



Spring

Home &

Garden

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Republican

PAGES 1B - 32B

Exploring different backyard structures



Designing an ideal backyard space requires forethought and an eye for style. Knowing which features to include in a yard often boils down to what homeowners want to achieve in the space. Will it be a relaxing oasis or a central entertaining focal point?

People often look to various structures to add height and visual interest to outdoor spaces. Homeowners will likely come across structures like arbors, gazebos, pergolas, and even trellises as they wade through the variety of features they can incorporate into backyard plans. Each of these structures can add appeal, but they also can offer shelter from the sun and privacy when enjoying the yard. There are significant differences between each structure, so here's an in-depth look at what sets them apart.

- **Arbor:** An arbor is one of the more simple garden structures. It is usually a frame that is arched or square-cornered. Most homeowners use it as an entryway to a garden or even the front of the home. Those with green thumbs may cover the arbor with climbing and trailing plants. The Spruce says arbors

See **Structures**, Page 3B

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Structures • from page 2B

date back to early Egyptian and Roman gardens and were used throughout Europe by the late 16th century.

- Pergola: The words arbor and pergola are often used interchangeably, but to suggest the two structures are the same would not be accurate. Pergola comes from the Italian word “pergula,” which means “projection.” Pergolas were once projected from exterior walls and supported on one side by pillars or columns. Today, arbors are usually freestanding units with two or four posts. Pergolas may be connected on one side to a home or another structure. Some are freestanding units supported by four posts. Pergolas tend to be larger and offer more privacy and shade than arbors.

- Gazebo: Gazebos are more defined garden buildings, states the contractor referral site Network. Gazebos are freestanding units that can be built in various shapes. Some are octagonal, others are square. Like a pergola, a gazebo is supported by columns and may have low railings or built-in benches. Gazebos also may have a more solid roof than arbors or pergolas, providing sun and other weather protection. The roof may have added architectural appeal, like a cupola.

- Trellis: A trellis is a simple, geometrically-shaped structure that provides a surface for climbing plants. A trellis also may support fruit-bearing trees. Trellis work may be used in conjunction with an arbor or pergola, or be installed on fencing.

Incorporating structures into backyard designs can provide functionality and appeal.

ADVERTISING INDEX

5-Star Buildings.....	page 25B
AAA Foam Company.....	page 4B
American Family Insurance.....	page 5B
B&H Home Repair.....	page 27B
B&H Well Drilling.....	page 17B
Becker Millwork & Hardware... ..	page 30B
Bill Krause Foundations.....	page 27B
Boyd's Plumbing, Heating & Air.....	page 5B
Brandt Heating, Air Conditioning and Fireplaces.....	page 32B
Central Mo. Septic Service.....	page 30B
Coverdell Glass.....	page 16B
Countryside Gardens LLC.....	page 24B
Crown Power & Equip. (Kubota Tractors).....	page 25B
Curtman Insurance Agency.....	page 11B
Dahl Dirt Works.....	page 27B
Decorative Stone Supply.....	page 6B
Diamond R Equipment (Gravely mowers).....	page 9B
Dry Fork Steel.....	page 20B
Enke Concrete Contractor.....	page 6B
Feeler Tree Service.....	page 8B
Final Sweep.....	page 8B
First State Community Bank ...	page 18B
Gerald Home Center.....	page 11B
Gorrell Electric.....	page 27B
Green Cabinet Shop.....	page 10B
Havener's Termite & Insect Control.....	page 22B
Hesemann Landscape & Supply.....	page 16B
Heintz Custom Tractor Work ...	page 21B
Hillermann Nursery & Florist....	page 10B
James Custom Flatwork.....	page 31B
Jarvis Excavating.....	page 9B
Jenkins Excavating.....	page 22B
Jerry's TV.....	page 2B
Kay Carpet & Furniture.....	page 4B

K&J Custom Lumber & Construction.....	page 18B
K&S Appliance Repair.....	page 28B
Lane Building.....	page 31B
Legends Bank.....	page 15B
Light Bulb Express.....	page 29B
Lost Hill Insulation.....	page 31B
Maciejewski Plumbing & Heating.....	page 12B
MidMo Drain Cleaning.....	page 28B
Midstate Paving Inc.....	page 5B
Mossy Oak Properties of the Heartland.....	page 13B
Overhead Door Doctor.....	page 29B
Pat's Place.....	page 5B
Pioneer Home Center & Rental.....	page 13B
Raaf's Landscaping Mulch.....	page 12B
Rehagen Heating & Cooling....	page 23B
Reinhold Electric.....	page 15B
Rosebud Tractor (Toro mowers).....	page 14B
Roy Ruth & Denny Vogt Construction.....	page 17B
Schaeffer's Small Engine.....	Page 22B
Schroepfer Geothermal.....	page 17B
Schulte's Custom Woodworking.....	page 2B
Second Creek Nursery.....	page 21B
State Farm Insurance.....	page 28B
Sydenstricker Nobbe (John Deere).....	page 7B
The Maries County Bank.....	page 30B
The Missouri Bank.....	page 26B
Three Rivers Electric.....	page 24B
Three Rivers Propane.....	page 20B
Tom Bloemke Agency.....	page 21B
Trident Maintenance.....	page 17B
Walmart.....	page 3B
Williams Insulation.....	page 26B
Zeugin's Home Repair.....	page 21B

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How ergonomic tools can help gardeners



Designing an ideal backyard space reGardening is a rewarding activity that has been found to provide a host of benefits beyond ensuring 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, a 2017 study published in the journal Preventive Medicine Reports found that gardening can help aging men and women offset 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.

See **Tools**, Page 5B

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Tools • from page 4B

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 Disabilities 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.



