

Spring home & garden

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Thinking about buying your first property? Discover tiny homes!

Buying your first home can be a challenge. The prospect of saving enough money for a down payment and securing a mortgage can be discouraging for many first-time buyers. A tiny home could be an appealing alternative. Here's what you need to know.

What's a tiny home?

As the name suggests, a tiny home is a small dwelling. Generally ranging in size from 300 to 600 square feet, it's designed to maximize all usable space while emphasizing functionality. Some tiny homes are built with foundations, and others are mounted on wheels for mobility.

What are the advantages?

Affordability is the primary draw. Depending on various factors, such as the home's size, complexity and location, the cost could range from about \$30,000 to \$110,000. This price difference largely sets tiny homes apart from traditional single-family dwellings.

For first-time buyers, it can be a particularly wise choice.

Because they're smaller, tiny homes consume less energy, helping residents reduce their carbon footprint. Many owners also choose recycled or reclaimed materials for the construction, further minimizing their envi-

ronmental footprint.

What should you consider?

If you're used to larger spaces, living in a tiny home may require some lifestyle adjustments. For instance, hosting large gatherings and sharing your personal space can be more difficult. You may also encounter com-

plications if you live in a municipality that doesn't yet allow tiny home construction.

In any case, a tiny home can be a smart step to homeownership. Would you like to learn more and explore your options? Consult a real estate professional in your area.



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As the weather warms up, consider these tips to help bring a garden back to life.

- Discard the dead weight. Winter can take its toll on a garden, even in regions where the weather between December and early spring is not especially harsh. Discard dead plants that have lingered into spring and prune any perennials that need it. Branches that fell during winter storms also should be removed at this point if they have not previously been discarded.
- Test the soil. Soil testing kits can be purchased at local garden centers and home improvement retailers. Such tests are inexpensive and can reveal if the soil needs to be amended to help plants thrive in the months to come.
- Mulch garden beds. Mulching benefits a garden by helping soil retain moisture and preventing the growth of weeds. Various garden experts note that mulching in spring can prevent weed seeds from germinating over the course of spring and summer. That means plants won't have to fight with weeds for water when the temperature warms up. It also means gardeners won't have to spend time pulling weeds this summer.

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How to save a dying lawn

If your lawn is looking dry and brown, try these tips to bring your grass back to life.

Water your lawn
Grass that's brown isn't necessarily dead; many grasses go dormant during hot, dry spells. To revive the grass, water your lawn early in the morning and ensure it gets at least one inch of moisture a week.

Do a soil test
Test your soil for nutrient content and pH to determine what fertilizer type to use and whether to add lime to lower its acidity. Over fertilizing,

using the wrong fertilizer and having soil that's too acidic can cause grass to die.

Get rid of thatch build-up
Too much thatch—decomposed plant matter that builds up between the soil and grass—can make your yard look barren. Use a power rake to loosen the thatch and bring it to the surface to make room for new grass shoots.

If these tips don't help, contact a landscaping expert to get a professional opinion.



Hose pipe on dry and parched grass



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How to prevent your tomatoes from splitting

Do your tomatoes split just as they're becoming ripe enough to eat? Tomato splitting occurs because of fluctuations in how much water the plants receive. If there's a heavy rainstorm right after a dry spell, the insides of the tomatoes start to expand more rapidly than the fragile outer skin can handle.

Here are a few ways to prevent your tomatoes from splitting this summer:

- Use mulch. Applying mulch around the base of your tomato plants helps with maintaining regular soil moisture levels. You can use straw, pine needles, shredded bark or a store-bought blend.

- Water regularly. Water your tomatoes at regular intervals, making sure to provide them with about one to two inches of water each week. Watering them regularly helps prevent them from absorbing too much liquid following a heavy rainstorm.

- Choose resistant varieties. Some hybrid tomato plants are bred to have tougher skins on the fruit. Ask at a nursery or gardening store about varieties most resistant to cracking.

For more tips on how to grow high-quality tomatoes, visit your local garden center.



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How to Choose Grass Seed

Are you ready to begin the process of growing your perfect lawn, but you're too stumped on which grass to purchase?

Start by asking yourself these key questions:

- **How many hours of sun does my lawn get each day?**
- **How much grass seed do I need?**
- **Does my lawn experience high traffic from kids or pets?**

Once you have these answers, you can choose the best grass seed for your lawn based on the name of the mixture. Keep in mind that you may need more than one type of grass seed for your specific property. For example, a shade blend is needed for under trees and areas alongside large structures that do not get much sun. However, if the rest of your lawn gets 8 or more hours of sun per day, it's best to get a heat-tolerant, sunny blend.

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“What window coverings should I use in the kitchen?”

