

# SPRING HOME & GARDEN



## TURN YOUR YARD INTO A VACATION-WORTHY OASIS

Warm weather means more time outdoors. For homeowners lucky enough to have entertaining spaces outside, spring and summer provides plenty of opportunities to enjoy fresh air under the sun or stars.

A backyard renovation can cost anywhere from \$5,000 to \$50,000. The American Society of Landscape Architects suggests homeowners budget the cost of a major landscaping project at between 5 and 10 percent of their home's value. Large or small, there are ways to make your home an outdoor oasis.

*Continued on page 2H*

# TURN YOUR YARD INTO A VACATION-WORTHY OASIS

Continued from page 1H

## Create living privacy

Living in close proximity to neighbors may make privacy harder to come by. Wood or vinyl fences, however effective, may not provide the all-natural look many people desire. Vertical gardening, which trains easy-care vines like English ivy, Clematis or various climbing roses to grow on trellis or fencing, adds greenery and privacy. Hedges and fast-growing shrubs also can be used for natural barriers.



## Extend the living space

Decks and patios can help make outdoor entertaining areas more comfortable by eliminating the need to sit on the grass or gravel. Plus, they add another “room” to the home. When paired with weatherproof patio furniture, such as sofas, loungers and tables, a private seating area can be crafted and utilized for any number of entertaining desires.

## Provide outdoor atmosphere

Create a bespoke bistro vibe by using freestanding planters and posts along with hanging lights to make an intimate outdoor hangout spot at night. For those with permanent structures, like a deck or a gazebo, lights can be strung across the area or on railings or edging.

## Install a pool

An elaborately-shaped inground pool can blend in with the landscape and offer the ultimate hang-out zone. However, above-ground pools also serve the purpose and are more budget-friendly. Stock tank pools are popular among those who want minimal pool

expenditure or have small spaces to work with. Stock tanks are metal vessels traditionally used as watering holes for livestock. They also can be “adult kiddie pools” when combined with some plumbing. Galvanized steel frames make them sturdy. With floats and other accessories, they can become the perfect oasis.

## Hang a hammock

Few things evoke feelings of relaxation better than a hammock. Fitted between two trees (or two posts, if trees are sparse), a hammock is an ideal place to grab a nap or read a book.

Additional oasis-inspired ideas include outdoor kitchens, putting up lanterns, cascading water features, and bird feeders to attract the sounds of nature.

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# Attract more birds with the right seeds

While almost all bird seed may look pretty much the same to you, it doesn't to the birds you're feeding. Knowing what kinds of seeds different birds like can help you attract a variety of fine feathered friends to your feeders.

Consider these popular seed types and the common backyard birds they attract:

**Sunflower** - Black sunflower seeds attract blue jays, goldfinches, woodpeckers, purple finches, chickadees, titmice and nuthatches. Striped sunflower seeds appeal to chickadees, doves, grosbeaks, northern cardinals, nuthatches, titmice and woodpeckers. Sunflower hearts (also known as "hulled sunflower" and "sunflower chips") attract chickadees, common redpolls, juncos, doves, finches, goldfinches, grosbeaks, nuthatches, pine siskins, titmice and woodpeckers.

**Nyjer** - These lightweight, tiny seeds are a favorite of goldfinches. Put nyjer seeds in a hanging feeder with tiny holes so the small seeds won't get blown away. Nyjer also attracts redpolls, juncos, doves, indigo bunting and pine siskin.

**Safflower** - These white seeds are slightly smaller



than black sunflower seeds. Because they are bitter, grackles, blue jays, starlings - and squirrels - don't

like them. However, they do attract doves, purple finches, chickadees, titmice and downy woodpeckers.

**White millet** - Good for scattering on the ground, white millet attracts ground feeders such as juncos, sparrows, indigo buntings, towhees and mourning doves.

**Cracked corn** - Popular with ground feeders, cracked corn appeals to doves, crows, jays, sparrows, juncos and towhees. Avoid getting finely cracked corn as it's vulnerable to rot and can quickly turn to mush.

