

Summer Home & Garden



Planning a Private Pool Oasis

Saying goodbye to the public pool and hello to your own backyard oasis is a big step.

Before you get too deep into dreaming of lying poolside just steps from home, however, there are a few things to consider.

UTILITIES

Look around your yard and see whether there are any overhead wires or other utilities that need to be moved. If so, bear in mind that they will be moved at your expense and on the utility company's timeline. Call about any underground utilities. Check on your original house plans or make a free 811 call to confirm what's under your yard. Check for easements on your property while you're talking to utility companies and the city or county records offices.

TERRAIN

While you're looking for utility lines, notice how your yard is shaped. If you're on a hill at all or have a dip in the yard, you may have to have a retaining wall or dirt work done before the pool can go in. It's expensive but pales in comparison to having to fix the damage if your pool slides suddenly into your neighbor's yard.

Make sure there's enough room for heavy building equipment to access the area where you want the pool.



Dump trucks, concrete mixers and more may need to get into your yard, and this may mean tearing out a fence or wall. Sometimes, contractors can use smaller equipment, but it takes longer and may be more costly.

PROTECTED AREAS

Research whether your home is in any sort of protected area, such as a historic district or wildlife zone. To put a pool in, you'll need to go through a different approval process involving more boards

than just your HOA. Speaking of homeowner's associations, you'll need to check with them, too.

ABOVE GROUND, TOO

Just because you're popping up an above-ground pool

instead doesn't mean you can skip these steps. Above-ground pools still may need dirt work to prepare the right pad for the pool to sit on to prevent damage to the pool, to your property and to your neighbors' properties.

Caring for Patio Furniture

Part of getting ready for summer is getting ready to spend more time outside, lounging in your patio furniture, enjoying the sunshine, visiting with friends and family or cooking out.

Here's how to keep your furniture looking fresh for years to come.

CLEANING

Regular cleaning plays a big role in caring for your patio furniture. For most materials, mild soap and warm water can work wonders. For some pieces, such as wicker or rattan, run a vacuum with a soft brush attachment over the furniture to remove any loose debris first. Rinse your furniture well to remove any soap residue. Let the furniture completely air dry before using it.

While bleach may cure a variety of conditions, it's not the best thing to use on patio furniture. Not only can it discolor fabrics and cushions, it can also weaken the fabric and shorten your furniture's useful life. If you don't want to use soap, vinegar is generally safe to use; make sure to spot-check whatever cleaner you're using to make sure it doesn't damage your fabrics and other materials. Clean your patio furniture once a month to keep it looking its best.



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PROTECTING

Once your furniture is clean, protect it from the elements. Routinely check wood furniture for rotting, warping and cracking. Once repairs are made, seal it with a coat of protective sealant appropriate to the type of wood used in

your furniture.

Rattan furniture can be warped or discolored by exposure to moisture or humidity, so keep these pieces away from water sources and clean up spills or rainwater immediately. Periodically paint metal furniture with a rust-resistant

paint.

Store plastic furniture out of direct sunlight when it's not in use to prevent fading or deterioration.

STORAGE

When you're not using your patio furniture or during

severe weather, store it in a dry, protected area such as a shed or garage. Store it off the ground and use furniture covers to protect it. If you don't have an indoor storage option, consider using waterproof furniture covers to protect your investment.

Trending Exterior Colors

If you're considering sprucing up your home's exterior now that warmer weather is here, consider some of these trending paint palettes to make your curb appeal pop.

The National Association of Realtors says these are some of the top colors to consider for 2024.

BENJAMIN MOORE'S 'BLUE NOVA'

Deep blue with a brush of purple, this blue hue gives homes a fresh energy. Jackie Mosher, cofounder of Dzinly, a virtual design platform, says this color offers distinct charm and character.

"This dynamic color choice exudes energy and contemporary style, making it an ideal option for those looking to infuse their living spaces with a vibrant and modern ambiance," Mosher says. Pair it with a crisp white ("White Dove") and a warm accent ("Brickyard Red").

SHERWIN WILLIAMS 'UPWARD'

Staying in the blue family, NAR then goes with a serene, light blue with Sherwin Williams' "Upward."

"This delicate shade evokes a sense of weightlessness, inviting you to explore the soothing, open expanse of the sky," Mosher says. "It's an excellent choice for exterior siding,



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where it can infuse your home with a sense of serenity and simplicity."

