

# Home & Garden

March 2022

A Special Supplement to

**The Expositor**





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## *Did you know?*

Homeowners should give due consideration to whether or not plants are considered invasive species before introducing new plants on their properties. According to the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration, invasive species of plants can lead to the extinction of native plants and animals. Invasive plant species also can reduce biodiversity and cause significant fundamental disruptions to local ecosystems. Though non-native plants are often cherished for their unique looks, homeowners planting new gardens or supplementing existing gardens with new plants are urged to plant only native species. Such an approach benefits plants and also local wildlife that depends on native plant species for food and cover.



# Bain's Greenhouse and Farms is working year round for your garden

**RACHEL AUBERGER**  
contributor

Taking care of the family business is often seen as a rite of passage. For the Bain family, that business is a greenhouse and farm.

Founded in 1972 as a simple farm by Joe and Frances Bain, Bain's Greenhouse and Farms has grown and evolved over the years and now has three generations living on the farm and working to fill the variety of roles in the operation of the family business.

"We wanted an environment where we could focus on family and teach our kids the value of a good work ethic," Bain said. "We love being able to work outdoors, spend time with family, and be a part of something that betters the community."

Joe and Frances, the first generation, help to care for the grow room, wash produce, and assemble hanging baskets in the greenhouse that was added to the farm in 1992. Brent and Mary Crys, the next generation of Bains working the farm, take care of the day-to-day operations including planning and marketing, while the third generation - Aleni, Abigail, Elijah, Isabella, and Sadie help with potting, watering, harvesting, loading orders, and waiting on customers.

"Many people think of greenhouse season as April through June, but, the truth is, greenhouse and farming are year-round endeavors," Mary Crys explained. "While most of our plant sales take place during this time, seeding and cuttings are largely done December through February, with some started a year or more in advance. When summer arrives, we move into produce, clean-up, and ordering for next season. Fall brings mums and pansies, supply deliveries, and winter preparations at the greenhouse. Winter starts the seeding process all over and is also a time for fencing and working with our livestock."

The focus for Bain's Greenhouse and Farms is on plants that perform well in the Middle Tennessee area, with top sellers being geraniums, wave petunias, and bedding as well as vegetable flats. The farm offers a large variety of vegetables, herbs,

hanging baskets, perennials, and a wide assortment of bedding annuals.

"We rotate in new items every season and try to include novelties such as caterpillar-like chenilles, sensitive plants that respond to touch, pineapple lilies, etc.," Mary Crys explained.

The future of Bain's Greenhouse and Farms is primed to grow and prosper for generations to come, and the vision for the future is something that moves, changes, and evolves almost daily.

"It's a moving goalpost," Mary Crys said.

She and her husband, the planning and marketing duo for the farm, are considering adding a Christmas tree farm in the future, along with the possibility of a berry patch, restaurant, botanical gardens, or other agri-entertainment ventures.

"As the next generation grows up, their desire to stay with the family business (or not) and their interests will play a large part in our future direction," May Crys said.

Bain's Greenhouse and Farm is located at 1076 Green Rd., in Rock Island, and is open 8 a.m.-6 p.m., Monday-Saturday, starting in April. Home delivery options are available through their website <http://www.bainsgreenhouse.com>



# Buds and Blooms has grown with the community

**RACHEL AUBERGER**  
contributor

One of White County's favorite places for plant enthusiasts started as a hobby but over the past 15 years has grown to something much more.

"We had no intention of getting this big, but, as time has gone by, it is something that just happened," Allen Selby, owner of the family-owned and operated greenhouses that are tucked into White County on Old Smithville Highway, said. "Buds and Blooms Greenhouses started in October 2005 when my oldest son Trey built two 20'x100' hoop houses, finishing them in December."

The Selbys began selling plants the following spring, and they haven't looked back.

"That first year, I think we had 50 Boston Ferns and 100 hanging baskets, and maybe 400 flats of annuals," Selby reminisced. "I can remember the first day that we surpassed \$100 in sales for a single day. We were all impressed."

Over the next few years, Buds and Blooms continued to grow, and more greenhouses were built as the Selbys rode the momentum built on the excitement of that first year.

That momentum came to a sudden halt when a tornado ripped through Buds and Blooms, in 2017.

