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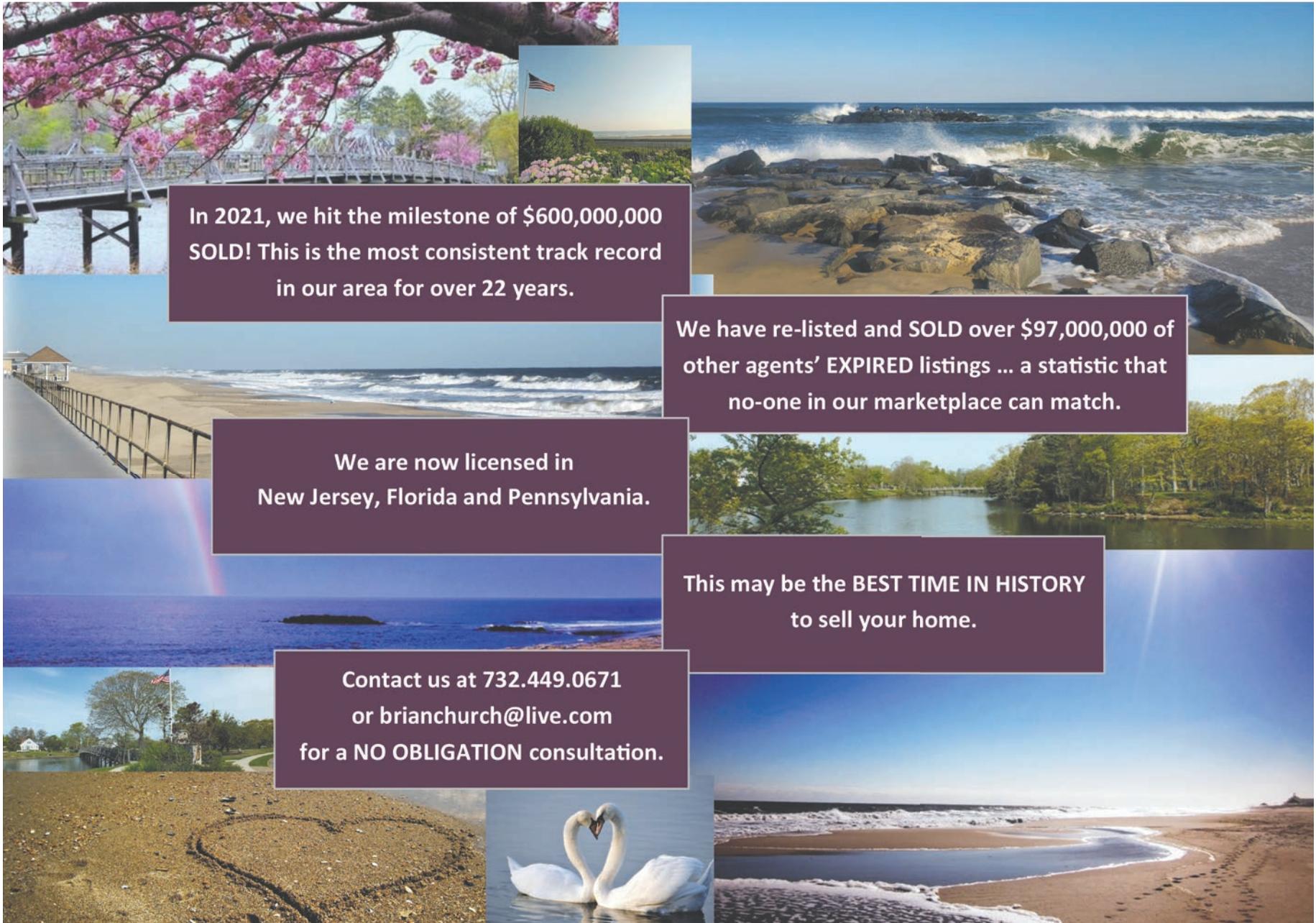
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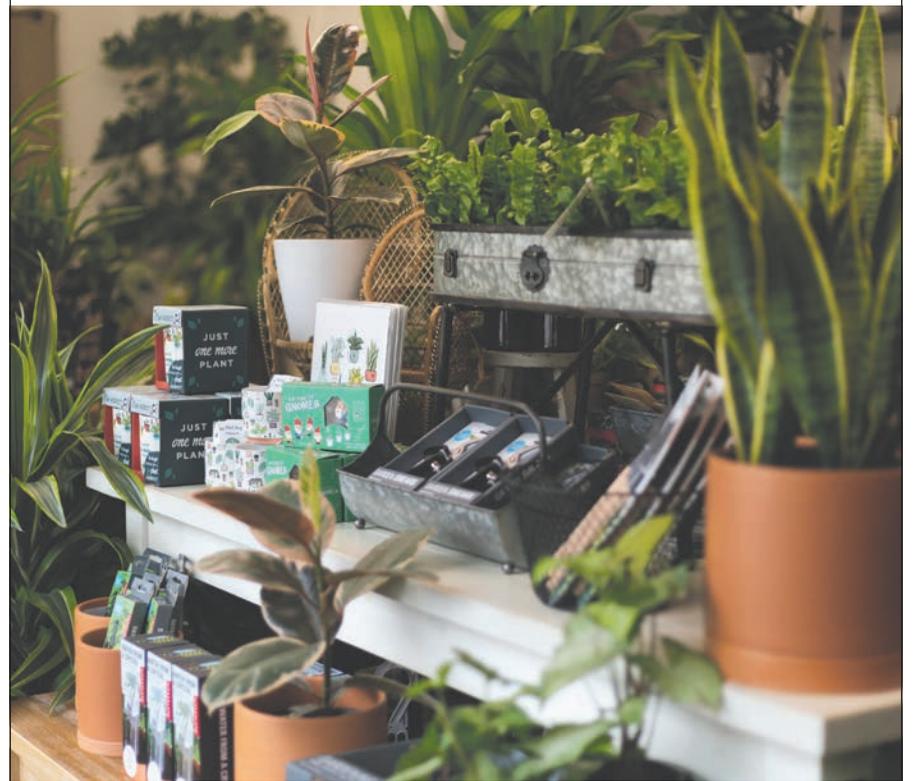


