that makes their house feel like a home," says Olsen. "Is it providing the ambiance, the atmosphere, the look, the style that fits their energy? They are creating that mindset to make a peaceful home." H&H

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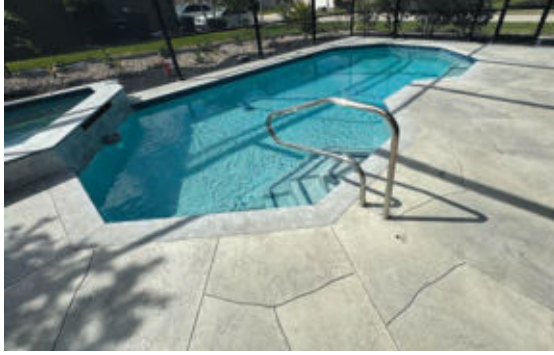
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Restoring from the **Inside Out**

New Castle Artisan transforms aging concrete into beautiful surfaces that will last.

by Liz Hunter

Most home improvement projects come with their share of hassles, from permitting to disrupting daily routines and creating additional unforeseen projects. For this reason, homeowners often put them off. However, New Castle Artisan has a better way.

Family-owned and-operated for more than 30 years, New Castle Artisan is helmed by Gwen Kunkel and her brother Paul Randall, who have a combined 50 years of experience in the industry. Its sole business is concrete resurfacing, a technique that can breathe new life into many concrete surfaces, whether it's your driveway, pool deck or patio. With summer on its way, now is the perfect time to have New Castle Artisan assess your needs with a free inspection and estimate.

Concrete projects can be invasive on a property, and pouring new concrete doesn't guarantee the same problems won't occur down the line. "Instead of the usual repairs made to cracks, tripping hazards and other issues, our resurfacing allows us to hide all of the repairs in a beautiful, custom upgrade," Kunkel says. "You avoid all the hassle and mess of the demolition and repouring. With resurfacing, we add designs and carve the cracks into the existing pattern after we repair them, so you've got results that are more valuable financially and aesthetically."

Projects typically take three days to complete and don't require township permits—another headache avoided. Kunkel also says one day of bad weather won't set the project back either. "Each day is independent of each other, so if it rains one day, we extend the project one day. We don't need three consecutive sunny days."

Polymer resurfacing has been used since the 1960s, and if applied properly, adds beauty and aesthetic value without the expensive cost of installing all new concrete. What's more, it will last a lifetime with some routine resealing maintenance. "We use polymer cements because they resist erosion. 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," says Kunkel.

One of the most important aspects of the product used by New Castle Artisan is that it's naturally textured to be slip resistant, making it an ideal choice for pool decks.

Resurfacing a pool deck also comes with significant cost savings. "Pool decks, as they age, can have movement, creating cracks and unlevel pads. The heavy equipment required to bring new concrete into a backyard is labor intensive, which makes the cost higher," she says. "On top of that, your landscaping and grass are damaged, your fence has to be taken down—our process is no mess. We use small pieces of hand equipment that can be carried in and out, causing no impact to your landscaping."

There is also a level of artistry with New Castle Artisan's resurfacing. "Our products are applied by hand for a look that can be customized to your liking. We can add colors and then finish it with rock hard sealants to make it look appealing," says Kunkel. "We utilize design to incorporate the repaired cracks into a pattern that can be managed. Should cracks reappear, they are blended within the design. If you try to repair other products, like pavers, you'll never be able to match the color after five years. ...We've perfected this method, not only providing quality installation, but an investment that can always be remedied or managed." **H&H**



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A Matter of Trust

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

When you need work done on your home—expected or not—you want to know that you can trust the contractor you've hired to get the job done well. After all, you're not an expert on what's involved in services like roofing, siding or windows, and you don't want to get taken advantage of as a result. Because of that, it's important to choose a company that you can feel confident is reputable.

But how exactly do you know a company can be trusted?

One important factor in choosing the best contractor is longevity. Only a company that performs great work is going to be able to stick around for the long haul. That's exactly the case with Emmons Remodeling, a company that has been offering expert care for South Jersey and the Jersey Shore area since 1996. They are a wellknown name in the region—and for good reason. Their success was built upon a reputation of honesty, integrity and good work.

In fact, the company is an Owens Corning Platinum Preferred Contractor. That's not a designation that any old company can have. Platinum Preferred Contractors are in the top tier of a premier-network of roofing professionals. In order to achieve this title, they must have passed a workmanship inspection, been professionally screened for financial stability and customer service, and continue to adhere to stringent guidelines set forth by Owens Corning. Fewer than 1% of roofing contractors in the United States are Owens Corning Platinum Preferred.

"It's a title that backs up our already strong reputation," says Stephanee Kelly, co-owner of the company along with her husband Matthew. "Only the most reputable companies are able to earn that designation."