As one of the most-used rooms in the home, your kitchen deserves thoughtful attention to both functionality and style. One detail that often gets overlooked is the window coverings. Here are some ideas to consider.

Consider your cooking habits

Do you love spending time in the kitchen whipping up a variety of dishes? If so, you know that kitchens get dirty fast. Grease particles and splatters will sooner or later end up on your window coverings. For avid cooks, vertical blinds made of wood or synthetic materi-

als are ideal because they're quick and easy to clean.

Do you prefer simple or no-cook meals? Are your windows located far away from your appliances? If so, fabric curtains can be a great choice. They match any decor and are perfect for large windows when you're looking for a stylish yet affordable option.

Think about the atmosphere you want to create

Depending on the amount of sunlight in the room and the colors of your furniture or flooring, your

choice of window covering can influence the mood in your kitchen. White-washed shutters paired with light wood flooring create a bright, clean look. Canvas solar shades and warm-toned cabinets provide a softer, more intimate vibe.

Your kitchen window coverings should reflect how you use the space and the atmosphere you want to create every time you walk in.

Visit your local shops to find the perfect window coverings.



Beautiful white sink near window in modern kitchen

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Stylish ideas for painting a staircase

Go ahead, give it some personality!

Want to use paint to give your staircase a budget-friendly transformation? Stairs have many distinct elements, including risers, treads and banisters. These features make your staircase the perfect place in your home to indulge your creativity. Here are a few ideas to inspire you.

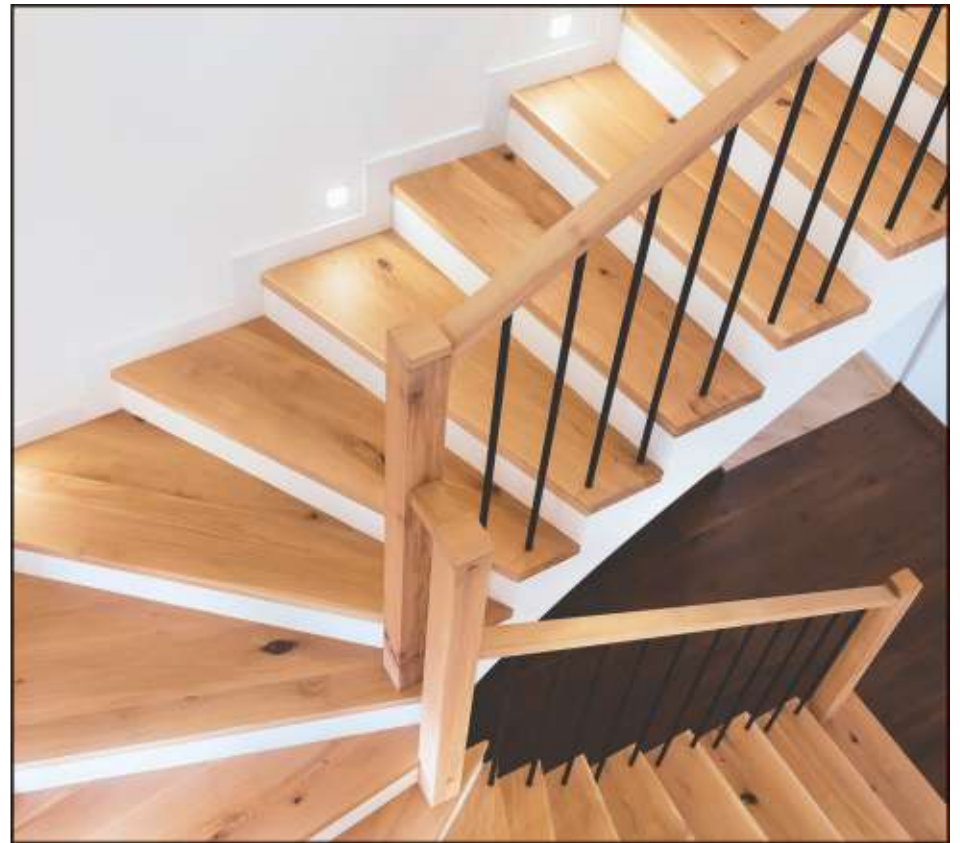
- **Monochrome decor.** Create depth by using the same color, or several shades of it, on both the walls and the stairs. The result will be quite striking!

- **Bold contrast.** Give your staircase a look that's dramatic yet refined

with dark tones like black or indigo on the risers and banister. You could also break up the monotony and add visual interest by choosing a color that contrasts with your walls.

- **Riser spotlight.** Paint the risers white to give your space a bright and airy look, or use a bold color to liven it up and attract attention. For a playful touch, alternate between two complementary shades.