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Simple ways to improve a kitchen pantry

People have been spending more time at home in 2020 than in years past, and certain projects around the house have become a priority. One home improvement idea that serves the double benefit of creating organization and making cooking at home more efficient is to reimagine the kitchen pantry.

A pantry is a room or closet where food, beverages and linens or dishes are stored. Pantries can be highly useful spaces that provide ancillary storage in kitchens. Many modern homes are equipped with pantries, but older homes may require some modification to create more useful pantries. Whether starting from scratch or modifying an existing pantry, these tips can help projects go more smoothly.

- **Maximize vertical storage.** Utilizing vertical areas can help increase storage capacity. Build in extra nooks by investing in undershelf storage baskets. These baskets can instantly create designated areas for different types of ingredients. Homeowners also can look for ways to use the inside of cabinet doors or add extra shelves on walls or in eaves.

- **Consider your needs.** Figure out which items you would like to store in the pantry and then shop for corresponding storage systems. For example, storage solutions may feature wine bottle racks,

baskets for potatoes and other produce, shelving for small appliances, and even pull out racks for baking pans or cutting boards.

- **Use clear storage.** Put ingredients in clear, airtight containers of similar dimensions so that you can easily find items you need. Transfer bulky items, like cereals and baking supplies, to storage containers for uniformity.

- **Store bulk items elsewhere.** Bulk shopping can be cost-efficient, but bulk items can quickly eat up real estate in the pantry. Designate another area for non-perishable bulk products, like paper goods or canned items, such as in a garage or utility room.

- **Pull out drawers are convenient.** Pull-out drawers can reduce the need to seek and reach for items. These drawers conveniently roll out so items in the back can be accessed without disturbing foods in the front. Drawers can be custom built for any pantry space.

- **Make it accessible.** Think about who will be taking items from the pantry. Put children's snacks on the bottom pantry shelf where they can reach them, and then organize other shelves for adults in the home.

A pantry remodel can add valuable storage space and make one of the busiest rooms in the house operate more efficiently.



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



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Spring blossoms

An aging redbud tree (above) blooms for possibly that last time along Fourth Street this past week. The tree's multiple-pronged limbs are failing. A magnolia blooms on Second Street, helping highlight the brickwork of the home it fronts.



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In full bloom

A variety of spring bulbous plants help create this display at the corner of Highway 19 South and East Jefferson (above) and in the flower bed at Winter Park (right). A cold snap midweek will likely bring our area's vibrant early spring displays to an end.



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April tips for your garden

Vegetable gardening is making a comeback and a contributor to this fascination is the fact that more and more people are concerned with what they put on the family table. When you grow it yourself, you control what goes in the soil and on the plants, and you get to pick a much broader selection of vegetable varieties. They taste a whole lot better when they're home grown.

If you're thinking of growing a vegetable garden this year, you are not alone. Start small and expand as your interest and time permit. No summertime garden is complete without tomatoes. Also, bush cucumbers will fit in small gardens, and so will the bush summer squash varieties. They can be planted in nontraditional garden areas like flowerbeds or as a small addition to the landscape. You can interplant lettuce plants with your impatiens and harvest them long before the impatiens covers the area. You'll get some salad greens and kill two birds with one stone. Taking care of the impatiens ensures the lettuce is never neglected. In short, a vegetable garden can find its way into every area of your home's landscape - whether it's confined to its own area, combined into the



by **Sandi Hillermann McDonald**
Hillermann Nursery & Florist

annual or perennial gardens that you already have, or planted in containers on your deck or patio - it will provide the ultimate in fresh vegetable taste, and the safest vegetables you can produce for your family table.

Hang out your hummingbird feeders the first of this month. Use a solution of 1-part sugar to 4 parts water for the nectar. Change the solution frequently to keep it from fermenting. Food coloring is NOT needed or recommended. And keep your bird feeders full as nature's harvest from last fall is long gone for the birds.

Birds are beginning to reproduce now, and food is very important. Mother Nature must regrow and reproduce before they can feed the birds. I it is up to us!! So please do your part.

Asparagus and rhubarb harvest can begin!! Keep your hoe sharp. Start cucumber, squash, and cantaloupe and watermelon seeds indoors this month. The last week of April is a good time to try an early sowing of warm season crops in the garden such as green beans, sweet corn, etc. You can begin to plant transplants of tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, and sweet potatoes outdoors now. This can continue through the month of May. This is truly the year of the garden. So, reap your own harvest and enjoy the scrumptious flavors of your own produce. Remember, that Natural Gardening will keep your family safe, so check out what organic options are available to you! There are many.

Enjoy!

See you in the garden...

Hillermann Nursery and Florist Celebrates 70 Years

Hillermann Nursery & Florist, a family-owned Nursery/Garden Center in Washington, is celebrating their 70th Anniversary during the month of April. "We are so honored and excited to celebrate this long-time milestone! We are grateful to all our customers who have supported us over all the years. We could not have done this without our customers, and of course, founders Don and Bernie," said Sandi Hillermann McDonald, current CEO of the company. In celebration, the company has been offering giveaways and prizes to their

See **Hillermann**, Page 11B



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How to protect your yard from deer

With more than 60 different species of deer worldwide, there's a good chance individuals will have some sort of interaction with these majestic animals at one point during their lifetimes.

Deer, which live on all continents except Antarctica, can survive in everything from mountainous areas to wet rainforests to suburban neighborhoods. These herbivores are voracious eaters that will search far and wide for their meals. Home landscapes tend to be easy pickings for foraging deer.

Many people are excited to see deer in their neighborhoods and yards because they can be such graceful creatures to behold. However, once deer start to munch on ornamental trees, annuals and flowering shrubs, the novelty of these animals may wear off. Furthermore, deer also can be covered in ticks that spread illnesses like Lyme disease. Here are some tips to keep deer at bay.

