

# HOME & GARDEN

MARCH 2025

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## HOMESTEAD GARDENS

**PAGE 16** Now celebrating the 15th anniversary of its Severna Park location, Homestead Gardens strives to be more than an average garden store.



### TIPS FOR MOSQUITO CONTROL

**PAGE 6** These insects hatch in gutters, plant container saucers, toys, buckets and small ruts.

### ESSENTIAL HARDWARE ITEMS

**PAGE 14** Be prepared for a leaky faucet, a broken door handle, or a minor home repair project.

### OUTDOOR LIVING DECK TRENDS

**PAGE 11** Outdoor decks can combine style, sustainability and comfort in the spring and summer.

### VIBRANT SHADOW GARDENS

**PAGE 29** Native plants support ecosystems and are the foundation of any sustainable landscape.



# Beyond The Kitchen: Screened Decks Without Limitations

**John Aliff**  
Bayrise Builders LLC



The modern home is all about maximizing the utility of all spaces, and a well-designed screened deck is a key feature that fits that concept. In the past, screened decks and porches were largely separated and secluded from the interior of the home, often accessible via a single exterior door. However, we've recently seen a shift toward the desire to have a seamless integration between indoor and outdoor spaces.

A screened deck directly accessible from the kitchen offers a prime example of this philosophy when the proper design and features are implemented. This concept elevates outdoor living beyond mere recreation, transforming it into a functional and enjoyable extension of your home.

A well-designed screened deck, positioned strategically off the kitchen when feasible, essentially doubles the usable space during warmer months. The screened aspect provides for a pest-free environment, preventing the annoyance of insects along with protection from the elements. While shielding against rain and excessive sunlight, it still allows for the enjoyment of fresh air and natural light. To really take this space to the next level, consider unique design choices to integrate the space with the interior of your home. For example, partially eliminate exterior walls by incorporating large sliding glass doors, French doors, bifold doors and/or various versions of pass-through windows to create a fluid connection that enhances cooking, dining and overall entertainment.

A pass-through window is a particularly unique feature, especially when incorporated

with built-in outdoor bars of sorts. Picture your interior countertops extending through the wall into the screened deck, with a large pass-through window open to combine the spaces. These pass-through windows come in many sizes and styles including awning windows, bifold windows, in-line fold-up windows, and French-door style casement windows.

The strategic placement of the screened deck also optimizes natural ventilation. Opening the kitchen pass-through windows and doors allows for cross-breezes, which can help cool the kitchen and bring in fresh air during the spring and fall months, in particular. This natural ventilation can also reduce the reliance on air conditioning, contributing to energy efficiency.

This high-level design concept, when paired with other features such as comfortable seating, ambient lighting, and perhaps even an outdoor fireplace, can create an inviting atmosphere that you'll be sure to use throughout all seasons.

*If this is something that you have been contemplating, reach out to the experienced team at Bayrise Builders by calling 410-561-6203. ■*







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# Navigating The Evolving Roofing Industry

## Understanding Insurance Changes And Market Trends



**Rob  
Calhan**

**Artie  
Hendricks**

**T**he roofing industry is experiencing significant transformations driven by a range of factors, including changes in insurance policies, advancements in material technology, and shifting consumer preferences. For homeowners and contractors alike, understanding these changes is crucial for making informed decisions. This article will discuss key questions about the current roofing market and challenges due to changing insurance dynamics.

### What recent changes have occurred in roofing insurance?

Recent changes in roofing insurance have shifted the landscape for homeowners. One notable change is that insurance companies are now more reluctant to offer coverage for older roofs, typically those over 15 years to 20 years old. This means that homeowners may face difficulties obtaining quotes for securing coverages. For instance, insurers are now more likely to require detailed inspections



and documentation before approving claims. This shift is partly due to a rise in severe weather events and the subsequent increase in claims, leading to higher costs for insurance providers.

Having a regular roof inspection is critical in Maryland due to the state's unique climate and weather patterns. Heavy snowfall, severe thunderstorms, hurricanes, and tropical storms — including nor'easters — are typical in our area. It is essential to review your homeowner's insurance policy to understand the specific requirements and recommendations for roofing inspections.

Don Kilcoyne is from GAF, North America's largest roofing manufacturer that produces quality, innovative roofing materials. He noted three trends GAF is seeing in the insurance industry. The first trend is rising deductibles. "In the past, it was typical for a homeowner to have a \$500 deductible and have replacement cost value (cost to replace at today's prices)," he wrote in an article. "A 2 percent-of-home-value deductible has become the standard in many markets and some insurance carriers are requiring deductibles as high as 5 percent. What this means is that an insured home of \$500,000 could have a deductible between \$10,000 to \$25,000. The reasons attributed to insurance increases could be due to climate change, inflation, materials cost, and risk aversion."

The second insurance trend that GAF notes is that there is a "move to basic and bare bones insurance coverage policies." This is where insurance companies limit what is covered by your policy. A third insurance trend GAF notes is that "replacement cost value policies are becoming less common as many companies are opting to offer actual cash value policies. One exception to this home insurance trend is that homeowners may be able to secure replacement cost value coverage on newer roofs."

### What does all of this mean to you?

Roofing contractors are evolving alongside these industry changes too. Many roofing companies are enhancing their customer service and communication efforts to assist homeowners navigate insurance claims. This includes providing detailed estimates, performing thorough inspections, and assisting with the documentation needed for insurance claims. Now more than ever, it is important for homeowners to regularly review their insurance policies and communicate with their insurance agents to understand the specifics of their coverage. It is also important for consumers to work with a reputable roofing company that has experience in dealing with insurance companies and the claims process should you experience a loss.

***A Landmark representative reviewed the insurance claims process with a homeowner.***

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## How can you best prepare for the future?

Homeowners should consider taking the following steps:

**Conduct Regular Roof Inspections** — Periodic roof inspections can help identify potential issues before they escalate into costly repairs.

**Maintain Open Communications with your Insurance Company** — Staying informed about your insurance policy to include changes and coverage options is important by regularly communicating with your insurance agent.

**Consider Upgrading** — If your roof is nearing the end of its life cycle, consider upgrading to more durable and energy-efficient roofing materials. In doing so, you may also qualify for better insurance rates. If you are unsure, contact a reputable roofing contractor to evaluate and provide status of your roof.

**Invest in Quality Materials and Contractors** — Choosing high-quality roofing materials and working with a reputable roofing contractor can make a significant difference in the longevity and performance of your roof. Seek a local roofing contractor who is licensed and insured. It is also important that your roofing contractor has earned high certification levels (such as Presidential Award Levels) from roofing material manufacturers as they have strict education and performance levels that are required for roofing contractors to attain these levels of certification.

Further, do your homework. Check the local Google reviews of your potential roofing contractor. Reading firsthand how the roofing contractor has performed is essential. Note the number of reviews and overall rating. Also check to see that your roofing

contractor has an A+ rating from the Better Business Bureau. It is important to work with a very reputable, certified, insured roofing company that will be an invaluable partner and advocate for you in navigating the insurance process.



## Summary

The roofing industry is undergoing significant changes, particularly in how insurance companies are approaching claims and coverage. For homeowners, staying informed and proactive with your insurance company and understanding your insurance coverage is important.