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The average timelines for popular renovation projects

STAR NEWS GROUP

Home renovation projects are significant undertakings. Working with skilled and experienced contractors can ensure projects go smoothly and are completed promptly. Timing is a big consideration for homeowners as they begin renovating their homes, and the home improvement experts at HomeAdvisor note that the following are some general timelines for popular renovation projects.

HOME ADDITION

Short of a full-scale demolition and rebuild, home additions are the most time-consuming projects homeowners can undertake. HomeAd-

visor notes that its survey of customers who recently completed home addition projects reported that the average time from start to finish was between three and four months. Certain variables, including the scale of the project and the local permits process, can extend the time it takes to complete a home addition.

KITCHEN REMODEL

Scale is a big factor to consider when estimating the time it takes to complete various home improvement projects, and kitchen remodels are no exception. Some HomeAdvisor users reported projects taking as long as four months,



COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Home renovation projects are significant undertakings with varying timelines.

though the average time reported was roughly six weeks. Projects that require major overhauls like rearranging the plumbing and moving walls will likely take longer than more cosmetic projects that are limited

to replacing cabinets and countertops.

BATHROOM REMODEL

More than 1,000 homeowners surveyed by HomeAdvisor reported that bathroom remodels took

about 4.5 weeks from start to finish. Small-scale remodels that focus on painting the walls a fresh color and replacing existing tiles can be completed in less than two weeks. But like with kitchen remodels, bathroom remodels that involve replacing plumbing fixtures and removing walls figure to take much longer than that.

SIDING INSTALLATION

HomeAdvisor users report that new siding projects take roughly two weeks from start to finish. That estimate is the same regardless of which materials homeowners are replacing and installing.

