

# Spring Home & Garden

*A Pull-out Guide*

*From bathroom remodels to ergonomic tools for gardeners, we have your spring projects covered.*

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# How ergonomic tools can help gardeners

**G**ardening is a rewarding activity that has been found to provide a host of benefits beyond ensuring

a 2017 study published in the journal *Preventive Medicine Reports* found that gardening can help aging men and women off-



readily available access to fresh fruits, vegetables and awe-inspiring blooms.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says many gardening tasks qualify as light to moderate exercise, which means raking the leaves and cutting the grass can be just as beneficial as cardiovascular activities like brisk walking or jogging. In addition,

set age-related weight gain. And the health benefits of gardening go beyond the physical. In 2014, a systematic review of randomized controlled trials published in *Complementary Therapies in Medicine* concluded that horticultural therapy may be an effective treatment for people with dementia.

Gardeners have a host of tools at their disposal to help turn their lawns and gardens into awe-inspiring landscapes. Among those options are ergonomic tools. Ergonomic tools can benefit gardeners of all ages, but they may prove especially valuable for aging men and women.

## How ergonomic tools differ from traditional gardening tools

Ergonomic gardening tools are designed to ensure that using them has as little effect on the body as possible. Ergonomic tools align with how a person naturally moves his or her body, which can reduce the likelihood that gardeners will suffer any strains or sprains while gardening or experience any aches and pains after a day spent tending to their landscapes.

## Choosing the right tools

The West Virginia University Center for Excellence in Dis-

abilities notes that gardeners will know they have chosen the right ergonomic gardening tool for the job when they do not have to adapt the tool. Ergonomic tools should match gardeners' heights, fit their grip and feel comfortable when in use.

## Specific benefits of ergonomic tools

Ergonomic gardening tools are designed in a way that can reduce stress on the body while performing various tasks. Gardeners know that aches and pains can add up after a day spent kneeling in the garden, raking soil and carrying supplies from a shed or garage around the property. But the WVUCED notes that ergonomic tools do more than just reduce gardeners' risk of injury.

- Ergonomic tools increase efficiency. Wasted motions are less likely when using ergonomic tools. That can improve efficiency in the garden, allowing

gardeners to get more done in the same amount of time. And because ergonomic tools are designed to work with the body, gardeners likely won't need to take breaks due to aches and pains, which also makes it easier to be more efficient when working in the garden.

- Ergonomic tools increase gardeners' capabilities. The WVUCED notes that principles behind ergonomics keep gardeners using the tools in natural positions. That means gardeners won't lose power to bending and twisting, enabling them to do more in the garden than they might be able to do when using non-ergonomic tools.

Gardening is a rewarding and beneficial activity. The right ergonomic tools for the job can enhance those benefits and make gardening even more enjoyable.

# Lawn watering and fertilizing techniques

**A** lush, green lawn is a sight to behold. Many variables are involved in growing and maintaining grass, and water and fertilizer are among the most important components.

Knowing how much water and fertilizer to apply and when to

apply it can make a big difference in the appearance and health of a lawn. That's because a well-fed and watered lawn will develop a better root system, which makes the lawn less vulnerable to stressors like drought, mowing, foot traffic, and heat, according to the Scotts® company.

## Fertilize

There is no magic formula governing when to fertilize a lawn. The type of grass and how well-established a lawn is must be considered. Experts suggest having the soil tested to determine its pH levels and if any nutrients are lacking. A fertilizing schedule can then be developed after testing.

Keep in mind that overfeeding a lawn will not make it grow any better and actually can damage the turf. Several small applications of fertilizer during the lawn's most active growing period may be helpful, advises the home improvement resource *Tools Around the House*. An annual application (late spring for warm-season grass or fall for cool-season grass) may be all that's needed.

Certain fertilizers need to be applied and watered in. Others may be combined with weed-control products and must be set on top of damp grass. Read packaging to determine the right application.

## Water

The right watering schedule and techniques can help a lawn



thrive. Scotts® says adjusting for climate and nature can help grass to grow strongly. A lawn that has a grayish cast or appears dull green is telling an owner that it needs water. Another test is to step on the lawn. If footprints disappear quickly, the grass blades have enough moisture to spring back.

Water the lawn in the morning before 10 a.m. when it's cooler and the winds tend to be calm so that the water can soak in. For those who must water at night, do so in early evening so that the water can dry before

nightfall and will not contribute to disease.

Scotts® says to water an established lawn until the top six to eight inches of soil is wet. Most lawns need one to 1.5 inches of water per week from rain or a hose to soak the soil that deeply.

Newly established lawns may require more water to keep the soil moist but not soggy.

Visit a lawn care center for more information on watering the type of lawn for your area or visit [www.scotts.com](http://www.scotts.com) for additional tips.