"We lost three greenhouses completely and it damaged three others," Selby said. "But, with the help of family, we were able to move all of the plants we still had to Jimmy Denton's Woodpecker Greenhouse. He held the plants for us until we were able to rebuild."

And rebuild they did. The Selbys went to work repairing and rebuilding. By January 2018, they were able to bring their plants back home and start growing the year's crops.

Crops is a small word for a big operation that happens at the Buds and Blooms Greenhouses. The operation has

grown from a few plants, in 2005, to a long list of flowers, plants, seedlings, and trees.

"We produce somewhere around 400 flats of annuals and around 500 flats of perennials," Selby said. "We grow about 5,000 succulents and carry in the neighborhood of 1,500 Boston ferns and 200 hanging baskets of annuals."

"We also grow several hundred mixed containers and over a thousand flats of garden vegetables. We also carry a wide variety of tropical/house plants that would make almost 2,000 pots. We are a retailer of Weeks Roses and also carry Knockout Roses."

In the fall, Selby estimated that Buds and Blooms grows 6,000 mums and assorted annuals as well as selling between 7,000 and 8,000 pumpkins.

"We are also planning on growing poinsettias this year," he said, because adding new things to their lineup is what has kept things fun at Buds and Blooms over the years. "We hope to have them available in late November."

Keeping things fun and finding new ways to encourage the community to enjoy their greenhouses is something that has been in the thoughts of the Selby family.

"Last year, we put on a couple of classes: one succulent class and another mixed-container class," Selby said as he talked about opportunities they provided for friends to gather and enjoy a few hours creating their own arrangements. "Both were really well received, and we hope to do that again this year. We want to add some other experiences that I think everyone would enjoy."

While educating attendees to the classes was fun for the staff at Buds and Blooms, Selby said they know everyone doesn't have the time for that, and the greenhouse offers a service for those people who want to use flowers and foliage to decorate their porches, decks, patios, and homes.



"A lot of customers are unsure of what to plant or they don't have the time to plant their containers, so we offer the service of doing it for them," Selby explained. "They drop off their pots, or we have pots for sale, and give us some information: colors they want, types of plants, amount of sun vs. shade it will receive. We will pick the plants and fill the pots with soil and set the plants. The customers can return in a few days and pick up their new pot, ready to be displayed."

Local plant enthusiasts and homeowners aren't the only ones who visit Buds and Blooms Greenhouses, however.

"We also grow tens of thousands of plants for landscapers and other retailers from Indiana to Alabama," Selby said and then talked about the newest expansion. "In July 2021, we purchased a greenhouse operation from an existing business. It is an internet business."

The Selbys now own a second business, Tristar Plants, that houses and sells over 300 variations of trees, bushes, berries, and garden items to customers who purchase them through their website [tristarplants.com](http://tristarplants.com) or a variety of other platforms including Amazon, Etsy, eBay, Pinterest and Facebook Marketplace.

"This business takes us from being a local company to becoming a national company with sales in all of the 48 continental United States," Selby said. "It is a huge learning curve for us. It is a totally different way of doing business."

When asked about what is next for

the not-so-small family-owned operation, Selby was quick to say that the brakes are on.

"Right now, expansion is not a word we use. We are tired," he laughed. "In 2021, we built four greenhouses, and in 2022 we have added six more and moved over 20,000 pots of trees and bushes, so we need a break."

But Selby also added that he's never saying never.

"Honestly, the possibilities are there. We take several phone calls a week from businesses looking for someone to grow plants for them," he said. "So, time will tell."

For the Selbys, what started as a hobby and became a passion is something for which they will forever be indebted to the community that surrounds them.

"We are grateful for the business the people of the community bring to us, and we thank each one who has visited Buds and Blooms," Selby said. "We love what we do and hope to be here for years to come."

Selby said seeing the smiling faces and watching people enjoy their greenhouses makes all the work worthwhile.

"We invite you to come out and visit us," he said. "You don't have to buy anything, just come and walk the houses and enjoy the plants anytime. Take pictures - we have prom photos and wedding and other occasions done here frequently. We just enjoy people."

And plants. It is safe to say the Selbys enjoy both people and plants and mostly enjoy sharing plants with people.

# Roberts Bros. Landscaping brings a lifetime of experience to your landscaping projects

**RACHEL AUBERGER**  
contributor

Roberts Bros. Landscaping may have been making sure properties around the Upper Cumberland look great and stay healthy for the past 22 years, but they bring an entire lifetime of experience with them each time they head out.