REPLACEMENT WINDOWS

Homeowners who want to replace all the windows in their home can expect such a project to take roughly three weeks. HomeAdvisor notes that such a timeline need not concern homeowners worried that they will be forced to brave the elements during the length of the project. Much of a contractor's time during a window replacement project will be spent on upfront measuring and then ensuring a tight fit once the windows have been installed.



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Many different outdoor projects can add value to a home.

Outdoor improvements that boost home value

STAR NEWS GROUP

Focusing on outdoor renovations that make the most financial sense can benefit homeowners in the long run. The right renovations can be assets if and when homeowners decide to sell their homes. So how does one get started?

First and foremost, speak to a local real estate agent who is knowledgeable about trends in the community. While a swimming pool may be something coveted in one area, it may impede sales in another.

The following outdoor projects are just a few renovations that tend to add value.

FIRE PIT

A fire pit is a great place to gather most months of the year. Bob Vila and CBS news report that a fire pit realizes a 78 percent return on investment.

OUTDOOR KITCHEN

Many buyers are looking to utilize their yards as an extension of interior living areas. Cooking, dining and even watching TV outdoors is increasingly popular. Outdoor living areas can be custom designed and built. In addition, prefabricated modular units that require a much smaller commitment of time and money are available.

PATIO

Homeowners who do not already have a patio will find that adding one can increase a home's value. Patios help a home look neat, add useable space and may help a home to sell quickly. The experts at Space Wise, a division of Extra Space Storage, say that refinishing, repairing and building a new patio offers strong ROI.

DECK

Deck can be as valuable as patios. A deck is another outdoor space

that can be used for entertaining, dining and more. Remodeling magazine's 2018 "Cost vs. Value" report indicates that an \$11,000 deck can add about \$9,000 in resale value to the home, recouping around 82 percent of the project's costs.

DOOR UPDATE

Improve curb appeal with a new, high-end front door and garage doors. If that's too expensive, a good cleaning and new coat of paint can make an old door look brand new. These easy fixes can improve a home's look instantly.

NEW LANDSCAPING

The National Association of Realtors says an outdoor makeover that includes well-thought out landscaping can net 105 percent ROI. Installing a walkway, adding stone planters, mulching, and planting shrubs are ideas to consider.

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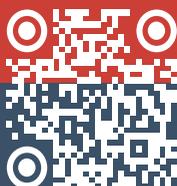
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The basics of container gardening

STAR NEWS GROUP

Gardening is a rewarding hobby that has been linked to health benefits like reduced stress and improved mental well-being. Gardening also can lead to an inviting home landscape full of attractive blooms and/or delicious foods.

Backyard gardens have long been planted after clearing a plot of land, tilling and amending the soil, and planting rows of favorite crops. However, gardening can be less labor-intensive and even more successful when people consider the many benefits of container gardening.

WHAT IS CONTAINER GARDENING?

As its name implies, container gardening is growing plants inside of containers. These containers can be flower pots, rectangular deck boxes or even large raised garden beds.

PROS TO CONTAINER GARDENING

One of the advantages of container gardening is that plants can be moved in and out of sunlight to ensure the right growing conditions. This isn't as easily achieved when gardens are stationary. Also, beginner gardeners may be more able to control soil conditions inside of a small container rather than a vast ground-based garden, which will require a good deal of manual la-



COURTESY OF METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Container gardening is a great way to add plants to smaller patios, reduce the workload involved in maintaining expansive gardens, and customize conditions for optimal growth.

bor. Pots and boxes also can be grouped together to create eye-popping displays, usually at lower costs than the sheer volume of plants that would be needed to fill out an expansive landscape.

