

living

MAGAZINE

GREATER HOUSTON
HOME IMPROVEMENT ISSUE



pool party

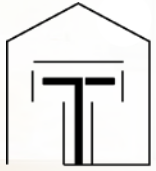
MAKE A SPLASH WITH DESIGNS & FEATURES

living color

HUES THAT REFLECT COMFORTING DESIGN

a loaded deck

STYLES YOU CAN ENJOY FOR YEARS TO COME



TONER HOME
PERFORMANCE

Keep your home healthy and problem-free.

Stay protected from damage and deficiencies with TONER Home Matters' forensics-based approach to increasing your home's health and performance.

THE BUILDING PERFORMANCE COMPANY

*Mold | Moisture | Warped flooring | High humidity | HVAC failures | Odd smells
Indoor health concerns | Contaminates | Staining | Water damage | Comfort issues
Swollen trim | Building defects | Bad workmanship | Poor design | Mysteries*

PROTECTING HOMES EVERY STEP OF THE WAY



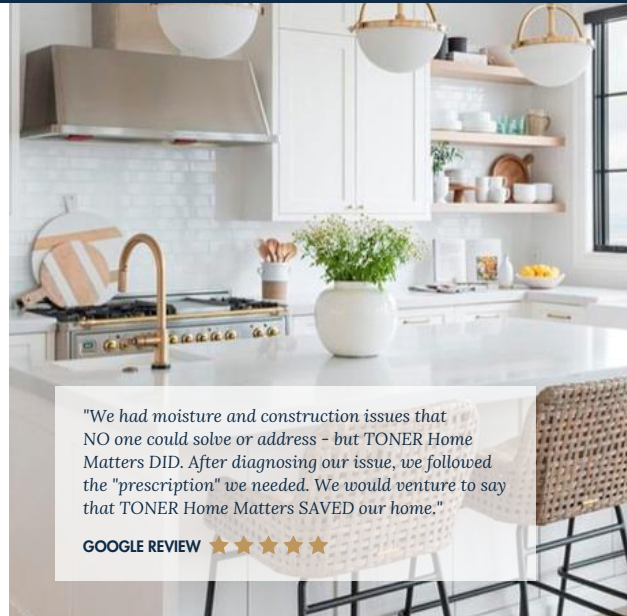
Design: We design new builds, remodels, modifications, and historic restorations that will perform properly in relation to the climate, construction, and client needs.



Forensics: When homes are "misbehaving," we provide a service that looks at the house as a total system. This includes not only the structure itself but also its specific microclimate and how the current and previous occupants behave within the dwelling.



Litigation Support: We support owners, builders, trades, and other professionals in the resolution of construction deficiencies in residential homes. We also specialize in assisting in pre-litigation efforts and coordinating all expert witnesses.



"We had moisture and construction issues that NO one could solve or address - but TONER Home Matters DID. After diagnosing our issue, we followed the "prescription" we needed. We would venture to say that TONER Home Matters SAVED our home."

GOOGLE REVIEW ★★★★★

PROTECTING HOMES THROUGHOUT TEXAS

TONERHOMEMATTERS.COM

EZ FLOORS

PROUD TO SERVE TEXAS!

The Best Deals On The
Latest Flooring Trends!

Carpet • Area Rugs • Tile & Stone
Hardwood • Laminate • Resilient • Countertops

20680 WESTHEIMER PKWY, #150 • (281) 647-0777

5015 FM 2920, #A • (281) 288-2300

16945 N. ELDRIDGE, #100 • (281) 257-5955

1557 W. SAM HOUSTON PKWY N, #110 • (713) 465-6741

24150 HWY. 290, #270 • (281) 758-2980

18024 HWY 105 W, #200 • (936) 582-4000

17111 WEST RD, #115 • (281) 656-2224

2721 FM 1463, #100 • (832) 437-5305

HIRING IN ALL POSITIONS

www.ezfloorsonline.com

Ansonylon
so soft. so tough. so proven.

Shaw
FLOORS



ASK US ABOUT OUR LIFETIME WARRANTY ON INSTALLATION!

HANDSCRAPED HARDWOODS

STARTING FROM
\$3.79 SQ. FT.

ALL INSTALLED.
TRIM INCLUDED.
LIMITED TIME OFFER.

TILE

STARTING FROM
\$2.69 SQ. FT.

INCLUDES INSTALLATION.
LIMITED TIME OFFER.

6X36 WOOD LOOK PORCELAIN TILE

STARTING FROM
\$3.99 SQ.FT.

INSTALLED. THIN SET
GROUT INCLUDED.
LIMITED TIME OFFER.

LAMINATE

STARTING FROM
\$2.29 SQ. FT.

INCLUDES INSTALLATION,
TRIM & PAD.
LIMITED TIME OFFER.

20x20 PORCELAIN TILE

STARTING FROM
\$3.19 SQ. FT.

INCLUDES INSTALLATION.
LIMITED TIME OFFER.

CARPET

STARTING FROM
\$1.09 SQ. FT.

INCLUDES INSTALLATION,
PADDING AND REMOVAL
OF ALL CARPET.
LIMITED TIME OFFER.

GRANITE COUNTERTOPS

STARTING FROM
\$27.99 SQ. FT.

INSTALLED.
INCLUDING 1.5" BULLNOSE.
LIMITED TIME OFFER.

6X24 WOOD LOOK PORCELAIN TILE

STARTING FROM
\$3.79 SQ.FT.

INSTALLED.
THIN SET GROUT
INCLUDED.
LIMITED TIME OFFER.

SPC WATERPROOF RIGID CORE WOOD LOOK

STARTING FROM
\$3.29 SQ.FT.

INSTALLED, INCLUDING
MOLDINGS PAD.
LIMITED TIME OFFER.

AMERICAN MADE HANDSCRAPED HARDWOOD

STARTING FROM
\$4.99 SQ.FT.

ALL INSTALLED.
TRIM INCLUDED.
LIMITED TIME OFFER.

\$100 OFF PURCHASE OF \$1,500 OR MORE

PRESENT AT TIME OF
PURCHASE. NOT VALID
WITH ANY OTHER
SPECIALS.

HANDSCRAPED LAMINATE

STARTING FROM
\$2.59 SQ. FT.

INSTALLED.
ALL TRIM INCLUDED.
LIMITED TIME OFFER.

All Hardwood & Laminate Installations Include:

QUARTER ROUND • TRANSITIONAL TRIM • PAD & GLUE

UP TO 12 MONTHS NO INTEREST FINANCING

It Matters Who You Hire



CATHY STUBBS REALTOR®

281-967-6149

CATHY@CATHYSTUBBS.COM

CATHYSTUBBS.COM



FLEXIBLE FEES THAT FIT YOUR NEEDS

Each Keller Williams office is independently owned and operated.

living
MAGAZINE

— best of —

MEMORIAL

READERS' CHOICE

2022

VOTED
BEST
FLOORING
STORE

SPRING
savings



floor
INSPIRATIONS
DESIGN & BUILD

14082 MEMORIAL DRIVE (MEMORIAL & KIRKWOOD)
(281) 670-5568 | FLOORINSPIRATIONS.COM

20% OFF
WITH INSTALLATION

**see store for details*

EXPIRES
4/30/2024



KITCHEN & BATH REMODEL | CARPET | TILE & STONE
SAND & FINISH HARDWOOD | LUXURY VINYL | COUNTER TOPS

DECORATING DEN INTERIORS®

- Blinds & Shutters
- Custom Window Treatments
- Wall Coverings
- Fine Furniture
- Area Rugs
- Accessories & Lighting

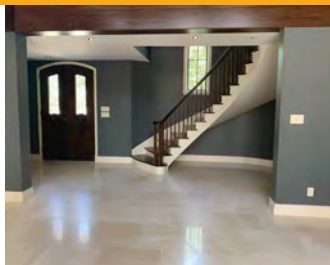


JENNIFER JONES
WINDOW FASHIONS
CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL

281.357.0511
jjones.decoratingden.com
Each franchise independently
owned and operated



THE POWER OF FRESH COLOR



Experience Best-in-Class Service

INTERIOR PAINTING • EXTERIOR PAINTING • REPAIRS • EPOXY FLOORS



VOTED
BEST PAINTING COMPANY
IN MEMORIAL



CertaPro Painters®
★★★★★
Of Central & Northeast Houston

713-824-5166
CENTRAL-HOUSTON.CERTAPRO.COM
8584 KATY FREEWAY, SUITE 305
HOUSTON, TX 77024

inside this issue

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

- 8 | FAIRCLAIMS ROOFING
- 12 | EDWARDS INTERIORS & DESIGN
- 16 | PATRICIA FLEMING
- 18 | ENVISION DESIGN BUILD
- 22 | STAR FURNITURE

features

10 ECO STYLE

Designing with natural materials and elements

14 RENOVATION READY

Get a return on investment with these home updates

20 LIVING COLOR

On trend hues reflect comforting lifestyle design

24 READY SET SWIM

Prep your pool for some fun in the sun

26 BECKONING BUTTERFLIES

How to plan a garden they will love

28 A LOADED DECK

Styles and materials you can enjoy for years to come

30 LET IT GO

Everything you need to know to get rid of unwanted stuff

32 POOL PARTY

Make a splash with designs and features

36 TURN UP THE HEAT

Maintenance is key to staying in hot water

38 THE ART OF DOING LAUNDRY

Tips to make this chore more fun

40 BY DESIGN

What to consider when planning an addition

42 WATER WISE

Care for the environment and save money too

44 GROUND RULES

Get your yard ready for Spring

46 FIRST IMPRESSION

Give a lift to your home's most prominent feature

48 DWELLING DETOX

Boost your home's health factor

50 NOT AN OPEN AND SHUT CASE

Tech savvy garage doors

52 PLAYING IN THE DIRT

Gardening with kids isn't just fun, it's healthy, too

54 DON'T BE ALARMED

Stay safe with home security

56 PROTECT YOUR PUP

Help your dog stay cool in the summer heat

GREATER HOUSTON HOME IMPROVEMENT ISSUE



10



ABOVE THE ROOFLINE

HOW TO EXTEND YOUR ROOF LIFE
IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

PHOTOS BY KARINA EREMINA OF JOY OF THE MOMENT PHOTOGRAPHY

You just might find Justin O'Neal braced like Spiderman on the side of a Houston rooftop. When the job calls for it, the owner of FairClaims Roofing Company will not shy from heights or steep pitches on residential or commercial builds. Suspended from ropes, he defies gravity. For clients, O'Neal and his team install or repair shingles, 24-gauge steel, and elegant tile from vertiginous perches. For clients preferring solar, stone, or other materials, O'Neal's company is at the ready. A seven-year winning streak in Living Magazine's Readers' Choice Best Of showcase serves as a glowing community endorsement.

O'Neal doesn't take it for granted. Though incentives run high for fly-by-night roofers, the "BestOf" wins for FairClaims Roofing Company prove that experienced tradesmen outcompete discount roofers at every turn. "There's not a state license for roofing like there is for electricians or even barbers," said O'Neal. That means barbers have more educational requirements than some contractors. For buyers, the research helps distinguish between excellence and the rest. With two decades serving The Woodlands and Montgomery County under their belt, the FCR reputation for higher standards precedes them. We spoke to owner O'Neal about how consumers can save money, avoid pitfalls, and get the most from the roof over their heads.

ROOF SHINGLE VS. PINE NEEDLE

Call it the result of substantial cost increases in construction and the trades, but insurers are treating roofs differently these days. "One of the more common calls we get now is [from customers who tell us] 'My insurance company sent me a letter saying my home is no longer insurable because I have an aging roof on my house,'" said O'Neal. While deductibles climb, roofs are placed on depreciated schedules. The amount of coverage in case of a claim now often depends on the age of the installation. "That puts the burden back onto the homeowner to maintain the roof so that it will last as long as possible," said the roofer.

Warranties for roofing products may last longer, but "the average shelf life of a roof is about 15 to 20 years," said O'Neal. In Houston, the elements can cut that short. Needles from pine and other trees in the area should be removed two or three times a year to ensure proper drainage. Houston's climate also causes a breakdown and loss of shingle granules, while high winds or hail can knock gravel off and gouge divots. During long Texas droughts, caulking can become dry and lead to leaks, so O'Neal recommended an annual inspection, or at least an assessment of the roof's condition, which he offers for free. Should service be required, free estimates make budget planning possible for homeowners or property managers. Basic service packages include a clean and tune-up either annually or semiannually, a scheduled care package that could prolong the life of your roof into its twilight years. To perform service, a full-time roof repair team works with O'Neal. They're not just any team.

STAYING POWER

With a low barrier to entry, newbie contractors can mint a roofing business in the time it takes to assemble their crew. Those mystery men hammering and nailing into your home may have never done the job before and may not ever again. O'Neal said subcontractors are not uncommon, and though they are not always the telltale sign of less expertise, the signs of highly skilled workers do exist. "My main crew has been with me since 2003," he said. With the years, skill accrues.

SOLAR SHINGLE ROOFING:

"AS ENERGY COSTS GO UP, THE QUICKER IT PAYS FOR ITSELF."



Additionally, FRC counts itself among the Roofing Contractors Association of Texas. Association members are vetted and advocate for consumer protection. "[RCAT] offers a license similar to a state license that has testing and ongoing education ... for contractors who want to differentiate themselves and do things the right way," said O'Neal. The respected contractor is even on the executive board of the RCAT's local chapter, the Houston Area Contractors Association. With a consumer advocate's transparency, O'Neal explained roofing types when we spoke.

HEAVY METAL

Asphalt shingles win the roofing popularity contest, but the far more durable – and more expensive – option is metal. Painted metal roofs often come with a 40-year warranty on the finish, and in the Houston climate, metal just performs better. Because it's impact-resistant and less likely to be damaged by hail or strong winds, insurance becomes more affordable.

The strength of metal comes from a few important features. Installed over plywood, for starters, and made of 24-gauge striated steel, the slight bend in each pane makes them sturdier. And because metal is reflective, it bounces sunlight back to the atmosphere rather than absorbing it into your home, earning an Energy Star rating.

"I'm a big advocate for [metal]. It feels like the biggest bang for your buck," said O'Neal. Because of the higher cost, he

told us that it makes the most sense for homeowners hoping to keep the house for 15 or 20 years.

In the roofer's opinion, tile is a similarly durable product, "but you have to keep [it] clean and keep debris out of [the tiles] so they can properly channel water." Experienced roofers will build the underlayments and battens with longevity in mind, advised O'Neal.