Grab your paintbrushes and let your creativity flow!



Wood staircase inside contemporary white modern house

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I'd like to thank you, our customers, and the East Penn Press team for your continued support. If we could be of any service to you (even for advice), we are here and more than willing to help. We are conveniently located at 4337 HAMILTON BLVD, ALLENTOWN PA 18104 or by phone at 610-398-7200 WWW.ABNATURALSTONE.COM.

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-Linda G.

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-Brian D.

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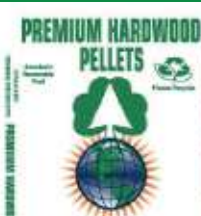
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The importance of inspecting your roof: how to avoid unpleasant surprises

Every spring, it's a good idea to inspect your roof to see if it withstood the winter months. This will help you identify any problems and take necessary action. Here's what you need to know when doing a thorough visual inspection of your roof.

Safety first

Climbing onto your roof can be risky. Ensure you use appropriate safety equipment, including closed-toe, non-slip shoes, a sturdy ladder and a safety harness. Having someone help you stabilize the ladder and be available in an emergency is also a good idea.

Additionally, ensure the roof is dry before inspecting it. Choose a day with minimal wind and cool temperatures to avoid working on a screaming hot surface.

Things to check

First, remove any debris, such as leaves. Then, inspect all accessible

parts of the roof to identify problems such as:

- Standing water
- A damaged or deformed membrane
- An uneven gravel layer
- Cracked sealing joints
- Rusted or flimsy flashing
- Protruding nails
- Missing, broken or lifted shingles
- Mold

It's also a good idea to examine your attic, walls and ceilings while you're at it. Check for signs of water infiltration or poor ventilation. Unpleasant odors, mold, excessive moisture and peeling paint are telltale signs that something's amiss.

If you notice an issue, don't wait for it to worsen. Seek professional help. If you're uncomfortable inspecting your roof, call a local roofing professional to get the most accurate assessment of your roof's condition.



Missing shingles on roof due to storm damage.

Garrett has been involved in his family's landscape business for over forty years, alongside his older brother Bill, who is a certified EP Henry dealer and hardscape installer. In 1992 he graduated from Temple University with a BS in Landscape Architecture with an emphasis on naturalistic landscape design. He immediately began working for Petritsch Lawns and Landscaping as a designer and crew foreman of their landscape division. Honing his skills from working on various projects, his affinity for natural products expanded, often incorporating boulders, flagstone, native plants, etc. With an increased interest in horticulture, he received a PCH (PA Certified Horticulturist) from Penn State University and later an SLC (Sustainable Landscape Certificate).

In 2021 Garrett's parents, Henry and Diane, retired after serving the community for many years. Inspired by their parents' hard work and dedication, both Bill and Garrett started their own businesses. Bill is the proprietor of WH Enterprises, focusing on hardscaping, excavating and has a location where he sells stone & mulch products. Garrett owns and operates Petritsch Landscaping and Garden Center where you can find a large variety of both ornamental and native trees, shrubs and perennials. Whether updating your garden or starting with a clean slate, choosing a traditional landscape or taking a naturalistic approach employing native plant and construction materials, Garrett and his expert crew are ready to make your vision a reality.



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10 essential springtime tasks

The days are growing longer and warmer, coaxing you to step outside and enjoy the invigorating spring air. Warmer weather also means it's time to tackle some important chores. Here's an overview:

1. **Inspect the roof.** Check for missing shingles, popped nails, standing water, membrane damage and signs of mold. If you notice any of these signs, repairs are needed.

2. **Clean the gutters.** Look for cracks and remove debris that could prevent water from draining. Make sure water drains away from the foundation.

3. **Look at the attic and ceiling.** Look for signs of leakage, such as rings, mold or peeling paint. Check also for nests or droppings that indicate the presence of unwanted pests.

4. **Inspect the foundation.** If you notice narrow cracks, seal them with an appropriate product. Consult an expert if the cracks are wider than a quarter of an inch.

5. **Examine the windows.** Check for damaged caulking and replace it if necessary. Ensure all your windows open and close smoothly and the screens are intact.

6. **Deal with exterior taps.** Turn on

the water and inspect the tap for leaks. Cover the mouth of the faucet with your thumb. If everything is functioning properly, you shouldn't be able to stop the flow easily.

7. **Prepare the soil.** Fertilize and amend the soil as needed. If you haven't done this in a few years, consider getting a soil analysis to determine how to boost plant growth.

8. **Trim vegetation.** Cut back perennials you didn't get to in the fall and trim any branches that are dangerously close to your house. Remove broken branches that didn't survive the winter.