When choosing a bird seed mix, pay attention to the ingredients list on the package. Bird seed is required by law to list ingredients in order of content. Some cheaper mixes have filler seeds such as wheat, red milo, red millet or "assorted grain products." Most backyard birds won't eat those, and your seed mix could end up wasted on the ground.

Learn more about making your backyard an oasis for birds of all kinds at [eLivingtoday.com](http://eLivingtoday.com).

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# Bite back against Lyme disease

**A**mong the tall grasses and wildflowers that sprout each spring and summer lies a stealth predator just waiting for its chance at an easy meal. Ticks may be small in stature, but their impact on bite victims is potentially significant. Preventing Lyme disease and other tickborne illnesses comes down to following some key steps.

- Learn how common Lyme disease is. Lyme disease affects an estimated 476,000 people each year in the United States alone, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Vector-Borne Diseases. Lyme disease is most common in New England, the mid-Atlantic states and the upper Midwest. Between 2009 and 2022, the Government of Canada reported 17,080 human cases of Lyme disease across Canada. However, instances of Lyme disease are likely underreported due to undiagnosed cases.

- Know which ticks carry Lyme disease. The black-legged deer tick and the Western black-legged tick carry the Lyme disease spirochete. The

black-legged tick is native to the northeastern, mid-Atlantic and north-central U.S., while the western black-legged tick is found on the Pacific coast.

- Wear light-colored clothing outdoors. When traveling in areas where ticks reside, it is important to wear light-colored clothing. Long pants and tall socks, long-sleeved shirts and hats also should be worn. It is easier to spot ticks on light-colored clothing, and covering up prevents ticks from gaining easy access to skin.

- Know where to expect ticks. John's Hopkins Medicine says black-legged ticks live in moist and humid environments, particularly in and near wooded or grassy areas. Walking through leaves and bushes or through tall grasses can disturb ticks and enable them to jump onto people or pets. To avoid ticks, walk in the center of trails and avoid tall vegetation.

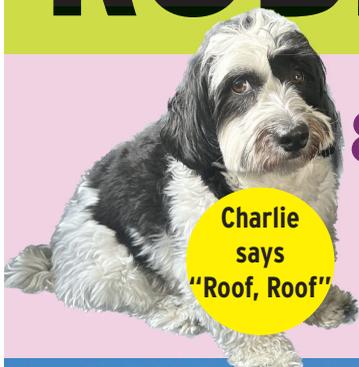
- Be mindful of pets. Even if you do not venture outdoors into tick-laden environments, your dog

may. He or she can carry ticks into the house where they may end up on you or other family members. Prescription tick repellent products are available from veterinarians, and there are topical solutions and collars that can keep ticks away.

- Remove ticks quickly and correctly. The CDC says if a tick is removed in less than 24 hours from when it first attached, the chances of getting Lyme disease is very small. Remove a tick with fine-tipped tweezers as soon as it is noticed, being cautious to remove all mouth parts. Try not to squeeze the tick, as it can regurgitate saliva and other fluids when squeezed.

- Repel ticks when possible. Create less favorable conditions for ticks. Use a product containing DEET or permethrin on clothing to repel ticks. Some people use chemical-control agents on their properties to reduce the number of ticks in the yard. Discourage deer from the property, as they can carry many ticks, with fences and removing vegetation that deer eat.

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# 7 steps to get you started growing produce at home

Growing your own produce is an all-around smart practice, from the money you'll save at the grocery store to the contributions you can make toward a cleaner planet. Maintaining a garden takes some effort, but it's a project even a beginner can tackle with ease. Consider these tips to start growing your at-home garden:

**1. Select a perfect spot.** You'll want to place your garden in an area where you see it often so you're reminded to weed and care for it regularly. Find a flat area you can access easily, where erosion and other pitfalls (including hungry wildlife) won't be a problem.

**2. Choosing ground and containers.** There are pros and cons to gardening in containers vs. the ground, and there's no universal right choice. Rather, the best garden depends on your goals and preferences. A ground garden usually offers more space and may provide a better growth environment for roots. However, a container garden is often easier to maintain and may be all you need if you wish to grow just a few plants.

