

HOME & GARDEN



SEVERNA PARK
VOICE

SEPTEMBER 2026

HOMESTEAD GARDENS PAGE 12

Fall is for planting at Homestead Gardens, which has a full slate of seasonal programs, events and new products.

FENCING TRENDS INSPIRED BY THE BAY PAGE 9

Coastal elements blend naturally with traditional and suburban styles.

WHY MODERN KITCHENS ARE SPLITTING INTO TWO PAGE 15

Butler's pantries and sculleries are making a functional comeback.

DO I NEED A BUILDING PERMIT FOR THAT? PAGE 19

Renovations in Anne Arundel County often require permits and licensed professionals.

Beyond Summer: Designing A Backyard For Every Season

Vic Minich
Coastal
Pools



For many homeowners, the backyard is synonymous with summer: sunny afternoons by the pool, kids jumping in the water and evenings spent outside with friends. But some of the best backyard memories happen long after peak pool season has ended.

When it comes to the design of outdoor spaces, homeowners should think beyond a single season. A well-designed backyard can become an extension of the home — a place for gath-

ering, relaxing and entertaining throughout much of the year.

The swimming pool is often the centerpiece of that environment. When designing a new concrete pool, consider not only how your family enjoys the outdoors today but also how you may want to use the space five, 10 or even 20 years from now. Decking, seating areas, lighting and landscaping can all connect the pool to the rest of the backyard rather than treating it as a standalone feature.

Existing pools can evolve, too. Families change, design preferences change and outdoor spaces should be able to change with them. Renovating an older pool might mean updating its interior finish and coping, modernizing the

surrounding deck, or reworking portions of the space to better complement the home's current aesthetic and the family's needs.

Fall is a particularly good reminder of how much more a backyard can offer.

An outdoor kitchen can turn football Saturdays and Sundays into backyard tailgates. Fire features create a natural gathering spot as temperatures cool.

Pergolas and covered areas can make outdoor dining and entertaining more comfortable. And a hot tub or spa offers an entirely different way to enjoy the outdoors when swimming isn't on the agenda — from quiet evenings after work to time spent together as a family.

The goal isn't necessarily to incorporate every feature. It's to create a space where the different elements feel intentional and work together.

Before adding something

new, look at your backyard as a whole. Where do people naturally gather? How does traffic flow from the house to the pool? Is there comfortable space for dining? What areas stop being used when summer ends? Those answers can help determine which improvements will have the greatest impact.

Ultimately, the best outdoor spaces aren't designed simply around a pool, patio or hot tub. They're designed around the people who will use them.

And when those spaces are planned thoughtfully, the end of summer doesn't have to mean the end of backyard season.

Coastal Pools specializes in custom concrete pools, renovations and complete outdoor living environments. On October 2-4, Coastal Pools will host its inaugural Fall Coastal Retreat & Hot Tub Showcase, featuring hot tubs, outdoor living inspiration and ideas for extending your backyard season. Visit www.coastalpoolbuilders.net or call 443-961-2176 to learn more.



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A Holistic Look At The Components That Protect Your Home

**Rob
Calhan**



**Artie
Hendricks**

*Co-owners
Landmark
Roofing*



A home's exterior works as a system. Roofs, gutters, gutter guards, vents, siding, windows and doors all play a role in keeping water out, maintaining ventilation, and protecting the structure from weather-related damage. When one part of that system begins to fail, it can affect the others.

Understanding how these components function together is an important part of responsible home maintenance. In a region that experiences humidity, heavy rain, seasonal storms, and tree debris, a holistic exterior inspection can identify small concerns before they turn into major repairs.

In the early 2000s, people moved more frequently. Today, longer tenure in homes means more attention needs to be paid to your home's exterior and other improvements to ensure your home continues to be efficient for you and your family while keeping it in peak condition.

Local resident David Orso, owner of the Severna Park-based Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices- PenFed Realty, commented on this trend. *"Severna Park residents are staying in their homes longer,"* he said. *"Two major factors have led to this trend. First, most homeowners secured a fixed interest rate of 3% or better and moving would surrender that gift. Due to the premium interest rate and residence permanence, home improvement investment is the preferred method of 'upgrading.' Homeowners are finding that improving their home is enjoyable immediately for their needs and also seeing massive rewards when it is time to sell. Our inventory is 50-plus years old and bifurcated based upon updated versus not updated. The updated homes WIN every single time!"*

What does this mean for you? Proactively maintaining and updating your home's exterior, along with other key home upgrades, protects your investment, helps meet evolving insurance requirements, and keeps your home in peak condition and market-ready whenever you decide to sell.

Why the entire exterior matters

Many homeowners focus on the roof first. But the roof does not work alone. Water management, airflow and siding conditions all affect how well the home performs over time.

A complete inspection looks at the building envelope as a whole. That means checking not just visible wear but also the areas where water or air may enter unnoticed. This approach helps homeowners make more informed decisions about maintenance, repair and replacement.

The Roof

The roof is the first line of defense against wind, rain, snow and sunlight. A roofing system includes shingles, underlayment, flashing, ridge caps, valleys, drip edge, and ventilation details. If any part of that system is compromised, the roof may become more vulnerable to leaks and premature wear.

During a roof inspection, common concerns include missing or curled shingles, exposed nails, lifted flashing, storm damage and signs of aging. In some cases, a repair may be sufficient. In others, roof replacement may be the more practical long-term solution.