- Avoid tasty morsels. Deer like English ivy, lettuces, impatiens, pansies, and hostas. Fruit trees also are targets. Choose other plants to grow, and wait until after early spring, when deer aren't as concerned with regaining weight lost during the winter, to get them in the ground.

- Use fishing line to deter deer. Put a few stakes in the ground and then run fishing line at a height

of about three feet. Deer can sense movement but do not have keen vision. As the deer approach your garden, they'll brush against the "invisible" fishing line and then get spooked off.

- Plant plants that produce strong aromas. The experts at Good Housekeeping suggest planting lavender and marigolds, which emit strong aromas. Deer will be reluctant to walk through because the smell can interfere with their ability to find food and assess their environment via their sense of smell.

- Stock up on soap. The tallow in soap helps keep deer away, according to the University of Vermont Extension Department of Plant and Soil Science. Scented soaps like Irish Spring may be especially good at warding off deer.

- Plant in levels. Raised beds and sunken gardens can discourage deer from coming into the yard because they aren't avid climbers, offers the home and garden resource This Old House.

- Employ harmless scare tactics. Deer are skittish, and any unfamiliar movement or sound may scare them away. Cans hung from strings, sundials and lights can keep them at bay.

Deer will seek out an easy meal, but homeowners can take steps to safeguard their trees, flowers and shrubs.

Hillermann • from page 10B

customers each week in April. Many wonderful prizes are being given to customers with help from the company's suppliers, and some prizes are directly from Hillermann's.

Founded by Don Hillermann in the spring of 1951, Hillermann Nursery started out as a hobby. Don's brother Bernie joined him in 1953 and a partnership was formed. One year later, having been laid off from their factory positions, the two became full-time nurserymen. The business was started at the old location on West 5th Street in Washington. From these beginnings, Hillermann Nursery & Florist has flourished. The company moved to its current location at 2601 East 5th Street in November of the year 2000.

Today Hillermann's is a large, diversified company, employing more than 80 people and providing a wide variety of services. Departments and services include Garden Center, Nursery, Florist/Gift Shop, Landscape and Irrigation Design, Installation and Maintenance,

Landscape Lighting, Grading and Seeding, Snow Removal, Spraying, and Lawn and Garden Equipment Sales, Parts and Service. You can shop for local wine, wine and beer making supplies, beekeeping supplies, bird and wildlife items, and beautiful décor and patio furniture along with a great selection of plants and lawn and garden items. There are always unique items and displays to discover.

Several greenhouses are in use at the current location where the company grows some of the plant products that are available in the nursery and greenhouse. Hillermann staff members also create beautiful container gardens and hanging baskets. The company strives to make all of their plant items the best quality possible.

Second-generation family members actively continue the business. It is through the inspiration of Don and Bernie Hillermann that they are able to continue our many years of service.

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The basics of mulching

Mulch is available in various forms. Like other land and garden products, mulch can go a long way toward helping plants thrive.

Mulch comprises just about any material that is spread over the surface of soil. Its purpose is primarily to help soil retain moisture. In addition, mulch can staunch weed growth, keep soil cool, improve the aesthetics of garden beds, and even improve soil nutrient composition. When the right mulch is chosen, it can reduce the amount of time homeowners spend watering and weeding their gardens and insulate plants from dramatic changes in weather.

Gardeners may not realize that mulch also can prevent garden soil from becoming overly compacted, according to HGTV. This can mean beneficial earthworms can move easily through the soil, creating channels for water and depositing their nutrient-rich waste products.

Gardeners can choose organic or inorganic mulch. Organic mulches are derived from natural materials that will decompose over time, lending organic matter as well as various nutrients to the soil. Organic mulches also may contain beneficial microorganisms that can fight against plant diseases. Inorganic mulches may be made of stones, landscape fabrics and plastic. Both types will need to be amended or replaced as they degrade. Those who want the most environmentally-friendly mulching materials can choose all-natural mulches instead of synthetic alternatives.

To work effectively, mulch should be applied in a two-to-

three-inch layer of material, state the experts at Old World Garden Farms. This is the ideal amount to retain soil moisture and suppress weed growth without choking plants. Also, mulch that is too thick may make it impossible for water to penetrate, or it may prevent the soil from airing out, causing continuously wet conditions that lead to root and stem rot.

The University of Connecticut Home & Garden Education Center says mulch should not be placed directly against plant crowns or tree bases, as this can promote the development of disease. It may also serve as a habitat for bark- and stem-eating rodents. The center also suggests watering newly installed bark or wood mulches to prevent fungi from colonizing in dry mulch and causing problems like a water-repellent surface on the mulch.

Home landscapers considering mulch types may find that compost, manure and grass clippings (from nonpesticide-treated lawns) can be inexpensive and versatile in garden beds. The home advice site The Spruce notes that newspaper may also be effective. Many newspapers have switched over to organic dyes, especially for their black and white sections. Newspapers are an inexpensive way to suppress weeds and act like organic mulch in beds. They can be covered with other organic mulch, like shredded bark, for more visual appeal.

Mulch can be a versatile asset when doing gardening projects around home landscapes. And the benefits are more than just aesthetic.



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How to help your flowers withstand heat waves

Heat waves are an inevitable part of summer in many places across the globe. While humans can escape indoors to air conditioned

rooms when heat waves hit full swing, flowers planted around a property have no such luxury, putting their survival in jeopardy whenever the mercury rises to especially steamy heights.

Wilted flowers that have succumbed to the summer sun are a sight many gardening enthusiasts can recognize. But there are ways to keep flowers safe and vibrant during periods of extreme heat.