FUTURE ROOFING

That new roof on the block? That's the one with solar shingles that produce energy just as effectively while looking much more physically attractive. Typically, buyers should anticipate an outlook of 10 years in terms of breaking even on the investment into such a roof, with one major caveat. "That doesn't consider inflation," said owner O'Neal. "As energy costs go up, the quicker it pays for itself."

FRC is certified at the highest level with GAF, the nation's largest shingle manufacturer, as a Master's Elite contractor. FRC has also been a president's club contractor for the last 10 years in a row, said O'Neal. As costs rarely fall, maintenance completed by adept tradesmen may be the best hedge moving forward.

CONTACT

25315 OAKHURST DRIVE
SPRING, TEXAS 77386
(281) 367-0466
FAIRCLAIMSROOFINGCOMPANY.COM



ECO style

Designing with Natural Materials and Elements

BY ANNETTE BROOKS

Natural is in, including using natural materials and elements in interior design. Versatile and appealing, they fit with almost any style, from cozy boho and comfortable transitional to minimalist or relaxed opulence. Below are a few ideas to kick-start your creativity and find new ways to enhance your home with wood, stone, and organic fibers.

WOOD: Using rough-cut and reclaimed wood remains popular, but don't shy away from finished wooden pieces. Place a low, polished live edge bench at the end of a bed instead of an upholstered piece by the fireplace, or use it as a coffee table instead of a large, tufted ottoman.

Another way to use finished wood is with a gorgeous hardwood dining table. If you're into sustainability, find one you like at a consignment shop or an estate sale. The wood you select depends on the look you're going for. Mahogany, for example, is luxurious and elegant. Walnut, known for its vibrant, rich color, has tight grains, often with swirls and wave patterns. Maple is light-colored with a smooth, even grain unless you splurge for birds-eye maple, which has swirling eyes within smooth grain lines. Soften it and add color, if you wish, with upholstered chairs.

And remember hardwood flooring. Sure, luxury vinyl that simulates wood is a popular choice for its ease of maintenance and durability, but there's nothing like the eye-catching appeal of real hardwood floors.

STONE: Timeless and often breathtaking, stone is one of the easiest ways to add natural materials to your home décor. The options are almost limitless. Flooring, countertops, backsplashes, vases, wall cladding, fireplace mantels, shower surrounds, lamps, candle holders, coffee tables, sculptures — and the list goes on.

As with wood, the type of stone you select depends on the aesthetic you're going for. It also depends on where you're going to use it. Sedimentary stones such as limestone, sandstone, and travertine tend to be more porous and softer. Metamorphic stones like marble, quartzite, and slate are harder than sedimentary stone. Granite, which is volcanic in origin, is one of the hardest natural materials on earth.

If you have the option, choosing your own stone slabs puts the control in your hands, and you'll know what the finished product should look like.

ORGANIC FIBERS: Natural fiber fabrics and décor accessories complement styles like modern farmhouse and add elegant comfort to virtually any living space, regardless of the style. Fabrics made from cotton, wool, jute, and sisal add warmth, softness, and texture to your home. Linen especially pairs well with minimalist design.

Choose natural fibers for throws and pillows coverings, rugs, upholstered ottomans and benches, and wall art, such as a grouping of sisal trays or shallow baskets. Or make a bold, beautiful statement with a striking mohair velvet sectional sofa. (Mohair velvet is a plush, durable upholstery fabric made from wool shorn from Angora goats.)

DECORATE WITH INDOOR PLANTS AND TREES:

Beautifying your home with plants builds a closer connection with the outdoors, but did you know that research indicates indoor plants may reduce psychological and physiological stress, too?

If you're new to growing plants indoors or have recently moved, consider your home's environment room by room. Is it drafty or dry in the winter months? What kind of natural light is available for how many hours of the day? Lastly, determine how much available space you have for plants. A fiddle leaf fig, for example, usually grows to about 10 feet or more indoors.

When selecting plants, match them with your home's environment to ensure they will grow and thrive with proper care. You can create groupings of smaller plants, go all-out and install a living plant wall, or invest in a couple of large statement plants. I especially love my Ponderosa lemon and kaffir lime trees. They're fairly low maintenance and easy to keep in great condition with plenty of sunshine and brief, daily misting. I move them outside in the summer and watch them grow like crazy. 🌿





Transform Your Home Into a Beautiful Personalized Space

EDWARDS INTERIORS & DESIGN, LLC

BY SANDY LOWE

Interior designer Tiffany Edwards planned to go into art history as a career. But as she reached her college years, she developed a fascination for spaces. Her roommate was using an auto CAD program, and Tiffany wanted to know more about how those areas worked together and grew into something brand new.

“I’ve always been interested in mysteries and puzzles,” Tiffany says. “I’ve always enjoyed problem solving. With interior design we’re always working to find the best fit for the client’s goals in the space they have. Maybe we have one bedroom and we need to turn it into five. I like to take on that challenge and come up with a great solution they love.”

During her younger years Tiffany rearranged her bedroom three or four times a year. She used her curling iron as a tape measure and moved the furniture around in that limited space to create a variety of arrangements, which turned out to be great practice for her future.

Tiffany began her interior design career in the Dallas-Fort Worth area in 2004, but her love of Houston and her family brought her back to her hometown just three years later. She worked for The Kitchen Source in Dallas-Fort Worth and

SERVICES

- RENOVATION DESIGN
- RESIDENTIAL SERVICES
- FURNISHINGS AND DESIGN
- CUSTOM CABINETRY DESIGN
- NEW CONSTRUCTION DESIGN
- ONSITE DESIGN CONSULTATION



Kitchen & Bath Concepts in Houston before branching out on her own.

In 2014, she opened the doors of Edwards Interiors & Design. A graduate of Stephen F. Austin State University, Tiffany holds a bachelor's degree in interior design and a minor in art. She is also a Registered Interior Designer (RID) with the State of Texas and a Certified Kitchen Designer (CKD). When counseling people interested in interior design, she recommends seeking out an accredited program in interior design such as SFA.

Jennifer Lehr joined the Edwards Interiors & Design team as an intern. Now that she has come on full time, Jennifer assists with projects from new construction to remodels, and has a knack for space planning and a keen ability to maximize space and function.

Jennifer is a graduate of Stephen F. Austin State University with a Bachelor of Science in interior design and a minor in art, with an emphasis in photography. She also has a certification in construction management from SFASU and was the

first female to obtain this certification at the university.

This talented team can make any space in your home beautiful. But there's much more to it than that. First, they want to know how you plan to use that space. How do you live in this space? How do you expect to be using it 10 years from now? Will it need to grow as your family grows or be adapted as family members grow older? The answers to these questions allow Tiffany and Jennifer to develop a plan tailored specifically for you, your home, and the people who live there.

What differentiates Tiffany and Jennifer from other designers is their approach to the design problem. While beauty and aesthetics are key components to designing a space, it's the function of the space that is most important. They like to begin every design with the intention of creating a space that is practical first. It could be rearranging the footprint of the home to suit the lifestyle or selecting low-maintenance materials for a new-construction home. Either one places the function of the design or product at the forefront.

The process to reach your ultimate goal begins with connection: Tiffany and Jennifer get to know you, your needs, and your dreams for your home. For the next phase, research and design, these experienced professionals use their multiple resources to seek out the items and arrangement to suit your project exclusively. For the design presentation they will share with you their solutions for your design challenges and their vision of your ultimate project. Design execution involves bringing



it all together: renovation, layout, furniture, fabrics, lighting, and more. Final completion ends with your complete satisfaction.

Edwards Interiors & Design is a full-service residential interior design firm dedicated to creating functional, aesthetically pleasing spaces that are unique and personal to each and every client. From start to finish, they keep you informed and involved each step of the way to make sure their designs suit your personal style, and that you are completely delighted with the results.

If you are unsure about what service may be right for you, or just want to hash out your thoughts, a 90-minute onsite consultation is the perfect fit. You can discuss lighting and hard finish selections, paint suggestions, layouts and space planning, overall design direction, and any other items you want an expert opinion on. This is perfect for clients who want to handle the implementation and design selections but need help with the overall direction or just have a few questions.

Edwards Interiors will even work with your builders and contractors, actively participating in the material selection process for a new

home. Their expertise and dedication ensure that the choices made contribute to the overall quality and aesthetic of the project.

Edwards Interiors serves Katy, Sugar Land, Cypress, Memorial, Bunker Hill, Tanglewood, and surrounding Houston neighborhoods. While their current location does not allow for much display of products, they are looking to the future. Tiffany and Jennifer hope to open a more accessible site with a retail boutique showroom to display available fabrics, colors and design options soon.

Tiffany regularly displays completed projects on Houzz.com, the premier web location for residential design. The annual Best of Houzz awards recognize the top-rated home pros and most popular designs on Houzz by category and area across the country and around the world. Her designs have been recognized as "Best Of" for design and service in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

2027 NORTH MASON ROAD
SUITE 301
KATY, TEXAS 77449
(832) 437-2614



WANT TO KNOW MORE?
SCAN HERE!





RENOVATION *ready*

GET A RETURN ON YOUR INVESTMENT
WITH THESE HOME UPDATES

BY CHERYL ALEXANDER

Before taking on your next home remodeling project, it's a good idea to get your ducks in a row by doing some essential preliminary work.

First, determine whether you'll need a professional or not. If you do, then research the professionals you'll want to hire. Then consider that not all renovations are equal. Many projects make for a better return on investment (ROI) when it's time to sell. Lean on the side of neutrality so that house hunters will clearly visualize their own personalities in the home.

Also, research current trends. Each year, surveys are conducted revealing the ROI of popular home renovations. Contractors nation-wide are polled to calculate what these upgrades cost to complete. The data collected is compared with how much real estate agents estimated these features would boost a home's market price. This year's answers overwhelmingly show that the focus should be on the parts of your home that are the most visible because most buyers will decide whether they want to purchase in the first few minutes of looking. That means a new garage door and front door, new siding, and fresh, updated landscaping should be the first projects you consider.



New garage doors have a huge visual impact on a house you're planning to put on the market and replacing them can recoup over 100% of the cost in resale. Entry door replacement is impactful and one of the first things a buyer will see. And the ROI is a whopping 90.7%.

The exterior of your house can take a beating from the elements, and after a while it shows. New siding could recoup 75.6% of the cost when you sell your house. Replacing part of that siding with manufactured stone veneer, however, will have a bigger impact. Homeowners who install a stone veneer on their house – usually on the bottom third of the exterior – see as much as 94.9% of the cost come back in the sale price.

Fresh landscaping could be just what the home needs to look new and appealing and with an ROI of 100%, every dollar spent here is worth it. It's important to replace dead patches of grass, mow the lawn regularly and add a bit of color with flowers or bushes.

Indoors for kitchens and bathrooms, think minor renovations. A major upscale kitchen renovation will recoup just 50% of the cost when the property sells, and an upscale bathroom remodel only 56%. Instead, consider simply updating the kitchen cabinets and backsplash or installing a double vanity or new lights and showerhead in the bathroom.

Another worthy consideration is replacing the windows, which impacts both the outdoor appearance and the indoor bottom line. Replacement of midrange windows can see an ROI up to \$1.15 for every dollar spent on the project, but that profit decreases with more upscale windows. 🏠

Bang for your Buck

Not all renovations add the value you might expect. If you're thinking of renovating in 2022, you'll want to choose your projects carefully. To make it easier, we've broken down the home renovations you're likely better off skipping and we've added the amount you might expect as a return on your investment (ROI) to help make things even more clear.

Pool installation - 7%

Major kitchen overhaul - 50%

High end bath remodel - 56%

New carpet or marble floors. Around 40% for carpet and only 50% for marble.

Wallpaper - 0%

Sunroom - Less than 50%

Patio - Less than 50%

PATRICIA FLEMING REALTY GROUP, LLC

*“Your Investment is
Our Investment”*

Known as “Three-day Patti” in real estate circles, Patricia Fleming’s superpower is her head-spinning talent for selling homes in three days or less. It’s not magic. It’s hard work. A lot can be said for her efforts toward “curb appeal,” but she goes below the surface too. Patti’s team of skilled craftsmen overhaul home interiors at cost. Patricia Fleming Realty Group often pays for the work in advance, recouping only when the home sells. Risky move? Not for a woman with confidence. In addition to her drive and care for clients, Patti’s top-flight, skilled, and dependable craftsmen have been with her for almost two decades. Eager to sell your home as is? Patti can do that too, flipping it fast. With dropping interest rates she told us that the time is ripe to buy or sell.

THE PHOENIX

Extensive client services make Patti unique in her field. Patti’s Survivor’s Spirit makes her unique as a person. In Houston to study nursing, ophthalmology, and surgery at Baylor College of Medicine, Patti paused her nursing career to care for her mother decades ago. During that time, she would earn a degree in interior design, but life had a few more detours in store for the future entrepreneur. She created a thriving upscale kitchen and bath design firm known as KitchenKrafters – located in the clock tower on Campbell Road – before being diagnosed with stage four ovarian cancer. Having seen two aunts succumb to the disease, her outlook was bleak.

“At the time, I didn’t know if I was going to make it, so I sold the company,” she said. Luckily, a then-cutting-edge immunotherapy treatment saved her life. Despite selling, she worked throughout her treatment. Gaping holes in real estate glared.

“I saw so many homes where the realtors were not helping. These were several million dollar homes, and I’d ask someone ‘What does your realtor say?’ and they’d say ‘Well, they didn’t give me much input,’” she told us.

As a cancer survivor, she forged ahead. Now, instead of just Three-Day Patti, she’s becoming Takeover Patti. Her ability to relieve other agents of unsellable listings, and then get them sold herself, is the

stuff legends are made of. The path to that reputation is paved with sheer grit.

WINNING TECHNIQUE

Inside the home, Patti’s design team chooses color palettes and renovation materials – be they lighting, flooring, appliances, or anything else. Outside, a team landscapes, power washes, and paints to make exteriors shine. Her loyal team of craftsmen resod, cover old roots, level a yard, and more.

“Everyone has been with me for a minimum of 16 years,” she explained. The long-standing team includes renovators who install quartz or granite countertops, new sinks, sparkling ranges, and fetching flooring. Licensed electricians and plumbers also step in as needed.

“Even a lightly renovated home will bring an average of 18% more to a client’s bottom line,” she told us. Show-ready homes save everyone time. When Patricia Fleming Realty Group steps in, the brokerage does the heavy lifting. Patti also presents a portfolio of professionals including experts in lending, home insurance home warranty companies, inspection, and more to clients who receive special discounts on many of these services.

