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*Under these
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than ever.*

A MODERN

Homeowners with older pools are updating them with amenities like **sun shelves, water features and slides.**

TOUCH



BY MATT COSENTINO

It is quite understandable for homeowners to have envy for neighbors with stunning pools in their backyard, even during normal times. But with the COVID-19 pandemic severely limiting entertainment options these days, the jealousy factor will surely be multiplied this spring and summer.

Vacations have been put on hold if not completely canceled, certain parks and community pools are off limits for now and walks around the block count as a special treat. Under these circumstances, having a pool to splash around in is even more meaningful than ever.

“[Some] beaches are closed—who knows when they’re going to open up again—and when they do, people might not want to be next to each other,” says Dominic DiCesare, general manager at Blue Haven Pools & Spas by Calvitti. “Everybody’s life has changed and things are starting to go back to how they were 50 or 60 years ago. People are not running around; they’re not doing travel sports [with their kids]. I think people are going to just hang out at their house.”

With that being the case, now might be the perfect opportunity for those with an

existing pool to do an update and bring it into the modern era. Amenities like water features, sun shelves and spas can all be added to make it even more enticing.

We spoke to several of the experts to learn more about the popular add-ons their customers are looking for and how feasible these projects are.

Making a splash

Homeowners who had pools installed 10 to 15 years ago may not have included the bells and whistles that are common with today’s

Choosing the Right Fence to Surround your Pool

When installing a pool, it's always fun to think about design elements like sun shelves or slides. But an important feature that should not be overlooked is the fence that must surround the pool or yard by law. There are several different styles to choose from and certain requirements that must be met.

"It varies by state and there are a few that are more strict than others," says Kelsey Gilinger of Montco Fence & Superior Structure. "For the most part, it really depends on the style of the fence. A lot of customers think it's just the height that matters, but different styles have different features both horizontally and vertically, so each style has its own code."

Mark Patrick of FenceUSA explains that many local municipalities adopt the national pool codes set forth by Building Officials and Code Administrators, or BOCA.

"Gates need to swing out away from the pool area; the latch has to be 54 inches above grade, or ground level; and the fence has to be at least 4 feet high," he says. "The interesting thing is, there are rail and picket space requirements too. You can have a 100-foot high fence and it wouldn't necessarily pass



pool code if it's climbable. It depends on how far apart the horizontal rails are."

Both Gilinger and Patrick estimate that about half of their customers choose to fence in just the pool area, and the other half put the fence around the entire backyard.

"It really just depends on the money they want to spend, the layout of the house—if they have enough room to just enclose the pool—and if they have dogs or babies," Gilinger says.

That decision will also impact the type of fence the client chooses.

"If you're just doing it around the pool, you're probably going to order an ornamental aluminum fence or a spaced vinyl fence that you can see through. You're not going to want to put up a wall around the pool," Patrick says. "Others who get a pool want to put a fence around the whole yard because they want some privacy from their neighbors. People are going to be walking around in bathing suits and they might not want people watching them. So they would get a privacy vinyl fence or a privacy wood fence."



A MODERN TOUCH

pool. For that reason, many companies have seen an uptick in renovations in which these amenities can bring an extra wow factor to the backyard.

"The last couple of years that is growing in popularity," says Mike McCool, general manager of Swim-Mor Pools & Spas. "Rather than just doing the straight coping/tile/plaster renovation, people are adding sun shelves, spas and raised wall water features with sheer descents. They're modernizing their pools to incorporate everything the new pools that are being built now have. All of the stuff that can be done to a new pool can be done to an existing pool."

Along with raised walls with sheer descents, other trendy water features include deck jets, fountains, cascades and waterfalls. These come at different price points to fit most budgets.

"The biggest add-on that we do is water features," says Rich Cording Sr., the founder of CLC Landscape Design. "People like to add waterfalls to an existing pool to jazz it up. We do all kinds of waterfalls, from very naturalistic to very formal."

McCool adds that while some water features, like a raised wall, are rather straightforward, others can get pretty complex.

"Waterfalls can be added, but you still have to get a plumbing line to it, which is usually the trickiest part because the backyards are already finished," he says. "They've built the patios and they've built the walkways and they may already have a fire pit area, and you have to get a pipe from the equipment to wherever the waterfall is. Sometimes it's undoable."

Plumbing also becomes a concern when adding a slide to an existing pool.