Gutters and Drainage

Gutters are designed to move water away from the roof edge, siding, and foundation. When gutters clog, sag, or pitch incorrectly, water can overflow and cause damage to fascia, siding, landscaping and even basement areas.

A proper gutter inspection should review slope, debris accumulation, seam condition and downspout function. Good drainage is one of the simplest and most important parts of exterior protection.

Gutter Guards

Gutter guards can reduce the amount of debris that enters the gutter system. For homes with trees nearby, gutter guards may limit clogs and reduce the need for frequent cleaning.

Homeowners should view gutter guards as a maintenance aid rather than a complete substitute for inspection. They can improve drainage performance, but they still need to be evaluated as part of the overall roofing and gutter system.

Siding

Siding protects the walls of the home while also contributing to its appearance and helps with insulation and R-value, which can result in lower energy costs. Whether the home has James Hardie fiber cement siding, or vinyl siding, the siding should be inspected for cracks, warping, rot, loose panels, failed caulking and signs of water damage.

Because siding connects closely with trim, windows, doors, and roof intersections, problems in one area can affect another. Moisture that gets behind siding may not be visible right away, so inspection of both the surface and the surrounding details is important.

James Hardie fiber cement siding

James Hardie fiber cement siding is valued for its durability and appearance. An inspection should confirm that the siding is properly flashed, sealed and maintained. Even durable materials need correct installation and periodic care to perform well over time.

Vinyl siding

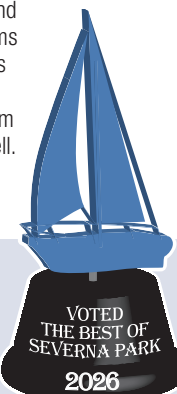
Vinyl siding is a popular choice because it requires minimal maintenance and is available in many styles. A vinyl siding inspection should check for fading, buckling, open seams, and movement around openings.

Windows and Doors

Windows and doors are major transition points in the exterior system. They need to provide access and natural light while also keeping out water and drafts. If seals fail or flashing is incomplete, these areas can become entry points for moisture and air leakage.

During an inspection, look for fogging between glass panes, damaged caulking, water staining, sticking, and gaps in the frame. Problems around windows and doors often indicate that the surrounding exterior system should be evaluated as well.

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Local conditions in Anne Arundel County

Humidity, wind-driven rain, tree debris and seasonal weather changes can all affect roofs, gutters, siding and ventilation. That makes regular exterior inspection especially valuable in this area.

Landmark Roofing has a 4.9 rating from a combined 805 reviews across Google, Facebook, Yelp and the Better Business Bureau. That track record along with the company's recognition as the only GAF Presidential two-star certified contractor in Anne Arundel County represents a level of expertise homeowners may want to look for when evaluating exterior contractors, especially for roof-related work.

"We have been serving the community for over 10 years, building homeowner trust and confidence. We live our core value: Helping make your home a safe and worry-free place for people to live and thrive."

Rob Calhan

Landmark Roofing co-owner and president of sales



What homeowners should look for?

Some of the most common warning signs of exterior problems include missing shingles, overflowing gutters, damaged soffit, cracked siding, peeling paint, drafty windows, and doors that do not close or seal properly. Inside the home, water stains, musty odors, or visible mold can also point to exterior issues.

These signs do not always mean a major failure has occurred, but they do indicate that a closer inspection is warranted.

The value of a full inspection

A full exterior inspection is useful because the home should be viewed as a connected system. A problem in one area can create damage in another.

By looking at the roof, gutters, vents, siding, windows and doors together, homeowners get a clearer picture of the home's actual condition. That makes it easier to plan maintenance and decide when repairs or replacements are needed.



Concluding thoughts

A holistic approach to home exterior protection is one of the best ways to preserve the value and performance of a property. Roofs, gutters, gutter guards, vents, siding, windows, and doors all contribute to the home's ability to stand up to weather and time.

For homeowners in Anne Arundel County, who are now staying in their homes longer than in the past, understanding these components and how they work together, along with other home improvements, can lead to better maintenance decisions and fewer surprises.

"Landmark looks at the house as an entire system. Most of the time, not all of the systems need to be replaced, and some can just be updated or maintained. We at Landmark know that owning a home is a long game, and we want to be there for you for years to come for any of your roofing, siding, gutter and window needs."

Artie Hendricks

Landmark Roofing co-owner and president of production

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Why Driveway And Parking Lot Crack Filling And Sealcoating Matter



Blake Harrison
Blake's
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Asphalt driveways and parking lots are a significant investment, and regular maintenance is one of the best ways to protect that investment. Two of the most important maintenance services are crack filling and sealcoating. Together, they help prevent small pavement problems from becoming expensive repairs while keeping asphalt looking clean, safe and well maintained.

Cracks are a natural part of asphalt aging. Changes in temperature, moisture, vehicle traffic and normal settlement can cause pavement to crack over time. When cracks are left untreated, water can seep beneath the asphalt and weaken the underlying base. During freezing temperatures, that moisture can expand and make cracks larger, eventually contributing to pot holes, crumbling

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One major benefit of hiring a professional soft-washing service is the staff's expertise. Professionals

Hiring a professional to soft-wash your property is one of the smartest choices you can make when it comes to maintaining the beauty and integrity of your home or business. Soft washing is a gentle yet effective cleaning method that uses low-pressure water combined with specialized cleaning solutions to remove dirt, algae, mold, mildew and other contaminants from exterior surfaces. Unlike traditional high-pressure washing, soft

professionals understand the right mix of cleaning solutions and the proper techniques to safely clean different surfaces such as vinyl siding, wood, stucco, roofs and decks. Improper cleaning, especially with high pressure, can lead to costly repairs like chipped paint, broken shingles or water infiltration. Professionals also know how to identify and treat problematic stains and growths that a casual homeowner might overlook,

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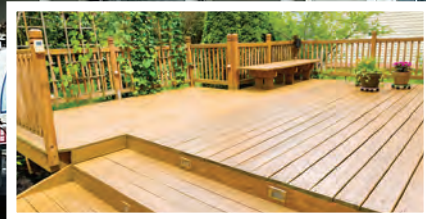
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Water Heater Woes

Repair, Maintain Or Replace?



