

March 2021
A Special Supplement to
The Expositor

Spring Nest

lawn • garden • home





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Did you know?

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, air currents can carry pesticides that were applied to nearby properties. That means even people who do not apply pesticides in their lawns and gardens can still be at risk of exposure to these potentially harmful chemicals. People concerned by the prospect of being exposed to the pesticides being applied by their neighbors can stay indoors with their children and pets while the substances are being applied. Those who live near fields and parks where pesticides are routinely applied can plant hardy, thick-branched trees to reduce their risk of airborne exposure. The EPA notes that such plants and shrubs can serve as buffers against airborne pesticides, essentially acting as walls around a property that prevent gusty winds from blowing pesticides into yards and gardens.



Top Notch Lawn Care provides advice for upcoming planting season

RACHEL AUBERGER

contributor

As spring approaches, many homeowners begin trying their hands at gardening, landscaping, and lawn care as they look to improving the appearance of their properties, but Bill McCulley, with Top Notch Lawn Care, says there are many things to consider before you go digging up patches of your yard.

“Not all plants can be planted at the same time,” he warns. “Some plants need to be planted after the ground is warmer or when the sun is up longer. Some plants need to be started inside your home or in a greenhouse while others are OK to be planted right from their seed or bulb.”

McCulley also warns that not all plants can be planted in the same garden, stating that it’s best to do a little research to determine which plants will grow in shade and which will grow in direct sunlight as well as which plants will spread taking over the area you plant them in, possibly choking out the other young plants you are trying to grow.

“Planting at the right depth is important, too,” he added, saying that some plants need to be closer to the surface so that they can break through the ground easily while others need to be planted deeper to protect the roots from harsher weather. “If you want your lawn and property to look top notch and you don’t want to be disappointed by the end result of your gardening - whether you are gardening for food or fun - it is important to take the time to do a little research.”

Of course, McCulley is happy to help with making the exterior of a home, or even a business, become vibrant. He, and the two employees of his three-year-old landscaping company, stay busy mowing and tending to the landscaping needs of customers across White County.

“We’ve done the research for you,” he said. “We can listen to your goals for your property and help you choose the right trees, bushes, and flowers that need to be planted around your home. We make sure that only good quality landscaping and mulch or rock is used so that you are



BILL MCCULLEY. with Top Notch Lawn Care

adding value to your property and that you are pleased with the way it looks for a long time to come.”

Of course, mowing is the primary service most customers call Top Notch Lawn Care for, but McCulley says he doesn’t mind that at all.

“Mowing is actually one of my favorite

things to do,” he laughed. “Bringing yards to life, keeping lawns trimmed and usable. I can envision families enjoying time outside as I do with mine. It’s a great feeling to know I am helping them be able to create great moments and memories.”

McCulley has advice for those using a lawn care service such as his.

“Make sure your yard is picked up,” he smiles. “If you know they are coming to mow, picking up all the toys and trash that may have blown around or been left outside can really make the job easier.”

He also offers advice for choosing a lawn care service saying that they should be willing to provide references and samples of their work and that you shouldn’t just jump at the first person who answers your call.

“Get multiple quotes and check the quality of their work,” he suggests. “The cheapest service is not always the best service. You get the quality that you pay for.”

McCulley said he always looks forward to meeting new people and customers but warns that soon he will be busy, and his schedule will fill quickly.

“The worst part of the job is having to decline jobs and turn customers away,” he said. “I enjoy getting to meet new people and develop relationships with my amazing customers. I also love having the opportunity to make my customers homes look top notch.”

Top Notch Lawn Care is on Facebook and can be reached by calling (931)254-9322



Low-maintenance lawn alternatives

A traditional lawn may not be right for every property nor desired by every homeowner. There is no denying that lawns take time and effort to establish and daily or weekly maintenance to thrive. 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. However, they are not ideal for areas that get foot traffic.

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.