CONS TO CONTAINER GARDENING

Container garden plants will not have direct access

to the ground, so they need gardeners to create the ideal growing conditions. Developing the right care formula can be challenging. The home and garden resource The Spruce says that drainage is an important factor in container gardening, and most containers do not offer enough drainage holes. If water cannot escape

the soil, the roots of the plants can rot and die. It's not enough to add stones or gravel to the bottom of containers. Drill additional holes in the bottom (1/2-inch in diameter for small or medium-sized pots; one inch in diameter for larger pots). Also, be sure to check on soil moisture so that watering can be adjusted. During hot stretches, plants may need to be watered more frequently.

PLAN FOR PLANTS THAT PLAY WELL

Grouping plants together can create visually stunning combinations. However, it is important to choose plants that require the same amount of light and moisture. Look at plant tags when visiting the garden center and

select complementary plants, or ask a store employee. Mixing different plant shapes, colors and leaf textures, as well as plants of various heights, can help containers look filled out.

FEED PLANTS ACCORDINGLY

Plants need nutrition to thrive in containers. Quality potting mixes will contain fertilizers, but nutrition will wane over time. Every couple of weeks, container plants will need either fresh potting mix or granular fertilizer added to feed them. Oregon State University Extension Services suggests using a slow-release fertilizer or worm castings several times throughout the season.

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Making Decisions on Lawn Maintenance Strategies

Maintaining your home landscape in an environmentally and health conscious way can be a daunting task. Do you go DIY and make sure you know what is being applied to your property? Do you buy premixed products or is the cost savings of buying your own concentrates worth the trouble of storing them in your garage or basement? Or do you hire a professional company with some flashy advertising at a competitive rate? And what do words like “organic” and “natural” really mean when it comes to your lawn and landscape plants?

All of these questions can be applied to your grass, your flower beds, and your trees and shrubs. We're going to focus on your lawn and apply the lessons elsewhere when we can.



FERTILIZER

Good news! There are a variety of organic and naturally derived fertilizers on the market today that deliver excellent results. Most of these contain varying levels of the three main ingredients of fertilizer:

Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus (P), and Potassium (K), as well as a variety of micronutrients that naturally occur in the fertilizer source (seaweed, compost, etc.). Inorganic fertilizers are blended to the specifications of the buyer (whether it's an off the shelf brand or a professional applicator business) to deliver consistent results and address the needs of your lawn at different points in the growing season.

Organic fertilizers generally require more material to be applied than inorganic, and they can contain phosphorus, which can be helpful in certain situations, but is harmful to our waterways. If you choose to hire a professional, they may use a liquid fertilizer. Liquid fertilizers can be applied more accurately and are absorbed by the soil and plants immediately. They can also be injected directly into the root zone of trees and shrubs. This is the best way to make sure that fertilizer is not running off and polluting the bays and other bodies of water in Coastal New Jersey.

WEED CONTROL

Weed control in your lawn is a two-phase operation: first a preemergent needs to be applied in early spring to prevent crabgrass and other difficult weeds from appearing during the growing season. The only option for effective crabgrass prevention is a synthetic product, and once it has started to grow even a professional's herbicide arsenal will struggle to control it.

Controlling broadleaf annuals is the second phase of turf weed control. Throughout the growing season, plants like clover, and dandelions will appear in your lawn. Your options for these weeds range from letting them be (they are green, and what kid doesn't like to blow on a dandelion seed head?) to hand pulling, to spraying. Iron chelate is considered a natural product and has been shown to be effective at controlling these weeds. It requires repeat applications every 3-4 weeks and is applied as approximately a 10% spray solution.

A conventional broadleaf weed control product is generally effective after the first application and is applied at about 1/2% solution. Both products require that you wait until the spray has dried before walking on the lawn. It's difficult to make these comparisons without getting too into the weeds* with the chemistry. The most important thing to keep in mind is the best defense against weeds is a thick, healthy lawn. *Pun intended

INSECT CONTROL

Controlling grubs and other insects that can damage your lawn and landscape is best left to professionals. Both natural and synthetic products can be toxic if they are improperly handled. However, there are effective organic products that can be applied around your yard to repel mosquitoes and other insect pests. These are a blend of oils that will not kill insects but will last long enough to let you have a barbecue without being eaten alive.