Having a family whose heritage is in farming, Jerry Roberts doesn't remember a year when he wasn't out working on the land in some way. In fact, by the time he was just 7 years old, Roberts landed his first paying job helping an elderly neighbor manicure her yard. When he was 10, Roberts, with the help of his father, Vivian, and his brother, Jason, began mowing the property at the Old Bon Air Cemetery.

Despite his experience and early start,

mowing and lawn management took a back seat to farming and the more lucrative growing of crops of tobacco as Roberts grew older. But, as all things do, tobacco farming ran its course and, as health concerns arose, the need for endless crops of tobacco declined, and Roberts shifted gears again.

In 2000, Roberts, who had never completely forsaken his lawn care business, turned his attention to making Roberts Bros. Landscaping a full-time business and added commercial properties to his resume. The business, which at first centered around White County, grew rapidly. Roberts expanded his property management to surrounding counties, eventually reaching out as far as Fayetteville, Tennessee, and stretching into southern Kentucky.

Being no stranger to hard work, Rob-

erts worked from daylight to dark, mowing as many as 500 acres a week as Roberts Bros. Landscaping managed the lawn and grounds maintenance of airport properties, city properties - including mowing rights of way, gated communities, apartment complexes, and private residential properties.

As with all of his work, Roberts took the job of caring for properties to a new level and moved Roberts Bros. Landscaping past just a mowing and trimming service. The company provides mulching or rocking landscape areas, new home lawn installs such as seeding and strawing, sodding, and tree and plant installation, and soil sampling. They also offer pressure washing, irrigation systems, and hardscaping, as well as building retaining walls. In addition, they offer other general maintenance services

such as bush hogging, general skid steer work, erosion control, fencing, and even snow removal in the winter months.

In recent years, Roberts Bros. Landscaping has been voted Best of the Best several times and has had one of the yards they maintain featured on the front of a well-known magazine.

As is typical of small-town communities, as well as among professional organizations, word of mouth goes a long way, and the pride that Roberts puts into his work has carried his company over the years. It is something that he is counting on to continue as his son, now 11, has already been learning the tricks of the trade as well as the value of hard work and how to nurture both the land and the relationships that the family business has spent years building.



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# What to know before planting around your property



When planning a landscape, it's tempting to pick the most colorful, vibrant plants. An eye-popping property filled with yellows, purples, pinks, and other bold colors is sure to catch anyone's eye. However, the right plant for a property is not always the most colorful.

Gardening novices can easily be overwhelmed on a trip to their local garden center, where employees may ask a host of questions that have little to do with homeowners' preferences and every-

thing to do with the growing conditions around their properties. Those questions may seem a little intense, but they're well-intentioned. Successful gardening is more about soil conditions and access to sunlight than it is about the plants themselves. An awe-inspiring hydrangea bush will only impress if it's planted in a location where it can thrive.

The Landscape, Nursery and Urban Forestry program at UMass Amherst Extension advises homeowners to learn

about the following site conditions, and ultimately share that knowledge with local garden center representatives, before they pick and plant anything around their properties.

- **Hardiness zone:** The Plant Hardiness Zone Map from the U.S. Department of Agriculture is designed to help gardeners determine which plants are most likely to thrive where they live. The map can be found on the USDA website at [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov).

- **Light availability, intensity, and duration,** from full sun to deep shade: Prior to planting, homeowners can document this information in a notebook or on their smartphones. Do so for a long enough period of time that you can get an accurate idea of the conditions in which plants will have to grow, and then take that information with you to the garden center where you will buy your plants. Employees can then use this info to help you find the right fit given the light conditions.

- **Water availability,** both quantity and quality, as well as ease of access

- **Exposure to wind and temperature extremes**

- **Exposure to weather events,** snow loads, erosion, and flooding: Garden center employees can likely recommend plants based on traditional weather pat-



terns in a given area.

- **Soil type, drainage and compaction:** Homeowners can take note of any areas of their property where water pools or the ground feels especially soggy after rainfall. Share this information with garden center employees prior to picking plants for such areas. If soil appears compacted, aeration prior to planting may be necessary.

- **Competition from existing vegetation,** keeping in mind the roots underground that you can't see

- **Above ground wires or obstructions:** Trees will grow up, and the presence of power lines or other obstructions may threaten the trees or prove dangerous if trees eventually grow into or hang over power lines.