Landmark Roofing co-owner Artie Hendricks said, "Your insurance company can drop you if your roof is considered too old, as they view an aging roof as a significant risk due to potential for expensive

claims related to damage or leaks, especially if it's nearing the end of its lifespan; this is often considered a 'hazardous condition' that could lead to policy non-renewal or cancellation."

Rob Calhan, Landmark Roofing co-owner added, "Condition is crucial. Even if your roof is nearing the end of its lifespan, if it's well-maintained and shows no signs of significant damage, your insurance company may be more likely to renew your policy." ■

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# Seven Expert Tips For Mosquito Control



**W**e may not love all of the rain, snow and wetness that has inundated our area this past year, but we know of at least one insect that does — mosquitoes!

Mosquitoes require standing water for their eggs to hatch. Some species lay their eggs in dry areas but know it will be wet after a rainfall, while other species lay their eggs directly in water. Some species need only a teaspoon of water to deposit eggs into. They can hatch in places like gutters, plant container saucers, toys, buckets and small



ruts. Although not all water sources can be eliminated, homeowners can do their part in reducing the standing water on their property.

Homeowners can follow these tips or **seven T's** for mosquito control:

**TIP** A small bottle cap filled with water holds enough water for mosquitoes

to breed. Since mosquitoes breed in standing water, the elimination of standing water decreases a mosquito's breeding ground. The biggest offenders are bird baths, play sets with tire swings, tree houses, portable fireplaces and pits, and corrugated drainage piping. Have a tire swing? Drill holes in the bot-

tom of the tire to empty water or even replace the tire with a wooden or plastic swing. After every rain event, homeowners can walk around the yard and tip over containers holding water and drain piping.

**TOSS** Toss that yard trash, bag up those clippings and leaves, and make sure firewood is stacked neatly. Another helpful tip: build or install a firewood holder to be sure that your firewood pile does not trap water.

**TURN** Walk the yard every few days and turn over items that could hold water and trash. Look for children's portable sandboxes, slides or plastic toys; underneath and around downspouts; and in plant saucers, empty pots, light fixtures and dog water bowls.

*Continued on page 28*

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# The Hidden Danger: How Clogged Gutters Can Damage Your Home's Foundation

**Joshua Hahn**

Owner  
Guardian  
Gutters



cause to your home's foundation. Understanding this risk can help homeowners take proactive steps to prevent costly repairs.

**G**utters play a crucial role in protecting your home, yet they are often overlooked until a problem arises. One of the most significant yet underestimated consequences of clogged gutters is the damage they can

## How Clogged Gutters Affect Your Foundation

Gutters are designed to direct rainwater away from your home, but when they become clogged with leaves, debris, and dirt, water can no longer flow freely. This leads to overflow, causing excess water to pool around your home's foundation. Over time, this consistent water exposure can lead to serious structural issues, including:

- **Soil Erosion:** When water is not properly diverted, it can wash away the soil around your foundation, leading to shifting and instability.
- **Foundation Cracks:** Excess moisture can cause the foundation to expand and contract, creating cracks that compromise the integrity of your home.
- **Basement Flooding:** Water pooling around your foundation can seep into your basement, leading to mold growth, water damage and costly repairs.
- **Structural Weakness:** Over time, the continuous cycle of wet and dry conditions can weaken the foundation, resulting in uneven floors, sticking doors and wall cracks.

*Continued on page 24*



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# The Benefits Of Fiberglass Pools

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**Sean Locklear**  
CEO, Splash  
Fiberglass  
Pool  
Company

**W**hen adding a swimming pool to their backyard, most homeowners often debate between fiberglass, vinyl liner, and concrete pools. While each has its advantages, fiberglass pools stand out as a superior choice for durability, low maintenance and long-term value.

Check out all the benefits of fiberglass pools on page 26

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# Kitchen Trends For 2025

**Kristy Wallace**

Designer  
Severna Park  
Kitchen & Bath



**W**ith the new year underway, these kitchen trends are popular among homeowners so far in 2025.

## COLOR

Once again, color is king! We are seeing color in kitchen design everywhere, from accent colors in a backsplash to a full color-drenched kitchen. Appliance manufacturers are out of the supply chain dredge and are able to offer beautiful finishes in color. Likewise, cabinetry manufacturers have expanded their color palettes and are able to provide custom colors at a minimal upcharge. Green is still the top trending color nationally, and in our area, shades of blue and black, and some muted browns, fall into our top trending colors.



Color is trending in countertops as well. Classic marble designs in quartz are now incorporating blues and greens, while black stones in a matte finish offer drama to juxtapose the traditional white kitchen.

## BIOLITHIC ELEMENTS

Earth tones are still trending big in the pendulum swing from grays. Natural walnut, white oak and alder are still big this year.

*Continued on page 25*



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# The Benefits Of Professional Mulching And Plant Fertilizing

**Jay Hudson**  
Owner  
Evergreen  
Gene's



**M**aintaining a beautiful and healthy property goes beyond regular mowing and watering. Two essential practices that can significantly enhance the health and appearance of your landscape are mulching and plant fertilization. When done professionally, these practices offer a myriad of benefits that contribute to the overall well-being of your property.

Mulching and plant fertilization play a crucial role in improving soil structure and fertility. Mulch acts as a protective barrier that retains moisture, prevents soil erosion, and suppresses weed

*Mulching and plant fertilization play a crucial role in improving soil structure and fertility.*

*Continued on page 26*

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# Outdoor Living Deck Trends For Spring Creating The Ultimate Backyard Oasis



**Nicole Bailey**  
Fence & Deck  
Connection



## Eco-Friendly and Sustainable Materials

Outdoor living spaces have evolved from concrete patios or simple wooden structures to multifunctional spaces that serve as extensions of our homes. For spring and summer, outdoor decks offer an array of trends that combine style, sustainability and comfort. Whether you're looking to refresh your current deck or create a new outdoor retreat, here are a few outdoor living deck trends that you should be on the lookout for in spring and summer.

Sustainability continues to be a major focus in 2025. Homeowners are increasingly drawn to decking materials that minimize their environmental footprint while still offering durability and style. Composite materials made from recycled plastics and wood fibers are becoming more popular due to their low environmental impact and long-lasting qualities. These materials not only reduce waste but also require less maintenance than traditional wood decking.

Incorporating solar-powered

*Continued on page 18*

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# Eight Compelling Reasons For Soft Washing Your Home



**Alex Prevezianos**  
CheckMark  
Power  
Washing

**S**oft washing is an effective and gentle cleaning method that has gained popularity among homeowners who want to maintain the exterior of their houses. Here are eight compelling reasons why you should consider soft washing your home:

## 1 Protects Surfaces:

Unlike pressure washing, which can damage surfaces, soft washing uses low-pressure water combined with specialized cleaning solutions. This technique effectively removes dirt, mold and mildew without harming the integrity of your siding, roof or other materials.

## 2 Removes Algae and Mold:

Homes, especially those in humid

climates, are prone to the growth of algae, mold and mildew. Soft washing is designed to eliminate these harmful organisms from surfaces, helping to prevent potential health issues associated with poor air quality.