"You have to cut up the concrete walkway where you're going to place the slide. You need about 13 feet in length on the walkway and you have to anchor it down," says Derek Blasker, vice president of operations at Pool

Designs Inc. "You also need a water line, because in the middle of the summer when it's boiling hot outside, you don't want to go down a plastic slide without water—it will burn your legs. But a slide is certainly a good option."

"A sliding board as part of a waterfall package is doable," DiCesare adds. "It's easier on a concrete pool; that structure on a fiberglass pool or a vinyl liner pool is going to compromise those types of pools. In a concrete pool you can add that stuff fairly easily."

Sun shelves—an area to lounge inside the pool or let young children play—have almost become must-haves in recent years. Those renovating an older pool often request sun shelves, although this kind of project does come with challenges.

"A sun shelf can be added after the pool is already in, but it's way pricier to do it after than it is while you're building it," Cording says. "If you're going to add a sun shelf to a concrete pool, you would have to empty the pool and build up layers of concrete to get to that level and epoxy it on, and then you would replaster and everything. To do it in a vinyl pool, you would have to redo the base underneath and then replace the liner."

Spas are also an expensive addition—almost double what they cost during original installation, according to Blasker. But he is currently adding one to an existing pool for a customer, who is excited to have the new feature.

"If you're going to add a spa, you have two options: you're either going to have a standalone spa or a spill-over spa," he says. "If you're just adding a hot tub that's self-contained, that's easy. You just pour yourself a [concrete] pad, lay it on top and it's all contained inside of itself."

"If you're going to try to incorporate it into your existing pool by making it a water feature that's going to spill over into it, you have to

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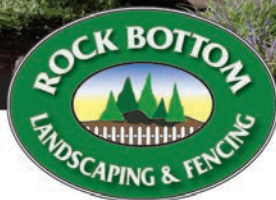
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A MODERN TOUCH

crack up all of the concrete where you're going to put the spa, and then you have to trail a line all the way back to the pool equipment so you can get a return to fill up the spa. You also have to replumb the area with a new valve and cut all the lines, and sometimes that's not too easy to do."

Simple ways to add pizzazz

If the cost and construction process of sun shelves or spas sound like too much of a stretch, there are other ways for homeowners to update their pools.

"To give the pool a little more of a wow factor, you can switch out the standard lighting with LED lighting that has built-in light shows. That is a quick, inexpensive addition," DiCesare says. "Obviously, the saltwater systems are very popular now, but we also do a lot of UV Ozone systems to treat the water. There is no chance of anything growing in the water at that point because that's how bottled water is purified. ... These are fairly inexpensive upgrades to most pools."

Blasker also recommends LED lighting and suggests another cost-effective element for an aging pool.

"If you have an old fiberglass pool that is looking a little faded on the top above the water line, you can add a nice, 6-inch tile perimeter all the way around," he says. "That will spice it up a lot by giving it a nice pop of color, and it's an easy, one-day job. You drain a little bit of water, maybe two inches, put silicone on some tile and you have a brand-new looking feature on your pool."

Entertainment options for the kids can be found in today's marketplace as well.

"Not many people are adding diving boards anymore, but dive rocks are very popular," Cording says. "That's something we get called about often. They're usually about 18 inches high and people can jump off them into the pool."

"S.R. Smith came out with a slide this year that folds up and

comes with its own [dolly]," Blasker adds. "You just wheel it out when you want to use it and hook up a garden hose to it. You don't have to cut up your concrete or run a water line to it. If you have small kids, it's a good slide."

No matter what amenities a homeowner is looking to add, the professionals encourage them to call their pool companies early to get on the schedule. While new construction projects may be up in the air due to the pandemic, renovations are still moving forward at a quick pace.

"We're getting a lot of calls for renovation work, so people are looking to get their pools updated either with coping and tile, adding new features or adding equipment," DiCesare says. "It should be a fairly busy year for that type of work." **H&H**



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THE Perfect Remodel

Turn your bathroom into the
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stressors of everyday life.

BY SYDNEY KERELO



BATHROOMS ARE THE PERFECT PLACE TO CREATE A SPA-LIKE ENVIRONMENT, WHERE PARENTS AND CHILDREN CAN ESCAPE THE CHALLENGES OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD AND BEGIN TO UNWIND AND RELAX.