9. **Maintain your gardening tools.** Ensure your hedge trimmer, lawnmower, edger and other tools are ready to use. Sharpen the blades, check the oil levels and clean or replace any parts as necessary.

10. **Test your air conditioner.** Follow the manufacturer's recommendations on changing or cleaning your air conditioner's filters and coils. Then, turn it on, test it and fix any issues before the first heat wave hits.

Call a maintenance professional or get started right away and make the most of this spring.



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His son, James M. Potocnie, worked with his father for years and eventually became sole proprietor. The third generation, Michael and his younger brother Andrew, are a part of the

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4 common watering mistakes to avoid

Watering your garden may seem like a simple task, but it can be one of the trickiest parts of caring for your growing vegetables. A few small habits can make the difference between thriving plants and struggling ones. Be careful to avoid these watering mistakes.

1. Underwatering or over-watering

Underwatered plants can wilt, grow slowly and produce small harvests. Overwatered plants may develop root rot, yellowing leaves and fungal issues. Instead of sticking to a rigid schedule, keep an eye on your soil. If the top inch is dry, it's time to water.

2. Watering during the heat of the day

If you water your plants at mid-day, the sun and heat cause the water to evaporate before the plants benefit from it. The best time to water is early morning, when temperatures are cooler. Your plants will have time to absorb the moisture before the sun gets too strong.

3. Splashing water or soil onto the leaves

Wet leaves create the perfect environment for diseases like blight and powdery mildew. Aim your water at the base of the plant, not the foliage. Soaker hoses and drip irrigation systems are especially helpful for keeping leaves dry

while delivering moisture to the roots.

4. Letting rainwater go to waste

Rainwater is free, eco-friendly, naturally soft and often better for plants than hose water. This makes it ideal for vegetable gardens. Collect it in barrels or containers; it'll reduce your water bill and ensure you have a supply during dry spells.

By implementing these watering techniques, you can grow healthier plants and have a more productive harvest.



Woman with watering can watering plants in the backyard garden, bushes Hydrangea Hosta Rose. Nature,

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- **Create a compost pile.** Composting is an eco-friendly way to enrich lawns and gardens. Composting helps to conserve water because compost promotes moisture retention in soil, reducing homeowners' need to water their lawns and gardens while also helping them to save money on their water bills. Composting also helps homeowners avoid the need to use potentially harmful chemical fertilizers because compost is a natural, slow release fertilizer.
- **Water at the right times of day.** Homeowners who water their lawns and gardens at the right time of day can help the planet and reduce their energy bills. Watering during the coolest times of the day means less water will be lost to evaporation, ensuring water-needy soil will get all it needs to help lawns and gardens thrive. Early morning watering before the sun reaches its midday peak and/or evening watering as the sun is setting are typically great times to water lawns and gardens, rather than when temperatures are at their hottest.
- **Use a rain barrel.** Rain barrels provide another great way to conserve water while tending to lawns and gardens. Rain barrels collect and store rain water from roofs and downspouts, keeping water from washing into sewage systems where it can't be put to good use. Water collected in rain barrels can be used in various ways. Many homeowners can use water from rain barrels to water their lawns, gardens and houseplants, saving money on their water bills along the way.



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Spring cleaning: get your backyard ready for summer

As the days get longer and warmer, you may find yourself anticipating how to make the most of your outdoor living space. Here's some advice to ensure your backyard is ready for summer.

The patio and fence

Since the patio and fence are prominent features of your outdoor living area, their appearance will set the tone for the space. Sweep away any rocks, leaves and other debris before cleaning the patio and fence with a pressure washer and specialized product. Make sure you choose the right setting so you don't damage the surface. Depending on the material, apply a coat of varnish or paint to freshen up and protect these backyard features.

The furniture

As you take each piece of furniture out of storage, check to make sure it's in good condition. You may need to

wash it to spot rust, stains or other signs of damage. In some cases, you might get another season out of your furniture by applying a new coat of paint. Additionally, worn cushions can be replaced or repaired by a professional. However, if your patio furniture has seen better days, consider starting off the season with a new set-up.

The barbecue

To make sure you're ready for summer cook-outs, clean all the stainless-steel surfaces of your barbecue. Be sure to check the condition of the grates and any other components that come in contact with food. Finally, inspect the propane tank and test each burner.

By following these tips, you'll soon be ready to enjoy lazy afternoons and warm evenings outside.



power washing - man cleaning terrace with a power washer - high water pressure cleaner on wooden terrace surface

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3 benefits of ground cover plants: varieties to explore

Is maintaining your lawn becoming a chore? You might want to consider replacing part of your grass with ground cover plants. These low-growing plants have many advantages and support local biodiversity. Here are three great reasons to make the switch, plus a few easy varieties to try.

