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HOME REMODEL MAGAZINE

LEHIGH & NORTHAMPTON COUNTIES

Volume 3 Issue 6



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TABLE OF CONTENTS



10

Add the Space You Always Wanted With a Finished Basement

From spacious living areas, playrooms and offices to specialty rooms like home gyms, movie theaters and wine cellars, the opportunities are endless.



14

Get Organized With Victory Closets

While an organized closet may seem like a job too big to take on, Greg Ahart, owner and founder of Victory Closets focuses on making a high quality product with a design process that's easy for the homeowner.



18

It's A Great Time to Replace Your Windows and Doors

Upgrading your windows and entry doors can not only give your home an instant facelift, but they can also enhance your comfort level, provide you with energy-efficiency and more security year round.



24

Decks Elevate Your Outdoor Living Year Round

If you are thinking about expanding your home's living space with a beautiful deck, now is the perfect time to get started.



28

Summer Trends You Will Want to Know About

This upcoming season, the advent of Summer brings along with it a different perspective of design trends just begging to be brought into your home to make it prettier, more organized and even more functional.

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Add the Space You Always Wanted With a Finished Basement



Photo courtesy of G Contracting & Design



While the housing market is booming and home prices continue to climb, it's a great time to add even more value to your home. And if you are finding yourself short on space, transforming an unfinished basement into a habitable zone is a smart way to establish extra square footage. From spacious living areas, playrooms and home offices, to specialty rooms like home gyms, movie theaters and wine cellars, the opportunities for expansion are endless.

Your first step is to decide exactly what functions the new subterranean level should perform. You can prioritize this list of features by dividing it into 'must have' and 'nice to have' categories. Taking this approach will also help you keep a firm grip on budget as the project progresses.

Once you've established your priorities for the remodel, it's time to track down a remodeling contractor who understands your vision for the space. Ask around friends, neighbors or colleagues who have recently had any work done to see if they can provide recommendations. Remember, it's not just about selecting the right contractor who has the shiniest portfolio of projects, either. You need to track down a

professional who you can communicate with effectively throughout the course of the project - personality can therefore be an important factor in your decision.

When you're getting your basement refinished, why not go all the way to making it look like a fully finished room. Decorative touches like shelving and trim and crown moulding can go a long way to making the space feel less like a basement and more like an exquisite living space. A finished basement doesn't need to be one big room. Add dividers like barn doors or decorative archways to delineate spaces and make your basement that much more multi-functional.

The Space You Always Wanted

Giving yourself more space with a finished basement gives you plenty of options for how to use the space. Maybe you always wanted a walk-in closet or home office that just wouldn't fit in your upstairs floor plan. Now here's your chance! Here's some other popular basement room options:

- Recreation room with built-in wet bar
- Additional bedroom or guest bedroom
- Full apartment space/In-Law Suite
- Extra Full Bathroom
- Home Gym
- Wine Cellar
- Playroom for kids
- Game Room



- Home Office
- Exercise Room

Things to Know Before You Finish Your Basement

Although a finished basement might sound like just the answer. There are some factors to first consider. Namely your space's capacity and the cost of such a remodel. Allentown's G Contracting & Design creates both finished basements and home additions for residents in the Lehigh Valley. Operations Manager Sasha Roethlein has some advice for homeowners considering a finished

Cont'd on pg. 12 >>>

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basement. “Be realistic with your expectations. Many times people don't realize the expense that goes into a finished basement. It seems simple, but that's not always the case.” She explains that the most basic finished

basement project, which includes framing, drywall, flooring, and ceiling, usually costs around \$40,000 plus. “If you want to add in a bathroom, which a lot of people do, and you don't have the plumbing rough, then that's going to add to the expense, if we're going to have to create those

plumbing lines.” Adding HVAC to the room can also add additional time and expense to a basement project. She adds that luxury vinyl flooring is now the most popular choice for finished basement flooring because it is not only waterproof but looks attractive in many color/texture options.

Include Storage Solutions

Before you had a refinished basement you probably used your basement for storage of pretty much everything. Many of those items like decorations and out-of-season clothing and bedding will still need a space to go. That's where built-in storage comes in to hide the bins and boxes from cluttering up your new living space. Consider under the stairs and built-in cabinetry to maximize your space.