As the world turns on its head and social distancing rules are being enforced, people are spending more time in their homes. Children are learning remotely and parents are working from home, changing the dynamic of the house from a place of rest and comfort to a place of stress.

Homeowners are seeking an escape from the daily routine and bathrooms are the perfect place to create a spa-like environment, where parents and children can escape the challenges of the outside world and begin to unwind and relax.

“Everyone seems to want to make their master bathroom a spa-like experience, morning and night,” says Sophia Amiano, design consultant/project designer for Amiano & Son Design-Build. “Turning it into a place where they can go, escape from the world for a little bit and feel very relaxed and calm.”

Remodeling a bathroom can seem daunting at first, there are many challenges to overcome and numerous options to consider but with the help of a design team, it can feel like a breeze.

House & Home spoke with local experts about the best materials to use in a bathroom remodel, the latest trends, how to gain the most storage space and how to accommodate your budget.

Where to Begin

When beginning a bathroom remodel, the homeowner needs to consider a few things such as what design aspects they are looking for, what is most important to them and how to stay within their budget. Talking with contractors and designers is the best way to make sure to get the most bang for your buck.

“We have a survey that we have our customers complete before we even do any work that talks about their lifestyle,” David Cerami, owner of HomeTech Renovations, says. “It talks about projects that they’ve done in the past that they’ve experienced and what some of the successes were, some of the things they found to be less than successful. The survey gives me a picture of what they hope to invest into their home.”

Not only should the contractor become acquainted with the homeowner’s design ideals, but they should consider the budget—how much they are willing to spend and what aspects they want to spend more money on.

“The budget really has to be considered carefully because you don’t want to shortchange yourself to save a couple dollars, only to find out that you really should have had it done five years later,” says Dan Dilworth, owner of Dilworth’s Custom Design. “There are times where you really have to realize that you need to go the extra mile, spend a little bit more than maybe you’re comfortable with. Don’t hurt yourself but at the same time, you want to

spend a little bit more because it will be worth it in the long term.”

When it comes to deciding what to spend the most money on and what aspect of the room the homeowner really wants to shine, they need to also consider the cost of the construction project. Spending a little more money on the shower or the vanity can be worth it in the long run but if there is no money saved up for the actual construction then they can be put in a hard situation.

“People tend to misunderstand the construction aspects of doing a bathroom. Unfortunately, plumbers and electricians cost a lot of money,” Jere Bradwell, owner of J Bradwells Home Kitchen & Bath Design, says. “You don’t realize that when you decide to take a wall down the shower plumbing may have to move to another area. The cost of taking everything out of the bathroom and starting back over is big and at the end, the major cost will not be the tile and the vanity and the lights and the things that you added—it’s the construction costs of getting that thing back together.”



THE Perfect Remodel



Tile Options

One of the main aspects of a bathroom remodel is deciding on the flooring and shower tile. Recently, more and more homeowners are moving away from using smaller tiles, whose grout joints require more maintenance and cleaning than having a large tile.

“We all know that grout is nobody’s best friend and it can be a little bit maintenance-intensive but there are new products like porcelain flooring, products such as Dekton and solid surface materials are being produced so they can be applied in vast applications without grout joints,” says Mike Werner, account manager with AAA Hellenic Marble & Tile. “That’s probably the most popular thing going on right now.”

Porcelain tiles, natural stone and luxury vinyl tile are becoming increasingly popular because homeowners are looking for something modern, durable and waterproof.

“The luxury vinyl tile is a man-made product and it doesn’t have to be set down, so the labor on it is a little different,” says Julie Broderick, showroom manager and design consultant of Renaissance Tile & Floor. “There is no grout or anything between it so it just kind of clicks together. It’s a little softer too than a tile floor.”

Although the luxury vinyl tile is easier to assemble, porcelain tile

offers durability and it’s easy to clean and maintain. It also can give the look of a natural stone at a fraction of the price and can be used to create intricate designs such as herringbone pattern, murals, decorative accents, focal points and solid slab work.



“You can create different effects with the size and the pattern of the tile so for example if you have a long and narrow bathroom, by laying a 24-inch rectangle horizontally you can visually trick your eye into thinking that the room is actually wider than it is,” says Werner. “Sometimes too in the smaller space, if you go with a medium-sized tile it actually makes your floor look bigger but there are definitely many different size options to fit certain spaces better.”