Knowledge of various conditions prior to planting can save homeowners the cost of replacing plants and the hassle of dealing with plants that don't take.



# 8 essential garden tools for beginners

The right tool for the job is essential to working safely and efficiently. This is as true in the workplace as it is in the garden.

Novice gardeners may not know where to begin in regards to which tools they need. The following are eight items that can serve as a solid foundation for beginning gardeners.

1. Gloves: Your hands will be working hard, so it pays to protect them from calluses, blisters, splinters, insects, and dirt. Look for water-resistant gloves that are also breathable.

2. Hand pruners: Hand pruners are essential for cutting branches, cleaning up shrubs, dead-heading flowers, and various other tasks. Choose ergonomic, non-slip handles that will make work easier. Rust-resistant, nonstick blades also are handy.

3. Wheelbarrow: A wheelbarrow can transport gear to garden beds or tote dirt, leaves, rocks, and other materials around the landscape. A good wheelbarrow is strong but light enough to maneuver when full.

4. Loppers: Long-handled loppers will fit the bill for thick branches. The long handles provide leverage to cut through branches an inch or more in diameter.

5. Hand trowel: A hand trowel is a

handy tool that lets you dig holes or unearth weeds. While shopping for a trowel, consider getting a hand-held garden fork, which can aerate soil and cut through roots.

6. Hose/watering can: Keeping gardens hydrated is part of ensuring their health. That makes a hose and a watering can two invaluable tools to have around. Invest in a lightweight, expandable hose if storage space is at a premium. An adjustable nozzle will enable you to customize the water flow as needed. A watering can is an easy way to tote water to hard-to-reach pots and containers.

7. Garden kneeler: Gardeners often bend and kneel while working in the soil. That puts pressure on the back and knees. A comfortable garden kneeler with memory foam or one made from shock-absorbing material can reduce aches and pains.

8. Garden hoe: Garden hoes till soil, remove weeds and perform many other tasks. A garden hoe can be used along with a full-sized shovel, trowel and garden rake.

This list is just the tip of the garden tool iceberg. Visit a garden center and speak with a professional about other tools that can be added to the mix.



## Signs of winter lawn damage

Mother Nature can be harsh on a lawn, and it's up to homeowners to nurse their lawns back to health after they endure the elements. That's often the case when winter ends and homeowners uncover signs of damage to their lawns.

Homeowners cannot begin to repair winter lawn damage until they learn to identify it, and the following are some telltale signs that winter took a harsh toll on a landscape.

- **Wilted grass:** Many things can cause grass to wilt over the course of winter, so homeowners may have to put on their sleuth's cap to determine why grass that was healthy as recently as late fall is now wilted as the spring bloom begins. Grass that's adjacent to walkways and driveways might have wilted due to the application of de-icing solutions. Such products can prevent the formation of ice on driveways and walkways. However, when they're tracked onto the grass by people or animals or blown there by winter winds, grass can wilt. A deep watering in spring can flush any lingering solution from the lawn. In future winters, homeowners can be as careful as possible when applying de-icing solutions, making a concerted effort to avoid spreading any onto the grass and limited applications to areas of the driveway and walkways that are not close to the grass.

- **Brown patches:** The National Association of Landscape Professionals notes that brown patches in a lawn of-

ten develop after heavy snowfall. Such patches tend to develop where large piles of shoveled snow were deposited, so homeowners can inspect alongside driveways and walkways. The NALP advises homeowners to rake away part of the brown patches first. If green tissue is emerging beneath, then the lawn will likely be fine in due time. However, if the area beneath is not green and surrounding areas are already turning green, homeowners may need to rake up dead tissue before applying topsoil to the affected spots. Once topsoil is spread, some grass seed can be spread and the grass should regain its green glory.

- **Gray or pink grass:** Another indicator of winter lawn damage linked to snow is gray or pink grass. The NALP reports that this is a byproduct of snow mold caused by lingering snow. Action may be unnecessary, as the NALP notes these circular patterns often go away on their own. If not, raking the affected areas might be enough to get the lawn on the road to recovery. If the issue continues to linger after raking, a topsoil application and subsequent seeding may be necessary.

These are three common signs of winter lawn damage in areas where snowfall is significant during the coldest months of the year. Homeowners concerned about their damaged lawns are urged to contact a local landscape professional to correct any issues that linger into spring.