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# Sod vs. seed

## Which is your best option?



**A** pristine lawn can be the finishing touch to a landscape and add significant value to a home. According to a joint study by the University of Alabama and the University of Texas at Arlington, homes with high curb appeal sell for an average of 7 percent more than similar houses without inviting exteriors.

When it comes to establishing a lawn, homeowners have two key options: starting from seed or installing sod. Each comes with its share of advantages and disadvantages. Which option makes the most sense for a given lawn

will boil down to various factors, including homeowners' budgets.

### Seed

Seed is the first thing homeowners may think of when planning a lawn. Seed is an inexpensive, easily installed option. Plus, garden centers sell a variety of seeds specific to particular regions and climates. The home improvement resource Fixr says seed will cost an average of 24 cents per square foot installed compared to \$1.29 for sod. That affordability compels many homeowners to turn to seed. However, seed can take up to two years to produce

a lush lawn and it requires high maintenance in the initial months to establish the grass.

Seed also requires greater soil preparation, including tilling to loosen soil and keeping the lawn well watered until the grass is hardy. Weeds also may mix in with seed more readily, meaning weed prevention becomes an additional task.

### Sod

One of the advantages to sod is that it can produce an instant lawn. When time is of the essence, sod will produce a complete lawn nearly as soon as the sod is laid. Sod can be used to mitigate soil erosion, as it works faster than seed, which needs to establish a root system to keep soil in check. Also, sod does not require as much soil preparation as seed.

The potential disadvantages to sod are its cost and the time it takes to install it, particularly on a large property. In addition, sod will require careful maintenance for at least the first two weeks until the sod takes stronger roots. It can be an expensive mistake if sod doesn't thrive and new pieces need to be installed. The Family Handyman says sod tends to be sun-loving and may not work in shadier areas of a property.

Sod and seed are the two main options for lush lawns. Each has its perks, and homeowners can speak with a local lawn specialist to determine which option is best for their lawn.

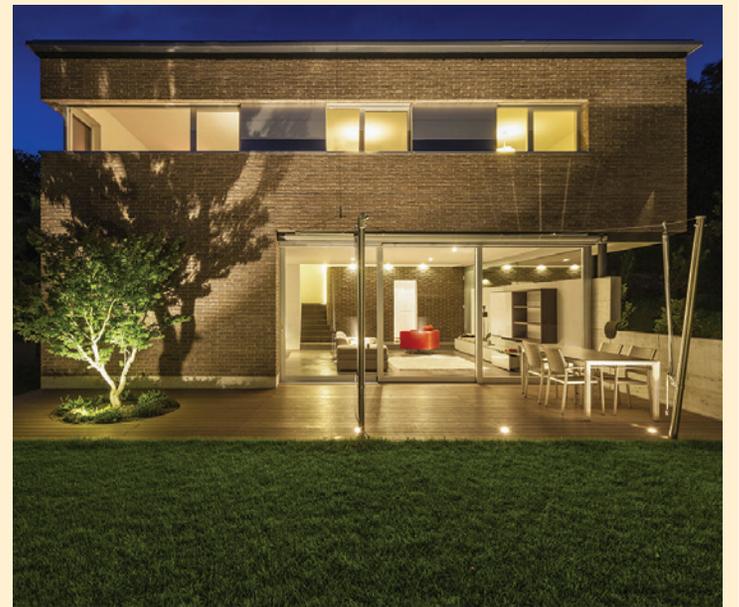
## Exterior lighting can add ambiance to a property

The value of the right lighting in a home is undeniable. Lighting can instantly transform a room and create the ambiance homeowners are looking to establish. Though it might be mostly seen as a way to create mood inside a home, lighting also can do much for lawns and gardens.

Backyards have come a long way over the last several decades. Once reserved as play areas for children and stomping grounds for the family dog, backyards have become oases for homeowners and their families. Outdoor living areas are wildly popular, and no such area is complete without exterior lighting. In fact, a recent report from the National Association of Home Builders found that 85 percent of home buyers want exterior lighting, making it the second most desired outdoor feature (patios topped that list).

Exterior lighting can have a dramatic effect on landscaping, and estimates from the online financial resource Kiplinger.com suggest such lighting is inexpensive, with installation averaging roughly \$67 per fixture.

When installing exterior lighting around their landscapes, homeowners can keep various tips in mind to create a relaxing, awe-inspiring mood on their properties at night.