Besides being able to feel confident that you've hired a contractor you can trust, this designation benefits homeowners in a more tangible way as well. That's because Platinum Preferred Contractors are able to offer 50-year warranties on their work—much longer than other companies can offer. According to Owens Corning's website, "because we stand behind these warranties, we need to make sure that we are backing up the best roofers in the business."

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

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

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

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

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

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

Choosing Wisely

At the end of the day, your choice in roofing, siding and window contractors can be the difference between good, quality work—and a big headache. Stephanee says that the last thing Emmons wants to see is people in their local community get taken advantage of by unscrupulous roofing, siding and window contractors.

"You should be able to feel confident that you've chosen a contractor that you can trust— not one that is going to leave you with problems to fix after they've gone," she says. "At Emmons, you are not only investing in a new roof, new siding or new windows—you're investing in peace of mind." H&H

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Stunning Seasonal Makeovers

The expert team at Evergreen Pros helps homeowners embrace autumn and enjoy their outdoor living space further into the season.

by **Kristen Jorgensen**

With cooler temperatures arriving, there's no question that fall is the ideal season to comfortably enjoy time outside with the family. As the vibrant hues of autumn begin to paint the landscape, Evergreen Pros is at the forefront of transforming outdoor spaces into seasonal masterpieces.

Expertise and Innovation

What sets Evergreen Pros apart from others in the industry is their commitment to combining design expertise with creative innovation. The company's team of experienced landscapers and designers stay updated on the latest trends and techniques in the industry to deliver results that are both aesthetically pleasing and fully functional.

"Our goal is to make every outdoor space a reflection of our client's vision while meeting any unique needs and preferences," says manager Nick Erman. "No one wants to call multiple contractors to complete a project, so we make sure to provide everything from large-scale endeavors like the installation of irrigation and pavers to building an entire pool and outdoor kitchen, to the smaller details like landscaping and fencing."

Evergreen Pros is a company that triumphs on being truly comprehensive backyard specialists while managing all of their projects. From the initial design concept to the final site cleanup, all services are performed by the hand-selected team members.

"When it comes time to conceptualize a project, we use SketchUp, a 3D modeling software that allows our design team to create and manipulate designs of pools, outdoor kitchens, paver patios and many other types of projects," shares Erman. "This sort of tool really helps align our client's vision with what is obtainable and helps the process to have clear expectations."

Development and Education

An education-first approach is a large part of the business model at Evergreen Pros. "Our guys are trained every year through certifications," he affirms, noting accomplishments like Evergreen being named an Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute-certified paver installer. "We're very much up on today's building techniques with installing pavers, pools and porcelain, all the way to building fireplaces, fire pits and everything else. That continuing education for our workers makes sure they're at today's level with their installation techniques."

Evergreen Pros specializes in using products from top brands like Cambridge and EP Henry, as well as the International Porcelain Company.

"Porcelain pavers are really revolutionizing the outdoor design arena with their blend of durability and sophistication. They're crafted from dense, high-quality porcelain and offer an exceptional level of resistance to weathering, staining and heavy foot traffic, making them an ideal choice for patios, walkways and driveways," says Erman.

Porcelain tiles are available in a wide range of styles and finishes and can mimic the look of natural stone or wood while providing a more consistent and low-maintenance surface, while their non-porous nature ensures that they remain pristine and easy to clean, even in challenging conditions. With their sleek, modern aesthetic and superior performance, porcelain pavers bring both elegance and practicality to any outdoor space, enhancing its functionality and visual appeal.



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Embracing the Seasonal Shift

Autumn is the perfect time to embrace and maximize your outdoor space, as the crisp air and vibrant foliage create a picturesque setting for relaxation and enjoyment. As the temperatures cool, transform your yard into a cozy retreat with the addition of comfortable seating, warm blankets and a fire pit for evenings spent under the stars.

"Fire Pits are a great addition to your outdoor space, especially during the fall. And of course, outdoor kitchens are always a favorite, from season to season, but the appeal of having more usable outdoor entertaining space during the holiday months is a big draw for a lot of homeowners," Erman says.

Incorporating seasonal elements like pumpkins and mums to enhance the fall atmosphere, while considering adding soft outdoor lighting can help extend the enjoyment of your space into the early evenings. Whether you're hosting a harvest gathering or simply savoring a quiet moment with a hot beverage, your outdoor area can become a delightful extension of your home, reflecting the rich colors and serene mood of the season.

Transforming Spaces, One Yard at a Time

Whether it's enhancing the curb appeal of a home, creating a welcoming environment for a business, or designing a peaceful garden retreat, Evergreen Pros brings creativity, expertise and professionalism to every project. Their attention to detail, highly trained and skilled team, and focus on customer satisfaction make them a leader in the landscaping industry.