**3. The importance of quality soil.** You may think any dirt will do, but keep in mind the soil you plant in will be the primary source of nutrients for your produce. Not only that, but quality soil provides



stability so plants can root firmly and grow healthy and sturdy to support their bounty. Quality soil also allows for ample drainage. Organic matter like compost, leaf mold or aged manure all help improve soil quality.

**4. Keep water close.** Lugging water can quickly eliminate the pleasure of tending your garden, so be sure you're situated near a hose. You'll know it's time to water when the soil is dry about an inch below the surface.

**5. Plan for plenty of sun.** A bright, sunny spot is a must, since most vegetables, herbs and fruits depend on six or more hours of sun every day. Remember the sun's path changes throughout the year, and as trees and foliage grow, they may produce more shade with each growing season.

**6. Consider what you'll grow.** Beginning with veggies you know you like is a smart starting point, since you'll be pouring sweat equity into making them grow. Over time, you might add new varieties, but early on, keep your focus on foods you know you like so you can see a meaningful return and avoid waste. You'll also need to consider what you can grow to maturity within your area's growing season. If necessary, you might want to start transplants you can nurture indoors before moving them outside when the temperatures allow.

**7. Plant according to a calendar.** Knowing how long it takes different foods to mature will help you create a planting calendar. You don't want to harvest everything at once, and if you stagger planting and replant what you can, you'll have a garden that produces food for your family for a longer period of time.

PHOTO COURTESY OF UNSPLASH  
Family Features



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# Cooking clean with propane

With many people focused on achieving a cleaner and healthier lifestyle, taking actionable steps such as recycling, using less hot water and eating nutritious foods can help lower your carbon footprint. Another step for a clean lifestyle: cooking with an environmentally friendly, clean energy source like propane.

Propane is already powering more than 12 million homes with reliable energy people can count on. Plus, gas-powered cooktops are preferred by 96% of professional chefs, including nutritionist and chef Dean Sheremet of "My Kitchen Rules," who partnered with the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC) to educate homeowners on the benefits of cooking with gas.

"There is a lot of misinformation about cooking with gas in the news," Sheremet said. "It's important to remember, the act of cooking itself impacts indoor air quality, regardless of the energy that powers the stove.

Having a qualified technician install and perform regular service for the stove, maintaining proper ventilation using a hood or opening doors or windows and following common sense safety measures can ensure the safe use of any stove."

Because ventilation when cooking is key, it's important to note that cooking with propane results in lower carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions than electric cooking, on average. That's because more than 60% of electricity production comes from natural gas or coal generation plants, which release more CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as part of the generation process.

Beyond the environmental benefits, propane-powered cooking appliances provide convenience, modern design and performance in kitchens, allowing home chefs to prepare healthy meals for their families in a short amount of time. Sheremet values the efficiency of a propane cooktop when creating



nutritious meals like Skirt Steak with Salsa Verde and Spaghetti and Clams, which can be whipped up in minutes using a clean energy source.

"Chefs, and parents like me, prefer gas for a variety of reasons," Sheremet said. "My son, Atlas, is often in the kitchen when I'm cooking, and we know sometimes kids don't listen when we tell them to not touch a pan or the stove. Propane cooktops allow for greater control of heat levels and their instant flame turnoff capabilities help them cool faster than traditional electric stoves, which can remain dangerously hot for a period after they have been turned off."

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## Do's and Don'ts of cooking with gas

### Do:

- Follow the manufacturer's installation and operating instructions.
- Keep pot handles turned inward to protect against accidents like knocking the pot off the stove or little ones reaching for the handles.
- Keep the range surface clean.
- Keep flammable materials away from burner flames.

### Don't:

- Do not cover the oven bottom with foil as it can restrict air circulation.
- Never use gas ranges for space heating.
- Do not allow children to turn burner control knobs.
- Do not leave food unattended on the cooktop.

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# Chores to get your home ready for spring

**E**very home requires ongoing maintenance to ensure it's living up to its aesthetic and functional best. This checklist can help you create a comfortable home setting for enjoying the warmer months.