Dzinly suggests pairing it with "Snowbound" for trim and "Diverse Beige" as an accent.

BEHR'S 'INTELLECTUAL'

Feeling moody? Try Dzinly's color of the year for 2024, Behr's "Intellectual," a sophisticated deep gray with subtle

hints of warm brown.

"Whether applied as a focal point at the front door, to enhance shutters, create contrasting trim or even cover the cladding, 'Intellectual' by Behr proves itself as a versatile option for any part of your home's exterior," Mosher says.

Partner it up with lighter hues such as "Whisper White" or "Swiss Coffee," and accent it

with warm browns such as "Art District."

DUNN EDWARDS' 'SKIPPING STONES'

Back with the blues, "Skipping Stones" from Dunn Edwards evokes the energy of the sea.

"It's an ideal choice for cladding the exterior of a home," Mosher says. "It infuses your

residence with a refreshing and timeless coastal feel, creating a harmonious and revitalizing atmosphere that reflects the collective yearning for calm and equilibrium in the year to come."

Dzinly pairs this color with the tropically inspired "Coconut Grove" for the trim and "Bison Beige" for accent colors.

Keep Your Garage Door Rolling

Regular maintenance keeps your garage door (and, let's face it, your life) moving smoothly.

Here's what you need to do and what you should leave to the professionals.

SAFETY TESTS

There are several safety tests for you to perform on your garage door. Failing any of these tests warrants a call to a professional for repairs.

Check the balance by disconnecting the garage door from the opener so you can operate it manually. Lift the door about halfway up, then release it. The door should remain in place. If it slips, call in the calvary.

You can check the mechanical reverse feature by placing a piece of wood or a brick on the floor in the path of the door. Activate the door to close. When the door hits the obstacle, it should reverse. If it doesn't, start dialing.

Lastly, test the door photocells. Locate the two photo sensors at the base of the garage door. Check the alignment of the sensors; they should light up when they are properly aligned. Keep adjusting them until they light up. Activate the garage door and as it closes, wave an object across the sensor path. The door should reverse. Test at least three different points in the beam's path.

If your door is more than 20



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years old, it may lack some of these features and need an upgrade.

CHECK THE HARDWARE

Twice a year, inspect your garage door and its hardware. Check the tracks and hinges and tighten any loose bolts or fasteners on moving parts. Inspect the rollers for wear. Steel rollers will show worn

bearings and may look lopsided. Nylon rollers tend to crack. Install replacements as needed. Look for wear in the lift cables on the door. If they're excessively rusted, deteriorated or broken, call for service.

SERVICE YOUR CHAIN OR BELT

Check the drive chain or belt from the opener to the door if

you hear groaning or slapping sounds as the door operates. Start by disconnecting the opener from the power source and raise the garage door to about chest height. Detach it from the opener and close it by hand.

Locate the adjustment bolt that connects to the chain or belt. There should be nuts on either side to adjust the drive

mechanism. Use a wrench to turn the first nut at the side of the assembly counterclockwise. Move to the next nut and turn it clockwise. The chain or belt should pick up slack. Tighten the chain or belt until it is about a quarter inch from the bottom of the rail. Don't overtighten it. Reattach the door to the opener and reconnect the opener to the power supply.

Hiring a Power Wash Company

Pressure or power washing can strip off years of gunk, grime, pollution, leaving your sidewalks, driveways, home exterior, roof and patios looking brand new.

Pressure washing can seem simple, but it can be dangerous. The jet of water can act like a knife, there are often harsh chemicals involved, and there's also climbing on ladders and working in precarious positions. Hiring a professional can get the job done quickly and safely. Here's how and why you should consider hiring professional pressure washers.

ARE YOU LICENSED AND INSURED?

Always ask the company you're considering whether they're properly licensed and insured in your area.

Licensure indicates that the contractor understands their profession. Insurance can cover any potential damage or injuries that may occur. You can also ask whether they're certified by the Power Wash Industry Association, which indicates they have undergone training and testing to conform to industry standards.

WHAT EQUIPMENT DO YOU USE?

Know what kind of equip-



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ment will be used at your home, including the detergents, to prevent damage to your home, your property and your family.

Also understand the process, including any pre-cleaning inspections and safety protocols. Ask the contractor about how many people will be at your home and be prepared to offer them facilities for their use.