"We know that when people hire us, they are trusting us to deliver more than a completed project, they are trusting us to deliver a dream," Erman states. "We strive for that wow factor on every job we complete. If our customers aren't happy, I'm not happy." H&H

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More Than a Pool

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

by **Kristen Dowd**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Finding the right pool

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

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

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

Pool popularity

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Why Swim-Mor Pools & Spas?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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ask the expert
by Chelsea Valcourt

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IN ANY HOME RENOVATION PROJECT, PLANNING AND KEEPING EVERYONE ON THE SAME PAGE ARE KEY. UNFORESEEN SETBACKS IN MATERIALS, SCHEDULES AND DESIGN CHANGES CAN LEAD TO LENGTHY DELAYS AND COSTLY ISSUES. That is why it is vital that all elements of the design process and the building crews are thoughtful and cohesive. To ensure this, the design-build firm of Amiano & Son will conduct a trade visit.

These visits allow experts from all aspects of the project to enter the space, note their needs and work together to establish a realistic timeline and ensure everything is ready to go when it's time to start. This is also an important time to verify that the plans match the homeowners' dreams and vision.

House & Home spoke to Amiano & Son production manager Keith Blose about the importance and process of a trade visit.


Keith Blose, production manager

WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF A TRADE VISIT?
Our comprehensive trade visit process ensures that your project is set up for success right from the start.

During a trade visit, we bring every expert from our team together to thoroughly assess the project. We personally visit your home and walk through every aspect of the design layout with you. Each expert will examine their area of responsibility—whether it's structural, plumbing, electrical, HVAC or any other essential function—making sure everything aligns with your vision.

As we check off our trade visit checklist, we take detailed notes on anything that may need reconfiguring to ensure optimal functionality. We pride ourselves on being completely transparent and will communicate openly if any changes are required before construction begins.

Once we've completed the trade visit and certified that everything will function as desired, we're excited to commence building. You can rest assured knowing that our meticulous process during the trade visit helps to minimize any surprises along the way.

WHAT SERVICES RECEIVE A TRADE VISIT?
Every single project, no matter how big or small, will receive a trade visit from our highly skilled team. This visit is designed to ensure that everything during the construction phase runs smoothly and stays true to your design.

Regardless of the scale of your project, trade visits are essential. They ensure that the design functions seamlessly while providing the necessary expertise of looking over and checking every moving part. Our team is committed to supporting you and ensuring that every aspect of your project aligns with your vision.

WHY ARE TRADE VISITS SO IMPORTANT?
Trade visits are one of the most important steps in our unique design-build approach, as they effectively marry your design vision with practical design function. Additionally, these visits play a vital role in helping us to avoid unforeseen problems that may arise during the course of the project. By engaging in trade visits, we can limit change orders and ensure a smoother workflow.

At Amiano and Son, we take every necessary step to ensure that you achieve your dream space—one that not only looks beautiful but also operates seamlessly. This commitment to detail is what sets us apart from other companies; we never overlook any crucial aspect of the remodeling projects we undertake.



Our trade visits hold immense importance for both us and our clients, as we firmly believe in never sacrificing functionality for beauty or vice versa. We aim for your design to not only be visually stunning but also to function optimally and our trade visits help us to do just that.

THE MOST TIME AND COST-EFFECTIVE REMODELING PROJECTS BENEFIT FROM EVERYONE BEING ON THE SAME PAGE. BEYOND TRADE VISITS, HOW DO YOU ENSURE CONSISTENCY THROUGHOUT THE PROJECT?
In addition to our trade visits, our dedicated team of experts collects all the necessary project information to make certain that every component is perfectly in place before moving forward with our final construction contract. As part of this process, your project manager will schedule a pre-construction meeting with you a week or two before construction begins. This extra step allows us to go over key factors such as protecting your home during construction, dumpster placement, working hours at your residence, and an overview of the job schedule.

During this meeting, the project manager will also ensure that you will not face any delays waiting for materials. All materials are pre-ordered well in advance, so everything is ready to go before we start. This thorough preparation is key in delivering a successful project. This attention to detail exemplifies our commitment to excellence in every project we undertake.

Furthermore, our partnership with our clients does not end with the completion of their project. At the conclusion of our work together, we provide you with a warranty packet detailing the materials used throughout your renovation. We want you to have peace of mind knowing that we stand by our work long after the job is done.

It is our sincere wish that each client enjoys many years filled with happiness and fond memories in their newly renovated home. In conclusion, there are numerous ways in which we go above and beyond to ensure that your project runs seamlessly, and we take pride in our process, which we stand by wholeheartedly. H&H





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House & Home recently spoke with owner Jeff Adamiak, who prides himself in providing clients with nothing but the best, as top-quality service has been the We Hang Holiday Lights standard since 2017.