## 3 Enhances Curb Appeal:

A clean exterior can significantly improve the appearance of your home. Soft

washing removes unsightly stains and build-up, restoring the original beauty of your siding, roof and walkways. This enhanced curb appeal can also increase the value of your property.

## 4 Increases Longevity of Surfaces:

Regular maintenance through soft washing can

*Continued on page 28*



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# Essential Hardware Items Every New Homeowner Should Have

**Rick Miller**  
Park Hardware



**M**oving into a new home is an exciting journey, but it also comes with a set of responsibilities. One of the most crucial aspects

of homeownership is being prepared for any situation that might arise — whether it's a leaky faucet, a broken door handle, or a minor home repair project. To help you navigate these challenges, here's a list of essential hardware items that every new homeowner should have in their toolkit. These items can be found at your local community hardware store, where you can also get expert advice and the help you need for all of your new home projects.

## 1. Basic Hand Tools

Having the right hand tools available is key to fixing everyday problems around the house. These should include:

- **Hammer:** A standard claw hammer for driving nails and handling light demolition tasks
- **Screwdrivers:** A set with both flathead and Phillips head screwdrivers, including various sizes

- **Pliers:** Needle-nose and standard pliers for gripping, twisting and cutting
- **Tape Measure:** Accurate measurements are essential for do-it-yourself (DIY) projects, furniture placement, and any renovation work
- **Utility Knife:** Perfect for cutting through a variety of materials like cardboard, plastic and carpet

*Continued on page 20*



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# Should I Move Out During My Home Remodel?

**Steve Wheatley**  
50 East Remodeling



**N**ow that Old Man Winter is gone and spring is around the corner, it's time to get out that list.

What list? The list of home remodeling projects that you've been thinking about. Renovating your home can be

very fun and rewarding, especially once your project has been completed. But that may bring up the question, "Should I move out during my remodel?" The type of project will often dictate the answer to this question.

## **Complete Bathroom Remodel:**

If you have more than one bathroom in your home, this is no problem, but if you have only one bathroom, you need to plan showers at the gym or a friend's house. Your contractor can help by installing a toilet at the end of each workday at a cost. No need to move out on this project.



**Major Kitchen Remodel:** Once your kitchen sink is removed, the clock is ticking to get it back in place. Even if walls are being knocked down to make your kitchen bigger, there is no need to move out for this project. Appliances like your fridge and microwave can be temporarily moved around to accommodate. Paper plates and napkins will be your friend. This is also a great time to eat out locally.

**House Painting:** Painting your house can be one of the easier ways you can make a big change to your home. You don't have to move out for this project. Your contractor will help you by setting a plan. In most cases, we have customers remove their smaller, fragile items and then we move larger furniture to the center of the room while we paint and put it back. Even if you're painting every room in the house, this is something that can be accommodated.

**Refinishing Floors:** Real hardwood floors are beautiful, durable and very desirable. All furniture and items must be removed off of the hardwood floor. They cannot be moved around like when you're painting a house. You have to

*Continued on page 20*



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# HOMESTEAD GARDENS CELEBRATES MILESTONE ANNIVERSARY IN SEVERNA PARK

*By Meredith Winter*

“

It's hard to believe it's been 15 years,” Homestead Gardens owner Brian Riddle said of his Severna Park store's milestone anniversary approaching this spring.

Prior to Homestead Gardens opening its second of three garden stores in April 2010, Riddle shared that his father, Don Riddle — the company's founder who established its first location in Davidsonville in 1973 — had been eyeing Severna Park as an ideal location for expansion.

Don, who passed in 2011, recognized it as a great area even before opening the popular garden center on Ritchie Highway 15 years ago, and today Brian maintains his father's sentiment, noting that Homestead Gardens loves being in the Severna Park community.

With a wide selection of garden supplies, indoor and outdoor plants, farm and pet supplies, backyard birding items, boutique apparel, a pantry of specialty food items, and so much more, the team at Homestead Gardens prides themselves on being far more than an average garden store. But staff members agree that they are especially honored to be a community partner that is committed to giving back.

For over five decades, supporting the community has been a top priority for the Riddle family; today, Homestead Gardens supports over 100 local nonprofits, civic associations, schools and more each year.

Severna Park General Manager Aimee Miskimon shared that in 2024, she and her team were very proud of helping complete a beautification project at the American Legion Post 175. Homestead Gardens donated plants and products for the post's entryway, memorial flag garden and Gold Star memorial, and Miskimon said her team plans to work with the American Legion again this year.

Last year, Homestead Gardens also donated hundreds of saplings to Kinder

Farm Park, and in return, Miskimon said Kinder Farm Park's beekeeper hosted classes on beekeeping for Homestead Gardens' customers.

“That's probably the part of the job that I absolutely thrive on and love more than anything,” she said, noting that Homestead Gardens also hosts charitable events for schools, a large annual fundraiser in support of University of Maryland Baltimore Washington Medical Center, and more recently, pet adoption days.

Giving back locally isn't the only thing that has set Homestead Gardens apart from other big box and area garden centers over the years; former Severna Park General Manager Heidi Tyler, who now serves as a buyer for the company, highlighted the importance of Homestead Gardens being family-owned and operated as well. And, she noted, many employees have been with the company for a long time — herself included — and are passionate about what they do.

“It's a hard market to be in with changing times and everything, so you really have to set yourself apart,” Tyler said, stressing that the team at Homestead Gardens loves not only plants but also people.

“It's a form of hospitality,” she added, explaining that the staff desire to make customers feel welcome, as if they are being invited into a home, so that they want to come back.

Tyler shared that many people call Homestead Gardens their “happy place.” More than a store to run a quick errand, it has become a destination garden center where customers can not only shop for high-quality plants and garden supplies but also discover unexpected offerings like patio sets, specially curated gifts ranging from clothing items they won't find elsewhere to home décor sourced from around the world, and a children's area overflow-



ing with Jellycat stuffed toys for kids young and old. And, four-legged friends are welcome, too.

"Everybody knows us as a place they can bring their dogs. ... We have regular customers, but we also have regular dogs," Miskimon said, adding, "we do know them by name."

Plant enthusiasts appreciate the variety they discover at Homestead Gardens, whether that be rare houseplants they cannot find elsewhere, or exotic plants they've never even heard of. "We're really, really proud of our curated plant collection," Miskimon said.

A milestone within a milestone, the Rise Up Coffee Roasters café that opened adjacent to Homestead Gardens one year ago in February has been a significant boon for business. Tyler said the partnership between the two businesses — which are connected by an interior doorway — has created excitement and provided an opportunity for year-round growth. Homestead Gardens recently trialed a coffee and bouquet carrier, allowing customers to surprise their loved ones with two comforting favorites: coffee and plants.

With the advent of spring, Homestead Gardens has a plethora of events planned to help customers get their gardens and homes looking their best this season. Homestead Gardens' Spring Kickoff started March 7 and will continue through March 16, offering educational opportunities and promotions. The Easter bunny will be on hand for free photos at all store locations on April 13, and Herb and Veggie Weekend is slated for April 25-27.

Community members are invited to join Homestead Gardens in Severna Park for an all-day **15-year anniversary celebration on Tuesday, April 15**. The store will be open for extended hours, from 9:00am to 7:00pm, offering special promotions and activities including 15% off storewide, one-day deals, rounding up for charity, and tasty treats and beverages.