When you're considering your landscape maintenance this spring keep these ideas in mind to save money and feel good about how you're keeping up your yard. If you have any questions email info@for-shore.com and we will be happy to help.

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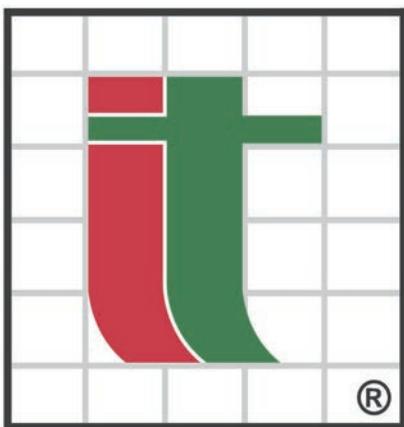
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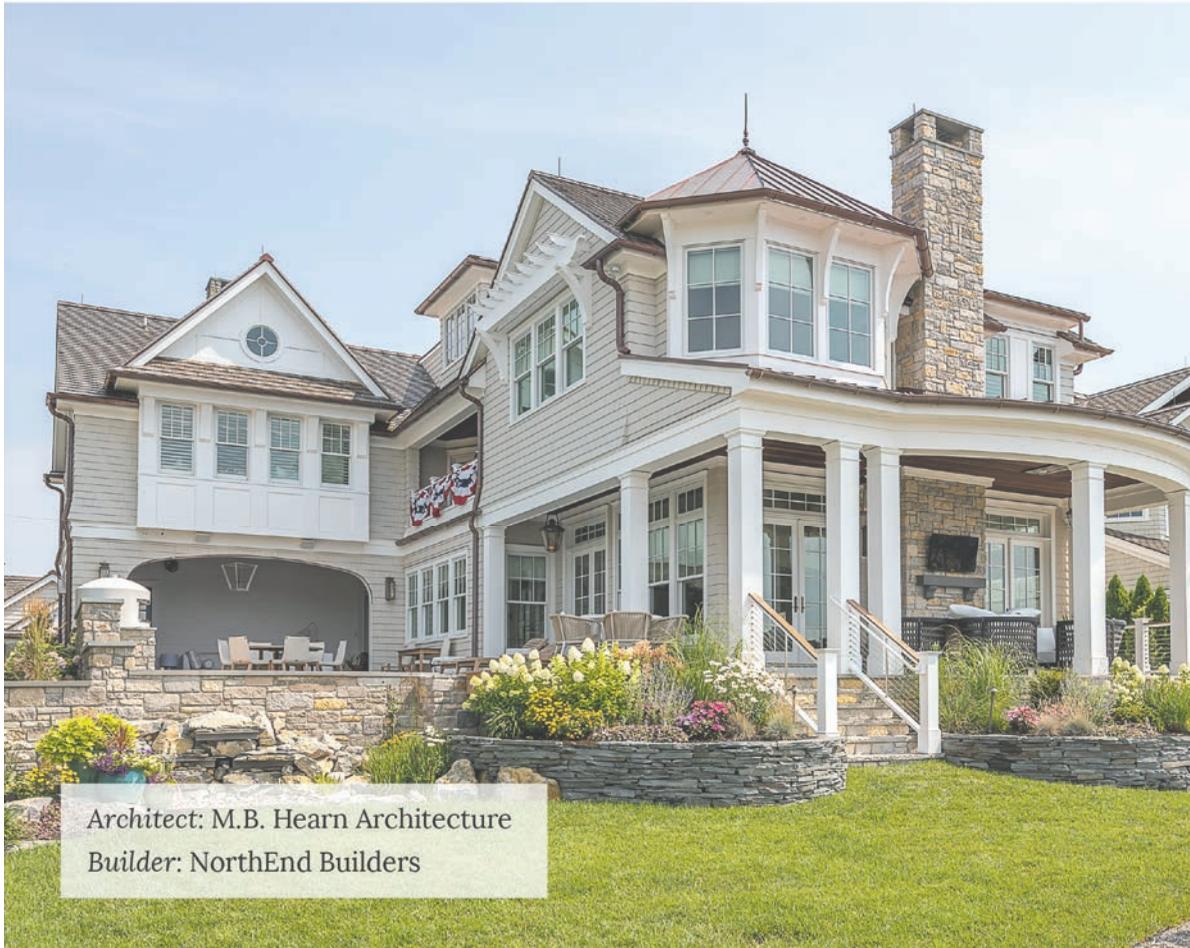
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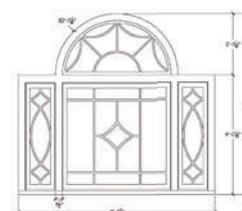
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Renovating a dining room doesn't require a large investment of time and money. A few simple steps can give dining spaces a whole new feel without busting homeowners' budgets.