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pressure concerns.

While replacing the unit may seem like an obvious solution, the first step is to determine what is causing the problem. The condition of the water heater, the homeowner's priorities, and the available repair or replacement options should all be considered. When possible, multiple solutions enable customers to make an informed decision with confidence.

Diagnosing a water heater starts with understanding the system. Is it a traditional tank-style unit or a tankless, on-demand system? Is it

Nearly every home has a water heater, but not every water heater is the same. Plumbing companies receive calls daily for issues ranging from no hot water and inconsistent temperatures to unusual odors, leaks and

Continued on page 16

The key is not to assume every water heater problem requires the same fix. A qualified plumber can evaluate the system, explain the options, and determine the best solution for your home and budget.



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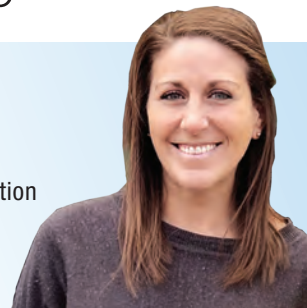
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Coastal Style At Home:

Fencing Trends Inspired By The Chesapeake



Nicole Bailey
Fence
& Deck
Connection



Living near the Chesapeake Bay strongly influences home and outdoor design throughout the Severna Park and greater Annapolis area, where coastal elements blend naturally with traditional and suburban styles. That influence is driving one of today's popular exterior design trends: coastal-inspired fencing.

Coastal design is less about nautical decor and more about creating a clean, natural look. Think simple lines, soft neutral colors and

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The Benefits Of Window Cleaning, Soft-Washing And Roof Treatment

Josh Stegall

Owner
Pink's Windows
Annapolis-
Columbia



Regular exterior cleaning is an important part of property maintenance. Window cleaning, soft-washing and roof treatments can improve curb appeal while protecting surfaces from buildup, staining and premature deterioration.

Window Cleaning Benefits

Professional window cleaning removes dirt, pollen, mineral deposits and other contaminants that can reduce the appearance and clarity of glass. Clean windows allow more natural light into a home or business and help maintain a



fresh, well-kept appearance.

For most properties, windows should be cleaned at least twice a year, typically in the spring and fall. Properties exposed to heavy pollen, coastal conditions, construction dust or sprinkler overspray may benefit from cleaning every three to four months.

Soft-Washing for Different Types of Siding

Soft-washing uses low-pressure water combined with cleaning solutions to safely remove algae, mildew, mold, dirt and other organic growth. Because it relies on cleaning solutions rather than high pressure, it can be a gentler alternative for many exterior surfaces.

Recommended Cleaning Frequencies Include:

- **Most types of siding, including vinyl, cement board, wood and stucco:** Every one to two years, or when visible algae and mildew appear.
- **Brick and masonry:** Approximately every two to three years, unless organic growth or staining requires earlier treatment.

Continued on page 21

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- .02** Do what we say we're going to do. Our word is everything, and we aim to exceed expectations in all aspects of the job.
- .03** Leave your home better than we found it.



At Homestead Gardens,

By Zach Sparks

With the arrival of fall coming on September 22, Marylanders are excited for the return of vibrant foliage, cider, hayrides and everything special to the season.

Fall is also an exciting time of year at Homestead Gardens in Severna Park and Davidsonville, and for good reason: fall planning sets the stage for gardening year-round.

“Every season, we really encourage our customers to come in the fall,” said Aimee Miskimon, general manager of the Severna Park store. “They can see the product in its prime and get it into the ground when the soil is really warm, well-nourished from the summer and spring season, and before the plants go dormant. While the plants are dormant, they are building their root structure and their systems.”

Fall is a time to nourish plants ahead of their long winter's nap.

“Fertilizing, you do in the fall,” said Homestead Gardens team member Amy Spurlin. “You

want to get it built up over the winter while the magic is happening under the ground, and get it prepped for the spring.”

With that in mind, Homestead Gardens has a full slate of fall activities, hands-on workshops, educational speakers and unique products designed to help people make the most of the season.

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Garden Coaching

Want to map out a blueprint of your garden space? Use the Homestead Gardens website to schedule a 30-minute or one-hour appointment with a garden coach as part of this new program that launched in September.

“We have a list of questions that we ask you to prepare prior to coming in,” Miskimon said. “What kind of sunlight is this area going to get? How big is the space? How much do you want to main-



tain? Do you want something self-maintaining?

“And then our garden coach will spend time with you selecting and designing an area for you to go ahead and plant. It will be hand-sketched with inventory that we have in stock, and that will be kicked off with our ‘Fall Is For Planting’ series this year.”

Houseplant Rx

An annual program that returns in September, Houseplant Rx is meant for customers who

want to bring their houseplants inside after summer.

“Things like their citrus trees,” Miskimon cited as one example. “How can they treat their plants for pests and disease and transition them to coming back inside? We spend a lot of time in the month of September growing the program inside our greenhouse, Houseplant Rx, focusing on how customers can have thriving plants inside their home all 12 months of the year.”