**Check gutters.** During the colder months, debris can accumulate in the gutters, which can be problematic when spring rains arrive. Clogged gutters prevent water from flowing efficiently away from the roof and house. When they're backed up, they can cause water damage in a short amount of time. Faulty guttering can also cause slow leaks that lead to damage you may not discover until major repair work is needed. Properly functioning gutters are clear of debris, flow freely and are securely attached to the home.

**Inspect the roof.** Your roof takes a real beating in all kinds of weather conditions. Making it a common practice to carefully inspect the roof with the change of seasons can help you identify potential problems while they're still in early stages, before a big storm hits and major damage occurs. Some roof issues can be addressed with simple repairs you can do yourself while others may require a professional. A roofing expert can help you determine whether any trouble areas can be patched or if a more complete restoration is in order.



**Replace the dryer vent.** Upgrading your dryer vent is an opportunity to conserve energy and prevent flammable lint build-up in your dryers. One option for updating the exhaust system is a paintable version of InoVate's Prime DryerWallVent. Engineered for both vent replacement and new construction, the vent includes features such as a gravity-assist damper,

integrated magnets and a drip edge to provide extra protection from the elements as well as pests. A large, clean opening and lightweight angled damper promote exceptional airflow efficiency.

**Service air conditioning units.** Your heating and cooling system works hard to keep your indoor climate comfortable when extreme temperatures make the outdoors unbearable. That's why it's important to have your systems serviced by a professional, and spring is a smart time to do so before they're hard at work throughout the warmer months. Service can correct problems and ensure everything is operating efficiently, which can lead to money savings as well.

**Repair window screens.** Throughout the winter, your home's window screens can accumulate a layer of dirt and grime that isn't just unsightly; it blows indoors when you open the windows to welcome a fresh breeze. What's more, if your screens have rips and tears, pesky bugs and other critters can make their way into your home more easily. Cleaning and repairing your screens can make your home more secure and help protect your indoor air quality.

Find more information to help get your home ready for spring at [DryerWallVent.com](http://DryerWallVent.com).

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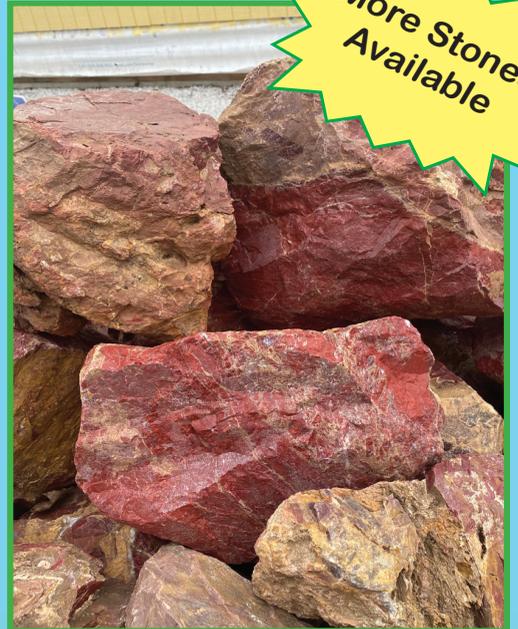
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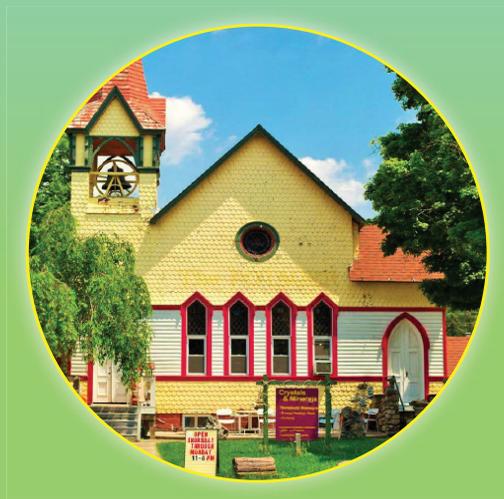


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# The role played by bees in lawns and gardens