- **Consider uplights.** Uplights are installed in the ground and direct light up at a tree, focusing on its trunk or canopy. This creates a dramatic effect that makes it possible to enjoy majestic trees at night just like you might when spending time in the yard during the day.
- **Focus on trees.** Many homeowners already have exterior lighting lining their walkways and patios, but focusing on trees can create an entirely different look. Though it's possible to install exterior tree lighting on your own, landscaping professionals with lighting experience know which fixtures will pair most effectively with the trees around your property and how to arrange them for maximum effect.
- **Opt for warm light.** Warm white light creates an inviting feel around the property. The exterior lighting experts at Utah Lights acknowledge that choice of lighting is up to homeowners but also note that, in situations with lower levels of ambient light, such as in exterior lights around a property, people typically prefer warmer light. That's because warm light tends to be easier on the eyes and directs attention to the features of the landscape, which is many homeowners' goal when installing exterior lighting in their yards.
- **Utilize a timer.** Modern exterior lighting timers make it easier than ever to control the lights outside a home. Many such timers even adjust for the changing seasons and the shifting hours of daylight. That means homeowners shouldn't have to tinker with the timer once it's set.

Exterior lighting can add significant appeal to a property without breaking the bank.

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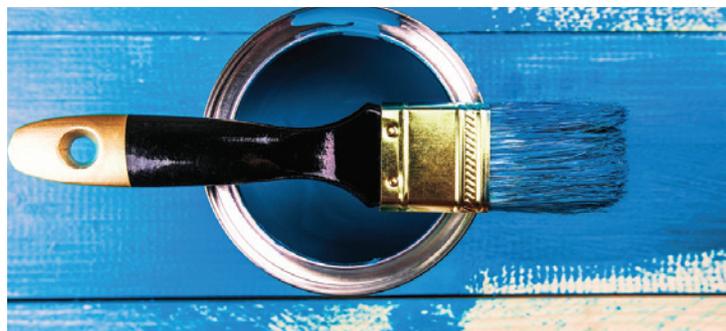
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# Complete these home improvements over the weekend

**H**ome improvement projects ramp up when the weather warms up, as homeowners channel the rejuvenating feelings of spring and tackle their home to-do lists. Large-scale renovations can greatly affect a home, but smaller projects can yield impressive results and be completed over the course of a single weekend.

If time is of the essence, these weekend or one-day projects may satisfy homeowners' desires to fix up their homes.

- Create an accent wall. Painting a focal wall in a home can create a serious impact. The bonus is it will not take as long or require as many materials as painting an entire room. Accent walls frequently feature a bold color, so decide on placement and tackle this project in less than a day.



- Install stair runners. Dress up hardwood stairs with decorative carpet runners. Runners come in elongated pieces of carpeting or individual pieces that can be placed on each step. If carpeting doesn't fit with the home's design, painting individual stair treads also can create visual appeal.
- Dress up the entryway. An entryway is a guest's first impression of a home. Many entryways can use a minor

overhaul, both inside and outside. Paint the front door a different color so it pops from the curb. Install a new mailbox or decorative house numbers. A new welcome mat can change the look as well. Inside, consider laying a new floor. Resilient vinyl tiles come in many different patterns and can mimic the look of wood, travertine or marble. Installing a floor can take a day or two.

- Install a new faucet. Instantly improve a kitchen or a bathroom with new fixtures. New faucets can provide aesthetic appeal and low-flow faucets can help conserve water.
- Create a gallery on the staircase. Gather and arrange framed photos, artwork or wall accents so that they ascend the wall of a staircase. This creates a designer touch and can dress up an often barren area of wall space.
- Install a fresh light fixture. Improve drab spaces with a little illumination. Better Homes & Gardens suggests replacing an existing fixture with something new and vibrant. If hanging a new fixture is not within one's skill set, free-standing table or floor lamps also can cast a new glow on a space.

- Add molding. Molding can add instant aesthetic appeal to a room. Molding is appropriate near the floor, at the top of walls where they meet the ceiling, or even mid-wall as a chair rail. Some homeowners like to create framed molding on walls in formal living spaces.
- Update kitchen or bathroom hardware. Replacing hardware is a fast and easy project, but one that can have immediate impact. Swap out tired or outdated hardware for newer brushed metals and more impactful shapes and designs. Home renovations do not need to take weeks or months. Many projects can be completed over the course of a weekend.

## "We Send a Roofer, Not a Salesman"

Robert Roofing and Gutters does reliable work without the gimmicks

BY JANE LEBAK

"A roof over your head" is shorthand for a house, but for Robert Greene of Robert Roofing and Gutters, a roof is your home's first protection.

Robert Roofing and Gutters promises, one call sends a roofer, not a salesman. When a homeowner makes that first appointment, it's with Robert himself. "A salesman can sell you a roof, but I go out myself, because I'm the one installing it."

Robert can estimate the age of a roof and identify the layers of shingles from the front lawn, but putting boots on the roof is always the best way to determine what's right for the home, so up the ladder he goes.

While Robert Roofing specializes in roofs, they also do gutters, vents, siding, window trim, and most other exterior home improvements. "Just about everything for the outside of your home."