Backyard pools provide a way to cool off and enjoy a taste of luxury without having to travel. Backyard pools provided even more convenience and a welcome respite in 2020, as many public pools were closed in response to social distancing restrictions put in place during the pandemic.

After installing pools, many homeowners realize that touching up the landscaping around the pool can provide the finishing touch to their backyard retreats. Not all landscaping is the same, and homeowners should choose plants that look beautiful, are tolerant to pool splash-out and won't

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

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

- Choose plants that will provide privacy.
- Know which kind of climate a plant needs prior to purchasing it. Tropical plants may be fitting poolside, but will they endure when the season is over?
- Design according to the theme of the

Swimming pool landscaping ideas

home, as plants should complement the existing style. Modern foliage may not blend well with a home styled after a traditional English cottage.

- Decide whether you can accept spreading or trailing plants that can cascade over retaining walls and other infrastructure.

- Look at trees that won't drop too many leaves, flowers or fruit into the water.

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

- Don't overlook the possibility of a lawn abutting pavers or concrete surrounding a pool, as it can soften the edges and keep

spaces open and inviting.

- Incorporate herbs or fragrant plants, which can transform a pool day into a spa experience. Consider low-maintenance lavender as an option.

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

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



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Exterior lighting can add ambiance to a property

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

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

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

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

- Consider uplights. Uplights are installed in the ground and direct light up at a tree, focusing on its trunk or canopy. This creates a dramatic effect that makes it possible to enjoy majestic trees at night just like you might when spending time in the yard during the day.

- Focus on trees. Many homeowners already have exterior lighting lining their walkways and patios, but focusing on trees can create an entirely different look. Though it's possible to install exterior tree lighting on your own, landscaping professionals with lighting experience know which fixtures will pair most effectively with the trees around your property and how to arrange them for maximum effect.



- Opt for warm light. Warm white light creates an inviting feel around the property. The exterior lighting experts at Utah Lights acknowledge that choice of lighting is up to homeowners but also note that, in situations with lower levels of ambient light, such as in exterior lights around a property, people typically prefer warmer light. That's because warm light tends to be easier on the eyes and directs attention to the features of the landscape, which is many homeowners'

goal when installing exterior lighting in their yards.

- Utilize a timer. Modern exterior lighting timers make it easier than ever to control the lights outside a home. Many such timers even adjust for the changing seasons and the shifting hours of daylight. That means homeowners shouldn't have to tinker with the timer once it's set.

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



Spring HOME





Safety first when power washing your home this spring

Spring cleaning is a great way for homeowners to clear their homes of clutter. As people spend extra time indoors in winter, items can quickly pile up around the house. Spring is a great time to clean up such clutter, but interior spaces are not the only areas of a home that can benefit from some extra attention once the weather warms up.

Harsh winters can take a toll on home exteriors. Dirt and grime can build up on exterior home surfaces over the course of the winter, affecting the appearance of the siding of a home as well as outdoor entertaining areas.

Power washing is a great way to give a home a fresh, clean look in spring. But there's more to power than simply renting the right equipment and getting to work. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes that there are many risks associated with using power washers. For instance, the CDC says strong spray from power washers can cause serious wounds that initially seem minor. However, such wounds can lead to infection or disability if left untreated. In addition, if manufacturer safety instructions are not followed, electric shock can occur due to improper use.

Homeowners who are intending to power wash their own homes this spring

should first determine if they're physically capable of doing so. Power washers can be difficult for some people to control, so it's imperative that homeowners honestly assess their physical abilities before renting a unit. The CDC urges homeowners who determine they can safely handle power washers to take these additional safety steps to make sure the process of cleaning their home exteriors goes smoothly.

- Never point a pressure washer at yourself or others.

- Do not attempt to push or move objects with spray from the washer. If anything is in your way, turn the power washer off and then move the obstruction.