According to Scott McArt, an assistant professor of pollinator health in the Department of Entomology at Cornell University, 53 bee species have experienced population declines or range contractions over the last several decades. Individuals accustomed to seeing bees as unwanted guests may wonder why that's a problem. Though declining bee populations pose a number of problems, perhaps none is more relatable than the link between bees and food production. A recent study published in the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* noted that declines in both managed and wild bee populations raise significant concerns about long-term food security. Authors of the study noted that crop production would be higher if crop flowers received more pollination. That's a significant benefit as the global population continues to increase, but it's also a notable benefit in the present day from



both a food security and economic perspective. In fact, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration reports that commercial production of more than 90 crops relies on roughly 3,600 bee species. Declining bee populations could put that production in serious jeopardy and create a domino effect that impacts food security and individuals' livelihoods. But all is not lost in the fight to restore bee populations. In fact, McArt indicated in a 2019 report that bee populations are thriving in agricultural and natural areas. But bee populations also must thrive in suburban and urban areas. Planting a pollinator-friendly garden is one step McArt suggested gardening hobbyists can take to help restore bee populations. When planting to combat declining bee populations, homeowners should always look for native plants, as they are well-adapted to local climates and unlikely to upset local ecosystems.

Local garden centers can be great resources for anyone looking to plant native species. According to HGTV, the following are just a handful of the many bee-friendly garden flowers and plants homeowners can consider for their gardens:

Bee populations are in decline. If efforts to restore those populations are not embraced, the consequences for future generations could be dire. Homeowners can do their part by planting bee-friendly plants.

<p><b>Bee balm</b>  <b>Honeysuckle</b>  <b>Sunflower</b>  <b>Cosmos</b></p>	<p><b>Strawberries</b>  <b>Dahlia</b>  <b>Butterfly bush</b>  <b>Crocus</b></p>	<p><b>Pot marigold</b>  <b>Geraniums</b>  <b>Echinacea</b>  <b>Hostas</b></p>
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# The mini shamrock-shaped solution for lawns

## Miniclover is drought-tolerant, simple, sustainable with low-to-no maintenance

That lush, green lawn most strive for is struggling to survive as our climate experiences “weather whiplash,” meaning abrupt swings in weather conditions from one extreme to another. Last season, drought conditions were so dire in California billboards shouted, “Brown is the New Green.” This season, despite early, extreme flooding in California, evidence suggests the length and depth of droughts will increase in upcoming years, becoming more frequent and severe.

Outdoor water usage is still astronomical, synthetic chemical use is ever-present and fuel-guzzling lawn blowers and mowers sing all summer. Traditional lawn maintenance is expensive, unnatural, untenable and increases greenhouse gasses, wastes water, pollutes ecosystems and reduces biodiversity.

Average American families use 320 gallons of water daily, about 30% outdoors, with more than half devoted to watering lawns and gardens, according to the EPA. Nationwide, landscape irrigation is estimated at almost one-third of all residential water usage, totaling nearly 9 billion gallons daily.

Gas-powered lawn mowers spew pollutants that can cause planet-warming gases, contributing to climate crisis and drought. According to the EPA, gas-powered lawn equipment releases more than 22 million tons of CO2 emissions and estimates over 17 million gallons of gasoline are spilled refueling lawn equipment; that’s more than all oil spilled by Exxon Valdez.

There are many issues causing harm to environmental health, from the ridiculous, like billionaires taking 17-minute flights in private jets, producing 2 tons of CO2 emissions, to everyday lawn care wasting staggering amounts of water for aesthetics while polluting the environment through run-off and toxic emissions.

Cash rebates, up to \$5,000, are being offered to some for the removal of grass lawns. To get the rebate, other water-efficient options must be put in place.



It’s time to take a page from the past; sowing clover seed can create a great-looking, water-efficient, sustainable lawn. Decades ago, clover was standard in lawn seed mixes. Then agricultural chemical companies created herbicides to rid lawns of broadleaf plants, killing everything but grass, clovers included, branding them weeds.