Calling her package of seller tools a concierge service, Patti offers an advance of up to \$15,000 to renovate their home at “builder cost” using her construction team, Bright Star Group, LLC. The funds are recovered upon the close of the home, and homeowners spend much less than they would bidding out the improvements otherwise. For homeowners who need quick access to funds, Patti will purchase their home outright with NO repairs and receive NO commission, delivering a cash infusion and closing the home within 10 days. Full-service listings benefit from complementary landscaping and staging packages valued at \$5,000. Thus, she readies each listing to earn the highest offers possible.

BESPOKE BROKERAGE

Patti designs a marketing program tailored precisely to individual client needs, starting with an in-depth consultation. She then delves into the details of her trademarked “Seven Step Marketing System” and offers several services, many of which are complementary. Besides

interior design and staging, landscaping with native plant recommendations to match the unique style of each home, property power washing, and a full professional home cleaning and move-out service are also available.

To get the word out about listings, Patti offers strategic and widely advertised open houses which include catering, and marketing before and after the open house with highly visible sign placement and advertising. Skilled in harnessing social media to showcase client homes she uses twelve additional websites to that end. Her professional photography and videography include drone footage and twilight photo shoots, and clients love her customized high-gloss foldable color brochures of their homes.

For buyers, Patti has the experience, training, and knowledge to negotiate the very best price and terms on their behalf. With her certification as a top negotiator and in-depth marketplace knowledge, her clients have the unique opportunity to gain access to homes even before they are available to the general public.

UNPARALLELED REPUTATION

Consider the stats. Patti has averaged sales of anywhere from 80 to 100 homes a year consistently since she received her real estate license in 2006. She’s a winner of the coveted Texas Five Star award for 13 consecutive years and has been voted “Best Realtor In Cypress” by Living Magazine every year from 2011 to 2023.

“I will spend well into the wee hours to find my buyers exactly what they have been dreaming of,” she said.

Patti loves seeing people achieve their dreams of home ownership and believes that every person deserves that opportunity. “My purpose in creating my unique brokerage is to set a new standard of ethics and professionalism in the real estate industry and give my clients both a personal and professional experience. My goal is to make both purchasing and selling your home an enjoyable, effortless and profitable experience for all my clients,” said Patti. She’s got the career to prove it.

“3 DAY PATTI WILL SELL IT FAST FOR MAXIMUM CASH !”



BRING YOUR DREAM HOME TO LIFE

ENVISION DESIGN BUILD, HOME DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION BUSINESS,
TAKES THE CLIENTS VISION FROM THE DESIGN TO THE FINAL COAT OF PAINT

PHOTOS BY CANDOR PICTURES

An established name since 1995, Envision Design Build brings expertise and enthusiasm to even the smallest facets of large custom builds, remodels, and designs. Jack Knowlton, owner offers Magazine-worthy images of floor-to-ceiling windows, updated kitchens, sweeping staircases, and soaring ceilings showcase his skill. Eye-catching textural elements of tile, stone, brick, and metals in rose gold and antique brass stand out in his work. Partner Garrett Shaw agreed that the

custom finishes make the work look polished. Those points are never an afterthought at Envision Design Build.

Knowlton and Shaw have some predictions about client needs: Houston's ample sunshine should put an added covered porch high on the priority list for homeowners. The design transformation can create a smooth transition to the outdoors and offer a space to relax in shade during the warm months. Shaw painted a vivid picture of how an addition can turn a barely-used covered

porch into an inviting, comfortable outdoor living space. Large, screened exterior patio doors, kitchens, covered entertainment areas, and cozy fireplaces in the outdoor space are a showcase of custom design by Envision.

"What's huge in Memorial," said Knowlton, a lifelong resident is that "a lot of people like the area and don't want to scrap the house, but they do want something more modern and up-dated than what they're in that was built back in the '50 & '60s.

For his experienced team, any area of the house can be reshaped. Raised ceilings and shifted walls, opening a kitchen to the family room, gallery worthy recessed lighting, also repurposing areas to create small offices, playrooms, and mudrooms are all very achievable.

MASTER CHEF

We've come a long way from your grandmother's Lazy Susan corner cabinet. For today's at-home chefs who love to entertain, custom kitchens and pantries are a wonderland they want to cook in, eat in, and entertain in. "The pantries we're doing now are so detailed and well-lit when you walk up to them. Everything is right in front of you with shelves and drawers that pull out. You don't lose a lot of space; you gain space," said Knowlton. He and Shaw told us about doors with shelves that pull forward as you open them, so you never have to reach to the back.

"We run lights vertically down the inside of cabinets so it lights up the entire space". You don't want dark spots in the kitchen. In these pantries, you open the doors and motion-sensor lights that come on automatically.

Clients also love custom appliance garages. This feature puts major, heavy appliances like mixers, blenders, and microwaves inside hidden cabinets. The sleek, smooth look is functional too. Appliances emerge for use on rollers so the user never lifts a finger. Contrasting finishes for kitchens are growing in popularity, such as, stained wood islands, painted and/or laminate cabinetry, metal detailing and plaster hood vents.

SPOT THE REMODEL

Knowlton said that seamless integration with the existing home leads folks to believe the home was originally designed as such. Couple that with the fact that Knowlton prides himself on blending his exteriors into each subdivision, and you have a recipe for updates that look like they were always there. "Our builds will look a little more modern than the rest of the homes, but still have the same character," he said of his approach. Some call it blending in or transitional design. Others call it timeless.

VALUE ENGINEERING

Rather than design a dream home only to discover prohibitive costs, Knowlton encourages clients to disclose their budget. With that in mind, Envision can find a way to achieve the look or concept the client desires without breaking the bank. "We have become extremely good at value engineering," said owner Knowlton. For clients, that's money in the bank.



CONTACT

800 Wilcrest Drive, Suite 120, Houston, Texas 77042
(713) 789-8262 | EnvisionDesignBuild.com



LIVING *color*

ON-TREND HUES REFLECT
COMFORTING LIFESTYLE DESIGN

Upgrading your home design is an opportunity to tap into new color schemes. Knowing what shades are trendy and how different hues can work together for a cohesive design is an essential step in creating an attractive design aesthetic.

While you might turn to family or friends for inspiration for your next project, another resource for collecting concepts and options to upgrade your space is the internet. Consider the Valspar Color-verse, which allows visitors to explore colors and offers paint color inspiration and decor trends they can envision within their homes.

COLOR TRENDS TO CONSIDER

Many of this year's popular nature-inspired designs are all about finding comfort, embracing a flexible lifestyle, and rediscovering joy. The most trend-worthy, forward-thinking, and livable colors reflect specific facets or emotions of life, so you can update your well-used spaces with thoughtful colors that evoke positive energy and lasting change.

Comfort and Contentment: If your goal is to create a space that envelopes you in comfort, consider a white with a yellow undertone that makes the room cozy, like a soft blanket, like Cozy White. Complement the softness with Southern Road, a muted clay that brings in brown undertones that suggest gentle contentment.

Calming Restoration: Tap into the calming tones of nature with Green Trellis, a hazy green with duality, bringing in both the great outdoors calm and liveliness. Another option is Everglade Deck, a deep midnight blue used as an elegant calming shade to restore the mind, body, and home.

Healthful, Mindful Living: Evoke a greater sense of health consciousness with a light blue that has a dose of softness used as a fresh neutral with uplifting qualities of a modern pastel, like Rising Tide. Reinforce the benefits of mindful living with Villa Grey, a cool color balanced by the warmth of the yellow undertone.

Connections and Joy: Establish spaces where you can celebrate relationships with others and happiness in your being. Consider hues like Gentle Violet, a harmonious shade promoted by digital connectivity. Evoke joy with a dependable classic tan like Holmes Cream, which features a yellow undertone that suggests new life with uplifting qualities.

Natural Balance: Bringing hints of the outdoors into a well-loved living space creates a soothing ambiance. Consider Ivory Brown, a warm neutral tone inspired by the shades found in nature, or Blue Arrow, a cooled-down blue that strikes a beautiful balance between cool and warm shades in your design.

Inspirational Thought: A work-from-home or crafting space needs color to inspire great thinking. Try a faded natural terracotta like Desert Carnation that sparks individuality and warmth or a deep blackened olive like Flora, an on-trend neutral that embodies charm and sophistication.

Explore the tool and find more colorful ideas at [Valspar.com](https://www.valspar.com).

Courtesy: Family Features, Valspar



Navigate New Colors

Exploring color options before you apply them to a home improvement or design project gives you a chance to experience and visualize different styles before you fully commit. Using a tool like Valspar's Color-verse, a 3D virtual home, you can experience on-trend color palettes that inspire your next big project through resources like:

- An interactive feature that allows you to repaint walls of a living room, dining room, bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, walls, and cabinets using the 12 Colors of the Year, then takes you directly to the site to order free paint chips to try at home
- An artistic element where you can create a 3D panorama nature scene, explore others' artwork, and share creations on social media
- A light-hearted game that inspires you to get on the road to gather your home improvement essentials

Check it out at: ValsparColorVerse.com/#/app



STAR FURNITURE DIFFERENT BY DESIGN

BY SANDY LOWE | BY CANDOR PICTURES

If you're looking for a place that can more than meet your décor, furniture and comfort needs, you've found it. Welcome to Star Furniture, Katy and West Houston's location for curated furniture and service.

This 150,000 square foot Flagship Showroom showcases one of the many differences that sets Star apart from other furniture retailers. This showroom bursts with more top brands under one roof than any other home furnishings store in Texas. Whether you're looking to fill a new home, create a particular ambiance in a room or to find that one statement piece, you're most likely to find it at Star.

No matter what you're shopping for in home furnishings you can trust

Star Furniture to make yours a quality experience. While the word "quality" can be interpreted many different ways, at Star, quality has become a set of standards and expectations for outstanding home furnishings and service.

Quality can often be found in the details. Some sofas may look the same, but Star raises the bar on the style, the sit, and the sizzle. Star's buyers and designers want you to enjoy a look that will last and make a statement in your home.

One of the differences you'll find at Star Furniture is a commitment to customers. Star's staff always stands ready to answer any questions about the high-quality products and services.

Star Furniture's knowledgeable and welcoming staff can guide you as much or as little as you need. Visual teams create inspiring settings throughout the showroom to spark your imagination and help you visualize how your home can look. Creative ideas abound. You'll be inspired to fashion exactly the look you want with exactly the pieces you need.

After your purchase Star's quick-response customer care teams are driven to provide the best experience with unparalleled service after the sale. Star boasts a one-call resolution policy to guests, to bring a speedy resolution to any issue they may encounter.

Star Furniture has been serving Texas families since 1912. Generations of Texans have trusted Star with furnishing their



homes. With some of the highest customer satisfaction scores in the industry and an average Google rating of 4.7 stars, it's no wonder customers return to Star more than any other furniture store.

Here's what one shopper had to say:

"Love Star furniture! Always leave there with great purchases. The sales attendants are friendly and give you space to shop. They don't pressure you and respect your space. I have furnished my master bedroom, dining room, and daughter's room with them. Next room will be the living room."

If you are looking for something special at Star Furniture you'll be glad to know that no other furniture store offers as many custom order options. Expert consultants will guide you through the process to create seating options that are uniquely you. Star offers literally thousands of custom upholstery options to choose from. Custom and special orders are not limited to seating. Star has choices for bedrooms, dining, and other case pieces that can be ordered in a variety of finishes. The possibilities are endless.

Creating a room you love takes planning and understanding of your taste and space. At Star, an expert design staff will develop a design that is just right for you. Star's designers have the skills and expertise to transform any space into a lifestyle you will love. Whether it's a custom sofa, decorative rug, or a special accessory, the design team can provide an affordable solution to any challenge your home has to offer.

Talented designers and the largest selection of the most recognized brands in home furnishings, has established Star as the fashion leader in home décor for over

100 years. Experience "the difference" with complimentary in-store design service.

You can also plan your room online. Star Furniture's website offers a digital Room Planner that will allow you to customize your room layout to see how new furniture will fit.

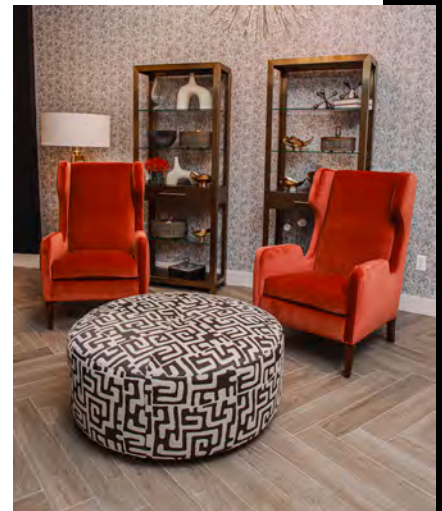
If your tastes run to the luxury and warmth of buttery-soft leather, look no further.

Star offers leather options in every seating category including power motion. If you want to know more about leather, Star is the leather leader among furniture showcases.

Star Furniture has revolutionized the mattress buying experience with a direct focus on Comfort, Quality and Value. Comfort is the most important factor when choosing a mattress. Weight, sleep position and partners have an impact on the best mattress for you. The Quality of materials used in your mattress have a direct connection to its lifespan, as well as your health and comfort. Once you've found your Comfort and Quality Star has a huge variety of options to best fit your budget.

You won't find a furnishing company more committed to the community than Star Furniture. Star's volunteer efforts include Books Between Kids, a non-profit organization that provides books to children who otherwise would not enjoy owning their own books. Star associates regularly serve the Houston Food Bank and support the efforts to end hunger in our area.

With a convenient location, a service-focused staff and ample parking, Star Furniture is only missing one thing: You. Plan a visit today and enjoy the selection, service and quality of the finest furniture retailer in Texas.



STAR FURNITURE'S OUTSTANDING BRANDS:


Bernhardt
Canadel
Kincaid
Hooker Furniture
Miranda Kerr
Natuzzi Leather
Sherrill Furniture
Vanguard Furniture

TOP BRANDS IN SLEEP

Aireloom
Tempurpedic
Stearns & Foster

CONTACT

16666 Barker Springs Rd.
Houston, TX 77084
(281) 579-7827
StarFurniture.com

A high-angle, top-down photograph of a woman swimming in a pool. She is wearing a blue swimsuit and is captured in a freestyle stroke, with one arm extended forward and the other back. The water is a vibrant blue with white ripples and splashes around her. The background is a solid blue, suggesting a clear sky or a pool with blue tiles.