- Never use a gasoline powered washer in an enclosed space, which can increase the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

- Always test the ground fault circuit interrupter (circuit breaker or outlet) before using a pressure washer.

- Always plug a properly grounded pressure washer into a properly grounded receptacle.

- If an extension cord must be used, keep the pressure washer's power cord connection out of and away from any standing water, and use a heavy duty extension cord with components rated for use in wet locations. Keep both the power

cord and extension cord connections as far away as possible from the item being washed and away from any water runoff. While power washing, periodically take note of the location of the extension cord connections to ensure they are not in a puddle.

- Wear rubber-soled shoes that provide some insulation when using the pressure washer.

- Never cut or splice the pressure washer's power cord or extension cords.

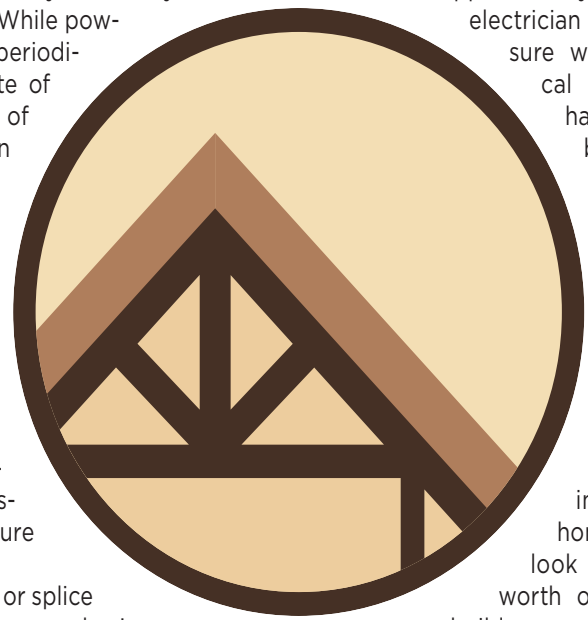
- Never remove the grounding prong from the pressure washer's power cord

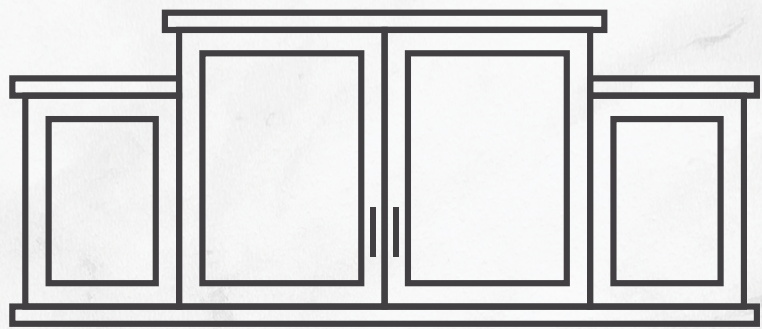
plug or the extension cord.

- Pause the project if a circuit breaker is tripped. Always have a qualified electrician check the pressure washer for electrical problems after it has tripped a circuit breaker.

- Never allow children to operate a pressure washer. Keep children at a safe distance when an adult is using a pressure washer.

Power washing can give a home a whole new look after a winter's worth of dirt and grime builds up on the home's exterior. Safety must remain the utmost priority when operating a power washer on your own.