In a surprising number of cases, if the roof doesn't need replacing, it's a huge financial

savings for the homeowner. "The first thing people think of is stripping the shingles, but that's largely cosmetic. The underlay is the most important part." Because all parts of the roof function together to keep a house healthy, he inspects the roof from the top downward. Are the shingles loose or curled? How does the plywood sound?

There are practical questions, too: How should his team place the ladders? How will they protect your landscaping?

After the assessment, Robert talks with the homeowner. "I like to outline the work, so the homeowner can visualize what I'm talking about. I won't sell them more than they need. Sometimes I find other problems, so I'll photograph those and talk through the fix. No surprises. Here's what it costs, and here's the reason I recommend it."

Kelli Greene, Roberts wife and partner of the business says, "We pride ourselves on transparency and integrity. No gimmicks. No upselling." They try



to get a team on the roof within two weeks, and most roofing jobs can be completed the same day, so the house isn't exposed.

Customers appreciate this straightforward approach. Most of Robert's business comes from customer recommendations and word-of-mouth.

Robert Greene set foot on a roof for the first time at age thirteen, working cleanup for his father's construction business. Since then, it's become a vocation. He grew up locally, and his family has lived and worked in Norfolk for well over a decade.

When he stands on a roof now, he can look out on any number of other roofs he's done.

Robert loves residential projects because he gets to know the homeowners. "Whenever I'm at a Norfolk event, my customers come up to me. They tell me how happy they are with our work, whether it was ten years ago or last week."

Kelli says, "Giving back to the community is so important to us." For example, during the winter of 2015, hundreds of area houses suffered horrific ice dams. Late one night, a woman

called with water pouring from a ceiling fixture. She was nine months pregnant, and her husband was on active duty out of the country.

Using the lights from his truck, Robert climbed her roof to resolve the ice dams, then took care of the ceiling fixture. He refused payment, saying, "Just thank your husband for his service."

For Robert, it's simple. "If you do the right thing, you get the right thing in return."

When a home's exterior needs attention, whether it's a new roof or siding or carpentry work, Robert has committed to starting and finishing the job with a personal touch. A salesman views your roof as a product, but a roofer understands it as the peak of your home.

Does your home need a new roof? Visit <https://www.robertroofingandgutters.com> or call (857) 247-8709 to schedule your first appointment with a roofer...not a salesman.

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# Should I DIY?

## 3 questions to determine if it's best to renovate on your own

**A**do-it-yourself mentality has taken hold in millions of households across the globe. Popular television channels like HGTV and DIY Network as well as accessible home improvement content on apps like YouTube has inspired many homeowners to tackle renovation projects around their homes. Taking such initiative is admirable, though it also can prove costly if homeowners end up biting off more than they can chew.

Home improvement videos and television shows have a tendency to oversimplify renovation projects, potentially giving homeowners a false sense of confidence in their DIY abilities. A concerted effort on the part of homeowners to determine if it's best to renovate on their own or hire a professional should always be the first step of any renovation project. No two homeowners are the same, but the following three questions can help homeowners determine if DIY is their best option.

### 1. Can I afford to DIY?

Professional home improvement projects are costly for a variety of reasons. Materials can be costly, but so are the

tools and labor necessary to do the job right. Homeowners may not have the tools necessary to complete complicated projects. Specialty tools can be expensive to purchase or even rent, and the cost of acquiring such tools should be included in any DIY project cost estimates. Labor also factors heavily into professional projects, and for good reason. Talented contractors have unique skills that have been developed and perfected over many years. Those skills can ensure projects are completed quickly and correctly. Labor may seem costly, but such costs may ultimately prove to be a bargain compared to the cost of fixing DIY mistakes. Projects that are minor in scope and don't require the use of potentially costly specialty tools may be better suited for weekend warriors than more complicated renovations.

### 2. Do I have the time?

Homeowners must determine how much time they have to complete a project before deciding to do it themselves. No one wants to spend months staring at an unfinished renovation project. Homeowners who are already pressed for time may not be able to complete projects in a timely fashion,

which can make homes less comfortable and even less safe.

### 3. Can I pull this off?

DIY projects can instill homeowners with a sense of pride in their homes, but it's imperative that homeowners considering the DIY option conduct an honest assessment of their skills. A lack of renovation experience does not necessarily mean a homeowner cannot successfully complete a DIY project. But in such instances, it may be best to start with small, straightforward projects and then gradually move up to bigger, more complicated projects as skills are fine tuned. And homeowners who have never been at their best with a hammer in hand should not be ashamed to leave the work to the professionals.



Television shows and online tutorials can make renovations appear easier than they actually are. Homeowners considering DIY renovations can ask them-

selves a handful of questions to determine if they're ready for the challenge of renovating their homes on their own.

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# Essentials for a bathroom remodel

What began as a utilitarian space for personal sanitation has, in modern times, transformed into one of the most coveted rooms in the house. Bathrooms have become a place to relax and unwind, and new bathrooms are on the tops of many homeowners' wishlists.