1. Save time on maintenance

A diverse lawn resists disease, pests and harsh weather better than grass alone. Ground cover plants spread quickly and crowd out weeds naturally. Say goodbye to chemical sprays!

They also form a protective layer over the soil,

which helps to slow water evaporation. This means your lawn will bounce back more easily from summer drought, especially in sparser areas, such as spots under trees or in shady corners.

2. Add style and originality to your yard

Who says lawns must be green? Many types of

ground cover bloom for weeks, adding a touch of color and originality to your landscaping. Plant them along pathways, near low walls or between decorative pavers, and let nature do its work.

3. Support the environment

Ground cover plants generally require less

watering than traditional turf. They also attract pollinators and provide a valuable source of food, especially late in the season. Support the bees and butterflies!

You have plenty to choose from when it comes to ground cover plants. For example, white clover and lesser

periwinkle grow almost anywhere. Creeping thyme tolerates light foot traffic, and sedum is relatively resistant to drought and temperature swings.

Visit a garden center or nursery in your area for more information about ground cover plants.

Grasscycling and leafcycling: simple, eco-friendly practices to try now

Do you want to adopt eco-friendly habits without adding extra work to your routine? Start grasscycling and leafcycling! Learn more about these practices.

The principle

Grasscycling involves leaving grass clippings on your lawn after mowing. Skip the raking and yard waste bags. Just mow as usual and let the clippings decompose naturally. As they break down, they return valuable nutrients to the soil and feed your lawn.

Leafcycling follows the same

principle, but with dead leaves. As summer gradually gives way to fall, run your mower over the fallen leaves to shred them into small pieces. Leave the fragments on your lawn. This will allow the soil to absorb useful nutrients.

The benefits

In addition to creating natural fertilizer, these two practices offer several clear advantages:

- In summer, grasscycling helps the soil retain moisture, significantly reducing the need for watering

- In winter, leafcycling creates a protective layer that shelters insects and beneficial microorganisms

- You reduce the amount of green waste sent to landfills, cutting down on polluting emissions associated with transportation and landfill disposal

- Soil fertilized with its own organic matter resists disease better than soil treated with commercial synthetic products

Tips

These habits can simplify your life by saving you the chore of collection. Additionally, you can use green waste around shrubs and flower beds to help them grow better. Collect some of the grass clippings and use them to nourish your hydrangeas, rhododendrons and other plants.

Do you want to take your grasscycling and leafcycling practices to the next level? When mowing your lawn, leave small patches of dandelions or clover unmowed to support pollinators that use these plants

as a food source. These simple steps can transform your lawn into a true ecological haven.

In short, you can take several steps to help maintain your soil in an eco-friendly way. Ultimately, you'll save money, reduce your water consumption and help the planet. Considering that many municipalities ban grass clippings from regular trash, now is the perfect time to start this new habit.

Do you need to get properly equipped for the mowing season? Visit your local retailers.

Do your part for the planet by installing a low-flow toilet!



Do you need to replace your old toilet? Installing a low-flow model is an eco-friendly choice that can help you conserve a lot of water. Here's an overview.

How it works

Depending on where you live, toilets can account for up to one-third of all drinking water used in a home. The higher frequency of droughts is causing increased scarcity of water. Therefore, it's more crucial than ever to find solutions that can conserve this precious resource.

A standard toilet uses about three and a half gallons of water per flush. The amount required for low-flow models is dramatically lower. For example, some use less than a gallon per flush. Additionally, certain models combine water pressure with gravity to move waste efficiently while using far less water,

significantly reducing household consumption.

Special features

Before you choose a model, consider a few factors related to your home's plumbing. If you live in a newly built home, the smooth, narrow plastic piping allows waste to flow easily, even with reduced flush volumes.

If you live in an older home with cast-iron pipes, the water pressure may be lower due to the pipes' larger circumference. In this case, a dual-flush toilet would be a wise option. It allows you to choose one flush type for liquids and a slightly stronger one for solids to help ensure everything clears properly.

Hire a certified plumber in your area to install your new toilet properly.

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The main store is the oldest business on MacArthur Road and is now owned by Doreen Cantalini and Todd George, great-granddaughter and great-grandson of Allen Kleckner. The Emmaus store has been serving the community since 1980 and is open 6 days a week.

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Raised beds vs. an in-ground garden

When you create a new garden, one of your first decisions will be whether to use raised beds or in-ground plots. To make the best choice, you should consider your space, soil and gardening goals. Here's a quick overview of each option.