One special thing that can be added to any tile is heated flooring. On cold winter days, stepping on freezing tile can be quite the wake-up call especially after

a hot shower but a heated tile eliminates that.

“We can run a radiant heat floor throughout not only the working floor of the environment as you would walk into the space, but inside the shower,” says Cerami. “When you walk in on a cold winter day, you feel the warmth under your feet and into the shower.”

A Sleek Spa Look

When it comes to the bathroom, the shower and the tub create the illusion of a spa. Adding a large, open shower or a freestanding tub ensures serenity.

“We did a project where there was no shower glass or walls. We took a cylindrical shower where we removed a tub and we created a cylindrical wall. As the homeowner would walk around the cylindrical wall there would be an opening that would be created within that wall to allow somebody to enter this environment,” Cerami says. “There was also a ceiling-mounted rain shower head that was programmable, where the shower was recessed into the ceiling, and all the components and it was basically 24 inches in circumference and you can program the shower head for general rain, hard rain, swirling rain and direct rain.”

Having a computerized shower head makes the bathroom more modernized and technologically advanced. Sink faucets can be controlled through motion sensors, bluetooth speakers can be hooked up throughout the bathroom and a heated towel rack can be installed.

“The newest material that’s on the market from a shower door perspective is coatings on the clear glass to protect it,” says Scott Kingsland, owner of Glass Castle. “There are coatings to help keep it clean longer, and coatings to help hard-water stains.”

A lot of older homes have acquired frameless shower doors to make the rooms feel larger. They are also incorporated when the ceilings are

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angled and there is limited space for a shower door.

Older homes usually have a tub as well, something that not many people use nowadays. But, they are aesthetically pleasing and offer a feeling of serenity. Standalone and clawfoot tubs have become more commonly requested, say professionals.

Maximizing Storage

Bathroom storage is one of the first things to run out. There never seems to be enough space for everyone to fit their belongings, especially families, which is why homeowners should consider their options when it comes to finding creative solutions to storage space.

"Some of the features that we put in, especially for a female bathroom, is something that resembles a spice rack, but now it's a pullout tool rack where it can be pulled out and it has a stainless steel can or container in there to keep curling irons and blow dryers," Dilworth says. "And then there are outlets on the inside of the cabinet that technically you can keep them plugged in to make it all user friendly."

But to add more space to the bathroom, homeowners can include freestanding cabinets that are used for more than a decorative purpose.

"You could do a tower in the middle and then one on each end," Bradwell says. "And then, right over each sink area would be open with a mirror which creates frames around each tower."

"We have done cabinets that were floating with drawers with touch latches, so as you open up the cabinet, there is no hardware on any of these vanities. And the top drawer was designed to integrate around the sink plumbing in the sink bowl," adds Cerami. "So we provide some additional storage by engineering the drawers to work around the plumbing infrastructure."

But with every vanity comes a countertop, something that not only appeals to the decor of the room but is also durable and long lasting.

"Granite is not only durable but is still probably one of the most cost-effective options you can do," Werner says. "The engineered quartz is taking off in popularity but you know it can definitely be a little bit more costly and not as durable as the natural stone options are."

H&H



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Rock Bottom Landscaping & Fencing

by Catherine McBride

The National Association of Landscape Professionals recommends spending 10 to 15 percent of the total value of your home on landscaping. A professional, well-planned landscape can increase the value by as much as 15 to 17 percent, however, a neglected and undervalued landscape can decrease the value of the home by as much as 15 to 20 percent. “Homeowners can certainly relate to their personal home-buying experience and pulling up to that neatly manicured, well-maintained home,” says Chris DeMato, owner of Rock Bottom Landscaping & Fencing. “First impressions are very important. How often did you pull up to the home that looked neglected and didn’t even want to see the inside?” This month, DeMato spoke with *House & Home* about the landscaping features every homeowner should consider.

How important is plant design in the overall look of a landscape?

A well-planned plant design and strategically placed trees can completely change an environment. For example, on the far corner of a property may be a building, factory or a tower. This can be softened and potentially covered by a grove of trees. Landscaping can also give the illusion of a much larger home which can work in your favor for resale. With the environment today and the active health concerns, plants can also act as repellents to pests that may carry germs and bacteria. Hiring a knowledgeable designer can be essential to the proper placement of plant material. As plants mature you don’t want the plants or trees to completely cover your house. The most important thing is that you enhance the nice features on your home.