“Today, clover is making a comeback,” said Troy Hake, president and owner of Outsidepride.com, offering drought-tolerant grasses, clovers, wildflower seeds and more. “Tik Tok’s #cloverlawn has over 65 million views, evidencing it’s time for sustainable options, like adding ‘miniclover’ or replacing lawns with it. Miniclover (*trifolium repens*), is one-third to half the size of white Dutch clover, only grows 4-6 inches and produces a thick, carpet-like look that blends well with turf. Less expensive than grass seed, it’s a natural solution for self-sustaining, low-maintenance lawns that look beautiful and help eliminate the need for fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides and weekly mowing. It’s healthier for people, pets, soil and waterways. You can’t go wrong with it.”

There’s nothing you can do about

those 17-minute private jet flights. However, anyone with a lawn can add in miniclover and redefine what sustainable lawns and responsible lawn care looks like. Sales of miniclover rose dramatically last season, surely an indicator that this lawn renovation trend was well-received and continues to grow.

### Benefits:

**Nitrogen fixer.** Miniclover takes nitrogen from the air and “fixes” it in soil, eliminating the need to apply nitrogen, keeping lawns green and growing while adding natural nitrogen to surrounding soil.

**Drought tolerant.** Miniclover is drought-tolerant and can stay green all summer with minimal watering.

**Deters bugs.** Grubs that feed on grass roots will not eat miniclover, and adult beetles and bugs are deterred from laying eggs in it.

**Crowds out weeds.** Miniclover is evenly dispersed via stolons (stems grow horizontally along the ground), crowding out weeds, preventing new weeds and controlling erosion.

**Low-to-no maintenance.** You can mow miniclover - the more it’s cut, the smaller the leaf size - or let it grow. Miniclover only blooms once in summer, providing bees with nectar, or mowing will prevent blooming.

**Thrives in sun to partial shade.** Miniclover does well in partial shade that receives some direct sunshine daily.

**Stands up to soil and subsoil compaction.**

**Immune to “dog patches.”** Dog urine discolors lawns, but miniclover stays green and lush.

**Feels soft and springy on bare feet and looks like ordered whimsy.**

So... what’s not to like?

For other drought-tolerant options, visit [Outsidepride.com](https://www.outsidepride.com).

- Joan Casanova  
(Family Features)  
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## Wire grill brushes are a danger

Popular stainless steel or brass wire brushes commonly used to clean grills may be effective, but they can be quite dangerous as well. Consumer Reports states that thousands of people visit emergency rooms each year after having ingested wire bristles that stick to the grill surface and end up in cooked food.

Wire bristles also can wreak havoc in the stomach and intestines if they are consumed. Infections may occur, even leading to sepsis if not treated promptly.

Fortunately for avid grillers, they don't need to turn in their spatulas just yet and give up on grilling. In fact, embracing new ways to clean grills can ensure everyone gets to eat great food without getting sick.

- Invest in alternative cleaning tools. Pumice stones and coil-shaped bristle-free brushes can effectively clean grills without employing wire bristle brushes.

- Use oven cleaner. Rather than scrubbing, grab oven cleaner spray and use it on the grill. Wipe off the residue when foods stuck on the grill dissolve.



- Rely on aluminum foil. Aluminum foil wads can replicate the scouring power of steel-wool pads. Wait for the grill to cool down a bit before using the foil to clean.

- Inspect the grill. If you still use a wire brush, make sure to toss it if the bristles start to come loose. Also, wipe the grill down with a damp cloth prior to grilling to catch any errant wire bristles prior to cooking.

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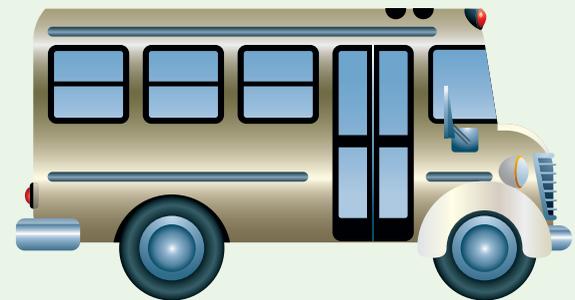
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# The benefits of planting native species

**N**ative plants are much better for a landscape and the local ecosystem it calls home. Recognition of the many benefits of native plants can make for healthier lawns and gardens and a healthier planet as well.