Before


After


Jeff Adamiak, Owner

WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A CUSTOMER?

Simply give us a call or visit our website to answer some qualifying questions to make sure we are a good fit for what you're envisioning. Then we will determine if what you're looking for can be designed virtually or if it requires an on-site consultation with me. I will work with you on display options and budget and discuss the terms of our service. Our lighting is customizable LED SMD lighting and because we cut them to fit your home, we can't reuse them and only offer 3-5 year agreements.

HOW DOES THE AGREEMENT WORK?

We do a lease agreement with our clients. We amortize the cost of the material over the length of the agreement. The longer the term the less per year, and everything is included. The price remains the same throughout the agreement.

WHAT'S NEXT?

After we agree on a display and the length of the term, we begin building your lights in our warehouse. Our crew comes out and custom-cuts the lights to fit your home. We label and diagram each strand of lights to make sure the display is the same each year, and use special clips to ensure the lights are perfectly straight and secure without damaging your home. We take full responsibility to maintain your display throughout the season. Should anything go wrong, simply call us and we will fix it either that day or the next.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END OF THE SEASON?

We begin our takedowns the first week after the new year and, weather permitting, all the lights are down by the end of the month. We make sure everything is labeled properly, box them up and store them in our facility. Installs for returning customers begin in the middle of September, starting with our clients who celebrate Diwali. We get as many rooflines installed by the end of October before the frost to be as safe as possible for my crews. We will have them installed and ready to go. You simply plug them in whenever you're ready.

WHY SHOULD PEOPLE HIRE YOU RATHER THAN DECORATE THEMSELVES?

Our clients appreciate the concierge-type service. The materials we use cannot be bought by the general public and the way we design your display is much more involved than simply "hanging lights." The end results are spectacular.

WHAT MAKES YOU DIFFERENT FROM OTHER COMPANIES?

We take an artistic approach to decorating your home. We don't just "hang lights." A few years ago a customer came to me and showed me lights installed by another company. She was happy with the display but wanted better. We came up with some different ideas and agreed that some of her trees didn't quite scream "put lights on me." After the first season with us, she replaced those trees with Christmas lights in mind. This client now has one of, if not THE nicest displays in her town.

IT SEEMS LIKE YOU REALLY ENJOY WHAT YOU DO.

Yes, this business is amazing. Our clients may be the ones paying for the lights, but the whole community gets to enjoy them. A few years ago, a woman called our phone number from a sign we left at a client's house. "I just had to call you and say how beautiful the lights look, I don't know the neighbor, but we walk past her house every night and it brings us so much joy to see the lights," she said.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE DISPLAYS?

The displays I enjoy the most are the ones we don't charge for. Five years ago, a client asked me if she could pay to have lights installed for a family member whose husband and son were both deployed overseas. She paid for the lights and we supplied the labor for free. It was done as a surprise and they were thrilled. It felt great to be a part of that and since then, we are always looking for opportunities to light up someone's home who is going through tough times. Whether it's for a child who's sick or disabled or a family who has lost a parent with young children, we hope to do about 10-12 of these jobs per year free of charge. **H&H**