Homestead Gardens is located at 522 Ritchie Highway in Severna Park and 743 West Central Avenue in Davidsonville, with a third location in Delaware. To learn more about the store's specially curated product selection, upcoming events and more, go to [www.homesteadgardens.com](http://www.homesteadgardens.com). ■



*Homestead Gardens opened its doors in Severna Park in April 2010, building on the store's legacy that began in Davidsonville in 1973.*



Photos by Meredith Winter

**Homestead Gardens offers a wide selection of garden supplies, indoor and outdoor plants, Jellycats and kids' items, seasonal decor, a pantry of specialty foods, farm and pet supplies, and so much more.**



# Outdoor Living Deck Trends For Spring

*Continued from page 11*

lights and outdoor fixtures into deck designs not only enhances the atmosphere but also reduces electricity consumption. As technology improves, expect to see a wider range of solar-powered options for both functional and decorative purposes.

## Multi-Functional Spaces

Just a few years ago, the pandemic showed us that our outdoor living spaces are more than just spots for lounging. They're becoming multifunctional spaces where homeowners can entertain, work, dine and relax. Your deck is no longer limited to just a seating area — it's a whole lifestyle experience!

Outdoor kitchens are still a hot trend. From built-in grills and pizza ovens to fully equipped kitchens with sinks, refrigerators and storage, these spaces allow homeowners to cook, entertain and dine outside in style. As remote or hybrid work remains the norm for many, more homeowners are bringing their offices outdoors. Whether it's a small, quiet corner for reflection or a full-fledged outdoor office setup, the possibilities are endless.

And don't forget about a fire feature to ensure your deck is cozy year-round. Whether it's a modern gas fire pit or a traditional wood-burning fireplace, these features provide warmth and ambiance, extending the usability of your deck into cooler evenings.

## Heat-Mitigating Decking

With Maryland summers getting hotter, heat-mitigating decking materials are gaining momentum. These materials are designed to keep the deck cooler to the touch, making it more comfortable to walk on barefoot. Brands such as Trex and TimberTech are introducing composite decking materials that are specifically engineered to reduce heat absorption, ensuring that your deck stays comfortable even during the dog days of summer.

As we anxiously await the arrival of the spring and summer seasons, it's wise to start thinking how you can turn your outdoor living space into a versatile,

stylish, and sustainable environment that reflects comfort and functionality. Whether you're focused on eco-friendly materials, bold design choices, or multi-functional outdoor living, this year's deck trends are all about creating spaces where you can live, work and play while enjoying the outdoors.

*Ready to transform your deck into the ultimate backyard oasis? For over 34 years, Fence & Deck Connection has designed and installed high-quality fences, decks and screened porches for families in Anne Arundel County year-round. Contact Fence & Deck Connection at 410-757-5511 to learn more about its many fence and deck options customizable to your needs. ■*

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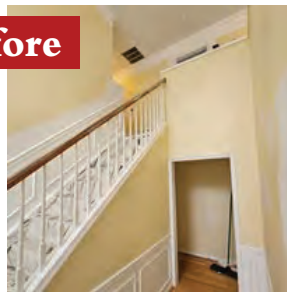


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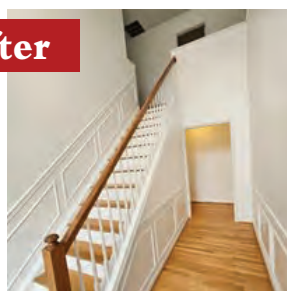
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# Why Remodeling A Kitchen Can Increase The Value Of Your Home



**Christopher Shaw**  
*Founder and President*  
 Precision Craft  
 Contractors LLC

**R**emodeling your kitchen is one of the most impactful home improvement projects when it comes to increasing your property's value. The kitchen is often considered the heart of the home, and its condition plays a significant role in a buyer's decision-making process. Here are a few reasons why upgrading your kitchen can boost your home's value:

## Enhanced Aesthetic Appeal

A modern, stylish kitchen can make

*Continued on page 22*



**The kitchen is often considered the heart of the home, and its condition plays a significant role in a buyer's decision-making process.**

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# Essential Hardware Items Every New Homeowner Should Have

Continued from page 14

## 2. Fasteners and Adhesives

A well-stocked collection of fasteners and adhesives is a must for quick fixes and larger projects.

### - **Nails, Screws, and Anchors:**

A variety of sizes for general repair, hanging pictures, and assembling furniture

### - **Wood Glue:** For woodworking projects and repairing wooden furniture

### - **Super Glue:** For quick fixes on broken items like ceramic, plastic or glass.

### - **Duct Tape:** A go-to solution for temporary repairs in almost any situation

### - **Electrical Tape:** Useful for quick, safe repairs on wires and electrical cords



## 3. Plumbing Tools

Plumbing issues often arise unexpectedly, so it's important to have the right tools to handle minor repairs:

### - **Plunger:** A must-have for unclogging sinks, toilets and bathtubs

### - **Pipe Wrench:** For gripping and turning pipes during plumbing repairs

### - **Adjustable Wrench:** Useful for tightening and loosening plumbing fixtures, faucets and pipes

### - **Plumber's Tape:** Used to prevent leaks in threaded plumbing joints

## 4. Home Maintenance Essentials

In addition to tools, there are a few other items that will come in handy for home upkeep:

### - **Level:** To ensure that pictures, shelves and furniture are hung straight

### - **Caulk Gun:** For sealing gaps around windows, doors and other areas to improve energy efficiency

### - **Ladder:** A sturdy ladder is crucial for tasks like cleaning gutters, changing light bulbs, or accessing high shelves

### - **Extension Cord:** Long enough to reach areas that lack convenient outlets

### - **Fire Extinguisher:** Keep one in the kitchen and other high-risk areas, just in case of emergencies

## 5. Unusual Hardware Items:

There are also a number of lesser known yet incredibly useful hardware items that can help make your life easier, improve your home's safety, and even prevent costly damage:

### - **Magnetic Wristband:** Holds screws, nails and small tools right on your wrist, freeing up your hands while you work

### - **Flexible Flashlight:** Has a gooseneck design, so you can twist it to direct light exactly where you need it — great for working in dark spaces like basements, attics or under furniture

### - **Wall Repair Kit:** Whether you have small holes from nails or larger cracks from settling, this kit typically includes spackle, a putty knife, sandpaper and a touch-up paint for a seamless repair

By stocking your home with these essential tools and hardware items, you'll be well-prepared to handle most home repairs and maintenance tasks. Not only will this save you money by avoiding the need for professional help, but it will also give you peace of mind knowing that you can quickly resolve problems as they arise. Start with these basics and expand your toolkit over time as your skills and needs evolve.

*Park Hardware is located at 500 Ritchie Highway, Suite A, in Severna Park. Learn more about its products and services at [www.parkhardware.com](http://www.parkhardware.com). ■*

## Should I Move Out During My Home Remodel?

Continued from page 15

be off of that floor for the duration of the work to let the stain and polyurethane dry. Therefore, you should plan on moving out of your home for this project for about three to five days.