· **Native plants are built for local climates.** One of the issues gardeners who plant exotic plants run into is keeping those plants thriving when weather turns harsh. For example, exotic plants may require extra watering in areas that experience drought or even long periods without precipitation in spring and notably summer. The United States Environmental Protection Agency reports that at least 40 states anticipate water shortages by 2024. Planting native plants can help to combat those shortages by reducing the need to water plants if conditions become dry in late spring and summer.

· **Native plants save money.** It's also important to note that native plants save homeowners money.

Because they're capable of thriving in local conditions, native plants tend to require less watering, which can help homeowners reduce their utility costs. But native plants also require less upkeep, which means homeowners can save on potentially costly, not to mention eco-unfriendly, pesticides and other amendments in order to maintain the look of exotic plants. And though it's not always the case, exotic plants tend to cost more at nurseries than natives.

· **Native plants save gardeners time.** In addition to saving money, native plants don't require as much attention. Though spring and summer is a great time to be in the yard, it's also a great time to be out and about. Because native plants thrive in local conditions, gardeners won't need to spend much of their free time tending to them. Exotics tend to require a lot of extra attention and effort, especially when conditions become harsh. Spending more time outdoors in harsh weather does not appeal to most gardeners.



· **Native plants blend in with an existing landscape.** Native plants look natural within an existing landscape, adding some instant aesthetic appeal without breaking the bank. When planting exotics, homeowners may feel a need to redesign their entire gardens to create a certain look (think Japanese garden). That can quickly consume a

budget and take up a lot of free time in both the short- and long-term.

Planting season marks a great time to revitalize a landscape. Choosing native plants when doing so pays numerous dividends for homeowners and the planet they call home.



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# Refresh your rooms for less with these ideas

**W**hether you're tired of the same decor every day or simply looking to refresh with a mini makeover, rethinking your favorite room in the house doesn't need to be an expensive ordeal.

Even if your budget is tight, you can still make small changes to transform a room. Consider these ideas:

- Bring stylish flair to your space with a new color scheme. Rather than replacing all the furniture, which can be costly, focus on smaller accessory pieces such as pillows and decorative items. Create variety by using multiple hues of the same color or mixing two or more complementary colors.

- Introduce new accent furniture. Smaller and less cost-prohibitive than centerpieces like a couch, for example, accent pieces such as end tables or a coffee table can provide subtle changes to the look of a room. You could also opt to refinish a piece of furniture you have on-hand to create a look that's all your own.



- Morph your room by simply rearranging what you already own. Adjusting the orientation of your furniture and decor can let you see your favorite room from a whole new perspective.

- Whether it's a flea market find, such as an old window frame that you paint and add a display shelf to the base, or a series of photos from your favorite vacation destination, adding some DIY art can not only update your room, but make it more personal, too.

A new look for your favorite room can go a long way, so find ways to update your space for a comfy retreat you can enjoy. Find more ideas at [eLivingtoday.com](http://eLivingtoday.com).

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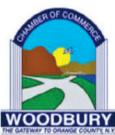
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# Long term “green” investing

Though plants might not seem like the first thing you think of when you hear long-term investments, perennials can be just that. The home and garden experts at HGTV note that some perennials can live for a very long time. For example, according to HGTV, the colorful flowering plant peony, despite a blooming season that usually lasts just seven to 10 days, has been known to survive for 70 to 100 years. Hostas are another popular perennial because they require little maintenance, and that extra free time can add up over the course of the hosta’s life, which can exceed 15 years. Long-living perennials are not necessarily unusual, but gardeners should know that many perennials, and particularly those characterized as “short-lived,” tend to live around three years.



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# Tis the season: Common allergy triggers

Allergens, according to eMedicine Health, trigger an immune system response to various substances the body deems harmful. In turn, the body overreacts to these substances, triggering allergic reactions. Allergic reactions may occur in one person and not another. The immune system produces antibodies, which can cause certain effects, including inflammation of the skin, sinuses, digestive system, or airways, depending on the allergen, according to the Mayo Clinic.

produce an abundance of pollen this time of year. It may coat vehicles outside and make its way indoors when people throw open windows to enjoy warm breezes.