- Water at the appropriate times of day. The National Gardening Association notes that it's best to water in the early morning and evening because less water will be lost to evaporation during these times of day than during the afternoon, when temperatures tend to be at their hottest.

- Choose the right watering method. It's not just when but also how you water that can affect flowers during summer heat waves. Aboveground sprinklers might be great for lawns, but the NGA notes that such sprinklers can encourage the spread of disease on certain plants, including roses. Many gardening professionals recommend soaker hoses when watering flowers because they promote deep watering that can help the plants withstand the summer heat. If you must use an overhead watering system, set the timer so plants are watered in early in the morning or evening.

- Routinely check the soil moisture. Soil moisture can help gardeners determine if their flowers have enough water to withstand the heat. The NGA advises gardeners to dig a 12-inch deep wedge of soil from their gardens to determine its moisture levels. If the top six inches of the soil is dry, water. If that area is still wet or moist, the plants have enough moisture to withstand the heat. Check these moisture levels more frequently during heat waves than other times of year.

- Avoid overwatering. Novice gardeners may be tempted to water more frequently when they see wilted leaves on their flowers. But wilted leaves are not necessarily

indicative of suffering plants. Plants release moisture to protect themselves from excessive heat, and that release of moisture

can cause leaves to wilt as the plants try to protect themselves by providing less surface area that can be exposed to the sun. So long as soil moisture levels are healthy, the flowers should be fine, even if their leaves have wilted.

No gardener wants to see their flowers succumb to the summer heat. Fortunately,

there are many ways to help flowers survive heat waves.



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Suggestions when shopping for fencing

Fences can improve functionality of a yard and provide extra security and privacy. Some fences are decorative while others are functional. Families with children and/or companion animals also may find fencing is a necessity to keep everyone safe and corralled.

With a vast array of fencing materials available, homeowners may find it challenging to decide which material is right for their properties. The following breakdown can help homeowners learn more about fencing and potentially point them in the right direction regarding which material to choose for their properties.

Budget

Budget is one of the first considerations many homeowners have when installing fencing. Pricing will affect whether one can afford a chain link fence (one of the most budget-friendly options), wrought iron or ornate wood (more expensive). Pricing out several different types of fences will give homeowners an idea of which material fits into their budgets.

Purpose

Homeowners install fencing for various reasons. If a fence is an ornamental way to delineate property lines, a picket fence or

a post-and-rail fence are simple options that can lend a homey feel to a property. These types of fences also can enhance and frame landscaping elements, such as gardens.

In many areas, laws require homeowners to install fencing around swimming pools. In such instances, chain link fencing that does not obstruct views of the pool might be the best choice. If security or privacy is the main desire, tall fences that make it difficult for neighbors to see into the yard may make an ideal choice.

Restrictions

It is important to understand local regulations before installing fencing. Communities governed by homeowners' associations may have rules in place that dictate the type of fences that can be installed. Townships and other municipalities may have their own rules concerning fence type, property borders, fence height, and other factors that will have to be adhered to so that fencing will meet code. If such rules are not following fines may be imposed and the fence may have to be removed. Homeowners also may need permits to install fencing, whether they are hiring a contractor or doing the work themselves.

Maintenance

Consumer resource Angie's List advises homeowners to consider maintenance before choosing a fencing material. Wooden fencing requires the most maintenance due to painting and staining. Alu-

minum or vinyl fencing requires less maintenance, but it can be harder to repair isolated damage or replace pickets, if necessary. In some instances, the entire fence may have to be replaced.

Homeowners install fencing

for many different reasons. Considering price, budget, purpose, and maintenance before making a decision regarding fencing can help homeowners make the best decision possible.



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Low-maintenance lawn alternatives

A traditional lawn may not be right for every property nor desired by every homeowner. Homeowners who find that a traditional lawn is not practical can explore some low-maintenance alternatives.

Wildflower meadow

Homeowners with wide swaths of property may discover meadows are cost- and time-efficient. Stores sell special wildflower meadow mixes of seeds or homeowners can use wildflower plug plants throughout areas where grasses are left to grow longer. This natural area can be a home to wildlife and an idyllic backdrop to a home. Most meadows only require a spring or summer and autumn cut to thrive and look good.

Ornamental grasses

Partition areas of the property for ornamental grasses to grow. The gardening resource Elemental Green says ornamental grasses tend to be drought-resistant and low-maintenance. They won't need much fertilizer and are often resistant to pests as well. Ornamental grasses grow in tufts or sprays and will not require mowing.

Moss

Moss can thrive in shady areas and ones where the soil tends to stay a bit damp. Moss

is velvety soft and green, so it can mimic the look of a traditional lawn but won't require mowing and other upkeep. Because it spreads quickly, moss can take over quite rapidly. You will need to protect areas where you do not want moss by creating barriers to stop spread.

Gravel

Stone and gravel areas can reduce maintenance in the landscape and require very little upkeep. When gravel is installed correctly, weeds may not grow readily. Gravel installation may include laying heavy-duty, semi-permeable landscape fabric, which is available in home improvement centers. Gravel is cheaper than pavers and can be just as beautiful.

Artificial turf

If the desired look is a lawn without all the upkeep, there are various artificial grass options on the market. Homeowners who opt for artificial turf can save money and space devoted to lawn mowers and other lawn tools.

Grass may be ideal for some, but there are alternatives for people who have troublesome landscapes or desire a low-maintenance product for their homes.