Now that you're armed with some essentials on how to remodel and finish a basement, you'll be able to tackle your home project head on ■



Photo courtesy of G Contracting & Design

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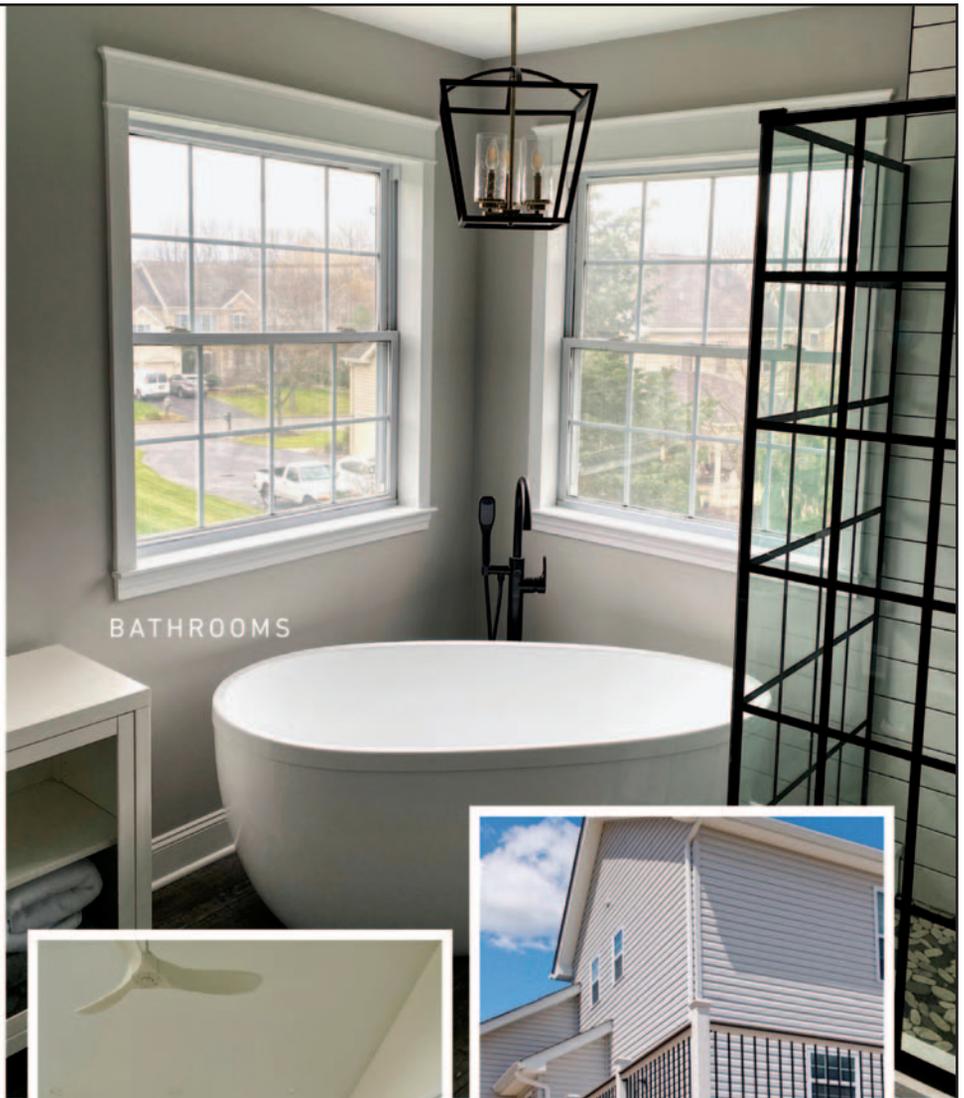
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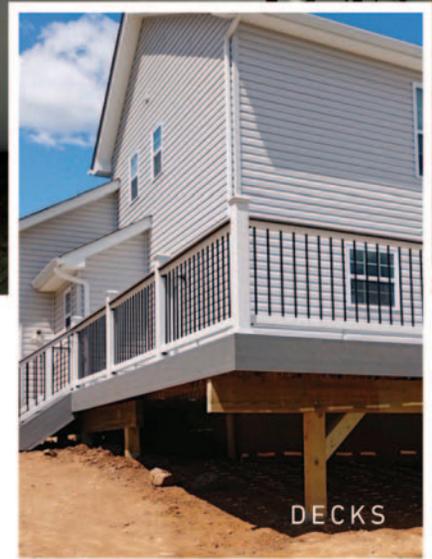
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Get Organized with Victory Closets



Even the tidiest homeowners can struggle with closet organization. Closets fit everything from shirts to shoes, dresses to pants to miscellaneous storage, which means that they can quickly become messy. While an organized closet may seem like it's too big of a job to take on, there are many closet organization companies that can get the job done for you. Greg Ahart, owner and founder of Victory Closets knows a thing or two about closets. With over 30 years of experience as a builder and cabinet maker, Ahart focuses on making a high quality product with a design process that's easy for homeowners. No sales tactics, straight forward pricing, free designs and estimates plus a unique

system that doesn't lock you into a single design is what sets Victory Closets apart from other closet systems.