Ready, Set, Swim

PREP YOUR POOL FOR SOME FUN IN THE SUN

BY MIMI GREENWOOD KNIGHT

As the days grow longer and the weather gets warmer, your backyard pool beckons you toward lazy hours of floating, splashing, diving, dining, and making memories with the ones you love. If your pool's been closed all winter, it's recommended that you begin getting it ready about a week before you hope to use it. Here are a few things for you or a pool professional to consider when preparing for summer fun.

Clean Debris and Give Everything a Once-Over

Take a little time to survey the area around your pool. Trim overhanging trees that might drop leaves in the water. Blow or sweep off your pool decking and look for any damage or wear and tear. Clean, repair, or replace deck furniture and conduct a safety check of pool rails, slides, rescue equipment, ladders, and diving boards. Then inventory your chemicals to ensure you have what you need on hand.

Remove the Cover

Your swimming pool cover accumulated water and debris all winter. Use a pool cover pump to eliminate old, dirty water so it doesn't end up in your pool as you take the cover off. Hose down the cover and give it a good scrub with a pool-cover solution.

Do a Thorough Pool Inspection

Remove drain plugs from surface skimmers and wall-return equipment and restore directional fittings. Inspect your pool's pump and filter and replace anything that's damaged or worn.

If you disconnected your underwater pool lights for the winter, reconnect them. Check all tiles and use a pool scale removal product to remove calcium buildup and stains. Thoroughly inspect the interior of your pool for damage and make any necessary repairs. If you have a fiberglass pool with a gel coating, hairline cracks typically won't affect the integrity of your pool, however, large cracks or holes should be addressed by a pool professional.

Do a Final Debris Removal

An easy way to get rid of that last bit of debris is to fill the pool to the midpoint of the skimmer opening. Then you can easily clean leaves, twigs, and debris from the pool's bottom with a pool brush. Empty the basket as well.

Turn on Filter and Test Water

Before you test the water or add any chemicals, turn on the filter and let it run for 24 hours. Then collect a water sample and take it to a pool professional to analyze and offer instructions for balancing your pool's water. They'll test the water's pH level, alkalinity, calcium hardness, and chlorine levels, advise you on shocking the pool, and recommend stabilizers, phosphate removers, metal treatment products, or algaecides to add a week before that first swim.

Continue to run the filter for the next few days and vacuum debris as it settles. Once you're done, all that work will pay off as you spend summer 2023 enjoying the perfect staycation spot right outside your back door.

CANNONBALL! 🏊

We take pride in being the premier custom pool builder in the area, and we've built our business and long-standing presence in the area through 100% customer satisfaction. We feel each one of our customers are a part of our family and when you become a part of the Hipp Pools family, you can expect nothing less than the best because that's what you deserve.

If you're interested in a new custom pool and spa, pool repairs, or pool maintenance in Houston, Spring, The Woodlands, or any of the surrounding areas, contact us today!

"HIPPO POOLS... FOR
HIP LIFESTYLES."



HIPP POOLS

Thank you for voting us
BEST Pool Company!

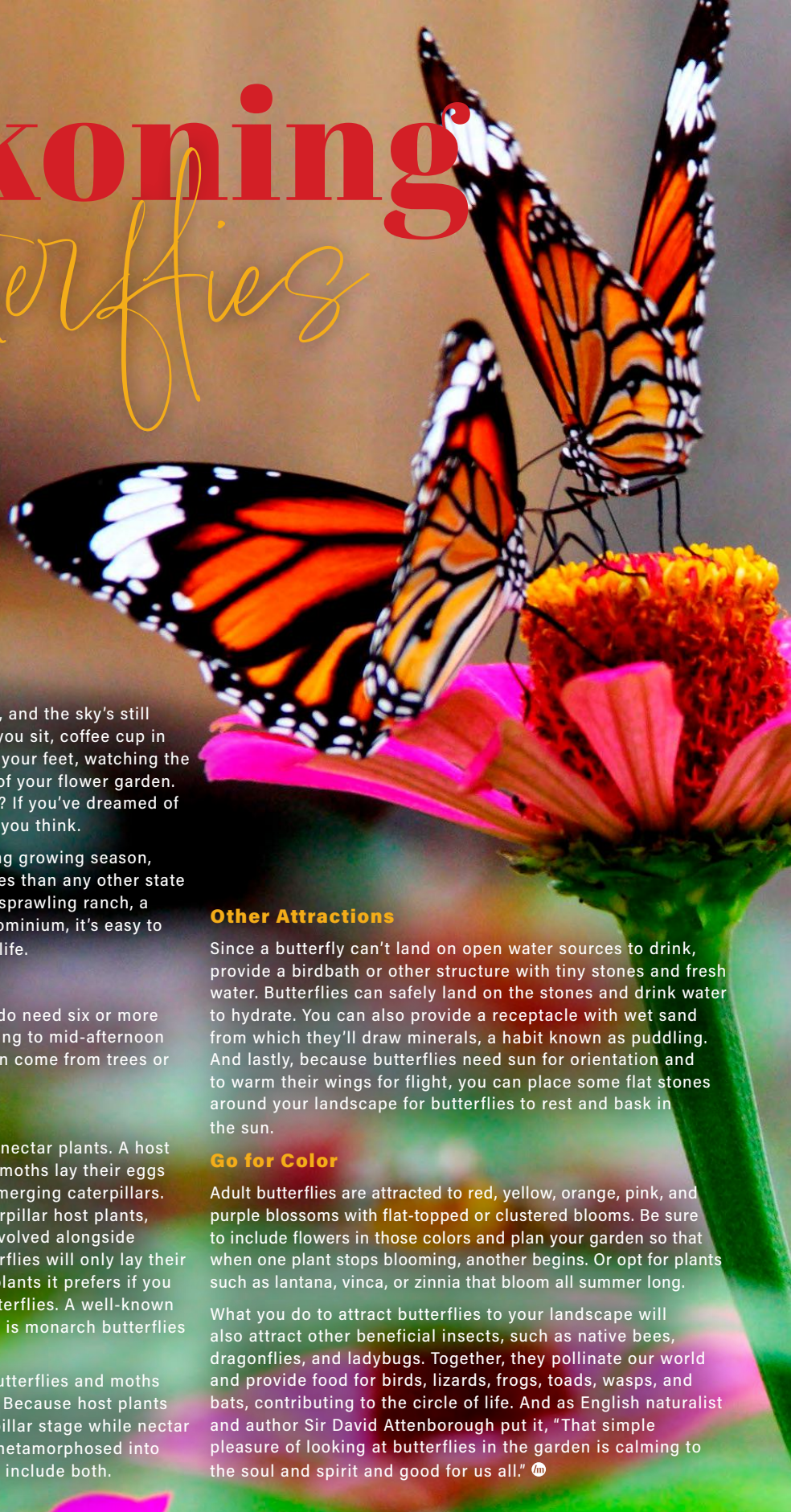


29418 FM 2978 Rd
The Woodlands, Texas 77354
281-362-POOL (7665)
HippPools.com

Beckoning Butterflies

HOW TO PLAN A GARDEN THEY WILL LOVE

BY MIMI GREENWOOD KNIGHT



Picture this. It's early morning, and the sky's still pink with the sunrise. There you sit, coffee cup in hand, companionable dog at your feet, watching the butterflies dance in and out of your flower garden. What could be more relaxing? If you've dreamed of just such a scene, it may be easier than you think.

Thanks to our diverse ecoregion and long growing season, Texas plays host to more butterfly species than any other state in the union. And whether you live on a sprawling ranch, a suburban homestead, or an urban condominium, it's easy to attract these winged beauties into your life.

Design an Enticing Space

Butterflies don't ask for much, but they do need six or more hours of sunlight — preferably midmorning to mid-afternoon — and shelter from the elements that can come from trees or plants and chemical-free soil.

Selecting Your Plants

Butterflies require both host plants and nectar plants. A host plant is one onto which butterflies, and moths lay their eggs and whose leaves provide a buffet for emerging caterpillars. Also known as larval host plants or caterpillar host plants, they're usually native plants that have evolved alongside butterflies and moths. Since some butterflies will only lay their eggs on a specific plant, find out what plants it prefers if you hope to attract a specific species of butterflies. A well-known example of this host/butterfly symbiosis is monarch butterflies and milkweed.

A nectar plant provides food for adult butterflies and moths who drink the nectar from their flowers. Because host plants provide food for butterflies in the caterpillar stage while nectar plants feed the creatures once they've metamorphosed into butterflies, your butterfly garden should include both.

Other Attractions

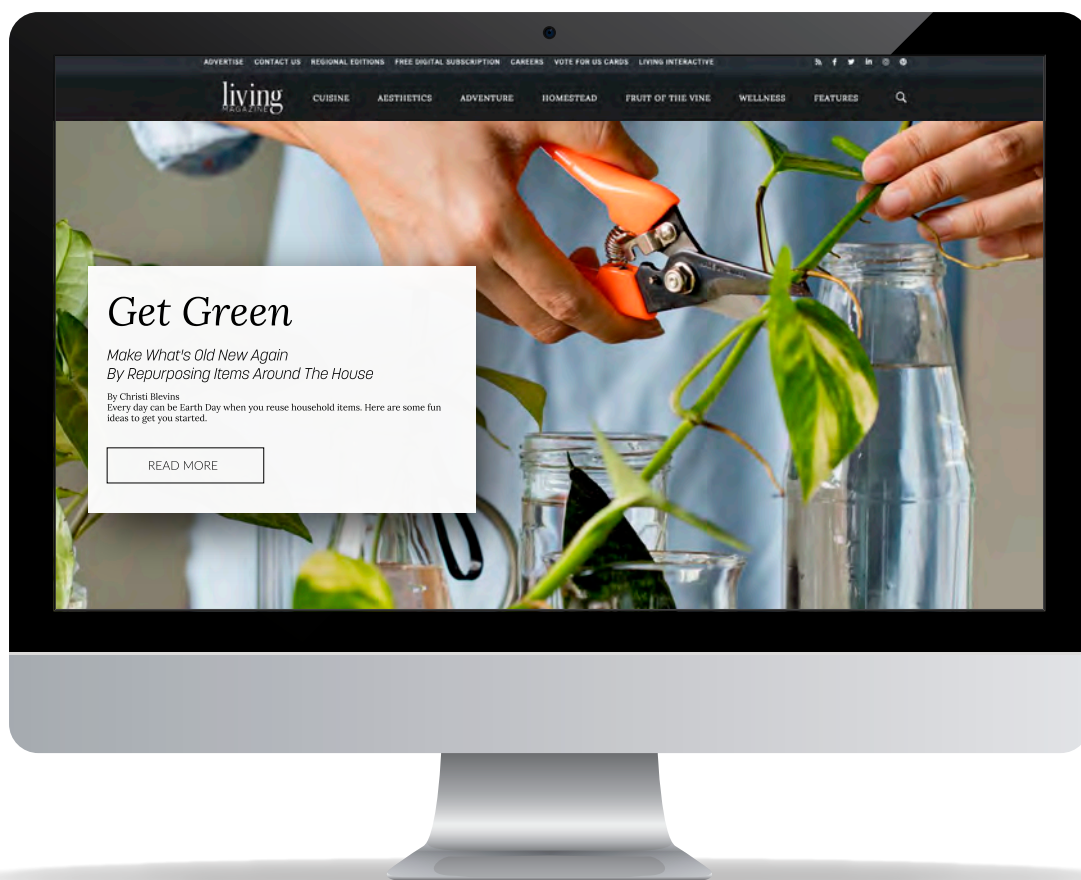
Since a butterfly can't land on open water sources to drink, provide a birdbath or other structure with tiny stones and fresh water. Butterflies can safely land on the stones and drink water to hydrate. You can also provide a receptacle with wet sand from which they'll draw minerals, a habit known as puddling. And lastly, because butterflies need sun for orientation and to warm their wings for flight, you can place some flat stones around your landscape for butterflies to rest and bask in the sun.

Go for Color

Adult butterflies are attracted to red, yellow, orange, pink, and purple blossoms with flat-topped or clustered blooms. Be sure to include flowers in those colors and plan your garden so that when one plant stops blooming, another begins. Or opt for plants such as lantana, vinca, or zinnia that bloom all summer long.

What you do to attract butterflies to your landscape will also attract other beneficial insects, such as native bees, dragonflies, and ladybugs. Together, they pollinate our world and provide food for birds, lizards, frogs, toads, wasps, and bats, contributing to the circle of life. And as English naturalist and author Sir David Attenborough put it, "That simple pleasure of looking at butterflies in the garden is calming to the soul and spirit and good for us all." 🦋

Our New Website Connects You To Stories That Inform And Inspire



We've updated our website to help you better navigate our online content. You can now access topics such as Cuisine, Aesthetics, Adventure, Homestead, Wellness, and Inspiration!

In addition, you can find a trusted doctor in your area, read about local female entrepreneurs, get answers from industry experts, and even meet this year's Best Of Readers' Choice winners.

Go take a look!

Find us at **LivingMagazine.net**



A LOADED *deck*

STYLES AND MATERIALS YOU CAN
ENJOY FOR YEARS TO COME

BY MIMI GREENWOOD KNIGHT

Who wants to be stuck in the house all night after a long day at work or school? A spacious deck is a perfect place to get outside, enjoy some family time under the stars, eat, listen to the crickets, and enjoy your backyard. Here are some deck ideas we're excited about this year.

LARGER DECKS

Gone are the days of the 20-by-10-foot deck with a grill and a scattering of patio chairs. Families are now enjoying multilevel decks with different functions on different levels, such as outdoor kitchens, sun decks, or spas. Pergolas and walls add privacy, and built-ins provide the perfect solution for seating, storage, and planters.

VARIED-PLANK DECKING

Instead of an expanse of identical decking, try mixing materials. Consider alternating thinner and thicker boards or different colored materials for a contemporary flair. It's an easy way to achieve any number of looks and can be accomplished with traditional wood or composite decking material.

BOLD COLOR

While neutrals are always popular for decks, some homeowners are stepping out with bolder hues. Use complementary colors to highlight structural design elements or to accent decking and railing to create a picture frame effect to show off structural design elements.

OUTDOOR LIVING

There's no end to the choices in outdoor living decor. Lighting, appliances, TVs, fireplaces, fire pits, misters, and outdoor kitchens make the deck a great place to hang any time of year. Low-voltage, solar-lighting adds safety as well as ambiance. Lighting elements should provide style, directional lighting, and function.