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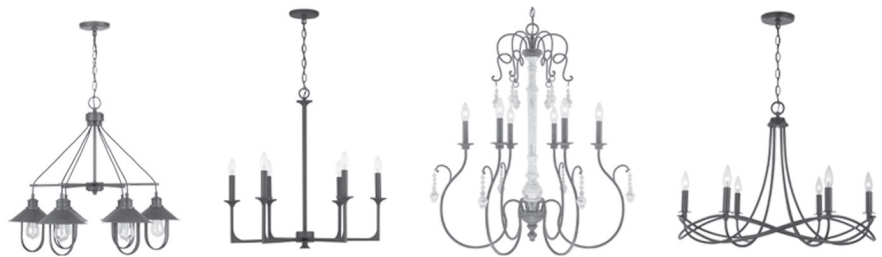
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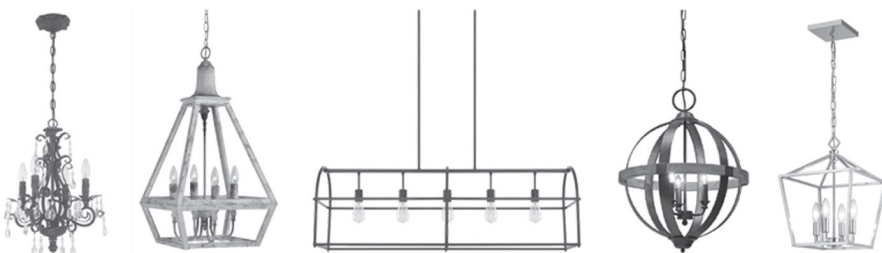


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How to prepare a garden for spring planting

The final weeks of winter, and even the first few weeks of spring, are still chilly in many parts of the world. Despite those last vestiges of winter chills, late winter is a great time to begin preparing gardens for the coming planting season.

Gardens may have to withstand months of harsh weather each winter, and such conditions can take a toll. Gardeners can consider the following tips as they try to restore their gardens and get them ready for spring planting.

- Disinfect your tools. It's common to clean tools in late fall or whenever they're typically placed in storage for the winter. But cleaning and disinfecting are not necessarily the same thing. If tools were not disinfected at the end of the previous gardening season, disinfect them before doing any work on the garden. Doing so can ensure any lingering bacteria or fungi on tool surfaces are killed prior to the beginning of gardening season. According to the University of Minnesota Extension, plant pathogens, including bacteria and viruses, can be transferred to and infect plants through bits of soil and plant debris left on shovels and pruner blades. Thoroughly disinfecting such tools prior to using them in the spring is a great way to reduce the risk of disease in your garden.

- Clear debris from garden beds. Leaves, twigs, sticks, and other debris may have gathered in the garden over the winter. Such debris can inhibit the growth of plants and vegetables, so make sure all of it is removed prior to planting. Weeds might even begin to sprout up in late



winter and early spring, so remove them before they go to seed.

- Test the soil. Testing the soil prior to planting can help gardeners determine what their gardens will need to thrive in the coming months. Garden centers and home improvement stores sell home testing kits that are effective and easy to use. Once the results are in, speak with a

professional at your local garden center about the best time to amend the soil.

- Loosen compacted soil. Soil can become compacted over winter. If compacted soil is not loosened prior to planting, plants will have a hard time getting the water and nutrients they need to thrive. Loosening the soil also provides another opportunity to inspect the garden for any

underlying issues, such as fungi or weed growth, that you may have missed when clearing debris or testing the soil.

Late winter is a good time to assess a garden and address any issues that developed over the winter so plants and vegetables can thrive come the spring planting season.



Lawn & Garden TIME



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 de-thatching, 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.



Exploring different backyard structures for individual tastes

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 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 "pergola," 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.

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.



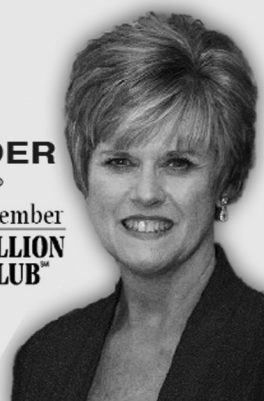
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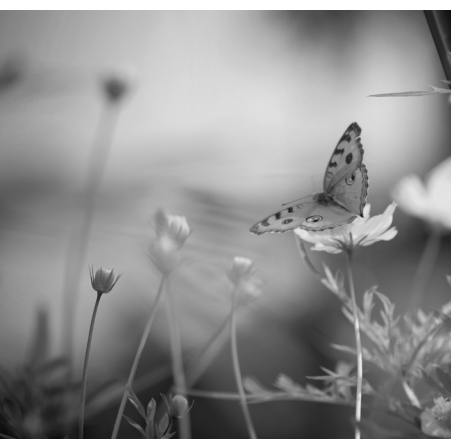
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How to garden from a wheelchair



Gardening is a wonderful activity that people from all walks of life enjoy. A garden full of fresh fruits and vegetables and/or beautiful blooms can instill a sense of pride in gardeners and turn their backyards into colorful, peaceful respites.