Designed and built in Pennsylvania, Victory Closets is a local company. Ahart, a Berks County resident, engineered and improved his idea for a new custom closet system over the span of several years and ultimately received a patent in 2015. His goal was to create a modular design that had the look, feel and quality of a custom-built closet, while keeping it simple and easy to reconfigure, as well as, affordable for the average consumer. With its patented closet organizer solution, you can have a beautiful, durable, sensibly-priced closet storage with the flexibility to



change as your needs change. No tools, no fasteners, and no commitments to a single custom design layout. He also wanted the flexibility to use the system for a variety of storage needs: walk-in closets and reach-in closets, pantries, mudrooms, linen closets and laundry rooms. Ultimately, Victory Closets could reconfigure your closet layout, whenever, and however you wanted.

Victory Closets has now installed hundreds of closets and expanded to three locations in Pennsylvania, serving homeowners, builders/remodelers, professional organizers, and interior designers. "Our patented custom closet design gives you the versatility to easily reconfigure your closet layout, whenever and however you want, without tools or fasteners," explains Ahart. "Installation takes only a few hours and once it's installed, you can easily move parts around within the system at any time. You can also add on later by purchasing additional parts, like extra drawers, rods, or shelves and they simply plug into your closet system without needing any skill or tools."

Another feature that sets Victory Closets apart from other systems is that it is wall mounted rather than floor mounted. "It takes less material to create the same storage," says Ahart, "so you save on materials. Moldings



are not removed, and flooring can easily be replaced later without the hassle of removing your closet system."

Customizing your closet is part of the fun and with Victory Closets' guidance you can make it as personally functional as you'd like. Some of the accessory options you can choose from include drawer sets constructed of solid hardwood with dovetail joinery and smoothly functioning soft-close glides, two-tiered jewelry drawers with felt-lined dividers, belt/scarf racks, glide-out mirrors, tie racks, valet rods, pull out wire baskets, hampers and glide

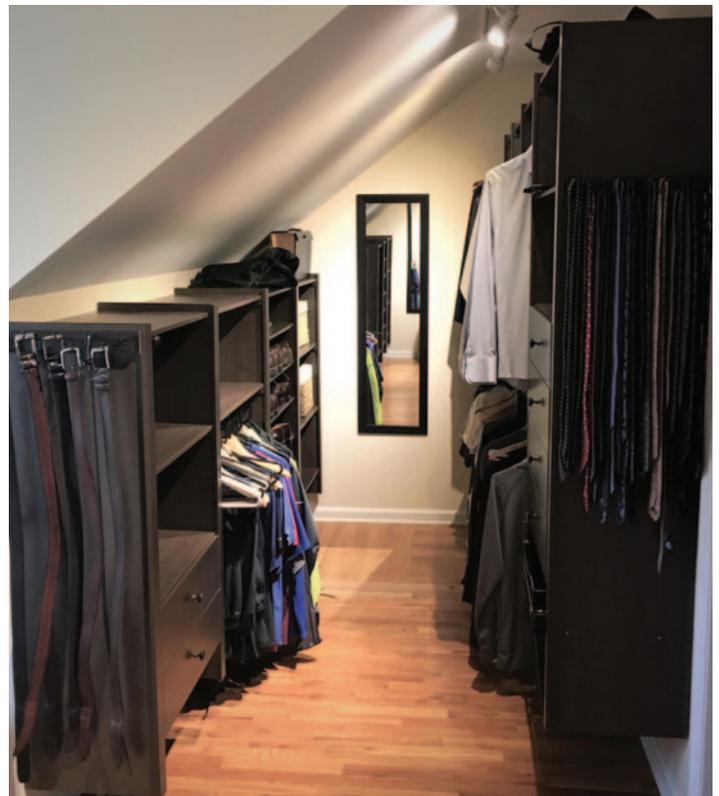
Cont'd on pg. 16 ▶▶▶



out shelving, which is especially helpful for heavy and hard-to-store items. You can also create a vanity/desktop area and add shoe storage dividers to maximize your space and showcase your collection of shoes or purses.