Fall Is For Planting

Garden Chores and Coffee

Chores often get a bad rap, but Homestead Gardens is making them fun through this year-round program. Participants grab a Rise Up Coffee Roasters beverage and discuss seasonally relevant information about their gardens with a small group of attendees and coaches. The Severna Park store offers the free program on Wednesdays, though registration is required.

“All summer, we have been working with customers on things like watering, pruning, bloom boosting and making sure their plants are thriving,” Miskimon said. “We will go into fall chores, everything from lawn and garden to bringing your houseplants in.”

ITEMS IN STOCK

Fall at Homestead Gardens would not feel right without the numerous unique items that fill and surround the store. Inside, customers will find Halloween planters and gift ideas, along with curated collections of clothing and jewelry that were



carefully selected based on the feedback of Homestead Gardens customers.

The Homestead Pantry offers gourmet food and specialty treats with unique flavors. Find Maryland honeys, apple products and other items sourced locally.

“After summer, the pantry transitions from jams and jellies to fall: teas and honeys and pumpkin butters,” Miskimon said.

By mid-September, the store will be stocked with fresh pumpkins and a bestseller, pottery pumpkins.

“Unlike a lot of other pumpkin sellers, we do designer pumpkins in addition to your traditional pumpkins,” Miskimon said. “So you’ll be able to find everything from your blue pumpkins,

your white pumpkins, your black pumpkins, all different shapes and sizes to make your fall porch-scape come alive. We do cornstalks and haybales, and that’s a really fun way of transitioning your spring and summer porch to a fall look.”

And, of course, shoppers will find mums, fall annuals, veggies and greens in stock.

From plants to décor to clothing and more, Homestead Gardens has it all. As fall gets underway, the team wants to remind area residents that their space is not just a store but also a hub for learning and growth.



“Fall is an extremely busy time of year for us,” Miskimon said. “It really is about setting the foundation for having a suc-



cessful growing season, spring and summer, and getting your fall garden done now. The benefit of having cooler days and hopefully less humidity and your soil being warm, it’s such a great environment for the roots to grow and get ready so that you have a beautiful garden in the spring and summer.”

Find Homestead Gardens at 522 Ritchie Highway in Severna Park and at 743 West Central Avenue in Davidsonville. For more information, call the Severna Park location at 410-384-7966 or the Davidsonville store at 410-798-5000. Homestead Gardens also shares tips, deals and event information on social media and at www.homestead-gardens.com.

Should I Age In Place Or Is It Time To Right-Size?

Betty Batty
Hello Home
of Compass



As they age, many homeowners eventually have to decide whether to stay or move and prepare for another chapter.

It's a big decision, and there is no one-size-fits-all answer. For some, remaining in a home filled with memories and familiar neighbors is the right choice. For others, moving can mean less maintenance, greater freedom, and a home that better fits the lifestyle they want today.

The key is to think about it before a decision becomes urgent.

Could Your Current Home Work for the Next Five To 10 Years?

If you love your home and community, start by considering what it would take to comfortably stay. Can you navigate the stairs easily? Is there a bedroom and full bathroom on the main level or could there be? Would modifications such as improved lighting, grab bars, wider doorways, or a more accessible bathroom make everyday living easier? Is installing Ring cameras an easy way for loved ones to make sure you are OK?

Also, consider the ongoing responsibility of maintaining the house and yard. A home that feels manageable today may feel very different five or 10 years from now. Sometimes, relatively simple improvements can allow you to comfortably remain in the home you love for many years.

When Does Moving Make Sense?

Moving doesn't necessarily mean "downsizing." I prefer to think of it as right-sizing, which is finding a home and lifestyle that better fit this next chapter.

Perhaps you're paying for rooms you rarely use, maintaining a large yard you no longer enjoy, or worrying about the house every time you travel. Maybe you'd like to live closer to family or a community where it's easier to stay socially connected.



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Fall

HOME MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

- Clean Gutters and Downspouts
- Clean Dryer Vent
- Schedule a Chimney Sweep
- Get your Gas Fireplace Serviced
- Winterize Faucets and Hoses
- Aerate and Seed your Lawn
- Survey Your Roof for any Damage or Missing Shingles
- Trim Trees and Bushes Especially Near Your Home
- Service your HVAC and Change Filters
- Clean Ceiling Fans and Reverse the Direction
- Clean Fridge Coils
- Clean Windows and Sills
- Replace Fire Extinguisher (if expired)
- Change Batteries in your Carbon Monoxide Detector

Enjoy lots of s'mores!

AND ONE MORE THING...

Thinking about selling this winter or next spring?
Start planning now.

Fall is a great time to walk through your home with a real estate advisor, identify projects worth tackling - skip the ones that won't make a difference and capture great exterior photos.

A successful spring sale often starts months before the sign goes in the yard.

Reach out today to arrange a confidential consultation!

- **Betty**



Betty Batty

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The Scullery Comeback

Why Modern Kitchens Are Splitting Into Two



Kristy Wallace
Severna Park
Kitchen & Bath



Was the sound of your spouse's morning smoothie mix in the blender not quite the 5:30am wakeup call you were expecting? Are small appliances taking over your countertops? You're not alone and that's why more and more modern home designs feature butler's pantries and sculleries adjacent to the main kitchen.