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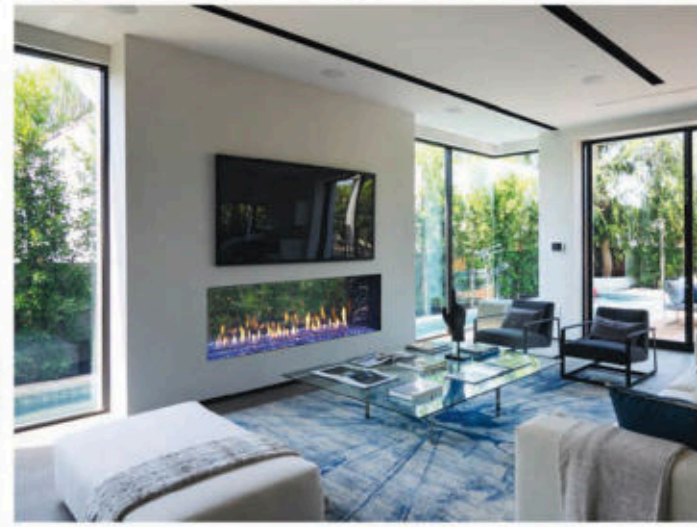
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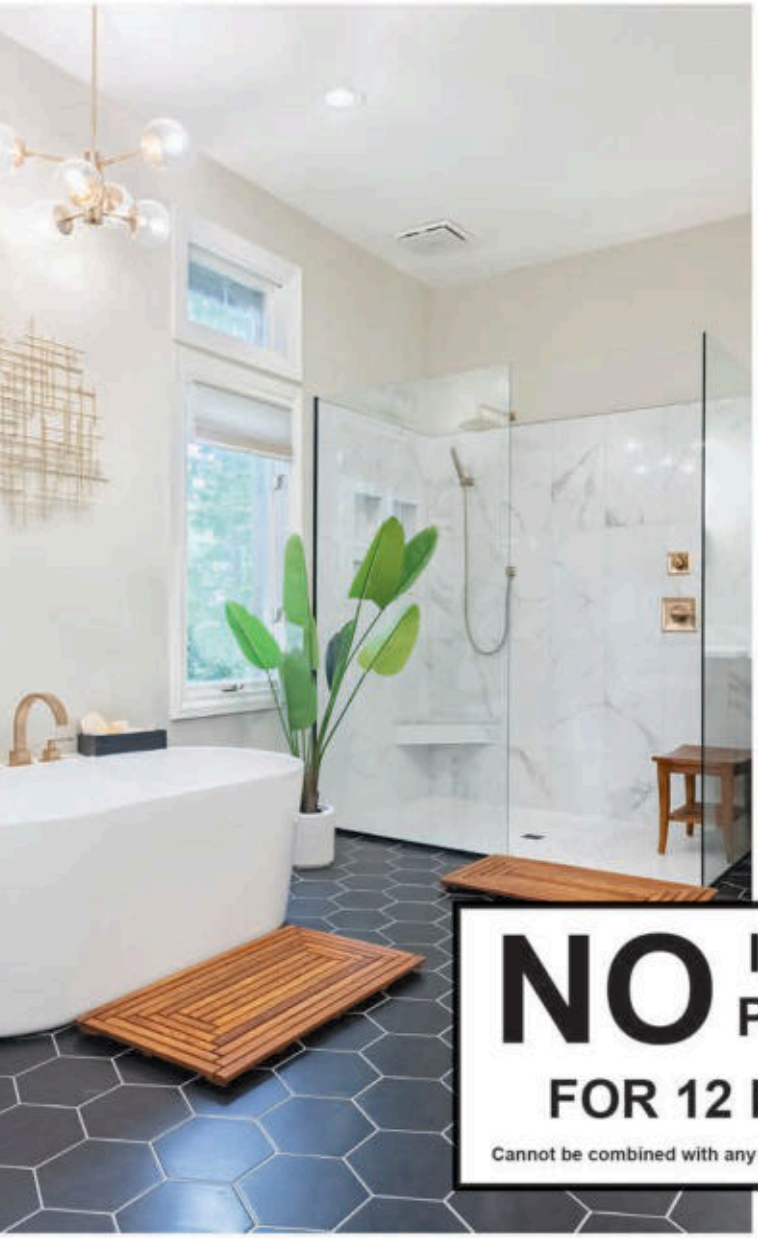
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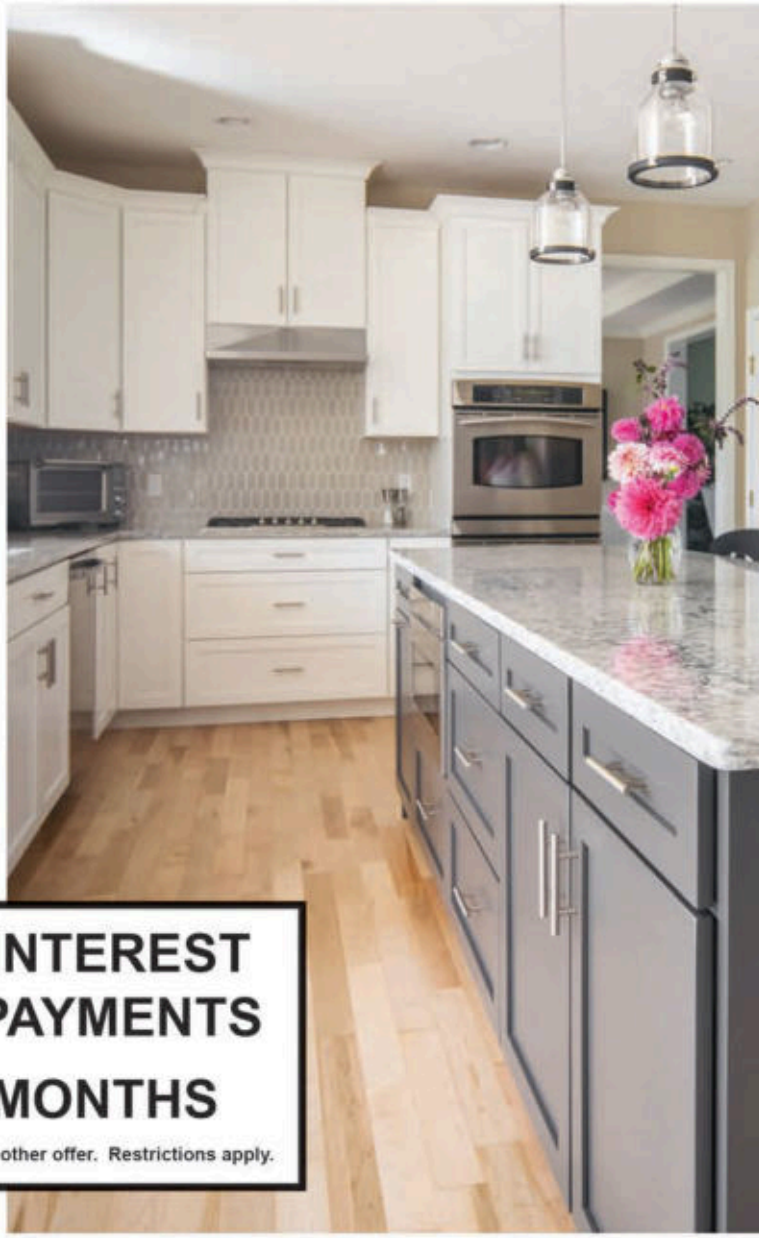
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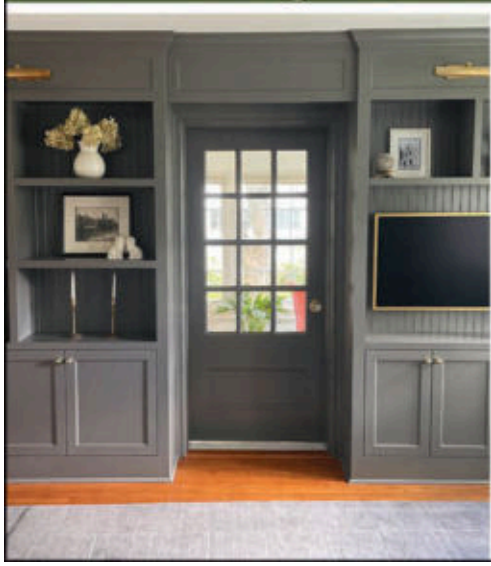
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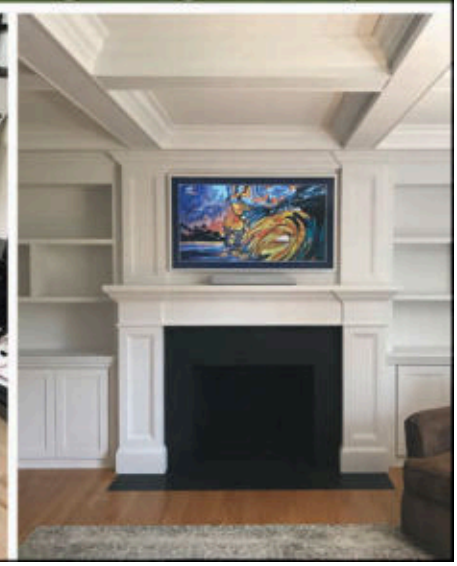
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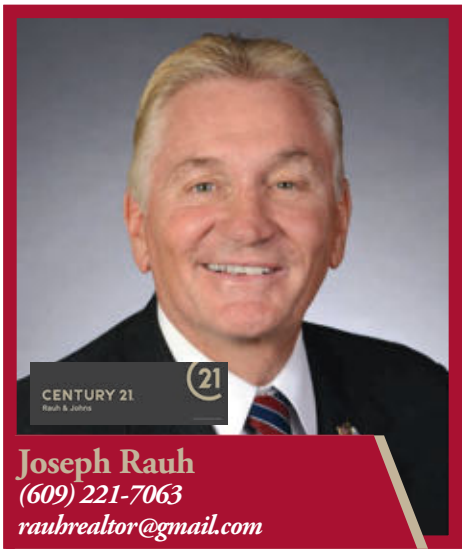