“The design process consists of three simple steps,” explains Ahart. “First, customers send us the dimensions of the closet or room they want to customize along with their overall needs for the space and their choices for color and hardware finishes. “We’re also here for a free in-home design consultation if you need a little added help,” says Ahart. “Next we design your closet layout, and we supply you with a 3D rendering and price quote.” Ahart says that this is when clients can make changes or adjustments and receive updated renderings. “Finally, once we’ve completed the design, all that’s left to do is to schedule your free installation!” With an easy design, free installation and reconfiguring process, Victory Closets has everything you need to make your closet organization project a huge success ■

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It's a Great Time to Replace Your Windows and Doors

Summer is always a great time to take care of those home upgrades you were putting off during the colder months. And if you swore you'd never deal with another year of cold drafts coming from your windows, then read on! As



Photo courtesy of Master's Home Solutions

you know for many of us, our lifestyles significantly changed in 2020, prompting homeowners to renovate to accommodate these changes. With more people working from home, children learning at home and families staying home, many window and door remodeling trends emerged to reflect this reality. Homeowners are renovating with a desire for, more natural light and ventilation, indoor to outdoor accessibility and noise reduction. And upgrading your windows and entry doors can not only give your home an instant facelift, but they also enhance your comfort level, providing you with energy-efficiency and more security year-round.

Make a Great First Impressions with a Stylish and Safe Entry Door

The front door has its role in the curb appeal of the house and is, therefore, an very important element. Besides

being the gateway to your home, it helps provide the first exclamation mark of your homes design. According to Remodeling.com, upgrading an Entry Door in the Mid-Atlantic region adds an average of 71% resale value from what is invested in the project,” explains Jared Hinkle Marketing Manager for Lehigh Valley’s Master’s Home Solutions, which provides windows, doors, gutters, roofing, and siding to homeowners throughout the region.

Hinkle points out that currently there are some exciting trends in entry doors. Today’s doors offer great energy efficiency, which means they keep the cold outside during the winter months. “Wood-grain and hand-stained products with gorgeous glass options are currently popular. They include decorative glass with hand-soldered coming to add curb appeal and truly make a home unique.”

New Door Technology Provides Many Benefits

In terms of security and smart home features, entry doors can now come equipped with Ring Doorbells and automated locks, making them even more convenient than in years past. “Look for composite frames/jambos that fight against rotting that can make a door look terrible and allow air, water, and insects to infiltrate the home doing unseen damage to the structure of the home,” adds Hinkle.



He also points out that new technology has made entry doors even more energy efficient. So if your door is many years old, it might be time to enjoy the benefits that newer, more insulated materials can provide. “Recent studies show 70% of heating is lost through windows and doors in an average home,” adds Hinkle. “Some unbelievable advancements in entry door technologies battle against air infiltration with triple sweep systems, auto-adjusting thresholds, and foam-filled slabs.”

Cont'd on pg. 20 >>>



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Photo courtesy of Alderfer Glass Co. and ProVia

Larger Windows

By increasing the size of your windows combined with proper positioning, your windows can add adequate natural light and more ventilation to your home. Windows are trending toward spanning entire walls by combining windows to create floor to ceiling glass. The trend is toward taller, wider windows and broader expanses of glass. With today's energy efficient insulated windows these glass walls are a popular option. Homeowners can renovate a room by replacing windows by simply increasing the size of the window opening to accommodate

a larger replacement window. "More customers are going with functional differences and variety, not just the standard double-hung colonial window that dominated for decades," says Ben Weaver, President of Alderfer Glass Co. "This can include slider and casement windows, as well as other options like garden or projected windows. We are also seeing more variation in grid placement in the windows, and patterns that people are choosing, as architectural styles have gotten more diverse. Colors are another area of change, as darker window colors like black and forest green are gaining popularity against the old standards like white and beige."

Indoor-Outdoor Seamless Access

For several years now connecting the indoors to the outdoors has been a building and remodeling trend. During the pandemic it's become a priority! Confined to home, homeowners have made improvements to their outdoor spaces, they now want easy access to these sanctuaries and safe gathering spaces. Adding modern sliding glass doors or hinged patio doors to a ground floor wall can help to bring more elements of the outdoors in. These type of doors are a great way to marry your outdoor living space perfectly with your interior rooms, giving the illusion of one large space.

Lastly, many homeowners are thinking about replacing their windows to save on heating costs and eliminate annoying drafts with contemporary windows. Or you may