GREEN DECKING MATERIALS

Composite decking is one of the most popular and affordable sustainable materials. The blend of wood fiber and recycled plastic creates a highly durable and beautiful product. Homeowners love it for its low maintenance and the way it convincingly mimics premium natural materials. And while a composite deck costs more upfront to build, it's cheaper over the deck's life because it won't need to be painted or stained every few years.

HEATERS AND CEILING FANS

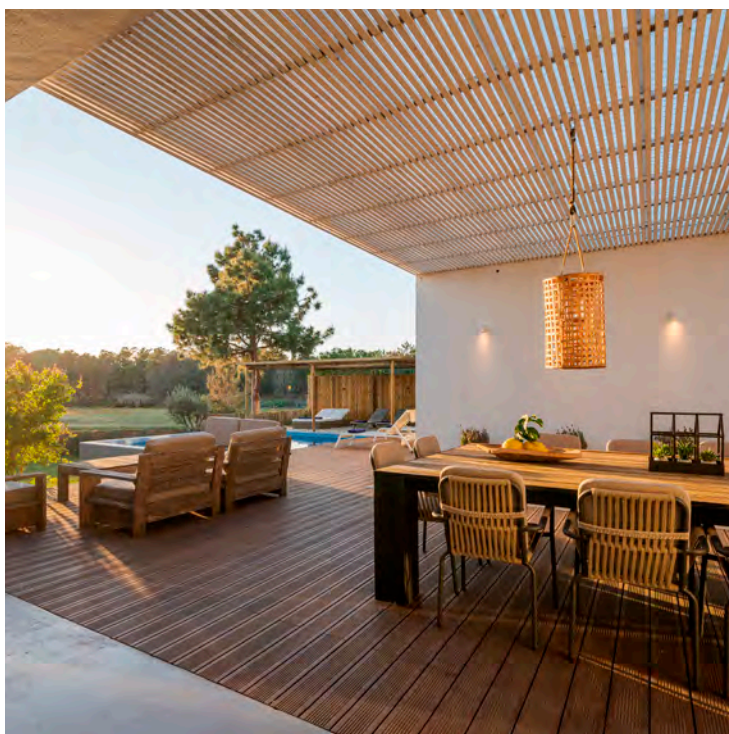
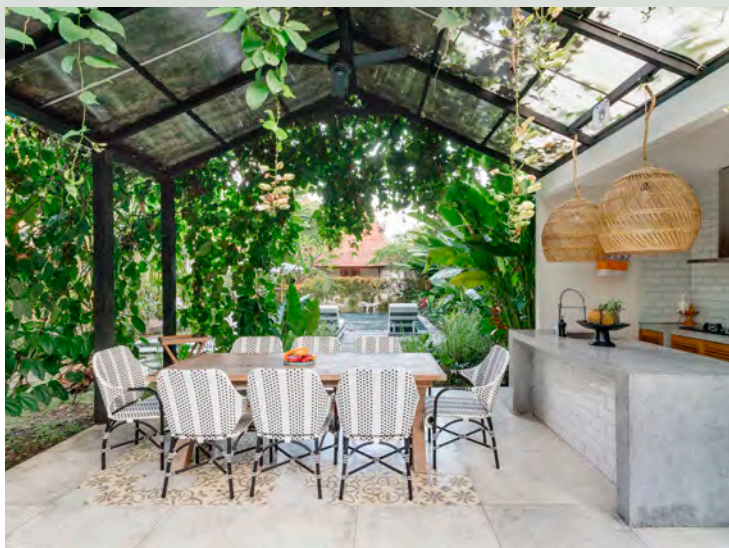
Adding heaters and fans to covered areas means you can enjoy your deck all year long. Incorporating them into the original deck design makes for a seamless aesthetic, but it's usually not a problem to retrofit them later.

MODERN/INDUSTRIAL STYLE

While rustic-style deck designs are still popular, contemporary-looking homes are being designed with modern/industrial-looking decks featuring cleaner lines, angular shapes, and cooler colors. Think mixed materials like metal and composite decking, stamped concrete, and glass rails or 'fences' for a sleek, industrial vibe. Cable railing also offers a clear, unobstructed view and requires minimal maintenance.

BLENDING OUTDOORS AND IN

Decks today are viewed as an extension of the home, offering many of the same amenities. Some homeowners are echoing the aesthetic appeal of their indoor living out onto the deck. Achieve this by continuing the color theme and other décor elements for a cohesive look, with the indoor space flowing seamlessly into the deck and outdoor area. 🏡

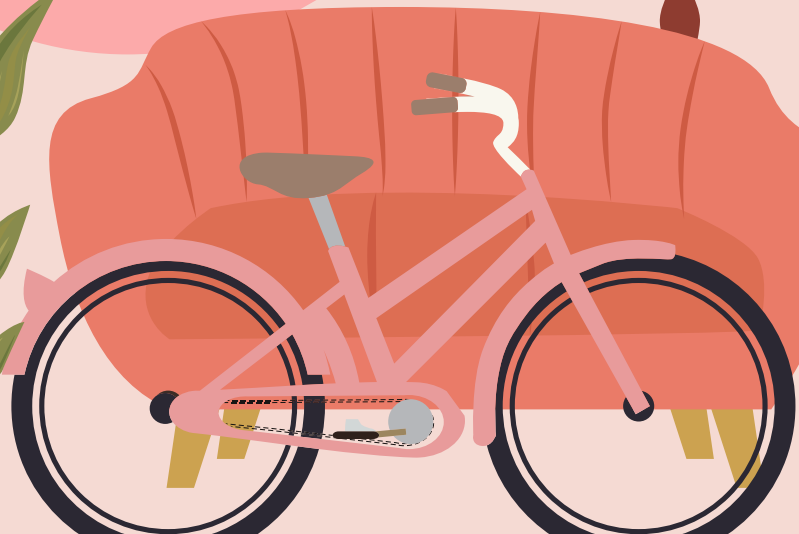
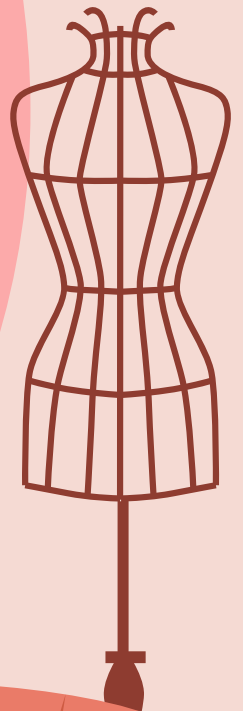
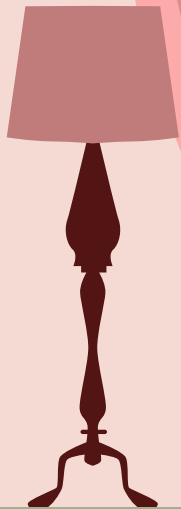


Let it Go

Everything You Need to Know
to Get Rid of Unwanted Stuff

BY KIMBERLY BLAKER

Are your garage, attic, and closets overflowing from the heaps of stuff you've been saving 'just in case?' If so, it may be time to put those languishing piles to good use — in someone else's home. Follow these suggestions for a successful sale and a clutter-free home.



The Storefront

A garage is usually the best place to hold a sale, offering shelter and requiring little daily set up and tear down. Use a covered porch, patio, or yard if your garage is hard to access or contains valuables. Make sure you have tarps available to protect items from rain and for covering at the end of the day.

All in the Timing

Plan your sale when temperatures are between 60 to 90 degrees outdoors. Typically, the best days to hold sales are Thursdays thru Sundays, with Fridays and Saturdays bringing the most traffic. Mornings get the most significant flow of shoppers, so the earlier you're ready, the better.

Displaying Your Wares

- Don't heap your merchandise on tables or leave it in boxes to be ransacked. While some are okay with digging through messy stacks, most people won't bother.
- Use a clothesline or portable clothes racks to hang as much clothing as possible.
- Plenty of table space is also a must. Folding tables are optimal, but you can make a table by resting a sheet of plywood over sawhorses or prop spare wood planks between chairs.
- Neatly fold and stack clothing that can't be hung on tables, and label stacks according to size. Organize good toys and complete sets where parents and grandparents will easily spot them. Categorize tables and place small articles such as jewelry in divider containers or egg cartons, so they're easy to view.
- One exception to the disorderly rule is for small toys. Stick all these little goodies in boxes on the ground where young children can dig for treasures to take home. Label boxes according to the price per item or allow kids to choose one as a prize.
- Finally, make sure batteries and electricity are available to show shoppers that items are in working condition.

Looks are Everything

Appearance plays a big role in selling used goods and how much they can bring. Wash and dry all clothing and linens, then

fold or hang immediately to prevent wrinkles. Wash dust, dirt, and grime from toys, tools, and household items. Also, repair broken merchandise when feasible.

Priced to Sell

Don't overprice items, or you'll end up packing up nearly as much as you started with. Research online ads or resale websites for average resale prices for oversized items. But remember that this pricing often differs from what people pay at a garage sale.

Advertising

Newspaper classified ads or Craigslist, as well as the more popular online garage sale locator websites, usually bring the best results. In your ad, be sure to include your address and main cross streets, dates, and time of your sale, and what you'll be selling. List big items individually and the categories of things you'll sell, like "tools" or "toddler clothing."

Also, post fliers on the grocery store or laundromat bulletin boards. If there are no regulations against doing so, posting signs on nearby corners is a must. Remember to put a bright sign in front of your house, too. Balloons tied to your mailbox, or a tree can make your sale more visible. 🎈

Tips for Success

- The bigger the sale, the more traffic you'll get. Go in with family, friends, and neighbors and hold one big sale rather than several small ones.
- Hold a street or subdivision-wide sale. This will draw people from surrounding areas.
- Move large items such as furniture or appliances into the driveway to attract passersby.
- Finally, have your items priced. Many people will only walk away from a sale with something when things are priced. They don't want to make an offer that's too low and might offend you. They also don't want the hassle of asking the price for every little thing they might consider buying.





POOL *party*

MAKE A SPLASH WITH DIFFERENT
POOL DESIGNS AND FEATURES

BY ANNETTE BROOKS

Have you dreamed of transforming your backyard with a pool, creating a safe place to have fun, relax, cool off, entertain, and create lifelong memories? If you're like most homeowners in Texas, the question isn't if you should build a pool but what kind to build. Your available backyard space and budget play a role, but you also want a pool that fits your lifestyle and how you envision using it. Here are a few different options to consider. But if there's one thing that isn't an option, it's choosing an experienced, highly reputable custom pool builder.

BEAT THE HEAT

*What style of pool
is best for you?*

Swimming Pool Design
& Construction
Remodels/Replastering
Pool Cleaning
Outdoor Kitchens
Patios/Pergolas
Fire Pits



Corinthian Pools
CUSTOM BACKYARD CREATIONS



281.960.0360
CorinthianPools.com

Lauren Douglas Co.

Vintage FURNITURE

SHOP, CREATE, and BE INSPIRED
by one-of-a-kind vintage furnishings.

USE CODE LIVINGMAG FOR

\$100 OFF!

LAURENDOUGLASCO.COM

SHOP NOW

CONTACT US ABOUT RESTORING
YOUR FURNITURE



BACKYARD OASIS/RESORT-STYLE POOL

Make your backyard a resort-worthy destination featuring a pool with options like waterfalls and water curtains, caves to swim through, lazy rivers, tanning ledges, dramatic fire features, a swim-up bar, and custom lighting effects. You may want to include a cabana and even a pool house with a bathroom. Or how about incorporating an outdoor kitchen and entertainment area into the design? With the right custom pool and outdoor living builder, the sky's the limit if you have the space and budget.

INFINITY POOL

Custom-made to highlight a view or a landscape focal point, infinity pools are designed with one or more walls just below the pool's water level. The water flows over the wall, creating the illusion of a vanishing edge. A sloping lot or one with a few feet of drop-off is usually needed for an infinity edge to work well.

COCKTAIL POOL

Do you envision relaxing in a pool bigger than a hot tub but smaller and not as deep as a regular pool? A cocktail pool may be just the ticket, especially if you have a smaller backyard. The design and size can be customized to fit your space and style and integrated into a patio or backyard living area.

PLUNGE POOL

Smaller than a traditional pool, a plunge pool is just deep enough for lounging, cooling off, and low-impact water exercise. The size can vary from around 6.5 to 10 feet wide and 10 to 22 feet long, and 5.5 to 7 feet deep, and the bottom is usually flat.

LAP POOL

These long, narrow, rectangular pools are designed primarily for swimming laps in the privacy of your backyard. A good length for a lap pool is at least 40 feet, and it can serve as a focal point for a narrow lot. Consider including features like a swim current generator.

"SPOOL"

A best-of-both-worlds option for homeowners, a spool is just what you think it might be – a pool and a spa. Often referred to by pool builders as a portmanteau (a blend of two words), spools are typically half the size of a typical in-ground outdoor pool and twice the length of a spa. 🏊‍♂️



More Hot Features for a Cool Pool

Baja Shelf – If you enjoy soaking up the sun but not the summer heat, a Baja shelf is a great solution. Think of it as a wide top step into your pool where you can lounge and play in shallow water.

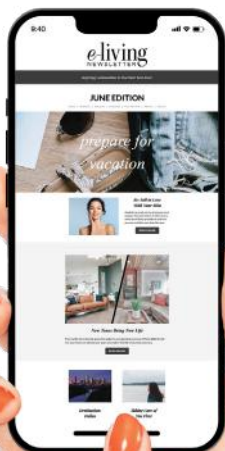
Lighting Effects – Make your pool come alive at night with programmable colored LED lighting. Whether you're in the mood for a dramatic, illuminated nightscape or dynamic light show, let your pool builder show you all the lighting options to choose from.

Laminars – Like a deck jet but better, laminars emanate from the pool deck or coping and reach greater heights. They produce a larger, sleeker, arced water stream that holds its shape until it hits the pool's surface, creating a serene scene that embodies beauty and relaxing elegance.

Reverse Infinity Pool – With most vanishing-edge pools, the water overflows a pool edge to seemingly blend into the horizon. As implied, the opposite occurs with this pool design. Instead, the water spills into an eye-catching, stylized catchment pool viewed from a spa, outdoor living area, or your patio.

Want more
lifestyle content?

e-living
NEWSLETTER



Start your **FREE** digital
subscription Today!