**Home Addition:** This one can be tricky because it really depends on the scope of the work. If you are adding an addition off of the back of your house per se, you can most likely stay home for this project. Some projects can be built and framed before ever making a walkway or doorway into the new space. If you work from home, this is something you should plan around because of the noise and ruckus.

If you're getting into a second-story addition, part of your project planning and budget should be moving out temporarily. Aside from the dust and noise during a second-story expansion, your roof area will be covered with temporary tarps. Plumbing will be shut off to be relocated. You will have electric

shut off in parts of the house, which is inevitable because of the way wiring was previously run.

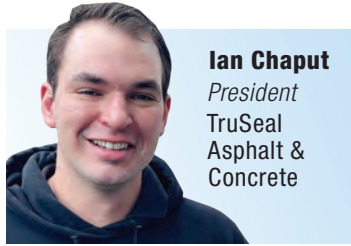
We had one family that had stayed in the home during their second-story remodel, and power was out in their son's bedroom for over a month. It was fun at first but then became a burden. If the family did the project again, they would leave for that large project.

Most companies give estimates for free. When meeting with your contractor, these are questions to discuss early on, especially depending on the size and scope of your project. In most cases, our customers and families stay home during the remodel. We work with them early to discuss planning around the inconveniences so they know whether to stay or whether to go.

*For more information about 50 East Remodeling, call 410-500-2266. ■*



# Key Questions To Ask Before Hiring Your Driveway Sealcoating Contractor



**Ian Chaput**  
President  
TruSeal  
Asphalt &  
Concrete

**C**onsider these questions to make the best choice when it comes to finding a contractor.

## 1. Are you a licensed and insured contractor in Maryland?

Contractor regulations and licenses are issued by the Maryland Home Improvement Commission. It is critical you hire a licensed professional because, as a homeowner, you will be protected under the Home Guaranty Fund. The

fund protects against “actual loss,” or in other words, incomplete or poor-quality work done by licensed professionals.

Additionally, any contractor performing work on your property should be properly insured with both business liability and workers compensation policies. This will give you peace of mind that if anything goes wrong, or the unexpected occurs, you are protected against any liability.

## 2. Do you send an invoice after the job is completed or do you require money/cash up front?

A contractor should understand that your time and convenience are valuable.

Make sure a proposal clearly stating the scope of work will be sent to you. For jobs over \$1,000, the Maryland Home Improvement Commission requires there to be a 33% payment. Once the project has been completed, you should get an invoice for the entire amount or the remaining amount if the project exceeds the \$1,000 threshold.

## 3. What material do you offer to your customers?

Your driveway is one of the first things people see and serves as the “welcome mat” to your property. Make sure you understand what is being applied to your driveway and how.

A quality asphalt emulsion sealer mixed with sand and fast-dry additives will properly

protect and beautify your driveway against harmful elements by forming a protective film on the surface of the asphalt pavement “aggregate.” These sealers are manufactured from byproducts of the petroleum distillation process with water to achieve the proper viscosity. This also means asphalt emulsion sealers are environmentally friendly since no volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are given off as the water evaporates from the sealer during the drying process.

Stay away from contractors trying to sell you on an “oil based” sealcoating application, which means receiving an inferior asphalt byproduct called “Gilsonite,” which looks

*Continued on page 22*



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# Key Questions To Ask Before Hiring Your Driveway Sealcoating Contractor

*Continued from page 21*

shiny but provides no protection for your driveway. Gilsonite is often spray applied and cut with environmentally harmful solvents that evaporate and eventually leave your driveway more brittle than before. Beware of many paving companies that will try to upsell you on sealcoating immediately following installation of a new driveway.

Contractors should avoid applying “coal tar” emulsion sealers as they have been banned in Maryland and Washington, D.C.

## 4. What is the expected wear life of your materials?

When hiring any contractor for your property, communication and setting expectations from the initial contact can make or break the experience. While prep work and overall quality of the job play huge roles in how long the sealer will last, let's face it – nothing will last forever. Areas with oil stains, heavier tire turning loads, standing water, or even areas more susceptible to falling tree debris may begin to show signs of wear first.

We recommend having your driveway sealed every two

to three years on average, depending on how frequently it has been sealed in the past. Newly paved driveways with a more porous surface will need to be sealed again following the first application within a shorter time frame compared to a driveway that has been repeatedly sealed.

## 5. What type of equipment do you use to apply materials?

When applying pavement sealers to an asphalt surface, for both residential and commercial applications, it's imperative your contractor is prepared for the job. Proper mix designs require the addition of silica sand into the sealer mix to add wear resistance and traction. The sealer must be continuously agitated prior to application to ensure the sand does not settle to the bottom. A 300-, 550- or 700-gallon tank trailer with hydraulic agitation control is often used by legitimate sealcoating contractors.

Stay away from anyone with “truck bed” setups, spray guns, or small tanks with thin material hoses. This often means the material they are applying is not mixed/agitated with sand or often is diluted to stretch the life and overcome having a smaller equipment setup.

## 6. What other jobs have you completed in the area recently, specifically in the past three years?

Ask your contractor for references within the community, look for reviews online, and check around for examples of job pictures to know what you will get with your service. Do your homework. Check other online sources like the Better Business Bureau.

## 7. What do you do to prepare the surface prior to sealing it?

Proper cleaning and prep work can make or break a quality sealcoating job. The sealer needs a clean surface to properly bond to.

Your sealcoating contractor should perform an assessment of the existing asphalt surface to evaluate what prep work and repairs are necessary prior to applying sealer. Any adjacent lawn or mulch areas should be edged back to expose the outside edges of your driveway. In some cases, pressure washing may be required to clean off heavy surface dirt and debris.

Following pressure washing, steel carbon brooms and industrial blowers should be

used to clean any remaining dirt as well as clean out larger open driveway cracks. The entire driveway is then blown off carefully to remove every loose piece of stone, dirt, leaf, etc.

A chalk line is snapped at the driveway end, so a detailed straight edge is left where the sealcoating application starts and stops. Lastly, oil stains should have a spot primer applied to them to encourage better adherence.

## 8. Will anything be placed to cordon off the driveway and how long do I need to remain off of it once you're done?

Although we can all admit nobody really likes to wait, it's critical your sealcoating application be left to dry and begin to undergo the curing process. Depending on the time of year and sun exposure of your property, this can be anywhere from a recommended 48-72 hours before returning your vehicles to the driveway. You will want to gently turn your tires for the first week or two to avoid tire marks while the newly applied sealer is most heavily curing.

Caution tape attached to stakes will be installed at the driveway entrance to close it off once the job is completed.

For additional information about asphalt maintenance services, go to [www.tru-seal-asphalt.com](http://www.tru-seal-asphalt.com). ■

# Why Remodeling A Kitchen Can Increase The Value Of Your Home

*Continued from page 19*

your home more attractive to potential buyers. Updating features such as countertops, cabinetry and lighting can transform the space, making it feel fresh and inviting. An aesthetically pleasing kitchen can elevate the overall atmosphere of your home, making it stand out in a competitive real estate market.

## Improved Functionality

A well-designed kitchen maximizes space and enhances workflow. By improving storage, replacing outdated appliances with energy-efficient models, and upgrading fixtures, you create a more functional and enjoyable cooking environment. Buyers appreciate a kitchen that meets their needs, and functionality is a key selling point.