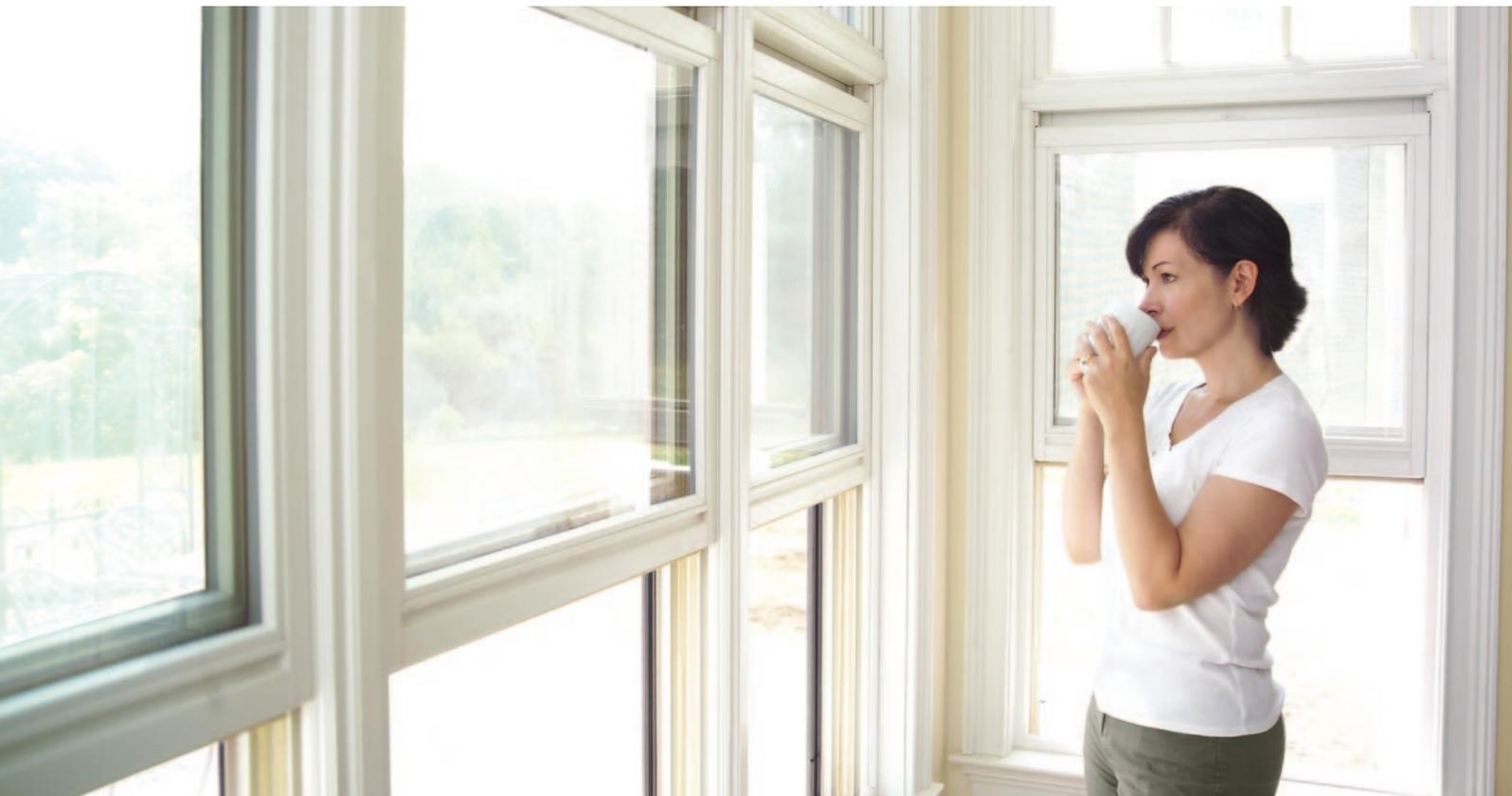


Photo courtesy of Master's Home Solutions

be looking for windows that help with noise control, or are easier to open, close and lock, and more convenient to clean. Whatever your reason, here's a few of the most popular trends for window upgrades in 2021.

1. "Dark windows." Black frames arrived on the scene a few years ago and now they are the epitome of on trend for a variety of different interior and exterior styles ranging from modern farmhouse to traditional.

2. Great warranties. "Best quality windows carry warranties that are lifetime, non-prorated guarantees for glass breakage, labor, seal failure, and hardware - transferable to the next homeowner," explains Hinkle.

3. Windows that open up your space. Adding sliding glass doors, hinged patio doors or large format windows to a ground floor wall can help to bring more elements of the outdoors in.

4. Vinyl windows are effortless and come in many options. They don't require any painting or upkeep for them to continually look beautiful for years. Now they're being offered in a wider array of colors and styles, all with their trademark low-maintenance and high energy-efficiency.