Sign- Up Here

Where Dreams Meet Design

– Complimentary Consultation –



*\$500 off
Full Room Design!*



DESIGNS BY NIKI

DECORATING DEN INTERIORS®

niki@decoratingden.com | 936-263-8520

living
MAGAZINE
— best of —
MEMORIAL
READERS' CHOICE
2023

**RICK'S FRONT DOOR
REFINISHING**
(713)427-2487



FREE
WEATHERSTRIP
INSPECTION



CALL TODAY!





TURN UP *the heat*

MAINTENANCE IS KEY TO
STAYING IN HOT WATER

BY PETE ALFANO

As you lie in bed at night counting sheep, have you ever thought about the 100 gallons of water that may be sitting above your head? Because various reasons make it nearly impossible for Texas houses to have a basement, many two-story homes have water heaters in an accessible walk-in attic on the second floor.

That's great news for helping keep that water hot during a typical Texas summer, but a leak from a faulty valve or pipe or other major malfunction that goes unnoticed can result in water spilling over a drain pan and flooding the floor. That will result in water dripping from the ceiling on the floor below, and, well, you can imagine the cost of the cleanup and repairs and what happens to your homeowner's insurance premium.



Sure, it makes more sense to have the water heaters in the garage if you have one, although they should be placed on a platform at least 18 inches above the garage floor if the water heater is gas-powered. This protects the heater from potentially combustible gasoline fumes emitted by your car. In any case, a homeowner should not ignore their water heaters. The easiest solution is to get an annual inspection from a plumbing company to ensure the water heaters are functioning properly and efficiently.

However, there are 364 days between inspections, so homeowners should diligently check their water heaters once a week. It is easy to forget about them when they are out of sight and out of mind. Inspect the heaters to determine whether there are any leaking pipes or valves and that no moisture has accumulated in the drain pan, not even a few drops. That could spell trouble is on the way.

If there is water around the pipes, valve, or in the drain pan, turn off the water to the heater at the source and call a professional. If you are not getting any hot water, check the pilot light on the water heater. A flame ignites a gas heater, while an electric heater uses a heating element to start the heater. Double-check that the circuit breaker dedicated to the water heaters hasn't tripped.

Make your water heaters more efficient by insulating the hot water heater pipes. You can also insulate the water heater tank with a relatively inexpensive insulation blanket or even use bubble wrap. Check the thermostat to see the temperature of the water. Most experts recommend keeping water heaters at 140° to prevent bacteria from forming, but others suggest 120° is hot enough and will cut down on scalding. It also will lower your heating costs.

If you are adventurous and want to maintain the water heaters yourself, flush the heater at least once a year. Unplug an electric heater or turn down the thermostat on a gas heater so it isn't going to start making more hot water. Then turn off the cold-water supply valve and attach a garden hose to the drain valve. Using the pressure relief valve or turning on a hot water faucet in the house allows air into the tank. At this point, you turn on the drain valve, and the tank should begin emptying. Water heaters collect sediment, which affects their performance and life expectancy. You can drain the tank into a floor drain, outside your house, or into buckets. Remember, the water will be extremely hot.

With regular maintenance, a water heater will last for 10 years and probably longer. But neglect will shorten its lifespan and may leave you in financial hot water. 🔥

TANKS(LESS) For The Memories

There are options for traditional water heaters, and the best may be a tankless heater that provides hot water on demand. It is a small unit that occupies far less space than traditional water heaters, and instead of storing water in a tank, a heat exchanger heats the water spontaneously. So, if someone in your family is prone to long showers, for example, you won't run out of hot water.

There are gas and electric tankless water heaters, with electric heaters considered about 10% more efficient. The most significant negative is the cost, averaging close to \$3,000 and often more if installers must modify or change the direction of gas lines. But there is also a potential IRS tax credit of up to \$1,200. Tankless heaters also require less maintenance and can be installed

just about anywhere, even outdoors.

Heat pump water heaters, solar water heaters, and other variations of the standard water heater are all designed for efficiency and to save money. But if you are concerned about that tank filled with water above your head, a tankless water heater may be the best option.

THE Art -OF DOING- Laundry

TIPS TO MAKE THIS
CHORE MORE FUN

BY SYDNI ELLIS



*W*ash, dry, fold, and leave in the basket until you want to wear it again, then repeat. It's the endless laundry cycle. Whether you immediately fold and put away your clothes (do these people actually exist?) or wait until your laundry pile could rival Mt. Everest, we can all agree on one thing — this chore may be exhausting, but it's so necessary. Lighten your load and make it more fun with these tips and tricks highlighting the art of doing laundry. You still may not love doing laundry, but it could help the process go smoother or maybe even help convince the kids to take over!





USE CLEAR DISH SOAP FOR STAINS

It fights grease on dishes, so why not stains on clothes? Dish soap makes an excellent spot treatment. I prefer a clear product, like **Palmolive Ultra Pure + Clear Liquid Dish Soap**. Just pour directly on the stain, scrub it with a laundry brush, and throw it in the wash. It's effective and works double duty in the kitchen.

SWITCH TO WOOL DRYER BALLS

Save money — and avoid that dryer sheet residue by switching to wool dryer balls like the **Eco Dryer balls from Friendsheep**. Made with 100% New Zealand wool, they help dry clothes more evenly, keep laundry soft and fluffy, and naturally reduce drying time by up to 40%.

\$22, Friendsheep.com



UPGRADE YOUR LAUNDRY HAMPER

A new laundry basket might be precisely what you need to find joy in folding clothes. The **Brightroom Laundry Station** features a medium-sized metal basket on the bottom, a small metal basket in the middle, and a bar at the top for hanging clothes to dry. The whole thing is on wheels, making it easy to roll it from your room to the washer and dryer and vice versa.

\$40, Target.com

BRIGHTEN WHITES OUTSIDE THE LAUNDRY ROOM

Instead of using bleach, keep your sheets, shirts, and socks extra white with a special tip by Martha Stewart. Boil water with a few lemon slices in a pot on the stove, then turn off the heat and soak your clothes for an hour. Afterward, wash them and hang them to dry in the sun.

LEARN WHAT THOSE TINY SYMBOLS ON THE TAGS MEAN

Delicates, outerwear, and linens all have different washing recommendations, as revealed in the tiny symbol on the tag. Keep a handy guide to these symbols and their meanings with the **Hearth & Hand with Magnolia Laundry Sign**. Hang it up in the laundry room for quick reference.

\$25, Target.com



FOLD LAUNDRY — OR NOT

It's perfectly fine if you'd rather skip this last step. Hang up your shirts and pants instead of folding them and put underwear in a drawer as is, although undershirts may be an exception. And kid clothes? Don't even worry about it. They'll ruffle through the drawers anyway, so save yourself some time. Remember, done is better than perfect, so find the system that works for you and embrace it. 🐏

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LAUNDRY

We washed clothes for thousands of years before Tide PODS and scented laundry beads arrived on the scene. Here's a quick refresher on the history of laundry from Encyclopedia.com.

2800 B.C. - Ancient civilizations made soap from boiling fats and ashes.

206 B.C. - A natural soap derived from the Soapberry tree was used during the Chinese Han Dynasty to wash silk.

7th century - Urine, dung, and lye were used to make soaps in Europe, and laundry was done in streams, tubs, or troughs.

1712 to 1853 - A luxury tax on soap in Europe meant that it was less popular than lye.

18th century - People pounded materials against rocks or wooden blocks to clean them. Washboards were also used in tubs.

Mid-19th century - Public laundries came into being in Great Britain.

Early 1900s - Chicago-based Hurley Electric Laundry Equipment Company introduced The Mighty Thor, the first electric washing machine.

1947 - The first fully automatic washing machine for home use was pioneered by Procter & Gamble.

2023 - We're still trying to find a way to stop losing socks in the dryer.



By DESIGN

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING AN ADDITION

BY CHERYL ALEXANDER

Are you and your spouse tired of sharing the bathroom in shifts? Has your family gained a new member? Do the kids need their own rooms? Does your kitchen feel tiny and cramped? Is it finally time for the home office you have talked about since you moved in? The list could go on, but one thing is sure – you are ready for more space, and the time is now. Here is a list that will help get the ball rolling in the right direction.



First, decide on your budget. Unless money is not an issue, you will likely end up making some cuts to your ideal vision, so enter into this process with that in mind. The average cost for an addition is between \$40,000 and \$50,000. This aggregate national number does not take into account size, scope, the slope of land, or geography. An extensive project could cost more than double this figure. If your addition is small and relatively simple, it may be less.

Once you have decided how much money you will need or can spend, you'll need to determine your exact property lines to develop a plot plan, including your home, landscaping, and the location of the utilities. Then check local codes regarding restrictions about how close you can build to your neighbor.

Next, take a close look at your existing structure and floor plan. At this point, you'll likely need help from a residential designer or architect to come up with an addition that will be not only economical but also attractive, useful, and fit with your current home style. As well as interior design, think about how the expansion will architecturally affect the exterior of your home.

Before work begins, make a list detailing the materials and the scope of the work to be done. Regarding materials (such as flooring, hardware, lighting, etc.), include first, second, and third options. Your first choice may turn out to put you over budget. A backup plan from the onset will ensure you do not lose time once your build-out begins. Determine at this stage what you can and cannot live without, where you can compromise, and where you can save money.

Finally, hire professionals. The number and type of people you will need will depend on the scale and scope of your project. Even if you plan a relatively small addition, you will need a designer or draftsman to prepare one or more working drawings to apply for a building permit, freehand sketches or rough diagrams will not suffice. For large projects, you will likely need an architect to design an efficient layout and merge the addition's design with your existing home. And do not forget to budget for the cost of the architect.

After your blueprints are complete, you will get bids from contractors. If you have plans for your home addition available for contractors to bid from, you will get a better sense of the cost because they will all be bidding from the same information.

Another option is to hire a design-build firm. They provide a complete package of services, including design consultation, construction drawings, and project management.

Though the idea of expanding your home can be daunting, when broken down into a few steps like these, an addition can be a relatively simple and extremely rewarding way to improve your home and lifestyle. 🏠



WATER *wise*

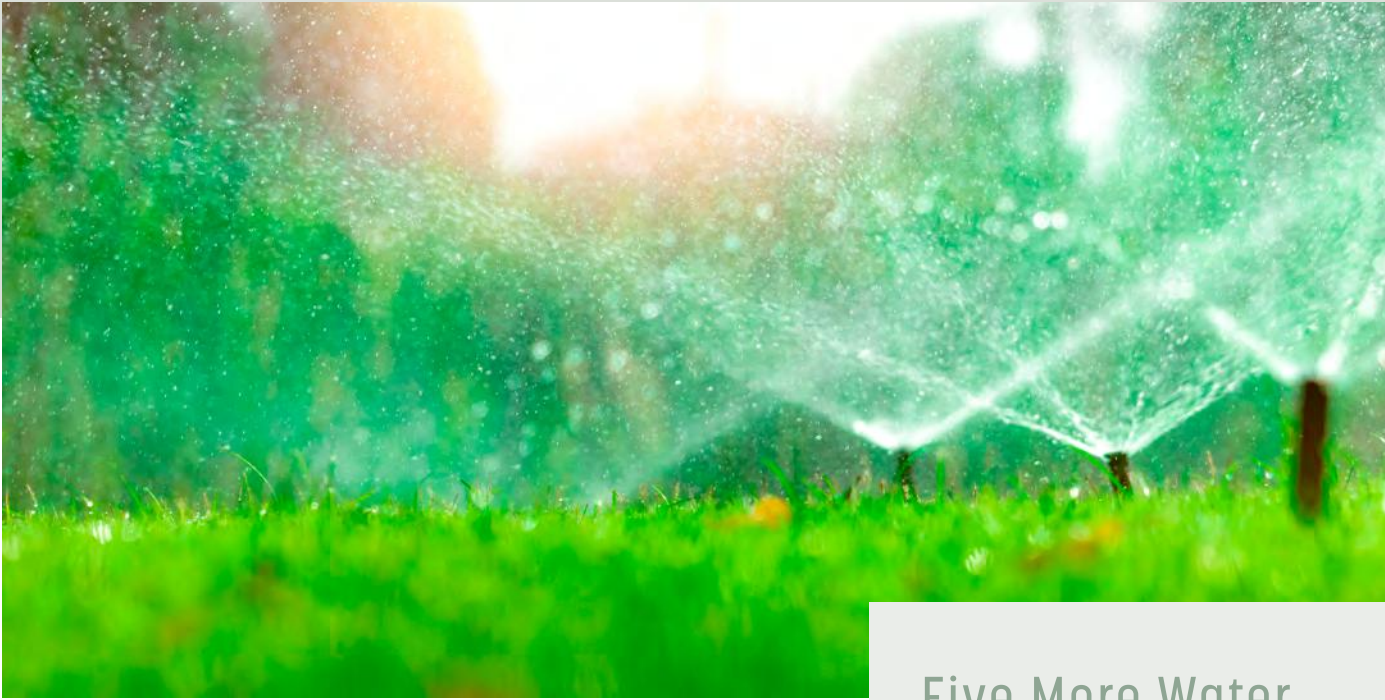
CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
AND SAVE MONEY TOO

BY PETE ALFANO

First, here are the facts of life as they pertain to water and Texas. The state averages just over 27 inches of precipitation a year, with half that amount in West Texas and almost double the average in East Texas. North Texas gets about 34 inches of precipitation annually, and Houston gets around 45 inches of rain yearly. So, why is this important? Well, the population of Texas was about 4.8 million in 1921, and today it is 29.5 million and counting. And guess what? Mother Nature hasn't allocated additional rainfall to account for the population explosion.

This makes water conservation imperative, especially when Texas is prone to periodic droughts. There are numerous steps we can take that might not seem like much but, cumulatively, can result in saving and better utilizing hundreds of thousands of gallons of water.

For starters, consider investing in a rain barrel. They can hold from 50 to 100 gallons of water collected from the gutter and downspout, which is cut to a height above the rain barrel. The rain barrel itself has a spigot that enables you to



attach a hose so you can use the rainwater to irrigate the garden and even wash your car.

Speaking of which, how often have you seen a neighbor's sprinklers running the morning after a major rainstorm? Raise your hand if you have also been guilty of this wasteful act. If you want to avoid manually monitoring your irrigation system, purchase rain sensors. These devices are attached to the sprinkler system and detect when there has been enough rain to prevent your sprinkler system controller from starting. There are different types of sensors, and all are excellent ways of saving water and lowering your water bill as well.