The extra kitchen that once seemed a luxury has become more practical. Families entertain more at home, often in the kitchen, while

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SEVERNA PARK

KITCHEN & BATH



580C Ritchie Hwy 410-777-9526 spkitchenandbath.com

Water Heater Woes

Continued from page 8

powered by gas or electricity? How old is it? Has it been maintained or flushed regularly? These details help determine whether the issue may involve a heating element, thermostat, burner, venting, sediment buildup, water pressure or an expansion tank.

For a homeowner, these possibilities can sound overwhelming, especially when the original concern was simply an inconsistent shower temperature. That is why a proper evaluation is so important.

Traditional tank-style water heaters commonly last around eight to 12 years, depending on water quality, installation, usage and maintenance. Tankless units can often last longer when properly maintained. Regular service can also help identify smaller problems before they become expensive repairs.

In some cases, replacement is the best long-term solution. In others, the water heater may still be in good condition and only need a repair, such as a new heating element, thermostat, anode rod or expansion tank.

If thinking about a tank type replacement, your next consideration is your home's usage and needs. Standard tank types typically range from 40-80 gallons of water storage, with 50 gallons being the most common unit. Units are sized to meet the requirements of the home, not necessarily the customer.

For example, if you know your family members all shower around the same time every morning or evening, hot water will be in high demand at that time. You may run out of hot water running the dishwasher or a load of laundry using warm water while showers are going.

Some homeowners consider upgrading to a larger tank if space allows, or installing a tank booster that can increase their on-demand water supply without increasing overall tank capacity. This is a commonly installed item on new and existing units that can bridge the gap between addressing specific needs and not installing a larger than necessary tank size.

A benefit of a tankless unit is that there is constant hot water available and it takes up much less space. That said, there are still constraints to its capabilities with varying flow rates in different

models. Tankless units also require ample gas or electrical supply when in use, something to consider if transitioning from tank type to tankless.

It's common to get calls to install a tankless in place of a traditional tank type, only to find out the customer's home does not have the existing gas or electrical requirements. Modifications can certainly be made to the piping or electrical panel to accommodate the update, but it can sometimes come as a surprise when not initially factoring that into your budget.

The key is not to assume every water heater problem requires the same fix. A qualified plumber can evaluate the system, explain the options, and determine the best solution for your home and budget. If it has been a while since your water heater was inspected, consider scheduling an estimate appointment before a minor issue becomes a major inconvenience.

For more information, contact Park Plumbing at info@parkplumbingllc.com or 410-417-8509, or visit www.parkplumbingllc.com. Find Park Plumbing on Instagram and Facebook @Park.Plumbing. ■



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Why A Fiberglass Pool Could Be The Right Choice For Your Pool Project



Sean Locklear
Splash Fiberglass
Pool Company LLC

When homeowners begin planning for a new pool, one of the first decisions they face is choosing the right type of pool for their property, lifestyle and budget. One of several options available, fiberglass pools have become an increasingly popular choice for homeowners looking for a combination of durability, efficiency and a streamlined installation process.

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Why Crack Filling And Sealcoating Matter

Continued from page 6

edges and more extensive pavement deterioration.

Crack filling addresses these openings before they become major problems. Filling cracks creates a barrier that helps keep water and other damaging materials out of the pavement structure. It is a relatively simple maintenance step that can reduce the need for more costly asphalt repairs later.

Sealcoating provides another important layer of protection. A quality sealcoat shields asphalt from sunlight, oxidation, water, chemicals, oil and everyday traffic. Over time, exposure to these elements can cause asphalt to become dry, brittle and faded. Sealcoating preserves the pavement surface and can give an older driveway or parking lot a cleaner, darker,

more finished appearance.

Regular maintenance also provides important practical benefits:

- **Stops water intrusion:** Sealing cracks prevents water from reaching the pavement base and causing structural damage.
- **Reduces costly repairs:** Addressing small cracks early can prevent potholes, widespread deterioration and premature resurfacing.
- **Extends pavement life:** Routine crack filling and sealcoating can help asphalt remain functional and attractive for more years.
- **Improves curb appeal and safety:** A smooth, well-maintained surface creates a better impression for homeowners, customers, employees, tenants and visitors.

The key is to treat pavement maintenance as preventive care rather than an emergency repair. Waiting until cracks become large or potholes develop generally means more extensive work and greater expense. A regular inspection and maintenance schedule allows property owners and managers to identify problems early and address them before they spread.

Whether it is a residential driveway, commercial parking lot, office complex or community property, investing in crack filling and sealcoating is a practical way to protect asphalt, improve appearance and maximize the useful life of the pavement.

Blake's Asphalt is a family owned and operated paving company serving Severna Park, Annapolis and Pasadena. For more information, go to www.blakesasphaltllc.com or call 443-758-0067. ■

Why A Fiberglass Pool Could Be The Right Choice For Your Pool Project

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A Faster Installation Process

One of the biggest advantages of a fiberglass pool is the installation process. Unlike pools that are built entirely onsite, fiberglass pools are manufactured in a controlled environment and delivered to the property as a finished shell. This can simplify the installation process and, depending on site conditions, allow homeowners to enjoy their new pool sooner.

Durability and Low Maintenance

Fiberglass pools are designed to withstand everyday use and changing weather conditions. Their smooth, nonporous surface also makes them easier to maintain than some other pool surfaces. The smooth finish can reduce areas where algae and debris can collect, potentially making routine cleaning and maintenance easier for homeowners.

Comfort and Everyday Enjoyment

The smooth surface of a fiberglass pool provides a comfortable swimming experience. There are no rough surfaces or exposed materials to worry about while enjoying the pool, making fiberglass an appealing option for families who plan to spend plenty of time swimming, relaxing and entertaining outdoors.