Pollen allergies are quite common and cause runny, stuffy nose, itchy eyes, sneezing, watery eyes, and itchiness of the skin or roof of the mouth in some instances. Decongestants tend to be recommended when pollen count is high. It's also best to leave windows closed during these times.

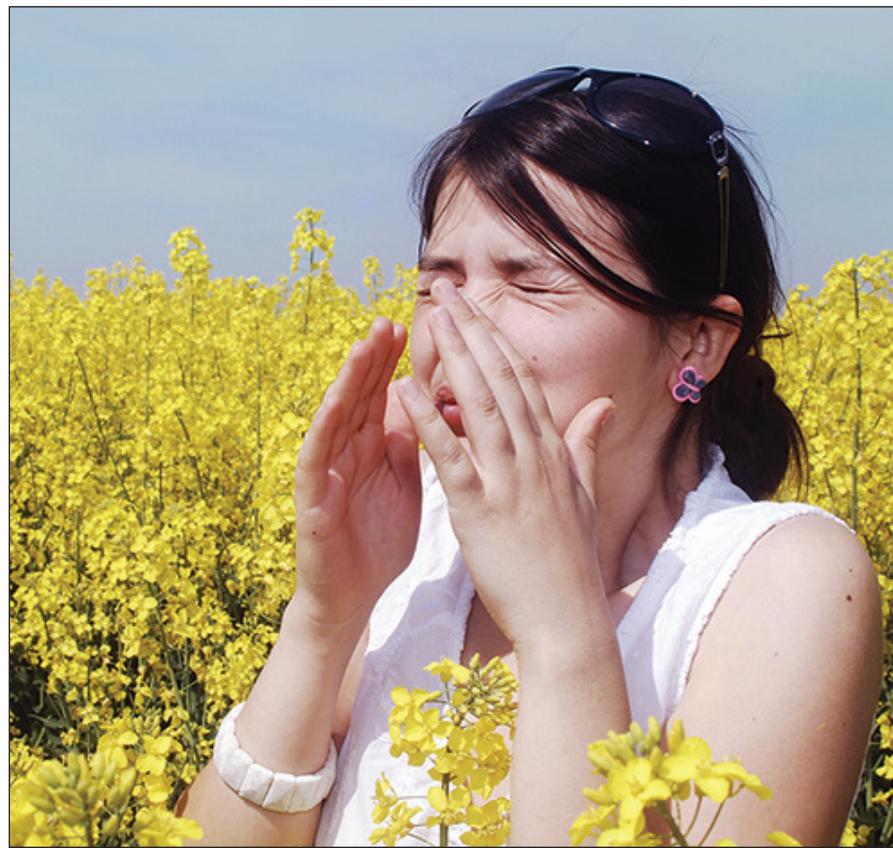
Many things can trigger allergies, and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that more than 50 million people in the United States have allergies. Here's a look at some of the more common allergies that tend to rear their heads when weather warms up.

## Pollen

The air is filled with pollen come the spring and summer. Freshly blooming grasses, trees, flowers, and even weeds

## Mold

Mold are very small fungi with spores that float in the breeze like pollen. Mold thrives in damp areas. Mold may grow unchecked after spring rains or in piles of damp leaves. It also can be found in musty basements or bathrooms. Using a dehumidifier indoors can help alleviate mold, but outdoors it may be a little more challenging to control. When doing yard work in damp areas, wear a mask to avoid breathing in spores.



## Dust mites

Chances are the arrival of spring may trigger the desire to do a little cleaning. In turn, it's highly likely that dust will be disturbed, and along with it, dust mites. WebMD says dust mites are microscopic, and people may not even know they are around. Keeping a home free of dusty items can reduce dust mite numbers. Also, cover mattresses and pillows and wash sheets weekly in hot water to help alleviate dust mite infiltration.

## Insect stings

We tend to think of allergens in terms of small substances that are inhaled, but insects that are abundant in the warm weather can be troublesome, too. An insect sting or bite can cause hives, itching, swelling, shortness of breath, or even anaphylaxis. While there's no definitive way to avoid all insects, people can opt against brightly colored clothes and scented lotions or cosmetics. Insect repellents and skipping sweet foods or beverages at outdoor meals also may help.

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