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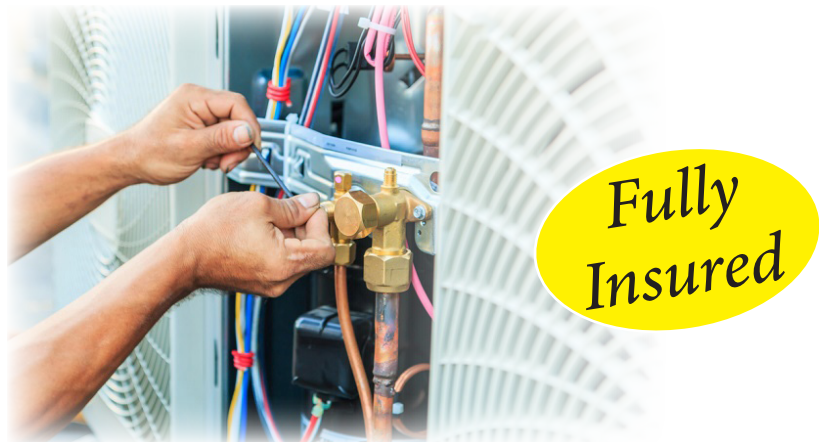


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How tree services can protect your property

Cold weather can take its toll on a property, especially in regions of the world where winters are harsh. Most parts of the landscape are vulnerable to damage from winter storms, but trees may be especially susceptible. By the end of winter, many homeowners wonder if their trees would benefit from some professional TLC.

Tree services provide a host of services. While fall is a popular time to remove trees from a property, doing so in spring is not unheard of, especially if trees were affected by winter storms and now pose a threat to a home and the people who live inside it.

Homeowners considering tree services can explore the following ways that some professional arbor attention can protect them and their homes.

See **Tree service**, Page 17B

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Tree service • from page 16B

• Tree services can help protect a home's foundation. Old trees that stretch well into the sky can be captivating, but they also can pose a threat to a home's foundation. Such trees may have especially large root zones that may extend beneath walkways and even a home. In the latter instance, foundations may crack as roots try to stake their claim to the ground beneath a home. According to the home improvement resource HomeAdvisor, homeowners pay an average of just over \$4,000 to repair foundation issues, though major problems can cost considerably more than that. A professional tree service can remove aging trees that might be beautiful and awe-inspiring but still pose a threat to a home and the areas surrounding it.

• Tree services can improve visibility. Trees that have aged a bit since their last trimming might affect the view of a property from inside a home. Overgrown branches can compromise residents' ability to see and experience the natural beauty just outside their windows. The average homeowner may be able to trim short trees on his or her own, but if views from the second floor of a home or higher have been compromised, it's much safer to call a professional tree

service. Such services have the right tools and experienced personnel necessary to safely trim high branches on tall trees.

• Tree services can help prevent future damage. Even if trees made it through a recent winter unscathed, that's no guarantee next winter or even the coming seasons of spring, summer and fall won't ultimately prove their undoing. Travelers Insurance notes that weather-related roof damage, including damage resulting from falling limbs and branches weighed down by snow during the winter months, accounted for more than half of all Travelers property loss claims between 2009 and 2016. According to BNC Insurance and Risk Advisors, homeowners may be liable if a tree they knew posed a threat falls onto a passerby or a neighbor's property and causes damage or injury. Having all trees properly trimmed each year, but especially those that can fall on your home and your neighbors' homes, may prevent future damage and legal issues.

Tree services can ensure trees maintain their awe-inspiring beauty and help homeowners protect their homes and their belongings.

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Get ready: Early spring landscaping tips

During the cold months of winter, many people stare longingly out of the window dreaming of spring and time spent outdoors. For those with green thumbs, images of tending to the garden and other aspects of their landscapes no doubt dominate such daydreams.

Draw inspiration from those budding crocuses and daffodils pushing through the last remnants of snow and employ these tips to prepare for the upcoming gardening season.

- One of the first steps is to apply a preemergent weed killer to get a head start knocking out weeds that can plague the

See **Landscaping tips** Page 19B

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Simple ways to reduce risk of disease in your garden

No garden is immune to disease. Even the most attentive, experienced gardeners have had to confront disease in their gardens, which can lead to significant damage and potentially kill plants.

Various bacterial, fungal and viral diseases can affect gardens, and the University of Maryland Extension notes that fungicides, which are chemicals that destroy fungus, are only rarely recommended to combat disease. In fact, a proactive approach rooted in prevention is often the most effective way to reduce risk for disease in gardens.

- Choose the right varieties of plant. The UME notes that choosing disease-resistant varieties is an effective way to prevent disease in gardens. Gardeners who have confronted disease in their gardens in the past should do their best to identify which diseases were present and then choose plants that are considered resistant to those diseases. A local garden center professional can help gardeners who are uncertain about what to plant.

- Plant in the right spots. The choice of where to plant is significant. Avoid wet areas with insufficient drainage. The home renovation experts at HGTV note that wet soil can decrease plants' chances for survival because of excess water and a lack of oxygen. If the only spots available for planting tend to be especially wet, consider planting in raised beds or having a French drain installed. Learn how much light plants need prior to planting them. Some can thrive in shady areas, while others require ample sunlight each day.

- Plant at the right time. Planting too early when the soil is not yet warm enough can make plants vulnerable to disease by weakening their ability to fight. Use a soil thermometer to determine soil temperature and only plant when the conditions for planting are ideal.

- Harvest on time. When planting vegetables, it's imperative that the vegetables are harvested on time. The University of Georgia Extension notes that fully mature

vegetables left on the plant attract disease and are vulnerable to insect infestations.

- Control insect infestations. Certain insects can spread disease, so it's important that gardeners

learn to recognize which insects pose a threat to their plants. Speak with a local gardening center about invasive insects and how to address infestations without harming the plant.

As the planting season approaches, gardeners can take various steps to make their plants and vegetables less vulnerable to disease.

Landscaping tips • from page 18B

lawn during the growing season. Killing weeds at the roots early on can mean far fewer hassles in spring and summer, and may prevent new generations of weeds from cropping up each year.