If you're considering replacing your entry door or windows, it's best to get a quote from a local company you can



Photo courtesy of Alderfer Glass Co. and ProVia

trust who has years of experience and great reviews from satisfied homeowners. You should first receive a free estimate and options that fit your price range. Installation of windows and doors can be tricky but pros are able to provide a quality installation in the shortest time possible ■

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DECKS

ELEVATE YOUR OUTDOOR LIVING ALL YEAR ROUND

Photo Courtesy of Sequoia Out Back

There's no doubt that a deck can add significant value to your home. Essentially it's like increasing your home's square footage with an elevated outdoor living space. And with strong and durable decking materials available to all homeowners, you can make your new deck more usable year round. If you've been thinking about expanding your home's living space with a beautiful deck that's just outside your patio door, now is the perfect time to get started. Composite decking products have been on the market for more than 20 years. Since that time there have been innovations in installation, materials and manufac-

turing that have improved the appearance, performance and cost of these products. But the reality is, not all composite decking is the same and sometimes you can't discern quality from pricing — so how do you choose? Here are some of the most important factors to consider when considering a composite deck.

Materials

There are many different choices of composite decking today — ranging from the variety of colors and textures to stability and comfort. All composite decking is made

from unique combinations of natural wood fibers and plastic. However, the type of plastic and the product mix may vary significantly by manufacturer.

Typically, manufacturers use either recycled polyethylene, PVC or polypropylene plastic to give material its superior resistance to moisture and mold growth. In general, these plastic composites tend not to splinter and crack over time like pressure treated wood. Because of its widespread availability and low price, polyethylene plastic used to be the popular choice among manufacturers. However, over the past several years, there has been a demand for improved performance from composite decking materials, including better structural strength, stain and fade resistance and cooler temperatures underfoot. Polypropylene is much less brittle than polyethylene plastic, making it a stronger material ingredient. Its superior resistance to chemical absorption and high melting point mean that composite decking made with polypropylene increases durability, stain resistance and is cooler underfoot.

Capped vs. Uncapped

Earlier versions of composite decking were uncapped — meaning the board was made up of the same material throughout and did not have an outer coating to offer added protection. This made deck boards more susceptible to damage and fading. Today, high-quality composite decking is capped, meaning that there is a tough outer layer surrounding the inner material.



Using your Under-Deck Space for Storage

Decks are meant to be lived on, and not under. However, an elevated deck could afford you not only great views, but storage space, too. Not all decks will come with room for storing your outdoor belongings beneath your feet, but those that do have their perks. If you have never considered the difference an open vs. closed under deck could make when it comes to storage, consider the benefits, plus how to use the space wisely.

Open vs. Closed Under Deck

Before deciding whether a closed under deck is right for you, it's important to know the benefits of each style. Open under-deck space allows you to see what's going on down there. If your home is located in a rural area, for instance, it may be smart to leave the under deck open so that you can see what's going on under there when needed. Additionally, an open under deck allows for easy

Cont'd on pg. 26 ▶▶

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access to anything you may need that is attached to your home, such as a hose or faucet, outlets, and more. And if your yard is on the smaller side, an open under deck could create a more spacious look by allowing your eye to continue past the deck, rather than being cut off by a wall of lattice. Furthermore, an open under deck could make yard work much easier since your lawn mower and trimmer don't have to stop at the screen.

On the other hand, a closed under deck may allow you to prevent things from getting under your deck. With lattice and Decorative Screen Panels (more on that below), you'll be able to keep animals (and people!) out and all of your belongings in, while still looking stylish. Seasonal items like deck furniture and pool floats, as well as yard equipment and tools can easily be stored under your deck for easy access when needed. And don't forget about privacy—instead of keeping things out in the open, they'll be securely stored away for safe keeping. While an open under deck does allow for easy access to a faucet or outlet that may be attached to your home, you can still access these details with a closed under deck—they'll just be behind a screen.

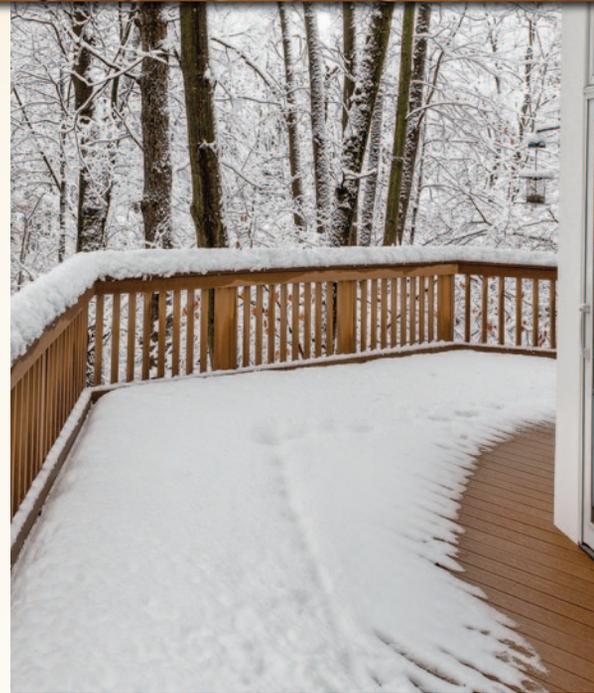
Under-Deck Space: Functional and Stylish