## Return on Investment

According to many real estate experts, kitchen remodels typically offer one of the best returns on investment compared to other home improvements. Whether it's a small renovation or a complete overhaul, the money spent on kitchen upgrades often pays off when you sell your home.

Remodeling your kitchen is a smart investment that can significantly increase your home's value, while also enhancing your living experience. Whether you plan to sell soon or stay in your home long-term, a kitchen upgrade is an investment that pays dividends both now and in the future. ■



# Ten Signs That Your Roof Needs To Be Replaced



**Here are 10 signs that you need, or will soon need, to replace your roof:**



- 1 The roof is over 25 years old
- 2 You keep finding chunks of shingles in the yard after heavy winds
- 3 Shingles are missing in spots
- 4 Edges are broken or jagged
- 5 There are excessive sprinkles in the gutters or driveway
- 6 The lines or keyways are lifting or buckled

**Continued on page 24**

**Milt Ordakowski**

*Owner, Tiffany Renovations*



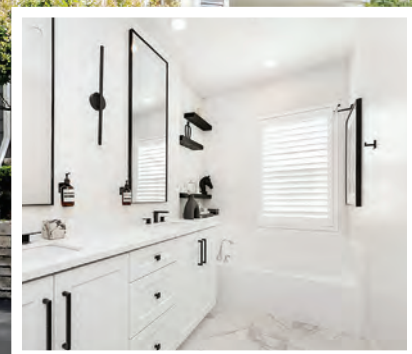
**Y**our home is one of the largest investments that you will make in your lifetime. Keeping that in mind, it would make perfect sense to protect it. You took care of your kitchen. You did the kids' room. You did your bathrooms. But did you look up and see how the roof looks? Most people don't, nor do they even know what to look for! If you wait until water is running in, it is too late.

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# How Clogged Gutters Can Damage Your Home's Foundation

Continued from page 7

## Prevention Is Key

The good news is that preventing foundation damage caused by clogged gutters is simple with regular maintenance and proper installation. Here are a few tips to keep your gutters functioning efficiently:

- **Clean Your Gutters Regularly:** Remove debris at least twice a year, especially in the fall and spring.
- **Install Gutter Guards:** These help prevent leaves and debris from accumulating, reducing the need for frequent cleaning.
- **Check for Proper Drainage:** Ensure that downspouts extend at least five feet away from your home to direct water safely away from the foundation or go into underground drains.
- **Inspect for Damage:** Look for sagging, leaks or blockages that could hinder water flow and address them promptly.

By maintaining your gutters, you not only protect your foundation but also preserve the overall health of your home. Ignoring gutter maintenance can lead to costly repairs, but with regular care, you can prevent water damage and ensure your home remains safe and structurally sound.

For more information, call Guardian Gutters at 443-775-2349. Make sure to ask for the owner, Joshua. ■

# Ten Signs That Your Roof Needs To Be Replaced

Continued from page 23



- 7 You find spider cracks in the shingles
- 8 There are leaks or water trails in the attic
- 9 Excessive moss is growing on the shingles

- 10 Leaks are evident on the ceilings or walls. This is usually what homeowners wait to see. This generally means that rotted wood is involved

I recommend a roof inspection on a regular basis to nip problems in the bud; it can be costly to wait too long. Call a roofing contractor to protect your investment!

Tiffany Renovations is locally owned by Milt Ordakowski. For more information, call 410-255-7312. ■

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# Kitchen Trends For 2025

*Continued from page 9*

Meanwhile, organic soft shapes like ogee and beaded profiles, along with arches, bring a fresh take on traditional design and merge with the grand millennial angle on design.

## MULTIFUNCTIONAL HIGH-TECH APPLIANCES

Homeowners can now choose from a variety of high-tech appliances like coffee-making refrigerators, steam ovens that microwave, and pizza ovens that air fry. With multifunctional appliances, gone are the days of cluttered countertops. Cooking has never been more inspiring, and with high-tech control, it has never been more precise.

## CLUTTER REDUCTION

One of our top requests is to “clear the clutter.” With pocket door cabinets and appliance garages, storing away small appliances like a toaster or coffee machine is a breeze. We are seeing butlers’ pantries off the kitchen that offer extra storage and space for appliances like overflow dishwashers and auxiliary ovens.

## LIGHTING

With advances in lighting technology, we can more easily integrate lighting into kitchen design. Clients love the aesthetic layer of lighting in cabinetry, appliances and even in backlit stones.

LEDs come in all shades to complement your home, and since they’re cool to the touch and last for years, they’re an effective way to elevate a kitchen design.

## PERSONALIZED DESIGNS

Most importantly, personalized spaces are trending for 2025. Clients want to come home to a space that welcomes them. Whether we’re finding the perfect spot to feed their furry children, choosing a layout that allows them to age in the comfort of their own home, or choosing the perfect shade of blue to cheer up their office space, we find that clients’ spaces are made great when they’re personalized.

*Trends come and go, but making a space personally yours ensures it will never be “out.” Severna Park Kitchen & Bath has a thoughtful team of award-winning designers here to help you with your kitchen project.*

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# The Benefits Of Mulching And Plant Fertilizing

*Continued from page 10*

growth. Fertilizers, on the other hand, provide essential nutrients that the soil might be lacking, ensuring that plants receive the nourishment they need to thrive.

Healthy soil leads to healthy plants. With the right balance of nutrients, your plants will grow more robustly, producing lush foliage and vibrant blooms. If your plants receive the correct nutrients in the right proportions, that care will promote optimal growth.

Mulch retains soil moisture by reducing evaporation. This means you can water your plants less frequently, conserving water and reducing your utility bills. In addition,

healthy, well-fertilized plants are more drought-resistant, requiring less water to stay green and thriving.

Organic mulches, such as shredded hardwood, can help prevent the spread of pests and diseases by creating a physical barrier between the soil and plant foliage. Fertilizers can also strengthen plants' natural defenses, making them less susceptible to diseases and pest infestations.

Not all mulches are created equal. A gardening expert can help you choose the best type of mulch for your specific needs, whether it's organic mulch, like shredded hardwood, or inorganic mulch, like gravel or stone. Each type has its own set of benefits and

considerations.

Applying mulch and fertilizing plants correctly is crucial for reaping their full benefits. An expert will know the best times to apply fertilizer, depending on the plant species and the specific nutrient requirements.

Each property is unique, and so are its plants' fertilization needs. This tailored approach ensures that your landscape receives the exact nutrients it needs, without the risk of overfertilization.

Mulching and fertilizing aren't one-time tasks. They require regular maintenance to ensure continued benefits. You will want to refresh mulch layers and adjust plant fertilization schedules as needed,

keeping your property in top shape.

Investing in professional landscape services can transform your property into a healthy, vibrant oasis. By enhancing soil health, promoting plant growth, conserving water, and preventing pests and diseases, these practices offer long-lasting benefits that go beyond mere aesthetics.