Anyone with the will to do so can plant their own garden, and that includes people who are confined to wheelchairs. Gardening from a wheelchair may pres-

ent some unique challenges, but such obstacles are no reason for wheelchair-bound gardening enthusiasts to steer clear of this rewarding activity.

In recognition of the challenges of gardening from a wheelchair, the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation offers the following tips to wheelchair-bound gardening enthusiasts.

- Match the garden to your abilities. The Reeve Foundation notes that trying to push beyond your limits can affect how much you enjoy gardening. Address issues that may impair how you can function in the garden, such as accessibility. For example, if the garden is far away from the physical structure of your home, you may feel exhausted by the time you get to the garden, which can affect your productivity and progress. Prior to starting a garden, consider the

potential that such issues may arise and then try to build a garden that makes it easy to overcome them.

- Consider raised beds. The Reeve Foundation highly recommends raised beds for anyone gardening from a wheelchair. When designing such beds, make sure they're narrow so they can be conveniently accessed from your wheelchair.

- Consider hanging baskets. Hanging baskets also can be a great option for anyone gardening from a wheelchair. Hanging baskets can provide aesthetic appeal inside and outside of a home, and such baskets can be accessed with a pulley system that makes it easy for gardeners to prune and water plants.

- Use specialized tools. The online medical resource Verywell Health notes that various manufacturers have rec-

ognized there's a market for adaptive gardening tools. Such tools make it easier for people in wheelchairs to indulge their passion for planting. Adaptive tools like trowels, cultivators and hoes can make it easier for gardeners to perform all the standard gardening tasks. Ergonomic adaptive gardening tools can help gardeners avoid the joint pain that can arise from using more traditional, non-ergonomic tools.

- Make it a team effort. Gardening with a loved one can make the hobby even more enjoyable for anyone, including people gardening from their wheelchairs. Seniors can garden alongside their grandchildren and/or friends who also have mobility issues, ensuring no one gets too tired or falls behind.

Anyone can enjoy gardening, and that includes people in wheelchairs.



Renovation trends that figure to be popular in the year ahead



Home renovation trends are ever-changing. Renovations that might have been de rigueur 20 years ago may seem dated now. Recognizing the potentially popular trends of tomorrow is a great way for homeowners to give their homes a fresh new look and put themselves in position to capitalize on popular trends when they put their homes on the market. That's especially so after 2020, a year when millions of people spent more time at home

than ever before. All that time working from home and relaxing at home gave millions of homeowners ideas about what they like about their homes and what they hope to change. The following are some renovation trends that various experts suspect could emerge in 2021.

•**Eco-friendly living:** Climate change, and how to combat it, was a hot button issue during the 2020 presidential election in the United States. So it should come as

no surprise that urdesignmag.com, a web magazine that showcases creative trends in design, architecture, art, technology, and fashion, predicts that eco-friendly living solutions figure to be hot commodities in 2021. Eco-friendly appliances, furniture and designs can help to conserve energy and reduce waste, which environmentalists and government agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency note are two critical components in the fight against climate change.