- While it may be tempting to take a prematurely warm day as a sign that spring is in full force and purchase a bunch of annuals, it's better to know the last of the possible frost dates (check "The Farmer's Almanac"); otherwise, you may waste time and money planting flowers or vegetables only to have them zapped by another frosty day.

- Amend the soil so that it is the right consistency—just crumbling when lifting it. Soil that is too muddy after spring thaw can harden, making it difficult for plants to flourish later on. Speak with representatives at a local lawn and garden center about which types of amendments you can add to the soil in your particular area to enrich it.

- Lawn and garden experts at The Home Depot suggest filling in bare patches of lawn now by mixing a few shovelfuls of soil with grass seed. Then apply this

patch to the bare areas, water, and continue to care for the area until the spot fills in.

- Spend a day in the garage or shed tending to the lawn mower and other gardening equipment. Clean all tools and ensure that everything works, repairing parts as needed.

- Give outdoor entertaining spaces a good scrubbing, clearing away dirt and grime that may have accumulated over the winter. Use a leaf blower to blow away any leftover leaves.

- Check if the front porch, railings or decking need painting and/or staining. Tackle these projects when the weather is cooler so everything will be ready for those peak spring days.

- Think about any annuals you might want to plant in the landscape this year that will complement any existing shrubbery or perennials. Come up with a theme so that the entire yard is cohesive.

Before homeowners know it, winter is gone and it is time to once again enjoy long days spent outdoors. Get a jump start on spring lawn prep as soon as you can.

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Woodcraft Magazine Classic Project Plans make it easy to build the inviting Swing Bed (pictured), as well as picnic tables, benches, hand grill carts, potting benches, Adirondack chairs, and much more.

Restoring Outdoor Projects, a Woodcraft blog, offers tips to make Adirondack chairs and other wood pieces and structures look new again. Download the free PDF at <https://www.woodcraft.com>.

See **Streamline**, Page 21B

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Streamline • from page 20B

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- System Three Marine Spar Varnish is a urethane-enhanced film finish formulated to protect against the harshest salt water and marine environments, as well as protect outdoor projects.

To apply coverings by hand, consider Redtree Onyx White China Bristle Brushes (solvent-based finishes) or Redtree Matey Synthetic Bristle Brushes (water-based finishes).

For spraying, the HOMERIGHT Super Finish Max features a built-in 450-watt sprayer, eliminating the need for a hose or motor to move around. Spray milk paint, chalk-style paint, latex paint, enamels, primers, urethanes, stains and varnishes.

Did you know?

Leaves that fall from trees can be a marvel to behold. But leaves can stain exterior surfaces when they eventually settle on vehicles, concrete driveways, patios, and other surfaces, become wet and/or are not cleaned away in a timely fashion. Leaf stains are caused by tannins in the leaves. The pigments can be absorbed by porous materials like concrete and leave stains behind. While these stains may wash away over time, homeowners may prefer a faster way to get rid of unsightly stains. To remove moderate leaf stains, mix oxygen bleach with hot water and apply to stains using a scrub brush. Dark stains may require a tougher cleanser, such as one that contains trisodium phosphate. Some homeowners find success using a pressure washer to clean away leaf stains, while others rely on commercial leaf-stain removers.

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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.

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Defining hardscape and how to use it

Curb appeal is beneficial in various ways. Curb appeal can make a home more attractive to prospective buyers and give existing homeowners a place they want to come home to. In its study of the worth of outdoor remodeling projects, the National Association of Realtors found standard lawn care and overall landscape upgrades were most appealing to buyers, as well as the most likely to add value to a home.

Although plants, grass and other items can improve curb appeal, homeowners should not overlook hardscaping.

Hardscaping is an industry term that refers to the non-living features of a landscape. These features can include everything from decks to walkways to ornamental boulders. Introducing paths or paver walls to a property helps develop that home's hardscape. Hardscape and soft elements often work in concert to create inspiring landscape designs.

DIY landscape designers can heed certain tips to make the most of hardscape features on their properties.

Choose materials

As with many landscaping projects, homeowners must first determine what types of additions they would like on their properties. Common hardscape features include

patios, decks, walkways of pavers or bricks, and retaining walls. Hardscape elements can be functional or simply decorative features that add whimsy to the yard.

Choose a theme

The right style allows hardscaping and softscaping materials to work together. For example, homeowners may want to give their yards an eastern feel, complete with a koi pond and decorative bridge or trellis. A formal English garden, however, may include manicured paths with stepping stones and ornate topiaries. Mixing too many styles together can take away from the overall appeal.

The pros suggest looking at the overall plan of the design, even if all of the work can't be completed at once. This way the eventual finished project will be cohesive.

Think about the purpose

Hardscaping can look good but also serve key purposes. Pebbles or gravel can mitigate trouble areas that don't grow grass or plant life well. Retaining walls hold back soil in yards with sharply inclined hills. Mulch can set perimeters around trees and shrubs, as well as planting beds. Fencing, another form of hardscaping, is essential for establishing property boundaries and adding privacy.



HARDSCAPING REFERS to the elements in a landscape that aren't living, such as paths, walls and fences.

Consult a professional

While many hardscaping additions can be handled by novices, large-scale projects, such as patios and decking, can change the grading of the yard. Professionals can map out how to handle drainage issues and meet building codes. In addition, professional

installation can ensure hardscaping features last for years to come.

Hardscaping should blend with the nature around it and take its cues from the surrounding environment. This can help softscaping and hardscaping work as one.



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Techniques to keep mosquitoes out of your backyard

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.

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

See **Mosquitoes**, Page 25B

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Mosquitoes • from page 24B

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 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.