A Variety of Designs

Fiberglass pools are available in a wide range of shapes, sizes, depths and configurations. Homeowners can choose from designs suited for entertaining, recreation, relaxation or smaller backyard spaces. Additional features such as tanning ledges, steps, spas, water features and lighting can also customize the pool area to fit a homeowner's vision.

Consider the Entire Project

Choosing a pool is about more than selecting the pool itself. Homeowners should also consider the surrounding deck, landscaping, drainage, fencing, electrical requirements, permits and other site-specific factors. Working with an experienced pool builder can help homeowners understand these requirements and plan the project from the beginning.

A Pool Is an Investment in Your Outdoor Space

A swimming pool can become much more than a place to swim. It can create a space for family gatherings, entertaining friends, relaxing after a long day, and enjoying more time outdoors. Choosing the right pool type and working with an experienced installation team can help homeowners make the most of that investment.

If you are considering a pool for your Maryland or Delaware home, a fiberglass pool may be worth exploring. Understanding the advantages, installation requirements, available designs and long-term maintenance considerations can help you determine whether fiberglass is the right fit for your property and lifestyle.

At Splash Fiberglass Pool Company LLC, Sean Locklear, Ron Allen and Josh Allen bring experience in sales, construction, masonry and pool installation to help homeowners navigate the process. Their goal is to provide clear communication, quality craftsmanship and professional service from the initial consultation through completion. For more information, call 410-541-4410, email info@splashfiberglasspoolcompany.com or visit splashfiberglasspoolcompany.com. ■

Do I Need A Building Permit For That?



Steve Wheatley

Owner
50 East
Remodeling



The answer in Anne Arundel County is usually yes. If you are doing any type of renovation or alteration to your home, you need to have a building permit filed with the county, and in most cases, you need to hire a licensed professional to perform the work.

This has been the topic among several customers recently, and I felt it was important to share this information because you may have a similar question.

The building permit process is set up to keep homeowners safe and to keep contractors registered so that customers can get their quote, hire a contractor that they choose and like, and have the home inspected by a third-party county official to make sure all of the work is done "to code."

This is a great system for the most part. It's important for contractors to communicate with their customers and let them know about the permit process and the additional time constraints and inconveniences that this will bring to a job along with additional costs. Here are two examples:

1. I'm a contractor licensed with the Maryland

Home Improvement Commission. I'm not allowed to change my gas water heater in my own home. I need to hire a licensed gas plumber, and the work requires a permit.

2. A typical kitchen remodel commonly requires building, electrical and plumbing permits, possibly a separate gas permit, and even a heating, ventilation and air conditioning permit, if something is being moved or relocated. While the costs and fees to the county are minimal, licensed tradesmen will have to file additional paperwork, and most items need to be inspected twice. An initial inspection happens once items are installed or built. A second inspection

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Always Hire A Professional To Soft-Wash Your Property

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ensuring a thorough clean that lasts longer.

Using professional soft-washing services also means you save time and effort. Cleaning the exterior of a property can be physically demanding and time-consuming. Professionals are equipped with the right tools and equipment to get the job done efficiently and effectively. They can clean large areas quickly and safely — something that is difficult to achieve with DIY methods. This not only frees up your time but also reduces the risk of accidents, such as falls from ladders or exposure to harsh chemicals.

Another important reason

to hire a pro is environmental safety. Professional soft washers use eco-friendly detergents that break down dirt and organic matter without harming plants, pets or the surrounding environment. They are trained to apply these solutions precisely, minimizing runoff and preventing damage to vulnerable landscaping. Many homeowners who attempt washing themselves may unknowingly use harsh chemicals or improper techniques that can cause harm to their gardens and local water systems.

Soft washing also extends the lifespan of your property's exterior. Regularly removing algae, mold and dirt buildup prevents decay

and deterioration. This is particularly vital for roofing materials and wood surfaces, which can suffer irreversible damage if neglected. Professionals provide tailored maintenance plans, recommending how often your property should be cleaned to keep it looking fresh and well-maintained all year.

Lastly, hiring a professional adds value to your property. A clean, well-maintained exterior boosts curb appeal, which can be crucial if you plan to sell or rent your home or commercial space. It creates a positive first impression for visitors, clients and neighbors alike. Furthermore, professionals usually offer guarantees on their work, giving you peace of mind about the quality and longevity of the results.

In summary, choosing a professional soft-washing

service is a wise investment in your property's health, appearance and value. The professional's expertise, efficiency, eco-conscious approach and ability to protect your surfaces make all the difference. Instead of risking damage or injury trying to do it yourself, leave it to the professionals who know how to get it done right. Your property will not only look cleaner but also stay protected and last longer for years to come.

For more information, contact CheckMark Power Washing, voted Best Cleaning Service for the past three years by the readers of the Severna Park Voice. CheckMark also has 45 Google reviews with a combined rating of 4.9 stars. Contact CheckMark Power Washing at 443-848-0581 or visit www.checkmarkpowerwash.com. ■

Why Modern Kitchens Are Splitting Into Two

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advances in the technology of small appliances are changing living spaces and design. A scullery, or work kitchen, provides a space for meal prep and cleaning, while a butler's pantry serves more for storing and staging. Both offer added function for day-to-day living and distinctive hosting.