*Trusting Evergreen Gene's to handle these tasks ensures that your landscape receives the care and attention it deserves, leaving you with a beautiful and thriving property to sit back and enjoy. Go to [www.evergreengenes.com](http://www.evergreengenes.com) or call 410-766-6877 to schedule a free estimate. ■*

# The Benefits Of Fiberglass Pools

*Continued from page 8*

## Durability and Longevity — Like A Boat!

Fiberglass pools are constructed from a durable, nonporous material that resists cracking and wear over time. Unlike concrete, which can develop surface issues like chipping or rough textures, fiberglass maintains a smooth and comfortable finish. This durability means fewer repairs and a longer lifespan, making it a wise investment for homeowners. A boat, like the ones you see in our beautiful Chesapeake Bay, is mostly built using fiberglass. They last a long time, and the cold doesn't affect them!

## Lower Maintenance and Cost Savings

One of the biggest concerns with pool ownership is ongoing maintenance. In Maryland, the average pool owner spends between \$3,500 to \$5,000 a year when paying a company. Fiberglass pools naturally resist algae growth due to their nonporous surface, reducing the need for excessive chemicals and cleaning. In contrast, concrete pools require frequent resurfacing and scrubbing, and vinyl liner pools need periodic liner replacements. Over time, fiberglass pools

save homeowners thousands of dollars in maintenance and upkeep.

## Quick Installation

A significant advantage of fiberglass pools is the installation speed. Unlike concrete pools, which can take months to build, fiberglass pools are pre-manufactured and installed in as little as two to three weeks. This means homeowners can enjoy their pool sooner, without extended construction delays.

## Energy Efficiency and Comfort

Energy is becoming more and more expensive. Fiberglass pools retain heat better than concrete pools, making them more energy efficient. This can lead to lower heating costs, allowing homeowners to extend their swimming season without excessive energy bills. Additionally, the smooth gel coat finish of fiberglass pools is gentle on feet and hands, making it a more comfortable option for families with children.

## Eco-Friendly and Sustainable

As sustainability becomes a growing concern, fiberglass pools are an environmentally friendly option. Their nonporous structure reduces the need for chemi-

cals, and their longevity means fewer replacements and less waste compared to vinyl liners. Additionally, many fiberglass pool manufacturers use eco-conscious production methods, making them a responsible choice for environmentally aware homeowners.

## Aesthetic Appeal and Customization

Modern fiberglass pools come in a variety of shapes, sizes and colors, offering homeowners the ability to choose a design that complements their backyards. Built-in features such as tanning ledges, benches and even spa additions make fiberglass pools a versatile and attractive choice. There are over 200 options.

## Conclusion

For homeowners looking for a pool that combines beauty, efficiency and long-term value, fiberglass pools are an excellent choice. Their durability, ease of maintenance, and quick installation make them a standout option compared to concrete or vinyl alternatives.

*To learn more about Splash Fiberglass Pool Company, call 410-541-4410, go to [www.splashfiberglasspoolcompany.com](http://www.splashfiberglasspoolcompany.com) or stop by the office at 537 Ritchie Highway, Suite 2G, in Severna Park. ■*



# Picking Plants That Work To Ward Off Bugs

**By Julia Price**  
Creators.com

**A**tired-looking wall or a dull bedroom can be instantly transformed into a colorful oasis just by adding plant life. But looking good isn't the only gift these green gods have to offer. In fact, there are specific plants that keep pests out of your home. And if that wasn't impressive enough, some plants serve another function as well — adding great flavor to your cooking!

## Herbs

Basil, lavender and rosemary not only taste great but also will keep the flies away. Basil specifically works to prevent flies and mosquitoes from inhabiting your living quarters and should be planted close to your house doors or outside in areas where you host frequent gatherings.

Lavender bushels can be placed in vases throughout your home.

While we tend to find the scent of lavender calming, it has the opposite effect on mosquitoes, moths, fleas and flies.

Rosemary works to ward off mosquitoes and other insects that tend to feast on vegetable plants. If you have an indoor garden or small patio lot, consider adding some rosemary, as well.

## Flowers

Although many flowers are only available seasonally, try a rotating assortment of flowers that can add pops of colors, attract human eyes and deter unwanted pesky guests.

Chrysanthemums are reasonably priced, come in a variation of bright colors, and their protective range is quite extensive, naturally repelling fleas, bedbugs, roaches, ticks, lice, spider mites and more. You can plant them in spaces where natural filtered bright light (avoid direct light) hits, like a window, and keep the temperature between 60-80 de-



grees Fahrenheit. Chrysanthemums also filter the air, removing toxins.

Marigolds produce an odor that repels rodents, flies and worms. When planting marigolds indoors, they require at least 10 hours of light per day. Placing them by a window that gets sunlight most of the day is ideal. While they generally survive best in a greenhouse, if you keep your home's tempera-

ture between 70 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit year-round, they'll have a good chance at a long plant life.

## Houseplants

The talent of the Venus flytrap is given away by the name itself. As soon as a fly or mosquito lands on it, the "mouth" of the flytrap will snap shut, killing the gnat or other insect by trapping it inside. Place these plants in bright, indirect sunlight such as a windowsill. They tend to be bright green with a reddish pink hue to differentiate the trap, or mouth, of the plant.

Sage bushes can cleanse your home of insects. Place your sage plant near indirect light, either near a window or glass door.

Before you purchase any chemical-filled, human-made bug spray or deterrent, remember that nature often offers better solutions. Your reward will be healthier lungs and pretty plants instead. ■



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# Eight Compelling Reasons For Soft Washing Your Home

Continued from page 12

extend the lifespan of your roof, siding and other exterior components. By preventing the buildup of organic matter that can cause decay and deterioration, soft washing helps protect your investment.

**5 Environmentally Friendly:** Soft washing uses biodegradable cleaning solutions that are less harmful to the environment compared to traditional harsh chemicals. This makes it a safer option for your landscaping, pets and local wildlife.

**6 Saves Time and Effort:** The soft-washing process is efficient and less labor-intensive than scrubbing surfaces manually or using pressure washers. This means you can achieve thorough cleaning in a shorter amount of time without the need for extensive physical effort.

**7 Prevention of Future Growth:** Soft washing kills mold and algae at their roots, which means they are

less likely to return quickly. This preventative approach helps to maintain a cleaner home for longer periods, reducing the frequency of cleaning needed.

**8 Professional Results:** Hiring a professional soft-washing service ensures that your home receives the best possible care. Experienced technicians understand the nuances of the process and have access to specialized equipment and solutions, resulting in superior results that homeowners may struggle to achieve on their own.

In summary, soft washing is a gentle yet effective method for maintaining the cleanliness and integrity of your home. From protecting surfaces to enhancing curb appeal, the benefits are numerous, making it a worthwhile investment for any homeowner looking to keep their property in top condition.

For more information, contact locally owned and operated CheckMark Power Washing at 443-848-0581 or visit [www.checkmarkpowerwash.com](http://www.checkmarkpowerwash.com). ■



**443-758-0067**  
[www.blakesasphaltllc.com](http://www.blakesasphaltllc.com)

# Tips For Mosquito Control

Continued from page 6

**TARP REMOVAL** Many homeowners have tarps or covers on items in their outdoor spaces. If not stretched taut, the tarps are holding water. Check tarps over firewood piles, portable fireplaces, recycling cans, boats, sports equipment and grills. Use bungee cords to keep tarps tight.