Chris DeMato, owner

What hardscaping elements do you recommend?

A brick pathway or walkway can add a tremendous amount of interest and depth to your yard, particularly in the new home developments today where there are usually four or five models and every two or three homes almost look identical. Creating a curved pathway that may split the yard or land in a different area than most of the other homes can really set your home apart and make for a much more inviting entrance, where the basic concrete walkway can be very stark and uninviting.

Brick pavers are great for patios as they do not require a lot of maintenance and most people understand that if you have a deck versus a patio there can and will be a lot of expense down the road in maintenance or potentially replacement when it ages. Patio design is important. As an experienced installer I get great feedback from previous customers. For example, was the fire pit worth the extra money and does the family enjoy it? Or how the built-in grill and extra storage space makes grilling a pleasure versus a task. People also love how brick generally stays cool in the hot sun versus a deck that becomes unbearable.

What curb appeal can masonry and driveway design add?

What a difference two columns can make as you enter your driveway. A nice, unique address plate on one side and maybe a nameplate on the other can really make your home your own. Brick paver driveways, Belgian block borders, brick paver apron or simply a border on both sides with a brick paver can dress up the basic blacktop driveway and again create a much more inviting en-

trance. How about a low decorative aluminum fence in your front yard with masonry columns to divide the sections? This can take a bland front yard and turn it into an estate right out of a home and garden magazine.

How do you help homeowners decide on the right fence style?

We have come a long way with fencing and fencing styles—wood, decorative aluminum and vinyl. As a landscape designer I think it is important to consider your surroundings when installing a fence. If you have a property with a large yard and beautiful views of natural scenery you may not want to obstruct that view with a solid panel fence, however you may have an unsightly view and a nice decorative solid panel fence could be exactly what you need. I always offer my input on what I think complements the surroundings and the house most.

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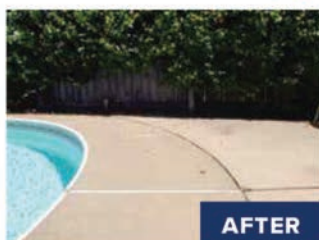
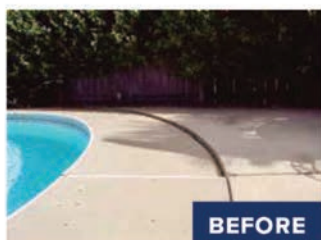
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Define YOUR SPACE

From natural stone to a wide variety of pavers, experts discuss the endless hardscape design options to make your outdoor oasis a reality. *by Julie Shannon*

Spending time together outside is a common occurrence for families, especially in the warmer weather that we are entering now, but even more so since the COVID-19 pandemic started. With all this time outside, homeowners may be thinking about redoing a walkway or patio, or starting a brand-new project from scratch.

One of the first things to decide on is the hardscape design. From decorative structures such as benches and stones to practical structures such as patios and walkways, there are a wide variety of materials to choose from in many different styles to make your front and/or backyard look like it was taken right out of a magazine.

House & Home spoke with experts who discussed all the materials available, what homeowners should be mindful of before starting a project and other elements to help complete the space.

Jarrod Nyce, owner of Nyce Crete and Landis Block & Concrete, says one of the ways hardscaping can define your space is by creating privacy.

“You can use hardscaping to build up, drop down or even to close off a defined area,” Nyce says. “Privacy walls to seating, or knee walls are also ways to define your outdoor living space. Combined with landscaping, you could make your area as private or open as you wish.”

Vic Fiore, owner of Magnolia Home Remodeling Group, says in

many cases manufacturers can produce a retaining wall that can coordinate with other hardscape areas of the project.

When it comes to other areas, such as patios, walkways and driveways, Fiore says his clients are choosing pavers for the cost and functionality.

“The technology and design of these paver products can give you a look similar to natural stone,” he says. “Sometimes it’s a lot more functional. Pavers from 20 years ago were very basic, and today



Upper photograph courtesy of Keystone Decorative Concrete; Lower photograph courtesy of Magnolia Home Remodeling Group

they have a wide range of colors, textures and sizes. Years ago you might have been limited to a few basic sizes, only 6 by 6 or 6 by 9, but now there are large slabs. There are some very interesting shapes and a lot of natural-looking textures, so it's a very durable, long-lasting product, with little or no maintenance and it's fairly easy to install for most contractors—especially in the Northeast. It's a more forgiving install with different stages of climate, temperature and other related factors.”