Whether you need a pantry or scullery, both offer additional storage. The best layout will include both open and closed storage, with rollout trays for heavy items, drawers for convenient access, and space for countertop appliances. That KitchenAid mixer finds a home, the bulk snacks are tucked away in a drawer, and your sheet pans are finally at arm's reach rather than buried in a bottom cabinet. The toaster oven that you can't live without now rests above the bread drawer. The butler's pantry is also a perfect place to store serving platters, extra glassware, and items that you only use on special occasions. Open shelves are a smart addition to the pantry for everyday items like coffee, supplements or even a favorite family photo.

The hosting house loves a scullery, and you don't have to live at Downton Abbey



to have one. The ideal scullery includes a prep sink, extra dishwasher, glass rinser, beverage refrigerator, icemaker and sometimes an additional oven. While employing home kitchen staff is mostly a thing of the past, the resurgence of traditional design combined with home entertaining gives sculleries a nostalgic feel.

Most families are not using a formal dining room, opting instead for in-kitchen

dining at an island or table. This lends additional unused space to add a scullery while catering to the more modern style of hosting. Furthermore, the bonus space invites playful design choices like moody cabinetry, eclectic wallpaper and patterned floor tile. Statement lighting and arched or half-moon pocket doors add personality and charm.

Modern home designs with butler's pantries and sculleries maximize kitchen functionality by separating prep work, appliance storage and cleaning from main living areas. These spaces offer essential storage solutions — including drawers for heavy appliances and shelving for staging — while allowing for creative, playful design choices that enhance home entertaining. So, the next time you are planning a gathering, consider how these additions could transform daily routines and hosting into a more organized, aesthetic experience for your family and guests.

Severna Park Kitchen & Bath is located at 580-C Ritchie Highway in the Park Plaza shopping center. For more information, call 410-777-9526 or visit www.spkitchenandbath.com. ■

Should I Age In Place Or Is It Time To Right-Size?

Continued from page 14

Think beyond the house itself. If you were no longer driving, could you still access the people and places important to you? Will your community continue to provide the connection and independence you want?

Don't Forget the Financial Picture

Your home may be one of your largest financial assets, so look beyond the monthly mortgage payment. Consider property taxes, insurance, utilities, ongoing maintenance and future repairs.

Compare those expenses with the cost of a different home or community and consider how your home equity fits into your overall retirement plans. A conversation with both your financial advisor and a trusted real estate professional can help you see the complete picture.

The Best Time to Make a Plan? Before You Need One

Whether you ultimately decide to stay or move, planning early gives you choices.

If staying makes sense, you can address deferred maintenance, make accessibility improvements, and put resources in place for the future. If moving feels right, you can declutter gradually, explore communities, understand your home's value, and prepare for a transition on your timeline.

There are many stages of homeownership and sometimes the best real estate advice isn't to sell, but my advice is to create a plan.

For more information, go to www.bettybatty.com or contact real estate advisor Betty Batty at betty.batty@compass.com or by calling 301-832-7609 or 410-429-7425. ■

The Benefits Of Window Cleaning, Soft-Washing And Roof Treatment

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Homes surrounded by trees or exposed to high humidity may require more frequent cleaning.

Preventing Hard-Water Stains

Hard-water stains are caused by minerals left behind

when water evaporates. They are especially common on windows exposed to sprinkler systems, well water or frequent water runoff.

Surface and Exposure	Recommended Frequency	Prevention Focus
Glass Near Sprinklers	Every eight to 12 weeks	Stops recurring irrigation overspray from baking into glass
Standard Windows	Two times per year (spring/fall)	Removes general airborne minerals, rain spots and pollen
Full House Soft-Wash	Every 12-24 months	Prevents acidic siding buildup from running down onto windowpanes
High Heat and Coastal Zones	Every three to four months	Eliminates salt-spray film and heat-accelerated mineral bonding

Treating Roofs for Mold and Moss

Roof treatments can help control moss, algae and mold growth before these contaminants become a larger maintenance problem. Moss can retain moisture against roofing materials, while organic growth can contribute to discoloration and deterioration over time.

A professional roof treat-

ment can improve the roof's appearance, control existing organic growth and support longer-lasting roofing materials. In many cases, roofs should be inspected and treated approximately every one to three years, depending on the roof material, shade, moisture levels and surrounding vegetation.

Regular exterior maintenance is ultimately preventative maintenance. Establishing

a cleaning schedule based on your property's materials and environmental conditions can help preserve appearance, protect surfaces, and reduce the likelihood of costly repairs.

Pink's Windows Annapolis-Columbia serves Arnold, Severna Park, Annapolis and surrounding communities. Learn more at www.pinkswindows.com/annapolis-columbia or by calling 443-332-7465. ■

Do I Need A Building Permit For That?

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occurs when the work is completed. On the day of the inspection, a contractor should be onsite to meet with the inspector to go over plans, questions and details. If the inspector checks the plans and looks over the scope of work, they may give a "pass."

The inspector may require something additional before moving to the next step. Once that work is completed, a reinspection will be done to see if it is satisfactory and then you can move to the next step.

It's an inconvenience for everyone involved. However, how else would a homeowner, who may not be savvy in the home improvement industry, be able to check the work?

Sometimes that inconvenience goes too far. We were on a recent project and we were asked by an inspector to remove a 4-by-4-foot section of the subfloor that was already screwed down

and glued down so they could see the top of the floor joists rather than looking from outside underneath. At that point, the inspection process somewhat jeopardized the final product. Thankfully, everything came together as planned.