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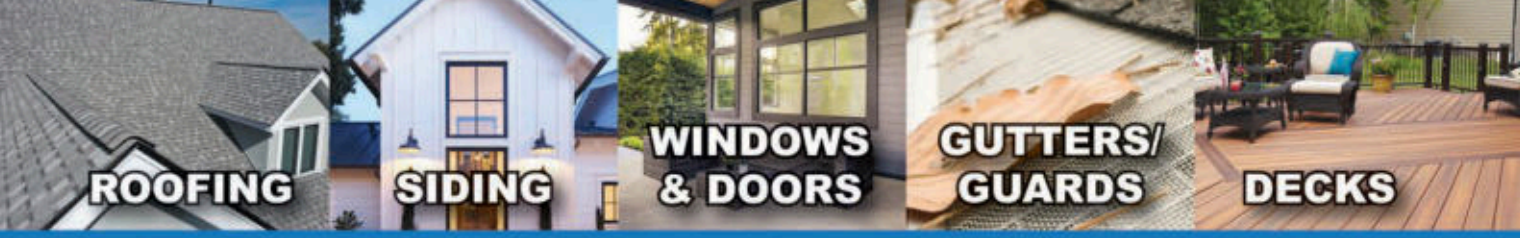
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A Step Ahead



Fall is the perfect time to begin winterizing your home.