**TREAT** Utilize a mosquito elimination barrier treatment around the home and yard. Using a barrier treatment at home reduces the need for using DEET-containing bug spray on the body.

**TAKE CARE** Home maintenance can be a deciding factor in property values and mosquito bites. Regularly clean out gutters and make sure the downspout is attached properly. Regrade areas where water stands more than a few hours, and make sure that all fallen branches and hollow trees or logs are removed from the property. Check irrigation systems to ensure that they are not leaking and causing a breeding haven. Keep your lawn height low and weed areas maintained.

**TEAM UP** Despite taking all precautions in your own home, talking with neighbors is a key component to mosquito and tick control. Education and knowledge can be used not only for your own yard but also for open spaces and community owned areas.

For more information about Mosquito Squad of Annapolis, visit [www.mosquitosquad.com](http://www.mosquitosquad.com) or call 410-317-8385. ■



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# Thrive In The Shadows: Cultivating Vibrant Shade Gardens



## Heather Yetzbacher

Landscape Designer and Production Planner  
KW Landscaping Inc.

**M**aryland is a dense state, covered with trees and vines introduced by travelers for nearly 400 years. With such a rich history, using native plants is essential to supporting our local ecosystems. Native plants are the

foundation of any sustainable landscape — they symbiotically assist pollinators, provide food and shelter for wildlife, and help maintain soil health. By choosing natives, we strengthen the bond between our gardens and the environment, creating spaces that thrive naturally.

So, how can we help sustain the Earth in this opaque shade that most of us share?

## Here are my top 10 favorite native plants that flourish in low-light conditions:

- **Jacob's Ladder** (*polemonium reptans*)  
A delicate groundcover with fern-like foliage and clusters of blue flowers. Thrives in moist, well-draining soil
- **Summersweet** (*clethra anifolia*)  
A fragrant summer blooming shrub that attracts pollinators
- **Doghobble** (*leucothoe fontanesiana*)  
Not widely known, but this small shrub produces strings of tiny, bell-shaped flowers. It is an excellent evergreen option for year-round interest as well
- **Cardinal Flower** (*lobelia cardinalis*)  
A vibrant red blooming perennial that adds a pop of elegance to any shady spot. A favorite among hummingbirds
- **Virginia Bluebells** (*mertensia virginica*)  
A spring blooming perennial with sky blue, bell-shaped flowers. This beauty disappears into the soil once the summer heat hits (almost like a bulb), so be sure to plant summer-loving companions nearby to compensate
- **Lizard's Tail** (*saururus cernuus*)  
With arching spikes of fragrant white blooms, this perennial thrives in consistent moisture. An ideal choice for pond-side gardens
- **Golden Ragwort** (*packera aurea*)  
A super low-maintenance perennial, forming a carpet of yellow in the spring
- **Creeping Sedge** (*carex laxiculmis*)  
A hardy perennial with seafoam green blades that pop beautifully against the deep shadows of the shade
- **Foamflower** (*tiarella cordifolia*)  
A wonderful native alternative to hostas, with soft white blooms and attractive, deeply lobed foliage
- **Fern species** (*polystichum acrostichoides*, *osmundastrum cinnamomeum*)  
These native ferns thrive in shady areas, providing year-round texture and an ancient woodland feel to any space

Although natives are a must, a shade garden isn't just about the plants — it's also about the ambiance. Incorporating pathways with stepping stones, small water features, or even seating areas can turn these spaces into serene retreats. Pairing lush greenery with textural elements like wood, stone and mulch ensures that your shaded space feels intentionally designed rather than neglected.

Local stone quarried out of Marriottsville, Maryland, are a fantastic contrast against the monotony of foliage in shaded

areas. Their mica-filled texture allows them to stand out in dark places and reflect light, adding structure and interest to the space.

I encourage all Marylanders to glance outside their kitchen window and take action to transform overlooked dark spaces from a pile of leaves into a woodland oasis — all while giving back to the land that gives so much to us.

If you have questions about these plants or about stone, email [heather@kwlandscaping.com](mailto:heather@kwlandscaping.com). ■



# Native Plants

## Nature's Problem Solvers

### Elizabeth Elliott

Owner  
Himmel's  
Landscape and  
Garden Center



**P**ollinator populations are globally in decline. By now, most of us know that native plants provide specialized feeding and breeding sites required for the survival of these tiny beings that we rely on for our food, economy and culture. Planting even a small container of native perennials like milkweed, turtle-head, coneflower or mountain mint can make a difference.

Did you know that native plants can do more than just contribute to the survival of pollinators?

Take erosion, for instance. Erosion is a natural process caused by water, wind and gravity, but it is exacerbated by development, deforestation, climate change, and inappropriate management of stormwater and runoff. If your property is succumbing to erosion, you can use native plants to mitigate the harm and prevent further damage.

Partridgeberry is a creeping, mat-forming

ground cover that is effective in controlling erosion on shady, wooded slopes. Native sedges like tussock sedge, plantain-leaved sedge, and Pennsylvania sedge are popular for erosion control and adapt to a variety of sun tolerances and soil types.

Itea, commonly called sweetspire, is a shrub that grows by suckers to form thickets of beautifully colored foliage that bursts into fragrant, four-inch spikes of white bloom in late spring. Many native plants form deep underground root systems that retain soil and control erosion while providing bloom, fragrance, color and a home for wildlife.

Feeling the heat from climate change? The effects of climate change are real, exhibited by an overall warming trend, extreme temperature fluctuations, and severe weather events. Locally, the effects of global warming contribute to oak decline, the introduction of new pests and fungal diseases that negatively impact plants, and a shift in our plant hardiness zone from 7b in 2012 to 8a in 2023.

The easiest way to fight climate change is to plant trees! Trees pull carbon from the atmosphere during photosynthesis, cleaning the air while providing the very oxygen we breathe. Plus, planting a diverse selection of native trees can create

desirable shade and provide food and shelter for pollinators, birds and wildlife.

Red maples are workhorses for fighting climate change, with large leaves that boost photosynthesis levels and root systems that adapt to various soil conditions. Generally, oaks are host to more caterpillars than any other tree, 532 species to be exact. The stately willow oak is an important species for wildlife food production, and shelters blue jays, red-headed woodpeckers, flickers and other songbirds and raptors, while enhancing the landscape with beautiful fall color. The Eastern red cedar is a gorgeous native evergreen that provides shelter for over 30 native moths and butterflies to complete their breeding and egg-laying cycle.

Native plants can also be used to create an edible landscape, control drainage issues, contribute to soil health, and provide beautiful, beneficial screening.

*The team at Himmel's believes that small efforts can make a big difference in creating a better, healthier and more beautiful world. Contact Himmel's at 410-255-7730 or [elizabeth@himmelsgarden-center.com](mailto:elizabeth@himmelsgarden-center.com) to find out how you can use native plants to make a difference in your backyard. ■*







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**Himmel's Landscape and Garden Center** is the area's leading resource for native plants! Himmel's carries an outstanding selection of native perennials, shrubs, and trees to add color and diversity to the landscape. Ask our friendly staff how to use native plants to attract pollinators, control erosion, manage stormwater and drainage issues, and contribute to a better, healthier, more beautiful world!



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