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# The dos and don'ts of fire pits

Many homeowners relish any opportunity to retreat to their back yards, where they can put up their feet and relax in the great outdoors. That retreat-like escape is made even more relaxing when sitting around a fire pit.

Fire pits can be found in millions of suburban backyards across the globe. Fire pits have become so popular that a 2016 survey of landscape architects conducted by the American Society of Landscape Architects revealed they were the most sought after outdoor design element. Fire pits remain wildly popular a half decade after that survey. Homeowners who are only now joining the fire pit revolution can keep these dos and don'ts in mind as they plan their summer s'mores sessions.

**DO** keep the fire pit a safe distance away from the home. Fire pits should be located a safe distance from the home

at all times, but especially when they're in use. Home design experts recommend keeping fire pits a minimum of 10 to 20 feet away from a house or other structure, such as a shed or a detached garage. The further away the fire is from houses and other structures, the less likely those structures are to catch on fire.

**DON'T** place the fire pit beneath trees or next to shrubs. Though fire pits should be kept safe distances away from a house and other structures, it's important that they're not placed beneath trees or next to shrubs. Shrubs and low hanging branches can easily catch embers and be lit ablaze, so make sure fire pits are not placed in locations that increase that risk.

**DO** clean out seasonal debris. It can be tempting to let seasonal debris rest inside the fire pit burn away during



the season's first s'mores session. But burning debris poses a serious safety risk, as embers can easily be blown out of the fire pit and catch nearby trees or shrubs or even a home on fire. The National Fire Protection Association advises homeowners that embers blowing from a backyard fire pose the same threat to homes as if they are from a

wildfire. **DON'T** let fire pits burn near flammable materials. Store firewood piles a safe distance away from the fire pit while it's in operation. It may be convenient to keep firewood right next to the fire pit while the fire is burning, but that increases the risk that embers will land on firewood and start a fire outside of the pit.

**DO** check the weather report prior to starting the fire. Windy weather increases the risk of embers blowing around and potentially landing on the house, other structures around the property or trees. If the weather report is calling for gusting winds, burn a fire on another night.

**DON'T** leave a fire pit fire burning. Unattended recreational fires are illegal and incredibly dangerous. Homeowners should never leave fire pit fires burning unattended or allow fires to slowly die out overnight. Always extinguish the fire before going inside and stop adding wood to the fire roughly one hour before you plan to go inside. Water or sand can be poured on ashes to extinguish the fire. Once homeowners are confident a fire has been extinguished, ashes can be spread around to ensure there are no hot spots still burning. If there are, start the extinguishing process over again.

A night around the fire pit is a summertime tradition in many households. Safety must be as much a part of such traditions as s'mores.



# How to pick the right trees for your property

Trees benefit a landscape by serving both aesthetic and utilitarian functions. A home surrounded by healthy green trees can be a sight to behold, and those same trees can benefit surrounding plants and wildlife at the same time.

As appealing as trees are, not all trees and landscapes make for the perfect match. The Arbor Day Foundation notes the importance of planning when designing a landscape. Planning ensures the trees homeowners ultimately choose for their properties will grow well in the soil and moisture present in their yards.

Careful consideration of a handful of variables can help homeowners determine which trees will make the best fit for their properties.

- Height: Homeowners must consider the projected height of a tree before planting it. Avoid trees that will bump into anything when fully grown, as that can adversely affect surrounding greenery and pose a safety hazard. The ADF's tree sizing guide can be accessed at <https://www.arborday.org/trees/rightTreeAnd-Place/size.cfm> and serves as an invaluable resource for homeowners who want to plant new trees around their properties.

- Canopy spread: Trees grow out as well as up, so it's important to consider their potential width at maturity as well. The ADF sizing guide can help homeowners get an idea of how wide a tree is likely to be at maturity. Trees that spread out quite a bit don't necessarily need to be avoided, but it's important that they're planted far enough apart so they don't

adversely affect surrounding plants. In addition, wide trees that are planted too close together can make the landscape appear crowded, taking something away from its aesthetic appeal.

- Growth rate: Growth rate is an important variable because it can affect how quickly homeowners will see changes in their landscapes. Homeowners who want to plant for privacy can consider trees with quick growth rates or purchase more mature trees that are already near full growth. Those who are not in need of instant transformation can try trees with slower growth rates, which the ADF notes typically live longer than fast-growing



species.

