

Tips and trends for homeowners, buyers and sellers

## Choosing the Right Grill



As the weather heats up, more opportunities become available to homeowners who enjoy cooking and eating outdoors. Having a grill in your backyard is a perfect way to eat well and entertain guests. But how do you know which grill is right for you? Consider these factors before you purchase or upgrade your grill.

- ▶ **Charcoal vs. gas**—Charcoal grills require charcoal or briquettes in order to cook, and they have air and cleaning vents at the bottom of the grill. These vents help control flames during use and remove residual ash after use. Gas grills come in two types, propane and

natural gas. For propane grills, you'll need to monitor gas levels and replace your tank when fuel runs out. For natural gas grills, you'll need to install a secure gas line hookup to ensure no gas leaks while you're cooking.

- ▶ **Grill location**—Another thing to consider is where on your property you'd like to place your grill. If you plan on cooking outdoors regardless of weather, consider placing the grill under an overhang to shield it from the elements. If your grill will be used for parties and events, think about the layout of your backyard and deck or patio to position it in a place that won't disturb guests.
- ▶ **Size and power**—Depending on what you'll be grilling, consider how large of a grilling surface area you'll need. If it's for personal or family use only, a smaller grill should suffice. If you're an entertainer, a larger grill with racks for different meats or food items to cook at different temperatures may work best. Remember that a more powerful grill doesn't always mean better—depending on the amount of food you plan to cook at a time, lower power or fuel output may provide a better and more even grilling experience.

## On the Fence—Is One Worth Installing?

For homeowners, outdoor space can be the most exciting—or most stressful—feature of a property. While everyone enjoys having extra room outside for activities and landscaping, the considerations vary considerably compared to maintaining the interior of a home. One feature you may be considering is a fence. Fences can provide some much-appreciated benefits but also can lead to headaches. What are the pros and cons of installing a fence on your property?

### POSITIVES

- + **Security**—A fence can help protect your home and outdoor property from people who may stray onto your land.
- + **Privacy**—Having a barrier allows for you and your friends and family to have a bit of seclusion from noisy or active neighbors.
- + **Aesthetics**—A well-designed and -constructed fence can add character and an attractive appearance to your yard area.

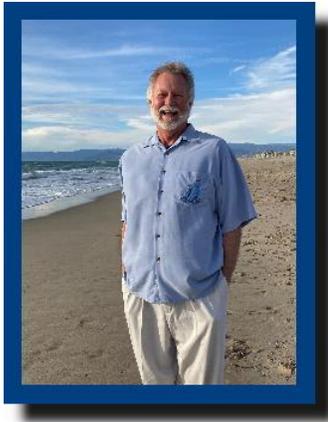
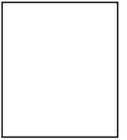


### NEGATIVES

- **Price**—Fences are not cheap, and construction of one (depending on the size of your property) can cost a few thousand dollars.
- **Maintenance**—Particularly with wooden fences, damage from the elements and natural aging can result in the need to replace or repair stretches of the fence.
- **Boundaries**—It sometimes can be difficult to determine where your property starts and ends, so be sure to communicate with neighbors to ensure a harmonious installation.



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## Tips for Maintaining Your Deck

A great way to create extra living space for your home is to add a deck to your yard this summer. But before you do, there are some helpful tips for deck maintenance you should take into account to ensure the safety and appearance of the structure.



**1**  
**Inspect**—You should give your deck a thorough inspection every year or two, looking for any boards that may be deteriorating or any nails that may need replacing. Once you've taken care of these problem areas, you've created a good baseline for further maintenance.



**2**  
**Clean**—First, sweep all large debris off the surface of the deck. Consider power-washing your deck to make sure all of the dirt and grime is thoroughly removed. You can use cleaning products on the wood, but be mindful of what you're applying. For example, bleach can help eliminate mildew; however, there's a risk of discoloring the wood, creating another issue to address.



**3**  
**Stain**—To make the natural beauty of the wood shine, you can stain your deck. Use a staining product that soaks deep into the wood, preventing peeling on the surface and potential future damage. Use a stain that is fully waterproof, so the wood does not sustain any water damage. Also, consider using a stain that has UV protection to prevent discoloration from the sun over time.



**4**  
**Seal**—For the final step, you must seal your deck to protect it. Make sure to shield all items near your deck with tarps or covers to prevent unnecessary damage. Also, be careful not to apply sealant too close to plants, as it may kill your greenery. Spray, roll or brush on sealant as evenly as possible across the surface. Brushing or rolling may be more precise, but takes more time to finish the area. Once the deck is sealed, be sure to wait 48 hours before using it or placing furniture on it. Then, enjoy the outdoors on your beautiful and safe structure!

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