BY PETER PROKO

With autumn's arrival, countless homeowners are looking forward to admiring the fall foliage and enjoying extended outdoor activities whether around the fire pit, the pumpkin patch or otherwise.

But the fall season also creates a great opportunity to get one's home ready to handle the harsher conditions that Old Man Winter brings. Winterizing your home should be top of mind for all homeowners, as it can solve problems in the short-term while also saving you lots of time, money and aggravation in the long term.

Adam Parnes of Global Home Improvement acknowledges the importance of staying on top of a winter checklist and says that homeowners who don't regularly do so are tempting fate. "I think anyone who is winterizing their home is already ahead of the ball game," he says. "Upgrading insulation, re-caulking windows and cleaning gutters are some of the easier solutions to a safe home this winter."

House & Home spoke with various leaders in the home improvement industry to get a better understanding of the key areas to focus on when winterizing your residence. Whether making energy-efficient upgrades to the interior or making necessary repairs to the exterior that also help boost curb appeal, the fall season offers ample opportunity to rectify any issues now and give homeowners some reassurance for once winter arrives.



Energy Efficiency

Checking to see if one's HVAC system is in need of a tune-up is recommended by industry professionals. Annual service will ensure things are running smoothly and curtail rising energy bills that result from suboptimal operation.

Poorly insulated attic space can also be a major contributor to energy loss. According to the Department of Energy, a properly insulated attic can help slash you heating bill as much as 50%.

Another common contributor to energy loss is poorly sealed windows and doors. "Not only do older windows and doors not have updated thermal efficiency, but many of them have air leaks, which are just inviting cold air directly into your home," says Parnes.

Brian Iwano, founder and project manager with Blue Tree Builders, says it can be difficult for most people to tell if it's time to replace their windows if there's no clear and present physical damage.

"The obvious signs your windows need replacing are when the seal fails and air gets between the panes; and with older wood windows, when the wood becomes damaged. Aside from these examples, it can be difficult to notice air seepage during mild weather," he says.

Roofing & Siding

Replacing one's roof or siding can be a sizable expense and cause some homeowners to delay any major repairs or replacements for another season in hopes they can avoid any catastrophic issues while saving some money. But one major winter storm can change that equation and the result could be an even heftier out-of-pocket cost.



When looking to determine if your roof may be a candidate for either repair or replacement, one tell-tale sign is the appearance of leaks. But there are also other factors to consider, namely age. Is the roof 20-25 years old? If so, it's likely the shingles have or will soon start to curl and the adhesion to one another will become compromised.

"The most important thing to consider is what could happen if you don't replace it," says Parnes. "A leaky roof will cost you way more money in damage then the money you save by trying to wait one more year."

"This may seem obvious, but look for any damage that may have occurred from summer storms," adds Iwano. "It's pretty easy to look for missing shingles. This in itself isn't all bad, as the real waterproofing is maintained by the underlayments and other prep. However, missing shingles do leave your roof open to further wind damage, which would definitely cause bigger problems very quickly."

Danny Cenaj of Siar Construction says in addition to seeing missing or buckled shingles that are no longer lying flat, there are other noticeable changes you may recognize. "If one area is much darker than another part of the roof; that is one of the other signs that it may be time to get a roof inspection. Another thing would be if you are cleaning your gutters and you are able to see a lot of granules that have fallen from the shingles," he says.

If your roof is old or you are not sure it will last another winter, fall is actually the ideal time to have it replaced. In the summer when battling extreme heat and humidity, the shingles can occasionally become damaged during the installation process, something that is certainly avoidable thanks to fall's cooler temperatures.

"The fall is one of the best times of the year to replace the roof," affirms Cenaj. "Homeowners can make sure they get everything done right before winter, which gives them peace of mind that they will not have to contend with any issues."





A Step Ahead



Elsewhere on the exterior, Iwano points out that problems with siding usually occur at transition points either between trims or moldings, or aluminum capping. "Additionally, end pieces and tops commonly become loose, which also [could lead] to further wind damage. Again, like roofing, the real protection is in the prep. But you definitely want to mitigate any vulnerability as soon as possible," he says.

Chimneys

For those who enjoy lighting a fire inside the home during the winter months, fall is also the right time to have your chimney serviced, as a detailed inspection can help to uncover any potential hidden issues.