WHAT IS YOUR LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE?

Ask about not only the estimator at your home, but also the owner of the business and the members of the crew you'll be working with. Get examples of past work and carefully review before and after photos of previous jobs.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

Make sure you understand

how long the crew will be at your home, if you need to be there the entire time, and any work you may need to do before they arrive. This includes moving any patio furniture, trimming landscaping and more.

DO YOU OFFER A SATISFACTION GUARANTEE?

Have reasonable expecta-

tions of what a pressure washing will do at your home. Remember that it's a pressure washer, not a magician. Deteriorated surfaces will be clean and deteriorated when they're done. That said, ask the contractor about what happens if you're unhappy with the finished product. Ask about any warranties they offer and get a detailed estimate before the contractors begin work.

Common Landscaping Fixes

Summer means spending more time outside and that extra time in your garden may mean you'll see problems cropping up.

Here are some common landscaping problems and how to solve them.

OVERWATERING

Overwatering plants leads to fungus and plant disease, spongy lawns and shallow root systems. Understand the watering requirements of the plants in your garden and carefully manage the amount of water you give your landscaping. Plant native plants to help minimize your watering needs and keep your landscaping looking healthier all year around.

BARE SPOTS

Bare spots in your lawn can be the result of soil compaction from heavy foot traffic, drought, disease, chemical burns, or weed or insect infestation. To fix these spots, you'll need to first determine the cause. If it's foot traffic, install stepping stones or a pathway to keep pedestrians off the grass. If it's weeds or insects, determine what you have before treating it. Once the yard is treated, you can start growing new grass.

New grass can be grown from seed. Spread straw as a



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mulch to help keep the young grass moist and safe from foraging wildlife. You can purchase lawn patch products that contain seed, fertilizer and mulch blends. Sod is also an option; keep sod moist until you can install it. Make sure it's level and makes good contact with the rest of the lawn.

POOR SOIL QUALITY

Sandy, silty or soils rich in clay can adversely affect your landscaping. Clay-heavy soils tend to make it difficult for water to drain or create shifting issues. Clay is great for building on, but could be bad for your garden. Sandy soil allows water

to pass through which makes it good for areas that need drainage improvement.

You can amend your soil to help improve it. The experts at your local home and garden center can give you advice on what types of soil you have and how to best amend it for your landscaping.

EROSION

Erosion is when soil wears away from water and wind. This can cause loss of fertile topsoil and harm plants, walkways and other landscaping elements. Retaining walls can help hold back soil. Amendments such as mulch and plantings like groundcovers also help.

Flooring Trends for 2024

When it comes to permanent parts of your home, such as walls and flooring, it's important to find a material that you love.

Here are some trends to keep an eye on for 2024.

HARDWOOD FLOORS

Hardwood floors are a classic style choice. Big this year are herringbone patterns and parquet floors. Jamie Hammel, owner of hardwood floor specialists The Hudson Company, told "House Beautiful" that complex patterns are coming back in style, whether it's mosaic tile or hardwood laid in intricate patterns.

Also in style are hardwoods with character, such as knots, burls and visible grain.

"Minimalism will probably never go out of style, but at the moment we're seeing clients take risks and embrace flooring with a lot of personality. Wood with lots of character in the right setting can almost be an element of design in its own right: Those natural features draw the eye, they might echo the form of a work of art or a textile nearby," Hammel says.

More and more homeowners are choosing hardwoods or even luxury vinyl planks in longer, wider boards to make spaces feel bigger than they are. Warm, natural colors are also in style, a contrast from the very light or very dark



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floors of years past.

TILE FLOORS

The simple black-and-white checkerboard floor is another classic enjoying a comeback, and in more rooms than just the kitchen and bathroom. Don't replicate the pattern

throughout the entire house, designers say, but pick a space where it can have an impact.

While patterns are big in hardwoods, they are booming just as much in tile floors. Again, this isn't a whole-home choice, but intricate tile patterns are a great way to add a

touch of creativity and whimsy to your home.

Just like the longer planks of hardwoods, wider tile can make your space look bigger and give your home a more contemporary look. Bonus: There's less grout to clean and maintain. As for color, biophil-

ic palettes featuring lots of greens and blues are en vogue and can have a calming effect in the home. Homeowners seem to be moving away from grays, whites and beiges of years past and looking for something more interesting, designers say.