Bathrooms can be as lavish as budgets allow. Wish lists can include everything from luxurious soaking tubs to rainfall showerheads to chaise lounges to televisions or home entertainment systems contained in the space. Those contemplating their own bathroom renovations may draw inspiration from the following features.

- **Hot water recirculation system:** Few things can be as disappointing as desiring a hot bath or shower only to find that the hot water tank has been drained. The home remodeling company Nor-



mandy Remodeling says that water recirculation systems provide on-demand hot water. In such systems, hot water may continuously run through the pipes or there may be a pump underneath a sink. Either way, one needn't wait for the water to warm up any longer.

- **Double undermount sinks:** Bathroom time is at a premium, especially when people must prepare and leave the house together. Rather than jockeying for position around

a single sink, dual sinks enable more breathing room and time efficiency. Undermount sinks are easy to clean because there is no lip around where the sink meets the vanity, preventing the accumulation of grime and gunk.

- **Glass-free shower:** Soap scum and water deposits can form on shower doors, even for homeowners who are diligent with cleaning. A sizable shower prevents water spray and affords the ability to forgo glass doors or curtains, thereby cutting down on cleaning and making the room feel more modern.

- **Multihead shower:** When redoing the shower, account for various shower heads so that the water can cascade across the body more completely. This provides a spa experience at home.

- **Touchless faucets and soap dispensers:** These aren't just for public bathrooms anymore. Touchless faucets and dispensers are more sanitary and convenient.

- **Separate toilet room:** A shared bath almost necessitates this type of set-up. The toilet is housed inside its own small space and closed away from the rest of the bathroom. It's more private and convenient this way.

- **Heated flooring:** You need not worry about stepping out of a warm shower onto a cold floor when heated flooring is part of the equation. This option is available in various flooring materials as well. Remodeling a bathroom boils down to certain coveted features that can really set a space apart.

## Spring cleaning can alleviate allergies

Allergies affect people of all ages. The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology reports that allergic rhinitis affects between 10 and 30 percent of the world's population. In addition, the prevalence of allergic diseases has risen in industrialized nations for more than 50 years.



**Leave carpet and upholstery shampooing to the professionals, as excess moisture can contribute to mold and dust mites, which aggravate allergy symptoms.**

Seasonal allergies tend to be the strongest in spring and autumn. Allergies can be exacerbated by many factors, including in homes where improvements are being made. Regular housecleaning can remove many common allergy triggers and help alleviate symptoms. Knowing which common home improvement mistakes can aggravate allergies can help homeowners avoid them.

### Suit up

Before any cleaning begins, allergy sufferers should don face masks and rubber gloves to prevent themselves from breathing in allergens or having them touch their hands, where they can be transferred to the face or elsewhere. Those cleaning should also wear clothes that can be easily removed and laundered after a day's work.

### Clean windows singularly

Prolonged exposure to outdoor allergens, such as pollen, mold or ragweed, can aggravate allergies. Therefore, if windows are being cleaned, do one at a time and then promptly close the window. Having the air conditioning running can help filter the air as well.

### Use exhaust fans

The AAAAI recommends using an exhaust fan in the kitchen and bathrooms to reduce the levels of moisture in these rooms and filter out potential allergens and odors. Moisture can eventually lead to the growth of mold and mildew, which isn't healthy for anyone, including allergy sufferers, to breathe in.

### Invest in a HEPA filter

Vacuums with HEPA filters can trap allergens that are so small that they pass through regular vacuum filters. That means instead of containing them, these small particles are only being shot back into the air where they are easily breathed in. WebMD suggests vacuuming once or twice a week to keep carpets and floors as clean as possible. Plus, don't forget to vacuum upholstered furniture and drapes as well.

### Launder with hot water

When it comes time to wash linens, do so in hot water, which can kill dust mites residing in sheets and blankets. Employ mattress covers to further protect against dust mite allergies.

### Shampoo smart

Shampooing a carpet may cause moisture to become trapped in the carpet fibers, leading to increased dust mites or mold growth. Spot-clean stains instead. Otherwise, hire a professional cleaner who will clean and dry the carpet as quickly as possible.

### Damp dusting is better

When cleaning up dust or home renovation debris, use a damp cloth or a vinegar solution to wipe down surfaces. This helps trap small particles instead of sending them into the air.

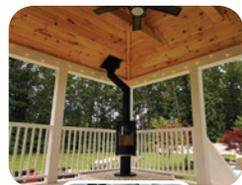
### Treat mold issues

Mold can trigger allergic reactions, so it is best to keep it out of a home. Solutions that contain at least 10 percent bleach can be effective at killing mold, but it's best to prevent mold from growing entirely. That means keeping tabs of any moisture issues and addressing them immediately. Allergies can be problematic, but routine home cleaning in the right way can help alleviate symptoms.