"Inspections will check for any cracks in the cement or the mortar or if there are any other problems, and you will be able to determine if the chimney will be good for the winter or not," says Cenaj.

At the very minimum, Cenja advises homeowners to have their chimneys cleaned before seasonal use. "Getting a chimney cleaned is something I would say is mandatory every fall before you start using your fireplace," he says.

Preparing Your Pond

It's important to know how to winterize a pond and prepare fish to withstand the harsh winter. Over a year, your pond will accumulate debris and organics such as leaves, twigs, grass clippings and fish waste. Left unchecked, decaying debris can release toxic gas and reduce oxygen levels. Removing this debris and replacing filtration systems with aeration kits and deicers will help ensure oxygen levels stay as high as possible and provide aeration,







ventilation and circulation throughout the winter months.

"When fall officially arrives, and the trees start losing their leaves, we often recommend netting your pond," says George Mihalchick of Ponds by George.

Fall netting is intended for collecting debris, and is often a choice to use for predator protection, which is why some pond owners even choose to leave the net in place until spring, but it is important to note that these nets are not designed to carry a heavy snow load, and should be removed in the winter before any snowfall.

"Once all the leaves have fallen, begin your fall pond care by removing any netting. Pond netting should be stored indoors to keep it safe from wear and tear due to heavy snowfall and ice," says Mihalchick.

As fall ends and winter approaches, plants will naturally fall into a dormant state. To winterize hardy plants, use your pruning tools to trim off dead foliage just above the soil. Removing debris that may have made it into the pond should also be removed. "Rotting leaves, twigs or dead aquatic plants will put stress on your pond's oxygen levels throughout the winter, which puts your fish at risk. I recommend removing leaves and debris from ponds and streams with the help of a hand net if possible," Mihalchick details.

Another way to keep fish safe when temperatures drop is with the help of aeration, and de-icers help to keep a hole open in the ice during winter months. "This prevents harmful gases from being trapped under the ice and allows oxygen levels to stay saturated in the pond. Or if your pond has a waterfall, leave it running, the movement will cause a natural opening," Mihalchick explains. **H&H**

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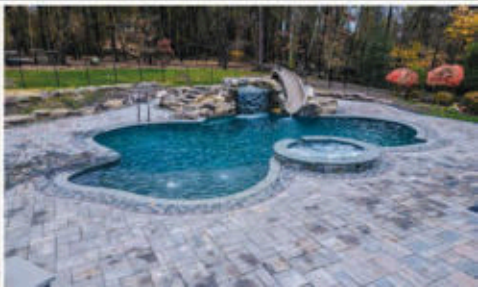


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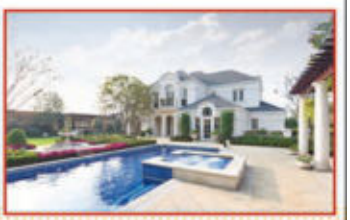
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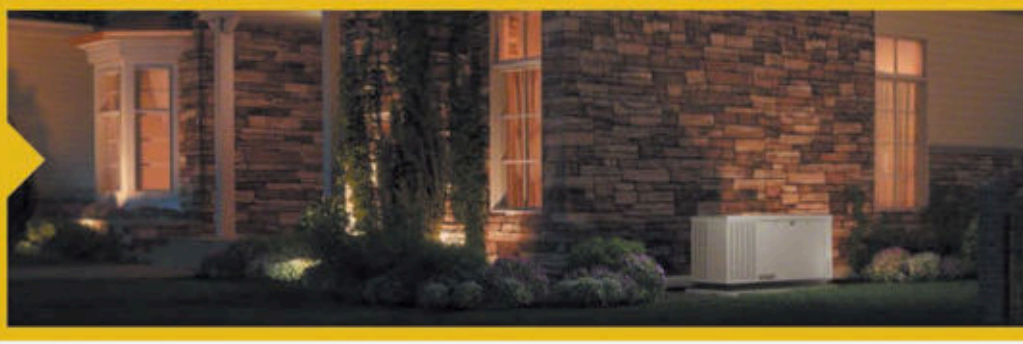
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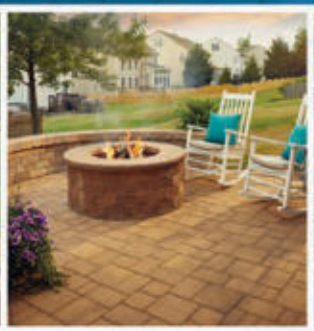
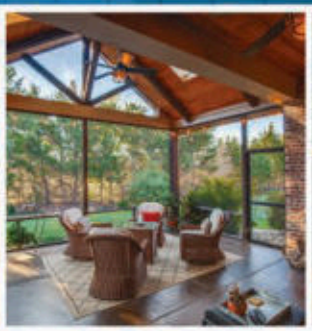
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