Before you get that bucket, soap, and garden hose ready to wash your car, consider going to the car wash. Yes, it is a more expensive way of keeping your car clean, but many car washes use recycled water, which is better than using fresh water. If cost is an issue, you can keep it down by getting only the exterior washed and cleaning the car's interior yourself.

There are dozens of water conservation measures you can do inside the home. For example,

purchase low-flow showerheads and low-flow toilets for the bathrooms. Check your toilet and faucets for leaks. And while you are at it, do not pour money down the drain by using water more than you have to. Reduce time spent in the shower, and don't run the tap while brushing your teeth or shaving.

In the kitchen, install an aerator on your faucet to reduce the flow of water. In fact, put aerators on all your faucets. If you have a dishwasher, fill it before you run it. It is estimated that you can save up to 5,000 gallons of water a year compared to washing dishes by hand. Fill a pan with water and wash fruit and vegetables instead of putting them under running water.

Follow the same principle when using the washing machine. Wait until you have a full load and use the "quick wash" cycle whenever possible. Your clothes will still come out clean. And use cold water to wash because it saves water as well.

Acting on even some of these suggestions to conserve water will benefit the environment and slow that water meter spinning in the front of your house. 🍷

Five More Water Conservation Tips

With the demand for water in Texas increasing, and the cost rising, here are some additional tips to consider:

1. Check your irrigation system to make sure your sprinklers are all working properly and that none of them is watering the sidewalk or driveway instead of the lawn.
2. Pools can lose as much as 80 gallons a day in the summer heat because of evaporation. Invest in a pool cover to reduce evaporation.
3. Insulate water pipes, which means you won't have to waste gallons of water waiting for the water to get hot.
4. Plant drought-resistant plants and trees and surround them with mulch to reduce evaporation and the demand for water. And water your lawn less but more deeply so that moisture reaches the roots — also, water in the early morning or evening.
5. Reduce the number of times you run the kitchen garbage disposal unit, as it requires as much as five gallons of water each time. And use cold water.




UNDO RULES

GROUND

GET YOUR YARD READY FOR SPRING

BY MIMI GREENWOOD KNIGHT



During spring, your yard is a different place every day as leaves return to trees, the grass renews itself, and local nurseries beckon with a rainbow of flowers to brighten your landscape. If you're as excited as I am about the approach of spring, it's an excellent time for a bit of prep work to get your yard springtime ready.

Start with cleaning up any leaves, twigs, or other debris that accumulated over the winter. Employ your rake and/or leaf blower to eliminate anything that can get stuck in your lawnmower or block fertilizers and other beneficial materials from absorbing into your lawn.

Hit your lawn with a combination of fertilizer to feed your grass and a pre-emergent such as Scotts Turf Builder, to prevent weeds. Follow the directions, but in general, you'll apply it again in six to eight weeks, adding a broadleaf weed killer. It's better to take preemptive action than try to play catch-up with weeds later. Get your mower out and start it up. If it seems sluggish, perform a tune-up, including changing the oil and air filter, replacing the spark plug, draining out and replacing leftover gasoline, and sharpening the mower blade.

It always amazes me what a fresh layer of mulch can do for a flowerbed. Along with replenishing the mulch, trim back dead branches on shrubs and replace anything that didn't survive the winter. If there are shrubs you've been meaning to move, spring is the time to do it. Consider hiring a tree trimmer (about every three years) to prune away dead or dying branches on trees which can cause property damage or personal harm.

Give your garden tools a good cleaning and sterilization since remaining plant sap, dirt, or debris can harbor bacteria or fungal spores which may infect your new plantings. You can do this with a soak for about a half hour in a solution of 10% household cleaner to 90% water. Then give your tools a good coating of oil to prevent rusting.

Have the soil in your flower or veggie beds tested by your local agricultural extension service. They can diagnose your soil's current pH and what amendments you can add to optimize your planting this season. Pull any weeds, trim any winter-killed, brown leaves from last year's perennial flowers and divide the ones that need dividing. Unless you're using a no-till gardening method, turn over the top six to eight inches of soil, looking for caterpillars, cutworms, or other garden pests that may have overwintered there. Raised beds may need to be topped off with more soil.

Visit a local nursery and get an idea of what annuals you might want to add, then draw up a plan of how they'll work into your perennial landscape. Consider incorporating something new and untested with some old, faithful plants that consistently produce for you. With a little prep work this spring, your garden will be ready to provide you with beauty, fragrance, and enjoyment all summer long. 🌱



CONSIDER AN ECO-LAWN

If you've been looking for ways to reduce your carbon footprint, remember your lawn. Whether you use a push or riding mower, your weekly summer mowing requires roughly a gallon of gas. Over the usual 32 weeks of summer mowing, that adds about 563 pounds of CO₂ into our environment. Then there are the chemicals required to keep your lawn green and weed-free and the gallons of water for irrigation.

By converting to an eco-lawn, you can significantly reduce the water required, eliminate chemicals, and reduce your mowing to three or four times per summer. One way to do this is to replace your traditional grass lawn with nitrogen-producing clover, which doesn't require fertilizer. It's drought tolerant and can thrive and grow in full sun or partial shade. It's also pet tolerant, a nectar source for bees, and clover flowers can be dried for tea.

Talk to your local landscape expert about the suitable clover to use for your area. Then, you can seed right over your existing grass on all or part of your lawn. The best time to seed for clover is after the last frost in spring, then water daily for two weeks and wait for your beautiful, earth-loving lawn to emerge.

If you're serious about converting your lawn and have an HOA, check with them first.





FIRST *impression*

GIVE A LIFT TO YOUR HOME'S
MOST PROMINENT FEATURE

BY CHERYL ALEXANDER

Upgrading your front door is one of the simplest and most cost-effective ways to give your home an instant facelift and improve energy efficiency.

A recent study found that replacing a front door increases the home's perceived value by as much as five times the cost of the new door, which means you get a return on your investment.

If you determine that now is the time for an update, do not think only about swapping one door out for another. Also, consider enlarging the entryway by installing a door with windows to either side or above it. The added natural light adds a sense of grandeur and creates a more open atmosphere. Here are a few options to consider.



Wood Doors: Wood doors are available in an infinite variety of colors and styles with lots, a little, or no glass at all. Select a wood door for its natural beauty and traditional style, but make sure it is in a covered entryway, protected from too much exposure to the elements.

Metal (Steel) Doors: Metal (steel) doors are very affordable and extremely durable, but they cannot be stained, only painted.

Fiberglass Doors: Fiberglass – probably the most popular current choice – offers wood's beauty and versatility and metal's durability. It is least affected by weather and ensures a long-term life span and easy operation. Fiberglass doors come in many styles and can be stained or painted.

If the existing entry door on your house doesn't have any of the problems listed above, you may want to have someone refinish or update it instead.

Embellish it: If every door on your block is brown or gray, a simple coat of bright paint will make your home stand out. You could also hang a wreath, add a dramatic house number, install some long shutters on either side, or add a specialty door knocker. Even a new doormat and some planters placed on either side with beautiful foliage will elevate your entry.

Add lights: Lights at your front door will boost your curb appeal. If you already have lights, consider replacing them as an update. On a front porch, a hanging fixture will cast a welcoming pool of

light. And to add a bit of drama, spotlights at ground level aimed at the door will put your entry at center stage.

Dress up your entry with new trim: Replacing your front door trim with decorative moldings is an easy way to upgrade. In addition to wood, these are also available in PVC trims that look identical to their wooden counterparts.

Go high-tech: While the front door is not the most advanced part of your home, you should consider raising its status with a smart doorbell/video combo. Many options are available that will snap a picture anytime someone rings the doorbell and send it to your phone/computer. You can then select a video download, have a conversation with the visitor, or answer the door in person. Most systems store many images, so you can review, save, and delete them when you are ready.

Keep it tidy: Clean is impressive, which translates to curb appeal. Sweep your entry weekly, then scrub with soap and water intermittently. You will instantly bring your home's appearance back to life.

Your front door is the first thing that welcomes a passerby or visitor and sets the mood of your home. While style and budget are obvious considerations, any improvement you can make to your home's most prominent feature is worth the investment. Your front door sets the first and last impression. Make it a great one. 🏠



DWELLING *detox*

BOOST YOUR HOME'S
HEALTH FACTOR

BY ANNETTE BROOKS

With spring in full swing in the Lone Star State, it's time to throw open the windows, let the fresh air and sunshine pour in, and participate in the time-honored tradition of spring cleaning. This year, go beyond the usual scrubbing, dusting, and organizing. Include a home detox to improve indoor air quality and the water you drink and address items that could pose a health and safety hazard. Here are a few suggestions to help you get started.

HVAC Filters – Most air filter manufacturers and HVAC companies recommend changing your air filter every three months. These out-of-sight, out-of-mind passive workhorses keep the air in your home cleaner by capturing pollutants and contaminants from the air that passes through them.



Be aware that not all filters are created equal. Generally, the more expensive they are, the more efficient and effective they are at trapping dust, pollen, and pet dander so it doesn't keep circulating through your house. Check the filtering grade assigned by the manufacturer before you buy replacement filters, and don't be tempted to pinch pennies here. Usually, the higher the rating, the better the filter is at trapping specific particle types.

Chimney Inspection and Cleaning – If you have a wood-burning fireplace, creosote – a dangerous byproduct from burning wood – can build up to the point that smoke and toxic gasses like carbon monoxide get trapped inside your home. Furthermore, creosote accumulation can lead to chimney fires. Chimney cleaning removes creosote, soot, and debris.

You won't have creosote build-up with a gas or propane fireplace, but you still need to have your chimney inspected and maintained. Ceramic logs can deteriorate and clog vents, bird nests, and debris may obstruct airflow in your chimney, and your fireplace should be checked to ensure there are no leaks and that it's in good working order.

Air Duct Cleaning – You'd be surprised at what can lurk in your home's air ducts. Pollen, pet dander, mold and mildew, dust mites, fungal spores, and even bacteria and viruses in your air vents can wreak havoc on your family's health and well-being. Look into air duct cleaning services that offer full source removal cleaning, which includes breaking contaminants loose from surfaces and continuously collecting them to prevent any spread during the process. Many companies also offer antimicrobial, EPA-approved products they apply to nonporous surfaces in your HVAC system to address microbial contamination and help control odors.

IMPROVE YOUR HOME'S WATER QUALITY

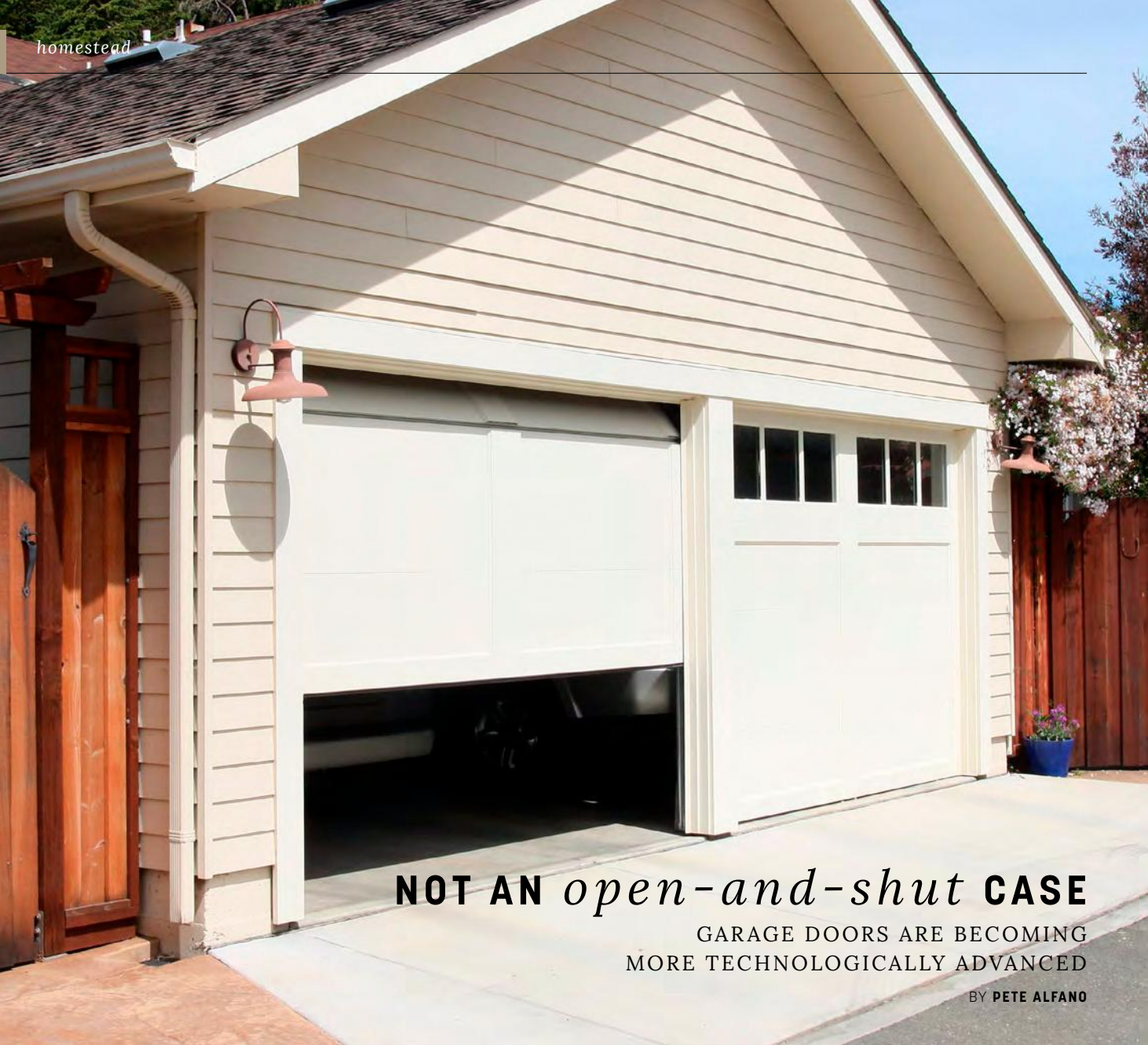
Get a whole house water filter and enjoy cleaner, safer water from every tap. Ask your water quality consultant about different systems and look for those that follow NSF/ANSI standards. A global, independent organization, the NSF standards team "facilitates the development of public health standards," and its service teams "test, audit, and certify products and services." 🏠



The Candle Debate

Do you love the scent and flickering flame of a candle burning in your home? I used to have a candle going somewhere in my house several hours a day and especially enjoyed using fresh scents. Then one day, when our HVAC tech was performing a spring check-up on our system, he walked into the room holding the HVAC filter he'd just replaced with a new one, and it was completely black.