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# Swimming pool landscaping ideas

**B**ackyard pools provide a way to cool off and enjoy a taste of luxury without having to travel. Backyard pools provided even more convenience and a welcome respite in 2020, as many public pools were

closed in response to social distancing restrictions put in place during the pandemic.

After installing pools, many homeowners realize that touching up the landscaping around the pool can provide the finish-

ing touch to their backyard retreats. Not all landscaping is the same, and homeowners should choose plants that look beautiful, are tolerant to pool splash-out and won't outgrow the area. The home and garden resource The

Spruce notes that a plant that is attractive at two feet tall can grow rapidly and drop leaves or other debris into the pool.

When selecting options for pool landscaping, there are some considerations to keep in mind:

- Choose plants that will provide privacy.
- Know which kind of climate a plant needs prior to purchasing it. Tropical plants may be fitting poolside, but will they endure when the season is over?
- Design according to the theme of the home, as plants should complement the existing style. Modern foliage may not blend well with a home styled after a traditional English cottage.
- Decide whether you can accept spreading or trailing plants that can cascade over retaining walls and other infrastructure.
- Look at trees that won't drop too many leaves, flowers or fruit into the water.

• Think about having layers of plants to soften the landscape, which can make a small pool seem bigger and more luxurious, indicates the landscaping company Earth Development, Inc.

- Don't overlook the possibility of a lawn abutting pavers or concrete surrounding a pool, as it can soften the edges and keep spaces open and inviting.
- Incorporate herbs or fragrant plants, which can transform a pool day into a spa experience. Consider low-maintenance lavender as an option.

Pool landscaping must marry a variety of different features and plant requirements. As a result, a professional consultation may be the route to take. Landscape architects will have the know-how to select plant varieties that will be tolerant, beautiful and fulfill homeowners' wishes.

Backyard pools can make a backyard retreat that much more enjoyable. Landscaping offers the softness and beauty that adds a finishing touch to poolside retreats.



## Local mason brings talent, expertise to every job

BY SUSAN MANNING  
STAFF WRITER

P.J. Kilkelly has been bringing his expertise and talent to the MetroWest area since he moved to Holliston 35 years ago.

A leader in fine masonry design in Massachusetts, Kilkelly Masonry offers clients the winning combination of experience and talent to create a beautifully balanced look in stone or brick.

An important aspect that you don't always find is that if you hire him to do the job, he does the job personally, alongside his team.

"He is hands on in every project," he said.

In collaboration with homeowners and architects, Kilkelly will work on projects of all sizes.

Kilkelly Masonry is not limited to chimneys.

"We also create patios, walkways, walls, fire pits, outdoor fire places and veneers as well," he said.

Regardless of the scope of the project, Kilkelly said he is proud of his work ethic.

"I say what I am going to do, and then do what I say," he explained. "We are committed to quality design in all our projects, no matter the size."

So when do you know it's time to call a mason for your chimney?

"Signs that your chimney needs work include finding bits of mortar and brick on the ground or on the roof. At this stage, water is probably already entering the chimney even if it doesn't show up on the ceilings or wall. This dampness is a breeding ground for mold," said the expert mason.

When you choose Kilkelly Masonry, you will receive the care and attention you deserve all the way from the design phase through the finished product.

"After a design is approved, thorough and extensive site prep-



aration is done to ensure a lasting installation," he said.

The quality of their work is bar-none.

"The skill evident in our installations suggest the rich heritage of our superior craftsmanship we have been proud of for many years," said Kilkelly

"We offer our clients a treasured addition to any home or

any garden landscape unsurpassed in distinction and durability. We create some of the most attractive stone and brick elements in MetroWest and New England," said the Holliston resident.

Don't just take his word for it, though. One client had this to say:

"P.J. did a fantastic job building a new stone retaining wall between my driveway and sidewalk. The prior wall was unsightly and was failing. P.J. was able to rebuild a new retaining wall keeping the elevated driveway in place without damaging the existing concrete walk. The wall was built in 2015 and still looks beautiful."

In addition to his dedication to his craft, Kilkelly has found time to volunteer in the Town of Holliston. He has been active in the Holliston Agricultural Commission, helping establish the Holliston Community Farm,

raising monarchs and operating the Butterfly Aviary, maintaining the Community garden, helping with numerous beautification projects with Holliston in Bloom, and representing Holliston in the Massachusetts Association of Agricultural Commissions.

Kilkelly, born in Kinvara, County Galway, Ireland, immigrated to Holliston in 1986. Once in the United States, he embarked on a journey to become a master mason. Kilkelly quickly established himself as a craftsman with both homeowners and architects.

"You can depend on us to provide you with an exceptional finished product that will enhance the look of your property," he said.

"Please contact us for a free estimate for your project based on design and materials."