Raised bed gardening

Raised gardening or container gardening is fantastic for beginners as it gives you control over soil conditions and ease of maintenance. For example, you can fill raised beds with high-quality soil and avoid soil-related issues like poor drainage or nutrient deficiencies. If your yard has clay or sandy soil, raised beds give you a fresh

start with the soil you use, so you can ensure optimal conditions for a successful garden.

Additionally, raised beds are easy on the back and reduce the need for bending or kneeling. This makes them more accessible to work in, especially if you have limited mobility. Moreover, the soil in raised beds warms up more quickly in the spring, helping extend the growing season. This is especially beneficial for northern gardeners.

In-ground gardening

Traditional in-ground gardens are great if you've always dreamt of a large, expansive gardening space. It gives you enough room to

plant a wider variety of crops, especially those requiring more space, like pumpkins, melons and corn.

A big advantage of an in-ground garden is cost. You don't need to build or fill a raised structure, so it's a cheap way to start growing your own food. Plus, plants in the ground establish deeper root systems, making them stronger and more resilient.

Both gardening methods have benefits, so mix and match or pick the style that best fits your gardening style. Start your gardening journey with the right supplies from a local gardening store to bring your vision to life.



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How to divide hostas

If you notice that your hostas are no longer sending up new shoots—or if they're taking over your garden—it may be time to split them into new plants. Here's how to divide your hostas:

1. Use a sharp-edged spade to dig a hole around the plant. Slide the spade under the root clump and lift it out of the ground.
2. Separate the roots by hand or use a knife to slice plant crowns away from the main plant. Try to avoid cutting the roots.
3. Replant the cut-away hostas in the de-

sired location. Make sure to dig a hole that's wide enough for the plant's roots to fully extend. Fill in the holes with nutrient-rich soil and cover the area with mulch.

4. Water the replanted hostas every few days for the first two weeks after replanting.

Dividing hostas promotes new growth, improves their appearance and gives you new plants to work with in your yard. To learn more about hostas and other perennials, visit your local garden center.

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Wood floor finishing: which product should you choose?

Have you recently started renovations and stripped your beautiful wood flooring to bring back its shine? Applying the right finishing product is key. Which one should you choose? Here are a few suggestions.

Stains

Stains are affordable, easy to find and great for restoring your floor's timeless charm. Keep these points in mind when choosing between a water- or oil-based stain:

- Water-based stains contain minimal volatile organic compounds (VOCs), making them an environmentally friendly choice. They dry fairly quickly, but they can make scratches more visible, especially the higher-gloss formulations.

- Oil-based stains are extremely moisture-resistant and easy to maintain. However, they

contain more VOCs and are flammable, which is a significant consideration.

Finishing oils

These products are attractive because they come from natural sources. Linseed oil and tung oil, for example, require very little energy to produce. However, they release VOCs when applied, so the room must be well ventilated during the finishing process.

An interesting fact: finishing oils penetrate deeply into the wood, providing long-lasting protection. Unlike varnishes, which aren't very environmentally friendly, you can touch up oils only in the necessary spots without having to strip the entire floor.

Are you wondering which product would be best for your wood floor? Consult a flooring professional near you.



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- A closed door may slow the spread of smoke, heat, and fire.
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Each project begins with a thorough inspection and consultation so customers understand their options and can make informed decisions about their home.

As a proud member of the local business community, Lehigh Gap Exterior is committed to supporting the neighborhoods it serves and building long-term relationships with customers.

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Do you have all the spring-cleaning products and accessories you need?

Check out this checklist!

Spring cleaning is the perfect opportunity to refresh your home after a long winter. Your spring-time spruce-up will go smoothly if you have everything you need on hand. Use this handy checklist.

Products

These must-have products will make cleaning a breeze:

- **Eco-friendly cleaners.** Use biodegradable products to clean your windows, mirrors and kitchen and bathroom surfaces.
- **Stain remover.** This product is essential for restoring the appearance of your carpets, curtains and upholstered furniture.
- **White vinegar, baking soda and lemon juice.** If you prefer DIY solutions, these inexpen-

sive natural products can degrease, disinfect and deodorize your space without harming the environment.

- **Wood-care products.** Clean, protect and shine your finest wood furniture and floors.

Accessories

Don't overlook these cleaning accessories:

- **Microfiber cloths.** Reusable and absorbent, they're perfect for cleaning all types of surfaces.
- **Bucket and mop.** Look for an easy-spin model for faster cleaning.
- **Magic eraser sponge.** Ideal for removing stubborn stains from hard surfaces, it'll even clean children's drawings from your

walls.

- **Brushes.** Remove stubborn stains from tile joints and hard-to-reach corners. An old toothbrush is great for tight spaces.

- **Squeegee.** This gadget is perfect for making your windows sparkle in no time.