- Requirements: Different trees require different amounts of sun and moisture and different soil components to thrive. Homeowners can have their soil tested to determine which trees will thrive in it. Local garden centers can be a great re-

source for homeowners who want insight as to which trees will thrive in their local climates.

Trees serve many functions on a property. Choosing the right trees for a landscape requires careful consideration of a host of variables.






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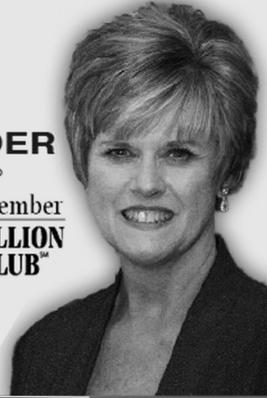
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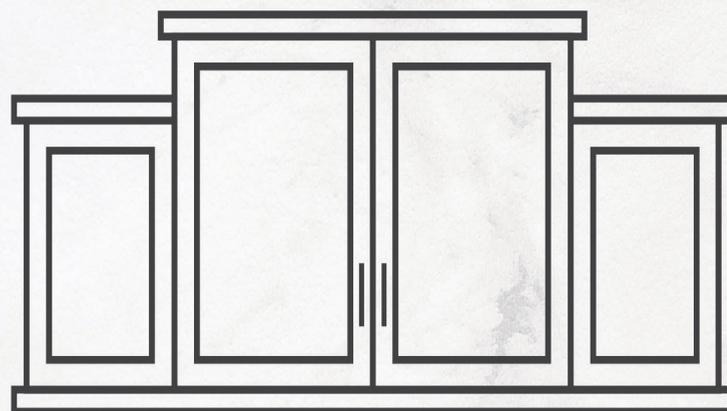
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# What to know about outdoor living spaces

Home trends come and go. What was popular as recently as a decade ago may have lost some luster in the eyes of today's home buyers. Though that's historically been the case in regard to real estate, outdoor living rooms are one relatively recent home trend that figures to have a longer shelf life, especially in the aftermath of a global pandemic during which people were encouraged to stay home as much as possible.

Real estate professionals and organizations like the National Association of Home Builders note the popularity of outdoor living spaces among prospective home buyers, and how that popularity has grown in recent years. Outdoor living rooms not only appeal to potential buyers, they also serve as a means for current homeowners to get more out of their properties. Homeowners mulling outdoor living space projects should consider various factors before deciding to go ahead with a project.

- **Cost:** The home renovation resource HomeAdvisor estimates that the average cost of an outdoor living space is around \$7,600. That cost can easily go up depending on where homeowners live and

the features they want to have in their outdoor living spaces. For example, including a built-in fire pit in an outdoor living space will cost more than purchasing a stand-alone fire pit that can be picked up and moved. But many homeowners feel a built-in fire pit makes an outdoor living space even more special.

- **Return on investment:** Return on investment is another factor for homeowners to consider as they try to decide if they should install outdoor living spaces and how to design those areas. Much conflicting data about the ROI on outdoor kitchens can be found online, but many trusted real estate organizations report that such additions do not mesmerize prospective buyers. Data from the American Institute of Architects indicates that outdoor kitchens are routinely ranked among the least desirable home features, which means homeowners should not expect substantial ROI when selling their homes. But that built-in fire pit? Estimates from the National Association of Realtors suggest fire features recover around 67 percent of homeowners' initial investment. In addition, 83 percent of homeowners surveyed by the



NAR who had installed fire features said they had a greater desire to be home after completing the project.

- **Space:** An outdoor living space may only be as relaxing as the space allows. The proximity of neighbors may affect privacy levels, which can make it hard to enjoy movie night outdoors or curl up to quietly read a good book. In ad-

dition, landscaping also may need to be addressed if drainage is an issue in the backyard. That can add to the cost, and drainage concerns may limit the materials homeowners can work with.

Outdoor living spaces are popular. Homeowners must consider various factors before deciding if such spaces are for them.

## Popular insect repellent plants

Homeowners choose plants for their properties based on a number of variables. Some may be into growing their own foods, while others desire their gardens to be an awe-inspiring mélange of bright colors and alluring scents. There's no wrong reason to plant a fresh garden,

but some plants offer extra benefits, such as repelling insects.