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# Affordable features to consider when revamping your kitchen

**K**itchens are popular gathering spots in many homes. That popularity is reflected in various ways, including how many homeowners choose to remodel their kitchens.

professional ranges and built-in refrigerators that match the surrounding cabinetry. However, many mainstream brands offer “faux pro” features that can equal more expensive alterna-

nants at the stone yard. If marble is your ideal countertop, save money by choosing a domestic product as opposed to one imported from overseas.

## Cabinets

Custom-built cabinets may be a dream, but they tend to be a very expensive one. Such cabinets are designed to adhere to the dimensions of the kitchen, and Consumer Reports notes that they can cost tens of thousands of dollars. If that estimate would bust your budget, examine the current layout of the existing cabinets. If the layout is fine but the cabinets need work, you can give them a whole new look by refinishing them. If the cabinets must go, stock units or semi-custom cabinets can provide a new look without busting the budget.

Kitchen remodels can be expensive. But there are many affordable ways to revamp a kitchen.



A 2019 report from the home renovation and design resource Houzz found that kitchens were the most popular room to renovate in 2018. Homeowners considering kitchen remodels should know that the Houzz report also indicated that spending on kitchen remodels increased by 27 percent in 2018.

Homeowners concerned by the cost of remodeling a kitchen should know that there are ways to give kitchens a whole new feel without breaking the bank.

## Appliances

Consumer Reports notes that luxury home buyers expect high-end features, including

faux pro appliances outperformed their high-end counterparts in terms of reliability.

## Countertops

Countertops tend to capture the eye’s attention when walking into a kitchen. Outdated and/or damaged countertops grab that attention for all the wrong reasons, while updated countertops made from today’s most popular materials provide that wow factor homeowners seek. If granite is a must-have, Consumer Reports notes that homeowners can save substantial amounts of money by choosing granite from rem-

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# 3 techniques to keep mosquitoes out of your backyard oasis

The value of a retreat-like backyard was never more apparent than in 2020. Over the last year-plus, much of the world has been forced to stay home as a global pandemic has claimed millions of lives while countless others have had to fight to survive in hospitals. It's no surprise people have looked for a respite from the harsh realities of living during a deadly pandemic, and many turned their attention to their own backyards to provide such an escape.

The online home remodeling platform Houzz reported a 58 percent annual increase in project leads for home professionals in June 2020. Contractors who specialize in outdoor spaces saw the biggest increase in demand. A revamped outdoor space can provide the perfect retreat



A backyard retreat can be even more enjoyable when homeowners find ways to keep mosquitoes at bay.

for homeowners who want to get away from it all. But one winged, unwelcome guest can quickly transform an oasis into an uninviting space.

Mosquitoes make their presence felt in many areas each summer. These pesky, often hungry insects can carry disease, and their bites can be painful and itchy. Homeowners can try these three techniques to keep mosquitoes out of their backyards.

## 1. Remove standing water.

Standing water is a breeding ground for mosquitoes, who don't even need a lot of water to successfully breed. A daily walk around the property may uncover kids' toys, empty flower pots or other small receptacles that can collect water. Even clogged gutters can lead to the accumulation of a small amount of water, and that can be enough for mosquitoes to breed. Remove these potential breeding grounds when you find them, and do so each day, as mosquitoes mature from eggs to nymphs in roughly four days.

## 2. Mow regularly.

Mowing the lawn so the grass never gets too high is another way to make a backyard less hospitable to mosquitoes. The pest experts at Terminix® note that mosquitoes seek tall grass to protect them from the elements, including wind and hot summer sun. Mowing enough so grass never gets too high in summer can make backyards less inviting to mosquitoes.

## 3. Plant with mosquitoes in mind.

The home remodeling experts at HGTV note that plants can be part of homeowners' strategy to repel mosquitoes. Various plants have mosquito-repellant qualities. For example, bee balm releases a fragrance as it grows, and mosquitoes don't like that fragrance. Homeowners can speak with a local lawn and garden professional for recommendations about plants that can thrive in their region and repel mosquitoes at the same time.

Mosquitoes can make it hard to enjoy a backyard oasis. But various strategies can help homeowners keep these unwanted guests out of their backyards.

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# What causes curled shingles?

No homeowner wants to look at the exterior of his or her home and see roof damage. Such damage may lead homeowners to think they need a new roof, a potentially costly expense that can quickly throw household budgets into a state of disarray.

According to the HomeAdvisor, the average homeowner spends a little more than \$7,600 installing a new roof. Various factors, including the size of a home and the type of roof homeowners prefer, will affect the cost of a roof replacement. In addition, homeowners who see roof damage can rest assured that not all roof problems will necessarily require a replacement roof to be installed.