In addition to these benefits, Fiore notes the wide variety of colors pavers offer. “The colors are unbelievable and the design possibilities are endless. You could do multiple borders, use different shapes and sizes and blend them together,” he says.

John Fossett, project manager with Turpin Landscaping Design/Build, says more of his clients are going with Pennsylvania bluestone, either in a pattern or irregular style.

“There are a few different kinds,” he says. “There are a lot of brown colors throughout Pennsylvania bluestone and some blue. With the full color there's more of a mix of blues, grays and earth tones; sometimes even brown or rust. That is a pretty common stone we use.”

Fossett says bluestone is natural-looking stone and is very durable, which is important for its longevity. “[Bluestone] is quarried right out the earth, so it's not going anywhere,” he says.

Whether the homeowner is looking for a more traditional, rustic or modern look, there are materials that suit everyone's style and taste.

“We carry two different styles across most of the lines, pavers and retaining walls,” Nyce says. “Renaissance, which is more rustic, and kingscourt/splitface, which is more traditional. The more modern look is large format, which means they are larger than normal pavers and cover more area. They come in many different patterns from wood planks to large garden steps.”

Materials such as river stones, crushed stone and mulch can frame areas to give a decorative, completed look.

“We have also done a combination of flagstone and gravel,” Fossett says. “We can do large spaces in the irregular flagstone patios, and have large joints where we put river rock and basically we glue the mix in the river rock called Gravel-Lok, so you can have decorative gravel on the patio.”



Photograph courtesy of Turpin Landscaping Design/Build

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Certain materials work better in specific areas in the backyard, such as an inground pool for example. “We offer epoxy flooring, granite coating and a quartz flooring system called Graniflex—they work really well around the pool deck,” Anthony King, owner, Keystone Decorative Concrete, says. “Graniflex is durable, crack resistant and has a whole different look. It has a salt-and-pepper look and also comes in a lot of different colors.”

“Pavers and travertine are what we commonly use around pool decks because they are designed to stay cool in the sun,” Fossett says.

A trend Steve Compton of CKC Landscaping is seeing with his clients is coming back to their homes for a second or third phase to install the exact materials and finishes they want. He says he’s already had three projects where he went back to the property much later to complete phase two with the goal of creating the ultimate outdoor living experience.

“One example is we planned a high-end project two years ago.



When we were hired, we put down the foundation and footings for future phases. We installed steps and a flagstone patio,” Compton says. “Earlier this year we went back and added all of the vertical elements—custom natural stone, pillars, walls, fireplace, custom railings, lighting and landscape. We

could have given them all the components in phase one, but would have had to sacrifice material and gone with the lower-cost alternative. This client wanted all high-end finishes and it’s a compromise they made to get it done over 24 months. It’s marrying budget with aesthetics of materials and the overall plan.”

Before any materials are chosen, Compton says there is one thing that is the most important part of these projects, and the majority of homeowners don’t think about—stormwater management.

“From the consultation on day one, right off the bat I ask myself these questions on the homeowner’s

Photograph courtesy of Turpin Landscape Design/Build

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property,” he says. “Where does water come from when it rains? Where are the roof drains? Where is it coming from over the terrain, and how do I manage that so it’s not changing the natural course of water flow and also not going to damage or undermine the work we will do?”

Compton says figuring this out before starting a project will stop potential major problems from happening down the road.

“It’s very important,” he says. “All of a sudden there is moved earth and potentially there is water coming through your backyard that never did before. We figure out how to tighten these problems

before the project begins.”

Of course, there are many finishing touches to an outdoor living project that truly complete the space. “Pergolas are a great way to throw shade or block the sunlight without being under a roof,” Nyce says.

“A popular item to make it an inviting space is a fire pit, which can be made in coordinating colors by paving stone manufacturers,” Fiore says.

With endless options to make your outdoor living area a one-of-a-kind space, now is the time to make the rest of your moments in quarantine and beyond with your family more fun and memorable.

“In our current environment, people have been forced to stay home,” Nyce says. “We have been promoting outside living spaces for years so this is what people are looking for and designers are providing.” **H&H**



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