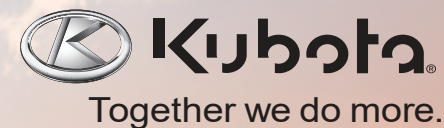
2. Mow regularly.

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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Adding plants to water features

Water features can make for relaxing and eye-catching additions to outdoor spaces. According to the online gardening resource Garden Know-How, a water feature is any landscape enhancement that uses water and other material to bring tranquility and beauty to a space.

Thanks to their soothing sounds and aesthetic appeal, water features like ponds and fountains are often included in healing gardens. But they can be used in any and all landscapes.

Homeowners can explore various water features, such as waterfalls, koi ponds and even rain bells, which offer soothing chime sounds when it rains. One consideration when installing a water feature is whether or not to incorporate live plants. Certain plants are better suited for water features than others.

Surrounding plants

It is possible to create a miniature ecosystem in a yard by surrounding a water feature with certain plants. Gardening Know-How advises using canna lily or taro at the edge of a pond. These plants thrive with roots in mud and their tops in shallow water. Broadleaf arrowhead is another option, as it

can do well in a pond's shallow edges. It's a perennial so it will come back and requires little maintenance.

Floating plants

Many plants can live on the surface of the water and provide hiding spots for wildlife in a natural water feature setting. Lotus, also called water lily, is a popular and fragrant option. Water hyacinth produces vibrant lavender flowers that pop on stems that can reach three feet in height. This stunning species can be invasive, but it can be managed by planting within a hoop or submerged woven basket, indicates Happy DIY Home. Other free-floating plants to consider are duckweed, fairy moss and butterfly fern. Floating plants look beautiful and they can help filter water and control algae growth.

Submerged plants

Submerged plants are a necessity in water features that have fish. Submerged plants are grown in weighted pots placed on the bottom of the pond. They provide shelter for fish and help oxygenate the water. Hornwort, anacharis, water milfoil, and dwarf sagittaria are some examples of submerged plants.

Water features attract wildlife, including potentially pesky insects. Planting pitcher



plants in submerged pots can help reduce the presence of unwanted insects in a water feature.

Some water-loving plants are invasive, so it is always best to check with a local agricultural extension or the Department of Environmental Protection to see if certain

floating or submerged plants are restricted where you live. For those who want to contain plants, placing pots of cascading greenery and flowers near to fountains, pools and ponds is another way to add appeal without having to dig in the ground.



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Techniques to revitalize a lawn after a long winter

Pristine, snow-covered landscapes can be wonders to behold. While that blanket of white is idyllic, a lawn's delicate blades may be paying a hefty price beneath the cold, heavy piles of snow.

Snow plows push salt and sand up on the grass while subterranean animals like mice and moles dig burrows beneath piles of snow as they try to find food and stay warm. Such conditions are not favorable for thriving landscapes. When the spring thaw arrives, lawns may be in dire need of some TLC. The following techniques can mitigate winter-related lawn damage.

- Clear out debris. Remove any scattered leaves, branches and other debris that has been strewn across the property due to storms or snow-laden trees. This will give you a clean canvas to work on.

- Dry out snow mold. The Family Handyman says snow mold is a cold-season fungus that causes gray-colored circles or patches on the lawn where there has been snow. To alleviate snow mold, rake the lawn to loosen matted grass and facilitate the drying-out process.

- De-thatch the lawn. Heavy snow can compress the grass and cause some of it to



die off. De-thatching helps to remove dead grass blades and separate any matting. This enables water, nutrients and air to reach the

lawn's roots more effectively. Thinning out old organic matter also helps encourage new growth.

- Aerate the soil. Coupled with dethatching, aeration involves loosening the soil or poking holes to allow nutrients to move freely to the roots.

- Kill weeds before they spread. Weeds may be the first to start growing when the weather begins to warm. Address them promptly by manually pulling them or applying an herbicide.

- Overseed the lawn. Chances are there are some bare spots that have formed over the winter. Overseeding can help to fill in the lawn. Make sure that frosts are largely a thing of the past and soil temperature is around 50 F to 60 F before seeding. Water daily until grass fills in.

- Apply nutrients. Fertilizer and compost can restore nutrients to the lawn that may have been used up over winter. A soil test at a nearby horticultural center can tell you which nutrients are needed, according to the Chemistry Cachet, a guide to using chemistry secrets for healthy living, beauty, cleaning, and gardening.

Lawns can be restored to their pre-winter glory after some sweat equity and about five to six weeks of consistent sunshine and warm weather.



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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 for additional tips.



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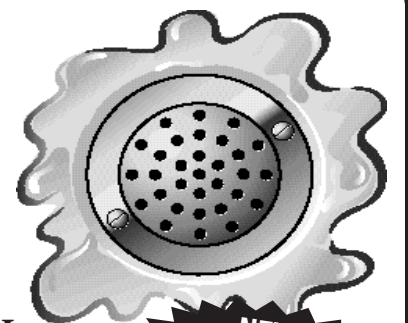
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Shade trees that can make yards more comfortable

Various factors motivate the decisions homeowners make when designing their landscapes. Some may be motivated by the ways additions will affect the resale value of their homes, while others may be guided by a love for a particular type of plant. Comfort is yet another motivator, and shade trees can make yards more comfortable as the mercury rises. According to the Arbor Day Foundation, the following are some popular shade trees that can add beauty to a landscape and make it more comfortable come the dog days of summer.



• **Quaking aspen:** The quaking aspen has the widest natural range of any tree in North America, spanning 47 degrees of latitude, 110 degrees of longitude (nine time zones) and elevations from sea level to timberline. That impressive range is no doubt why the

United States Forest Service notes that the quaking aspen can grow in greatly diverse regions, environments and communities.