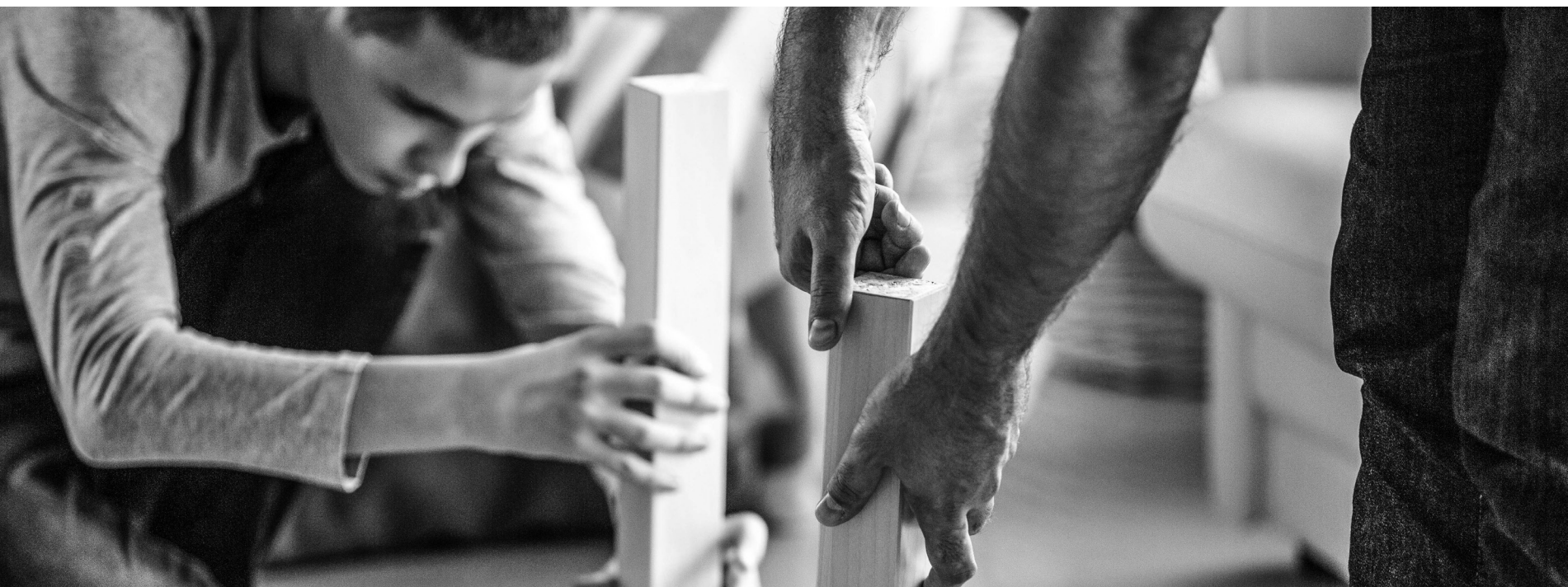
•**Large windows:** Large windows can provide stunning views of the outdoors and allow ample natural light into a home. It may not be a coincidence if large windows prove to be a hot trend in 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic that dominated much of 2020 forced many people to spend considerably more time at home. Darker homes without much natural light can adversely affect mood, especially when people are spending more time at home. HGTV predicts that homeowners will seek ways to bring more natural light into their homes in 2021, and large windows naturally brighten homes while making rooms appear bigger, helping people feel less cramped. That's an especially beneficial characteristic when spending more time indoors at home.

•**Minimalism:** The anticipated popular-



ity of minimalism in 2021 may also be connected to the pandemic. As professionals were forced to work from home and many families spent more time together inside their homes than ever before, they may have recognized a need to cut back on clutter, including extra furniture. A minimalist approach is both simple and clean, which can make homes feel less claustrophobic.

•**Multi-functional spaces:** Homeowners asked a lot of their homes in 2020, as rooms were transformed into multi-functional spaces seemingly overnight. HGTV notes that spending more time at home showed homeowners that it may not make sense to dedicate entire rooms of a home to a single purpose. Renovations that can help homeowners transform rooms into multi-functional spaces figure to be hot commodities in the years ahead.





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