The main perk of under-deck space is that it's additional storage space for your home. Chairs that don't fit in the garage? Put them under the deck. No shed for lawn equipment? Put it under the deck. The space is perfect for storing items you just don't have the room for,

allowing you to enjoy a more organized home and yard. Just keep in mind that the deck won't be waterproof, so wet weather could impact your items stored there.

Even better, a closed under deck allows you to get more creative with your deck.

Lattice and Decorative Screen Panels both offer a stylish design that can accentuate your yard while still concealing your items.



The Final Verdict on a Closed Under Deck

A closed under deck isn't right for everyone, but it can offer a level of security for your personal items, storage space, and a chance to add even more style to your yard.

Composite Decking Is Durable in Cold Weather

Homeowners in cold weather climates or regions with extreme temperature swings need outdoor decks that can withstand the elements. From freezing temperatures to snow and ice, the right deck will rally back in time for spring and the sizzling summer heat. Your best choice? Composite decking and here's why.

These are the key reasons why composite decking can tolerate cold temperatures and winter weather. They are:

Stability - Unlike traditional lumber, composite decking contains a high percentage of inert plastic material, so it is much less likely to expand and contract in response to changes in temperature or moisture levels.

Quick drying - Composite decking typically dries much faster than a traditional lumber deck because water has a hard time adhering to and absorbing into it. Composite decks are also manufactured so precisely that they are less likely to have indentations or other imperfections where water may pool up and be slow to dry.

Mold and mildew resistant - Another attribute that helps composite decking maintain a high-quality appearance year after year is its built-in resistance to mold and mildew. When natural pollutants like pollen, dirt, and debris remain on outdoor surfaces (trapping moisture beneath), there's the potential for mold growth. Because very little adheres to composite decking, most dirt and debris can be easily swept away by the wind. Occasionally washing with warm soapy water and a soft bristled brush will quickly remove any remnants of previous seasons, too.

Splinter resistant - Unlike traditional pressure treated (PT) decking, composite decks are not prone to cracking or splintering. Machined to a precise, uniform edge, it's much more difficult to damage a composite deck board when removing snow with a plastic-edged shovel. Traditional lumber, on the other hand, may suffer from small nicks and splinters that can ultimately lead to water absorbing into the wood, causing the board to eventually rot.

Strength - A properly framed composite deck can hold the weight of more than 3 feet of snow so homeowners can rest easy knowing their deck will safely withstand winter storms.

Long life span - One of the biggest benefits of composite decking products is that they simply last for a very, very long time.

Before utilizing the space, make sure your deck is built with the right support to prevent it from settling, and consider ways to waterproof it to prevent flooding and other water-related damage. With the right support and design, a closed under deck allows you to use otherwise wasted space in very smart ways.

The Benefits of Scheduling Composite Decking in the Fall

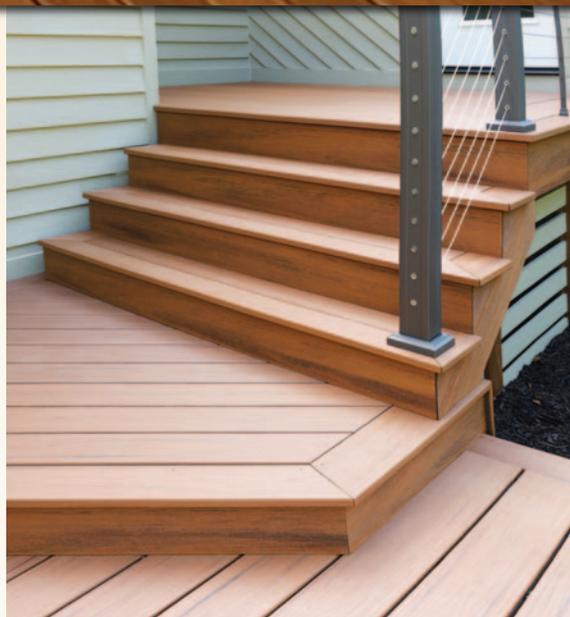
Lastly, homeowners can benefit by scheduling their deck building project for late Fall because it reduces the impact on the landscape. Heavy equipment used for site preparation and excavation work can sometimes damage lawns and other vegetation on the property. However, as summer turns to fall, the natural cycle of most outdoor plants has shifted from growth to dormancy. That means that any exterior damage caused by high foot traffic or construction equipment will more easily be absorbed and later repaired the following Spring.