The candle debate is controversial. Candle manufacturers claim they aren't hazardous to our health, and some believe soy candles are healthier than paraffin candles. My personal choice was to install a whole-home air purification system that actively removes many odor-causing contaminants from the indoor air. And when I occasionally want a pleasant scent in my home, like when I'm entertaining, I use essential oil blends in a cold air diffusion machine.



NOT AN *open-and-shut* CASE

GARAGE DOORS ARE BECOMING
MORE TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED

BY PETE ALFANO

We live in the age of “smart” technology. We have smartphones, smart TVs, smart cars, and smart houses. By utilizing the Internet, a person can raise or lower the thermostat, turn lights on and off, talk to someone at the front door, and arm or disarm the home alarm system, all from the workplace, grocery store, or in the car heading home.

Few people know, however, that garage doors have been technologically advanced, if not “smart,” for more than 100 years. According to garage door websites, inventor C.G. Johnson created the first overhead garage door in 1921 that could be manually lifted and which ran on rails. Five years later, Johnson invented the first electric garage door opener, which opened and closed garage doors by pressing a button. In 1931, the remote opener made its debut.



This history lesson won't make you feel better if you once owned a house where you had to get out of the car in the pouring rain to lift the garage door. It is also worth noting that many garages were separate buildings, modeled after carriage houses in the horse and buggy days. And back in C.G. Johnson's day, only the wealthy could afford an electrically powered overhead garage door.

Fast-forward to today when garage doors are not just an overlooked appendage to the house but very much a part of the design element and smart house technology. Websites such as OverheadDoor.com and LiftMaster.com display the updated design of garage doors, which can be opened and closed using an app on your smartphone or a key chain fob to avoid having a remote on your car's visor or programed into your car. You can search for a dealer near you on each website.

Garage doors come in wood, fiberglass, vinyl, aluminum, insulated steel, and what LiftMaster calls Thermacore, or insulated steel. There are a variety of colors to match the rest of the house's

exterior, or you can opt for a glass-paneled frameless door that is sleek and modern. Other styles include barn door and carriage house for more rustic or traditional home designs. In addition to remote entry from a phone app or key fob, a keypad can be installed outside the door so a homeowner can program it for additional security. And in the not-too-distant future, garage doors may include solar panels to help generate electricity.

Depending on what kind of door a homeowner chooses and whether it is for a single, double, or three-car garage, the cost for all the bells and whistles can exceed \$5,000. For that reason alone, garage door experts caution against making this a Do-It-Yourself project. Garage doors are heavy, and a person has to be comfortable with the electrical and mechanical components of installation. Garage doors will come with a warranty covering any damage that occurs when it is professionally installed. However, the warranty will be voided if damage is caused by a homeowner trying to install the door. Thus, the safest and "smartest" thing to do is leave it up to the professionals. 🏠

Sensing Trouble

Perhaps the most important development in garage-door technology was the infrared sensor. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, faulty design or installation of automatic overhead garage doors has resulted in brain injury or death for at least 85 children from 1974 to 1995. Children ranging from age two years to eight have been trapped under doors that failed to reverse as they were closing. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission thus mandated in 1993 that all garage doors have sensors to identify an obstruction that will keep it from closing.

Nonetheless, garage doors, like all technology, can sometimes malfunction, putting adults as well as children at risk for serious injury. It is important that parents ensure their young children do not play with garage door remotes and that the panel for opening and closing the door is mounted high enough on a wall, out of a child's reach.

A top-down photograph showing a pair of light-skinned hands gently cupping a small, vibrant green seedling with four leaves. The seedling is positioned directly over a patch of dark, rich soil. The hands are positioned on either side of the plant, with fingers slightly curled. The background is a close-up of the soil, showing its texture and some small twigs.

PLAYING IN THE DIRT

GARDENING WITH KIDS ISN'T JUST FUN - IT'S HEALTHY, TOO

BY KIMBERLY BLAKER

There's no question, playing in the dirt tops the list of fun for kids, particularly young children, despite the protests of many well-intended parents. If you are one of those worried parents, you can put your fears aside.

As it turns out, dirt is beneficial to kids' long-term health, according to a Northwestern University article by Clare Milliken, "Germs at four, less inflammation at forty." Studies have found that early exposure to certain germs, like those found in dirt, actually helps kids' immune systems learn to regulate inflammation better. In turn, this exposure reduces kids' risk for many diseases throughout their lives.

For that reason, a family garden is a perfect opportunity to build your kids' immune systems. Better still, gardening offers lots of other benefits to kids and families.

Through gardening, kids learn to be responsible by caring for their own plants. It's also a great way to help kids learn about and develop an appreciation for science. Another health benefit is that gardening encourages healthier eating. Not to mention, it's an excellent activity for family bonding.

So, gather up your kiddos and gardening supplies, head outdoors, and get ready for some dirt-filled fun.

GETTING STARTED

First, decide where to plant your garden. Then allow a small space for your child to have their own garden, too. This will help build your child's enthusiasm for the garden and encourage them to take ownership and responsibility for it. Having their own garden can be exciting and rewarding for kids because they know that they, alone (or with minimal help), grew those little seeds into marvelous plants.

Next, decide what to plant. For young children, consider fast-growing plants they are familiar with. Little kids also love plants that are colorful or have strong scents.



"This will help build your child's enthusiasm for the garden and encourage them to take ownership and responsibility for it."

If your kids are older, let them choose what they want to grow. But keep in mind your child's personality. If he tends to be impatient, suggest plants that are easy to care for and grow quickly.

As you plan and prepare, include your child as much as possible. Remember, this stage is as much fun for kids as it is for parents and helps build their enthusiasm. Also, let them help you draw up the garden plan. If they're old enough, they can also create their shopping list.

When you shop for supplies, take your kids along and let them pick out their own seeds and gardening tools. For the safety of young children, look for kids' gardening tools made of durable plastic.

PLANTING YOUR GARDEN

When you begin planting, show your child how to plant the seeds and how to space them apart correctly. Then have your child water as directed.

Put a daily gardening task list on the refrigerator to help your child take responsibility for their garden.

Also, suggest keeping a garden log to help your child maintain enthusiasm. Kids can have fun recording the date of plantings, each day's gardening activities, when each plant sprouts, the amount of growth of the plants, and the harvesting.

Finally, after harvesting, have your child help you prepare the vegetables. Try different ways of preparing or cooking them to help your kid develop a life-long love for fresh, healthy veggies. 🍴

BOOKS ON GARDENING WITH KIDS

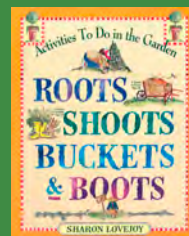
Consider an age-appropriate book to get your family's gardening project off on the right foot.



The Little Gardener
by Jan Gerardi (ages 3-4)



Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt
by Kate Messner
(ages 5-8)



Roots, Shoots, Buckets & Boots: Gardening Together with Children
by Sharon Lovejoy
(ages 4-10)



Gardening Lab for Kids: 52 Fun Experiments to Learn, Grow, Harvest, Make, Play, and Enjoy Your Garden
by Renata Brown
(ages 8-12)

The Book of Gardening Projects for Kids: 101 Ways to Get Kids Outside, Dirty, and Having Fun
by Whitney Cohen
(for parents)



DON'T BE *alarmed*

STAY SAFE WITH HOME SECURITY

BY AUDREY SELLERS

Your home should feel like the safest place in the world.

It's where you spend time with loved ones, share laughter, and create memories. If you want peace of mind that your family and property are safe, a home security system can help.

About one in four Americans use a home security system, according to U.S. News & World Report. These systems may be unmonitored or monitored, and they may run the gamut from wireless cameras and video doorbells to 4K image sensors and video analytics.

You could set up your home security system or get it professionally installed, which can be ideal if you're not particularly handy or tech-savvy. With professional installation, you can kick up your feet while



a home-security expert sets up your system. Many security companies offer same-day installations and the peace of mind that it is done right.

Wondering what kind of home security options are out there? Here's a breakdown of some of the available products. Pick and choose what suits your home security needs best.

Video doorbells. Whether you want to protect against porch pirates or keep an eye on package deliveries, doorbell cameras can help. Features vary by model, but many video doorbells provide night vision, facial recognition, voice control, and high-definition video. Some home security companies also offer optional storage plans that allow you to store motion-triggered video clips in the cloud.

Entryway sensors. When placed on doors and windows, sensors will alert

you immediately if one opens when it shouldn't. You can choose from wireless and wired sensors, with variations between contact sensors, glass-break sensors, and motion sensors.

Security cameras. These cameras may be mounted inside or outside your home, and you can choose to record continuously or only when motion is detected. Some cameras may feature two-way voice, mobile access with live streaming, pan and tilt, and a smartphone app that activates features, including a siren on the device.

Floodlights. Potential burglars can't sneak around in the shadows if you install security floodlights. Typically motion-activated, these lights feature super-bright LEDs and can be mounted quickly. Some floodlights include a built-in siren and may double as security cameras.

Panic buttons. This security option can be helpful during home invasions or medical emergencies. Just push a button to alert the company's monitoring center. Some panic buttons offer two-way voice capabilities so that you can communicate with a dispatcher.

Automated options. If you want high-tech home security, look for a company that lets you control everything from an app on your phone, Alexa, Google Home, or a smart panel. You can watch live or archived videos, arm or disarm your home, and check your system's status from anywhere.

If you've been thinking about stepping up your home security, you have plenty of options. Whether you want to turn your home into an expertly protected fortress or want to deter potential break-ins or thefts, use the options above as a starting point. 🏠

Three Considerations When Choosing a Home Security Company

Once you have an idea of the type of security system you want, it's essential to evaluate different home security companies. Some things to consider include the following:

■ **Contract length.** Does the company require long-term contracts, or can you go month to month? A contract

may not be an issue if you plan to stay in your home for the foreseeable future. But if you rent or move often, you should look for no-contract home security companies.

■ **Quick response time.** Ask how long the company's monitoring center takes to reach out when a security breach is

detected. Look for companies that reach out in 30 seconds or less.

■ **Helpful customer service.** How fast can you get an employee on the phone? Does the company offer live chat options? Make sure you choose a home security company with a strong track record of satisfied customers.

PROTECT *Your Pup*

HELP YOUR DOG STAY COOL IN THE SUMMER HEAT

BY PETE ALFANO

We all know the saying a dog is “man’s best friend.” The question is, are we returning the favor? Anyone who has watched an infomercial on cable TV showing how some dogs are mistreated or neglected by their owner knows how upsetting this can be. Sometimes, however, people don’t even realize they are neglecting their pet’s health.

Summer, for example, is a dangerous time for dogs, especially those that spend most of the day outdoors. They are more prone to heat stroke than humans because people sweat more readily than our furry friends, whose meager sweating is mostly through their paws. Instead, dogs try to regulate their body temperature by panting. Not leaving a dog in a yard with enough shaded areas, drinking water, or sunscreen on their nose, ears, and belly can lead to heat stroke and death. A word of warning — do not use your human sunscreen on a dog. It has ingredients such as zinc oxide that are harmful to animals. Purchase sunscreen formulated for dogs instead.

You should not leave a child or a pet in a car as they can overheat in minutes. Statistics show that the interior of a vehicle can reach 120 degrees in 10 minutes, even if you leave the window open a little.

Hydration is essential. Dogs, like people, need to drink plenty of water during the summer. Water should be cool, but not necessarily ice cold, which can cause gastric problems.

Puppies and older dogs are more at risk for heat stroke, as are dogs that are overweight, have exceedingly thick fur coats, or are bred for colder climates, such as Siberian Huskies and Malamutes. A dog with a respiratory condition or is on medication should be closely monitored and

have their time outdoors monitored during the summer. Veterinary experts say dogs with short noses (Pugs, Boxers, Bulldogs) are also at a higher risk. And resist the urge to have your dog shaved. Their fur coat is a form of insulation and protects them from sunburn.

Many dog breeds need regular exercise for their well-being; thus, summer poses a challenge when the asphalt and concrete heat up. So, avoid taking your dog for a walk in the late morning or afternoon.

Walk dogs in the morning and shorten their walks because heat and humidity can result in dehydration at any time of the day. Walk your dog on the grass, if possible. And invest in a set of booties even if you believe it will be a waste of time. It’s worth seeing if your dog will tolerate them because asphalt will burn the pads on your dog’s paws.

A pool can be a great place to cool off, but swimming is strenuous exercise, and your dog will still be exposed to the sun and heat. Limit their time in the pool, and rinse them with a hose afterward to eliminate chlorine. Also, dry your dog’s ears thoroughly to avoid infections.

Despite taking all precautions, your dog may suffer from heatstroke. Symptoms include vomiting, increased panting, difficulty standing, and difficulty breathing. Try to cool down your dog with a hose and go to your veterinarian or an emergency animal clinic as soon as possible. 🐾



ARE YOU ACTUALLY READY FOR *THE DROPPING* INTEREST RATES?



Jeff Lookabaugh

REALTOR®

jeff@cincoranchrealtygroup.com

832.266.8495

Amy Lookabaugh

MBA, Broker Assoc., CLHMS



amy@cincoranchrealtygroup.com

832.236.0699

CRCG

COMPASS



  Cinco Ranch Realty Group is a team of real estate agents affiliated with Compass. Compass is a licensed real estate broker and abides by federal, state, and local Equal Housing Opportunity laws.

Inspired
FLOORS



SAVE THOUSANDS - Call For FREE Estimate

SUPERIOR SERVICE • GUARANTEED BEST PRICE



Carpet

From **\$1.79 SqFt**
(Complete Installation)

Laminate

\$3.99 Installed
(Trim & Molding Included)

Quartz
ON SALE
NOW

Hand-Scraped Hardwood Floors
\$4.59 Installed
(while supplies last)

7.5" Wire Brushed
Hardwoods
\$5.99 SqFt
(Trim & Molding Included)
Installed

SPC
(Stone Polymer Composite)
starting at \$4.50

living
MAGAZINE

— best of —
**FORT BEND
COUNTY**
READERS' CHOICE
2016-2023

5405 Highway 6
Missouri City, TX 77459
281-208-1500 • InspiredFloors.com

NOW HIRING