Insects can be a nuisance and a threat to individuals' overall health. According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, insect-borne diseases are viral and bacterial illnesses that develop from

insect bites. Mosquitoes, sand flies and fleas are some examples of insects that can pass on disease. Fever, chills, headache, and muscle soreness are just a few of the more common symptoms linked to insect-borne diseases.

The good news for avid gardeners is that certain plants can help repel insects and provide the additional benefits like fresh food and aesthetic appeal that so many people love.

- **Basil:** The aroma of fresh basil is enough to compel any gardener to make a place for it in their garden. But there's more to fresh basil than its scent, as the Farmers Almanac notes it can be used to repel mosquitoes and moths.

- **Lavender:** Fleas, flies, mosquitoes, and moths are not fans of this aromatic and colorful member of the mint family. Bees tend to be drawn to lavender, a durable plant that many garden centers recommend in areas prone to drought or hot summers without much precipitation.

- **Mint:** Mint is another plant that is instantly recognizable for its aroma. But mint lovers may not realize that it's also great for keeping ants at bay. Mint also can be used to repel mosquitoes, but

gardeners with no experience planting mint should plant it in pots. That's because the Farmers Almanac notes mint is an especially aggressive spreader that can quickly take over a garden. Separating mint in pots can prevent it from bullying its way into other plants' domains.

- **Lemongrass:** Lemongrass is a tropical grass that's so fragrant it's often used in perfumes. Lemongrass contains citronella, which many people associate with repelling mosquitoes. A potted lemongrass plant can repel these unwanted guests, keeping them away from decks, porches and/or patios all summer long.

- **Chrysanthemums:** The Farmers' Almanac recommends using chrysanthemums, which repel a range of insects from bedbugs to fleas to ants, as border plants around a home. That's because they contain the natural insecticide pyrethrin, which can serve as something of an insect-repelling boundary around a home.

Insects are unwanted guests around a home each spring, summer and fall. Certain plants can help repel insects and serve as an eco-friendly alternative to insecticides.



# Should I DIY?: 3 questions to determine if it's best to renovate on your own

A do-it-yourself mentality has taken hold in millions of households across the globe. Popular television channels like HGTV and DIY Network as well as accessible home improvement content on apps like YouTube has inspired many homeowners to tackle renovation projects around their homes. Taking such initiative is admirable, though it also can prove costly if homeowners end up biting off more than they can chew.

Home improvement videos and television shows have a tendency to oversimplify renovation projects, potentially giving homeowners a false sense of confidence in their DIY abilities. A concerted effort on the part of homeowners to determine if it's best to renovate on their own or hire a professional should always be the first step of any renovation project. No two homeowners are the same, but the following three questions can help homeowners determine if DIY is their best option.

## 1. Can I afford to DIY?

Professional home improvement projects are costly for a variety of reasons. Materials can be costly, but so are the tools and labor necessary to do the job right. Homeowners may not have the tools necessary to complete complicated projects. Specialty tools can be expensive to purchase or even rent, and the cost of acquiring such tools should be included in any DIY project cost estimates. Labor also factors heavily into professional projects, and for good reason. Talented contractors have unique skills that have been developed and perfected over many years. Those skills can ensure projects are completed quickly and correctly. Labor may seem costly, but such costs may ultimately prove to be a bargain compared to the cost of fixing DIY mistakes. Projects that are minor in scope and don't require the use of potentially costly specialty tools may be better suited for weekend warriors than more complicated renovations.

## 2. Do I have the time?

Homeowners must determine how much time they have to complete a project before deciding to do it themselves. No one wants to spend months staring at

an unfinished renovation project. Homeowners who are already pressed for time may not be able to complete projects in a timely fashion, which can make homes less comfortable and even less safe.

## 3. Can I pull this off?

DIY projects can instill homeowners with a sense of pride in their homes, but it's imperative that homeowners considering the DIY option conduct an honest assessment of their skills. A lack of renovation experience does not necessarily mean a homeowner cannot successfully complete a DIY project. But in such instances, it may be best to start with small, straightforward projects and then gradually move up to bigger, more complicated projects as skills are fine tuned. And homeowners who have never been at their best with a hammer in hand should not be ashamed to leave the work to the professionals.

Television shows and online tutorials can make renovations appear easier than they actually are. Homeowners considering DIY renovations can ask themselves a handful of questions to determine if they're ready for the challenge of renovating their homes on their own.







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