Curled shingles are a problem many homeowners have encountered. This particular problem is not always indicative that a roof is on its way out. In fact, the home improvement resource This Old House notes that, as asphalt shingles age, their corners often begin to curl downward or upward. Homeowners who notice this early enough can glue down the curled section of each shingle that's beginning to curl.

Some shingles may be curling because they're defective. Fortified Roofing, a New Jersey-based roofing company that specializes in the repairing and replacing of various roofing configurations, advises homeowners to contact a local roofing professional to diagnose the cause of the curling.

Doing so quickly can prevent curled shingles from contributing to more widespread damage.

Moisture and poor ventilation may be contributing to curled shingles as well. Homeowners with attics in their home may see curled shingles on their roofs because moisture is building up in their poorly ventilated attics. In addition to causing damage such as curled shingles, a poorly ventilated attic allows moisture to build up, potentially contributing to mold growth. Mold presents a host of additional problems, including some that can adversely affect the health of a home's inhabitants.

Improper roof installation also may be the culprit behind curled shingles. When a roof is



not installed correctly, shingles may not be aligned or nailed down in the right way. This might be what's causing shingles to curl on recently installed roofs.

Curled shingles are unsightly and can pose a significant threat

to a home if not addressed promptly. Homeowners can protect themselves and their roofs by working with skilled roofing professionals, who can diagnose issues like curled shingles and offer the right solutions.

## Mario's Quality Roofing, Siding, and Windows

### Quality materials, expert craftsmen, and an unwavering pledge to customer service

After one bad experience too many with an unreliable contractor who used shoddy materials, Stephen Goulston founded Mario's Roofing.

"I didn't like the way things were going in this industry," he says. "I wanted to make a change. I started Mario's with the philosophy that I wouldn't do to your house what I wouldn't do to mine."

Thus began a fifteen-year quest for the perfect balance of craftsmanship, quality, and affordability. Mario's Roofing has grown beyond Stoughton to over a dozen local offices servicing Eastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Mario's has also garnered several awards, including the Diamond Approval Award from Customer Track-Record, the CertainTeed Tenured Member and Governor's Awards, and the Triple Crown Champion Award.

"In all of North America, only eleven roofing companies have achieved Triple Crown status and we are one," Goulston says. "We're really proud of that."

A phone call or a website request for a quote brings a Ma-

rio's Roofing specialist right to your home. They'll make targeted recommendations, then spend time with the homeowner explaining what they've found.

"With roofing, we have a video for the customer to demonstrate every step in the process," Goulston says. "The key to a good roof is the preparation of the roof and the underlayment beneath the shingles. For the homeowner, it's the way it looks. For us, it's the way it performs."

Goulston stresses continuing education for his teams, regularly inviting experts to teach his staff about the latest developments in techniques and materials. "Our guys are quality experts. Delivering the best to our customers requires we know what the best is. Then to make optimal use of it, we've got to know how and when to apply it. That's where my team comes in. We invest in experts so we can make the right recommendation for a client's situation." They'll even offer help with financing.

That commitment to cutting-edge materials is at the forefront



with their siding. While Mario's offers basic vinyl siding, they also showcase a full selection of the newest and most versatile options, such as Everlast, a triple-composite formula that combines inorganic minerals, polymer reins, and acrylic colorant to create the most durable siding on the market.

"September and October are the best times to work on your house," Goulston says. "Massachusetts winters can be hard on a home. Your roof needs reliable drainage to protect against ice dams. You need the gutters clear and ready to do the hard work.

The siding needs to insulate against the snow and wind. Every part of a well-maintained exterior works together for the entire house's protection."

Take windows, for example, which directly impact heating and insulation. Older windows may vent heat in winter or trap too much warmth in the summer. Replacing old windows with energy-efficient ones is an easy way to enhance a home's beauty and efficiency.

Mario's offers a variety of windows, including custom design. Goulston says, "With windows, the installation is the most important part. All our window installers are highly-trained, and our policy is that the person who measures the windows is the person who installs them."

Window installation involves work on both the inside and outside, and Mario's will move the furniture and the curtains rather than expecting the homeowner to do it, then set it back in place. Goulston says, "It's part of doing the job one hundred percent. Our workmanship separates us from everybody else, but over

the years, it's also become a huge part of our reputation that we care."

Early on, Mario's adopted the tag line, "We won't soak you to keep you warm and dry." They've held to that commitment with quality materials, expert craftsmanship, and competitive pricing.

Mario's website showcases a photo gallery of their best work, as well as before and after pictures with a slider bar so homeowners can visualize their own home's transformation.

Jobs range from new front doors to re-roofed apartment complexes, or even a single basement window. Goulston says, "A small touch like that is important—not only because it looks good, but for increased security and insulation. Our customers see those details every day, and when it's all working right, they feel proud of their home."

To get a quote for your home repairs and upgrades, visit <https://mariosroofing.com> or call (781) 344-2420.

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