• **Northern catalpa:** The Arbor Day Foundation notes that the northern catalpa is easily identifiable thanks to its heart-shaped leaves and twisting trunks and branches. Nature enthusiasts, and particularly those who enjoy birdwatching, may be happy to learn that the flowers of the catalpa are frequently visited by hummingbirds.

• **Red sunset maple:** Its name alone makes many people think of lazy summer days spent lounging in the yard. The red sunset maple provides ample shade and comes with the added benefit of

See **Shade Trees**, Page 30B

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PHOTO BY DAVE MARNER

Practical application of skills for FFA Floriculture team member

Emily Nichols waters plants Friday afternoon at the Save-A-Lot grocery store's garden center. Nichols, who was in her first week of employment, will compete this weekend in the Missouri FFA State Convention's Floriculture contest along with fellow Owensville High School FFA chapter members Katelyn Landolt, Alisen Chapman, Alyssa Manning, and Wyatt Bridgemann. The team has placed first in every contest so far this season including Area XIV, Columbia, Stoutland, Elsberry, Linn, Lincoln, Doniphan, and Skyline.

Shade Trees • from page 29B

producing an awe-inspiring blend of red and orange leaves come the fall. Red sunset maples can survive in a range of habitats and their adaptable roots means they can thrive in various soil types.

- Northern red oak: The state tree of New Jersey, the northern red oak is, according to the Arbor Day Foundation, both beloved for its aesthetic appeal and valued for its adaptability and usefulness. Northern red oaks can tolerate urban conditions, but they do not do well in hot climates.

- Sawtooth oak: Another tree that produces some awe-inspiring color, the sawtooth oak is a durable, adaptable shade tree. Golden yellow leaves in the spring will give way to dark green in summer, only to turn yellow and golden brown in the fall. The Tree Center Plant Supply Co. notes that the sawtooth oak can thrive in warmer climates where shade trees that can coexist with high temperatures can be hard to find.

Shade trees can add beauty to a property and make a yard more comfortable. Homeowners are urged to discuss shade trees with a local lawn and garden professional prior to planting.

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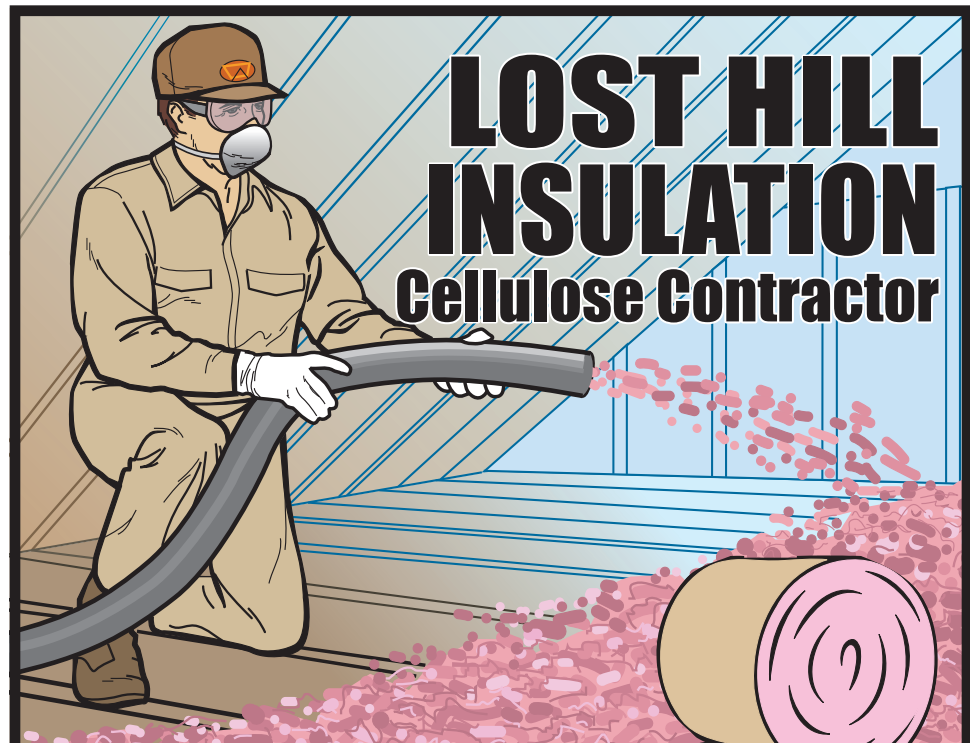
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Top-dressed for Easter Sunday

Vickie Mayberry top-dresses a flower bed with mulch in front of St. Peter's United Church of Christ to prepare it for Easter Sunday earlier this month. Mayberry had added some pansies to go along with established perennials.



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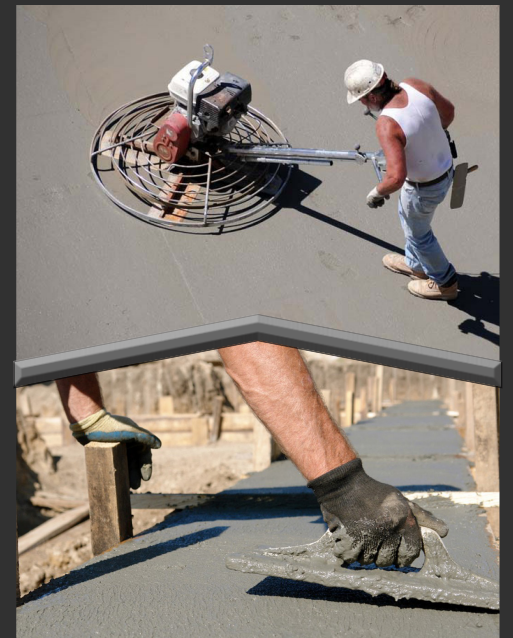
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