- **Rubber gloves.** Protect your hands from harsh cleaning products and water.

- **Vacuum cleaner.** Brooms have their limits. Invest in a high-performance vacuum cleaner to effectively clean every nook and cranny of your home.

Visit your local shops to get everything you need to tackle your spring cleaning.




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How to use wood ash in your garden

Did you know that ash from wood-burning stoves and fireplaces is good for your garden? Wood ash is rich in potassium and other minerals that growing plants need. It's also highly alkaline, which makes it an ideal substitute for lime when your soil is too acidic.

Before using ash in your garden, make sure it isn't derived from painted or varnished wood, charcoal or fake logs.

You should also do a soil test. If your soil already has a pH of seven or higher, it's best to avoid using ash so that the

ground doesn't become too alkaline for plants to thrive in.

Sprinkle cooled ash over your lawn to promote grass growth, or place a few handfuls around hardwood trees to provide vital nutrients. Ash is also excellent for adding to vegetable beds, especially around tomato plants, which require extra potassium. Avoid putting it near acid-loving plants like blueberries, rhododendrons, marigolds and potatoes.

To learn more about the gardening benefits of wood ash, visit your local garden center.

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Our strength is in our people. Each person is part of a division, from fertilization to lawn maintenance and landscape to hardscaping. Each division has its particular focus and therefore through education, hands-on training and experience in their discipline, our technicians and installers have become some of the best in their field. While each division has its own concentration, they are encouraged to coordinate and communicate with one another to better serve our customers with multiple needs. This way, each and every installation, application and task is completed correctly and without interference from one another. Additionally, this saves our customers money and stress from problems caused by having several different companies doing different things on one property that may disrupt or hamper the effectiveness of another.

We are dedicated to treating every property as if it were our own back yard, and strive to exceed expectations. We use quality materials and provide superior craftsmanship to ensure the delight of our customers during the job and after we leave their property. As with any company in the service business, word of mouth is the best form of advertising and those positive recommendations are why we have been able to grow and evolve into what we are today.



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Shady garden? Here's what to plant!

Do you have the urge to do some gardening, but feel the yard you want to beautify lacks direct sunlight? No worries! Many magnificent plants thrive in the shade. Take a look at these options.

- **Astilbe.** Add a splash of color to your garden with these pink, red, mauve or white flowers. These delicate blooms will create a cheerful atmosphere.

- **Azalea.** This hardy, low-maintenance shrub produces flamboyant blooms.

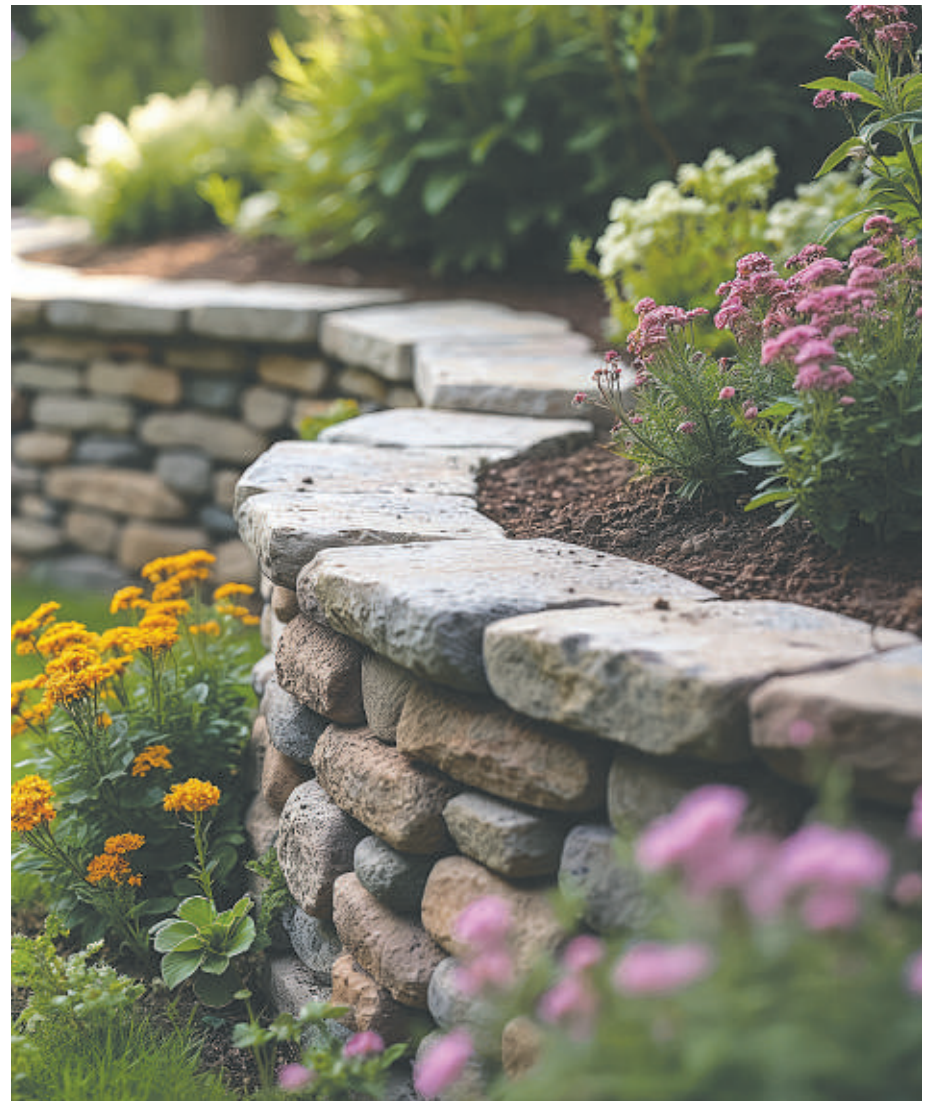
- **Begonia.** This plant yields an abundance of small flowers that will infuse your shade garden with whimsy.