Budget-friendly dining room renovation ideas

STAR NEWS GROUP

If the kitchen is the heart of the home, then the dining room may be akin to one of its arteries. The mood created in the kitchen spreads to the dining space where family and friends gather to eat and enjoy one another's company.

Dining rooms can get lost in the home renovation shuffle, as many homeowners tend to focus on renovating kitchens and bathrooms instead. Homeowners do not have to invest a lot of money in renovations to give their dining spaces awe-inspiring makeovers. Here's how to do so on a budget.

LIGHTEN AND BRIGHTEN

Dining rooms were once very formal spaces. Dark woods, large pieces of furniture, over-the-top chandeliers, and other details could be found in many homes. But now that houses are being built with open floor plans, dining rooms can blend with other spaces, which have moved

to lighter colored walls, flooring and furniture. A fresh coat of vibrant paint can work wonders and it doesn't cost much. If you can't remove a floor, cover it with a brightly colored area rug.

SWITCH THINGS UP WITH SLIPCOVERS

Slipcovers can be changed each season to dramatically alter the look of a dining room for little investment. Slip covers also protect chairs and can be easily laundered after spills.

ADD FLOATING SHELVING

Floating shelves provide much-needed storage or display space without the need to invest in another piece of furniture. Depending on the shelving, they can work in modern design schemes or even farmhouse dining spaces.

CLEAR OUT THE CLUTTER

It might be time to say "so long" to that large curio cabinet and the knickknacks within it. Curio and china cabinets used to be de rigueur, but

plenty of people now prefer more open and airy dining rooms. For those who want to keep the cabinet, try decluttering inside to only include the very best display pieces and see if the cabinet can be refinished with paint or a lightly colored stain.

IMPROVE LIGHTING.

Make the chandelier the statement piece of the space. Go for a bold color or an innovative design. Then add accessories throughout the space that coordinate with the chandelier.

ADD BENCH SEATING

Those who need additional seating may not have to get entirely new furniture. Swap out some chairs for benches, which can fit a couple more guests than chairs.

CREATE DEPTH WITH COLOR

HGTV says that using various shades of the same color in a space can add depth. Coordinate drapes, walls, seat fabrics, and accessories for a cohesive design.

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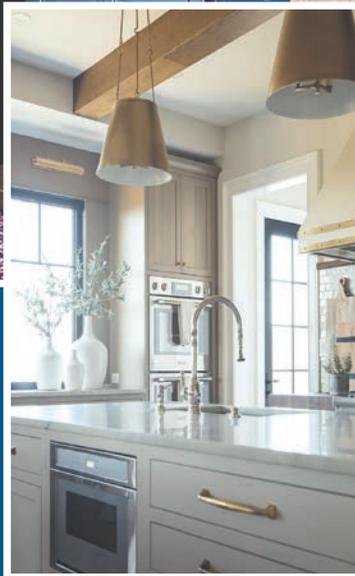


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