The caveat is that, while most outdoor construction projects can continue well into the Fall, freezing ground temperatures can make it more difficult to dig post footings for your new deck. The good news is that if you are building or resurfacing a new deck with composite decking, its inert ingredients will enable it to be installed regardless of the time of year, or temperature. Resistant to moisture, polypropylene composite decking experiences only minimal expansion and contraction from one season to the

next, meaning that even if the decking is installed on a 35°(F) day in November, it will remain solid, safe and secure in June when temps hit 90°(F).

So, go ahead and contact a few local professional decking companies now and know that you'll most

likely end up with a better looking, less expensive deck to enjoy next Summer ■



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Summer Trends

You Will Want to Know About

Is it just me or is spring and the thought of summer hitting you differently this year? After a long winter of social distancing and lockdowns, the prospect of sunnier days ahead is getting a lot of people excited, myself included. And the advent of a new season almost always brings along with it a different perspective of design trends just begging to be brought into our homes to make them prettier, more organized, and even more functional. Get ready because there's a lot of stylish stuff to look forward to right now. Some of these home trends are somewhat established, while others are new to the scene but sure to be absolutely everywhere before the sun sets in summer.

Accessories

Get ready to welcome a more-is-more attitude to your

entire home because decorative accents are back and better than ever. Collectibles and tchotchkes, which were once reserved for strategically styling the shelves of





bookcases, are now dotting every room, and, if the rise of trends like maximalism is any indicator, homes are about to get a bit more crowded (in a good way). Our new Zoom lifestyle brought with it the need for styled backdrops and with it those added accessories. It seems everyone is looking for ways to add pops of color and dimension to a room, which is driving the demand for art, books, objects, accents and colorful pillows.

Worn Wood Tones

If you take a look at the aesthetics trending in design these days they all have one thing in common: well-worn wood. From vintage French provincial nightstands to expansive 19th-century farm tables, wooden pieces with perfectly aged patinas are bigger than ever this season. Raw or reclaimed wood is a quintessential way to bring warmth and organic beauty to your design. The tones and imperfections of raw or reclaimed wood can add their own unique dimensions to your spring and summer interior design. And it's totally sustainable and eco-minded. Think of it this way: You're skipping the store in favor of shopping secondhand and giving a previously loved piece a new lease on life. Plus, with tons of shipping and supply issues due to COVID-19 still impacting the design industry, it's a great way to furnish or upgrade your house right now instead of waiting months for a new item to come in.

Wallpaper Everywhere

Put down the paint brush, and pick up the... paper. Yes, you heard right; wallpaper is back! Before you cringe, modern patterns, faux-texture, and easy application make the 2021 version of wallpaper feel, on the whole, very fresh. Whether it's used on a ceiling, on the back of a bookcase, or as a zoom backdrop, wallpaper is absolutely transformative, and I think we're all in the mood for transformation currently. Stick to small or mid-

Cont'd on pg. 30 >>>



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scale patterns to add a punch to your room without overwhelming the space.

If you're a commitment-phobe when it comes to home decor, fear not. You can still get in on this seemingly permanent design trend. More and more companies are launching temporary wallpaper lines, which has helped to make the application more mainstream. Peel-and-stick wallpaper has been updated to reflect modern textures and patterns. It's a quick and affordable way to update your decor without having to make a huge commitment. And there are plenty of designs that will fit anyone's style from bold oversized florals to edgy fun animal prints.

Entertaining Essentials

With the world slowly but surely safely opening back up, hosting a small group of loved ones is going to be top-of-mind for nearly everyone this summer. Entertain-

ing essentials are going to be in huge demand this season, as well as accessories that help people make better use of your outdoor entertaining spaces this summer. Grab a few crowd pleasers like a colorful set of wine and drinking glasses, chic melamine dishware (perfect for outdoors!), or that killer fire pit you've had your eye on all year.

Calming Colors

Now that winter is well behind us, it gave rise to a slew of new favorite shades that evoke the calm and ease of the outdoors, even when you're stuck inside. Earthy colors such as sage green, taupe, and dusty blues will be everywhere this spring and summer. Bringing in colors that remind us of nature can help create a calming sanctuary to your indoors. Try swapping some of your accessories like bedsheets, throw blankets, or couch pillows for styles in these shades for a subtle yet noticeable change in your environment. Typically chill rooms, like your bedroom or bathroom, are usually the perfect space for shades like this, but who couldn't benefit from a shot of calm in a home office nook or kitchen, too? ■



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