Anne Arundel County has some of the strictest energy code laws in the state. This is to an extreme benefit for the customer. R-60 is now required in ceilings, and spray foam is required to go behind new outlet boxes to prevent any drafts coming in by the electrical outlets. Also, for major home renovations, fire sprinklers are being added. These regulations are designed to benefit the homeowner and customer.

For more information on county permits, visit www.aacounty.org. Remember, you can always hire a professional.

To learn more about 50 East Remodeling, visit www.50eastremodeling.com or call 410-500-2266. ■

Fencing Trends Inspired By The Chesapeake

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subtle textures that complement the surrounding landscape. For fencing, that can mean moving away from traditional bright white vinyl and choosing weathered grays, warm wood tones or drift-wood-inspired finishes.

These colors work especially well with the architecture found throughout Anne Arundel County, from traditional colonials and Cape Cods to Craftsman homes and newer construction. They also pair naturally with stone, landscaping, patios and popular composite decking colors, allowing a fence to become part of the overall outdoor design rather than simply a boundary around the yard.

Material choice is just as important as color. Wood has long been associated with coastal homes because of its natural warmth, but homeowners who prefer less maintenance now have more options. Premium vinyl fencing is available in realistic woodgrain textures and sophisticated colors that offer the appearance of wood without many of the maintenance requirements.

Unlike traditional wood fencing, vinyl

does not need to be stained or painted and will not rot or splinter. Routine cleaning with soap and water is typically enough to keep it looking its best. For busy homeowners, that combination of style and easier upkeep can make a significant difference over the life of the fence.

Newer collections are also expanding what homeowners can do with vinyl. The Catalyst Newbury collection, for example, includes textured woodgrain finishes such as coastal cedar, cypress, slate gray and Brazilian blend. These nature-inspired shades can create privacy while adding warmth and visual interest to a backyard, pool area or garden.

Fall is a particularly good time to think about how fencing fits into the larger landscape. As leaves change and summer plantings fade, homeowners can more easily see the permanent elements of their yards and evaluate how colors, materials and sightlines work together. A new fence can frame landscaping, complement a deck or patio, improve privacy, and give the outdoor space a

more finished appearance. When considering a nontraditional fence color, view material samples outdoors at different times of day. Sun, shade, siding color and surrounding landscaping can all change how a finish appears. Homeowners should also check neighborhood or homeowners association guidelines before settling on a style or color.

The best fence is not simply the trendiest option. It should complement the home, meet the household's needs, and perform well for years to come. For homeowners around Severna Park, coastal-inspired fencing offers a way to bring the character of the Chesapeake region home through timeless colors, natural textures and low-maintenance materials.

Fence & Deck Connection has served Maryland homeowners for more than 35 years, helping families create outdoor spaces designed for the way they live. Visit www.fenceanddeckconnection.com or contact Fence & Deck Connection at 800-222-9268 to add a touch of coastal living to your own backyard. ■

There are multiple signs that indicate you're overdue for an electrical repair. Some of these signs are more obvious than others, however; if you notice any of the following happening in your home, you should contact our professionals for an electrical repair estimate.

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Turning Turf Into A Living Landscape



For generations, a luscious green lawn has been synonymous with the American dream and life in suburbia. But across Maryland, homeowners are beginning to imagine something different. Imagine a yard that is full of butterflies, bees and birds; imagine an entire ecosystem living in your backyard!

The idea is simple: less lawn, more life. Replacing even a small portion of your lawn with a garden bed can make a surprisingly big difference.

So, why would someone do this? Well, first and foremost, it is great for our environment. A lawn offers relatively little food or shelter to our outside friends. A diverse garden can provide nectar for butterflies, pollen for bees, seeds for birds, and places for beneficial insects to live. Planting native coneflower and cup plants will invite the American goldfinch to your space, and butterfly milkweed will have your yard buzzing with monarchs. Native plants are especially valuable because local wildlife has evolved alongside them. Don't forget about the soil improvements, stormwater management and erosion control as well.

There can be practical benefits, too. Less turf can mean less mowing, fewer lawn treatments, and less time spent maintaining grass that serves little purpose. A thoughtfully designed garden still requires care, especially while plants



become established, but the work shifts from repeatedly mowing a lawn to tending a landscape that changes with the seasons. Aside from planting perennials, trees and shrubs, relieving your yard of a little grass also gives you the opportunity to grow your own vegetables. All the pollinators busy pollinating around your yard will help give you weeks of harvests.

Making the change does not require tearing out the entire lawn at once. In fact, starting small is often easier. Homeowners can widen an existing flower bed, create a native planting around a tree, replace turf around the mail-

box or convert a sunny corner into a pollinator garden. Over time, those small spaces can grow and connect.

Got a spot in mind? Well, you do not have to wait until next spring to plant because fall is the perfect time. Planting in the fall gives the plants time to settle into their new home, grow and stretch their roots before their winter dormancy. White wood asters are wonderful native fall blooming perennials that do well in more shaded areas. Goldenrod is a Maryland classic with its waves of yellow blowing in the wind. Looking for a tree that makes a statement? Put in an eastern redbud for

beautiful spring blooms!

A lawn does not have to disappear to make a difference. Start with a few hundred square feet or even a few dozen. Remove some turf, plant something useful, and just watch what wonderful things happen. Maybe even set up that trail cam you got for the holidays years ago.

A little less lawn can make room for a whole lot more life!

Alex DeJong is a landscape designer and planner at KW Landscaping. For more information, email him at plant-alex@kwlandscaping.com, call 410-729-0646 or visit www.kwlandscaping.com. ■



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