- **Fern.** Known for their lacy foliage, ferns are easy to grow. Keep in mind they can be invasive, so monitor their growth closely.

- **Hosta.** This broad-leafed perennial is adorned with long-stemmed pink, lavender or white flowers. It spreads easily, so keep an eye on it!

- **Bigleaf hydrangea.** This plant boasts large heads of flowers or ball-like corymbs that will add a good dose of color to your garden.

You may also want to consider species like yew, fuchsia, forget-me-not, rhododendron, clematis, impatiens, foxglove, maidenhair ferns and day-lilies. There are more options than you might think! Visit a garden center near you for personalized advice.



Is your yard lacking character? Add a low wall!

Is your front or back yard in need of a little love? Building a low wall is an excellent way to delineate your space and enhance the beauty of your landscaping.

Numerous advantages

Adding a low wall to separate different areas of your yard creates a cohesive look that brings order to uneven surfaces. This is especially beneficial on properties with steep slopes.

If the wall faces south, it can absorb the sun's heat and transfer that warmth to nearby plants, encouraging healthy growth. When properly constructed on a solid footing, a low wall is durable and adds charm to your property.

Different materials

You can build your low wall from various materials, including:

- Prefabricated concrete blocks, which provide a clean, classic appearance
- Cut stone, which provides a natural, rustic look
- Brick, which creates a refined, timeless aesthetic
- Glass blocks, which provide an original, avant-garde look

Do you want to give your yard a little more structure and style? Contact a landscaping expert in your area and have a custom low wall built for you.

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Trend: the naturalistic garden

In 2026, homeowners are inspired by environmental concerns to create outdoor spaces thoughtfully nurtured to balance beauty, functionality and environmental care. Enter the naturalistic garden trend, an approach to gardening that promotes the natural cycles of growth.

A more relaxed way of gardening

A departure from the highly curated, heavily controlled gardens of recent years, the naturalistic garden is a more

hands-off approach. The goal is to limit human intervention in plant growth and make more space for the natural elements—plants, water, insects, soil and all its micronutrients—to interact organically. The pristinely manicured lawn of the past gives way to perennial flowers growing among the blades of grass.

A focus on sustainability

Ecological well-being is at the heart of naturalistic gardening. Soil health

improves, thanks to the diversity of species and the mulch created by decaying plant matter. Responsible irrigation practices incorporate traditional rainwater collection, as well as innovative solutions for efficient watering and moisture detection.

Beauty and function combined

With the introduction of edible species, the naturalistic garden becomes more than a showpiece. Modern gardens include traditional elements like fruit

trees and vegetable patches. They're also introducing edible plants popular in trendy cuisine. The esthetic appeal of these functional aspects of the garden is enhanced with curated features like decorative trellises and raised growing boxes.

Are you ready to go wild with your garden? Talk with a professional landscaper who knows the growing conditions in your region.

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The logo for 69 NEWS WFMZ-TV is centered on a white rectangular background. The number '69' is rendered in a large, bold, 3D-style font with a color gradient from yellow at the top to orange at the bottom. To the right of the '69', the word 'NEWS' is written in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font. Below the '69' and 'NEWS' text, the call letters 'WFMZ-TV' are written in a smaller, bold, black, sans-serif font. The entire logo is set against a blue background with abstract, swirling, light-blue patterns that resemble motion or energy.

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