



FAIRFAX COUNTY TIMES

HOME & GARDEN

Summer 2022

Six easy tips to prepare and maintain your backyard

Courtesy of StatePoint Media

From backyard barbecues to water balloon fights, our outdoor spaces are home to some of our favorite memories. With warmer temperatures finally here, and everyone itching to get outside, preparing, and maintaining your outdoor space is a must, but it's not everyone's favorite chore.

Lawn and garden equipment expert, Eric Halfman from John Deere, put together this easy prep and maintenance guide guaranteed to have you kicking back and enjoying your backyard in no time:

Feed your lawn. The secret to luscious and green grass? Feeding your lawn. Fertilize your lawn every two months to increase the amount of nutrients your grass can absorb. A thick and healthy lawn also leaves little room for weeds and crabgrass to grow, keeping it looking clean all year round, with little weed-pulling required.



Wash the deck and furniture. Cleaning off your deck is an easy start to bringing your backyard back to life again. Break out the broom and sweep away any dirt or debris that has piled up. Then, fire up the power washer (available for rent at most home improvement stores) or your regular garden hose to rinse off any stuck-on dirt and grime. Lastly, wipe down your outdoor furniture with soap and water. Don't forget to do a re-

fresh occasionally throughout the season.

Plant new flowers. Bring some color back into your yard by planting new flowers! Whether it's a flower bed or an array of big planters, flowers are a great way to dress up your backyard and they smell great, too. Head down to your local nursery to pick out a few colorful varieties to plant.

Mulch your garden. Limit the amount of effort needed to main-

tain your lawn and garden by adding a layer of mulch to your planting beds and around trees. No more mowing carefully around trees or painstakingly pulling weeds from your flower beds, as mulch helps keep weeds out of the picture and leaves your lawn looking great.

Mow your lawn. Whether you're mowing your lawn once a week or once a month, John Deere recommends the following: Safely

sharpen mower blades to ensure the grass is cut cleanly and evenly. Dull blades split the ends of grass, which allows turf diseases to spread and detracts from the beauty of the lawn. Follow the 1/3 rule, taking no more than the top third off the grass blade. Be sure to clean and maintain your mower for best performance – use fresh gas, regularly check oil levels, and dust off dirt and debris.

Prep the grill. Light the barbecue, then peel and halve a large onion – not for eating, but for cleaning. Stick a long-handled barbecue fork into the onion, then apply the cut side to the grill, putting to good use the onion's pungent flavor and its unique antiseptic properties. Rub the onion back and forth with moderate pressure, and watch the accumulated gunk disappear.

With a little prep work and maintenance, you'll be ready for family fun and making memories.

Tried-and-true tips to relocate plants like a pro



Courtesy of StatePoint Media

Whether your plants could stand a little more sun, a tad more space to grow, or you just want to redesign your backyard, transplanting plants offers them a fresh start.

"Tried-and-true methods will help you safely move your plants; all it takes is some know-how, elbow grease and a shovel," says Jamie Briggs, director of marketing, Exmark, a leading manufacturer of commercial mowers and equipment for landscape professionals and homeowners.

This is the driving idea behind "Backyard Smart," free online explainer videos full of facts to answer your most common lawn and garden questions. The following strategies, which come directly from a recent "Backyard Smart" episode, will have you transplanting plants like a pro:

- **When to do it:** Time of year matters. Perennials should be moved in spring when other flowers are in bloom and the days are cooler. Conversely, shrubs should be relocated in the fall – the cooler air and warmer soil make for perfect transplanting conditions. Never move plants in summer or winter. Hot weather, when plants need the most water, can kill sensitive roots. Likewise, the cold, hard ground in winter makes it virtually impossible for plants to take root. Always transplant on cloudy, cool days to protect roots from the harsh sun and retain moisture in their soil.

- **Rules of thumb:** To begin, picture a circle around your plant. You're imag-

ining its root ball – the mass of roots and packed-in dirt that help provide plants the necessary nutrients and stability to grow.

For perennials, dig a circle at least three inches out from the plant's edge. Shrubs are a different story. Instead of digging out from the farthest part of the shrub, first measure the circumference of its stem. For every inch in stem thickness, draw the length from the circle to the stem a foot longer. If your shrub has a 2-inch-thick stem, measure a circle that's at least 4 feet in diameter (or, a radius of 2 feet from stem to circle).

Now it's time to dig. Always dig straight down, as digging too shallowly and at an angle can lead to damaged roots, which can stunt growth and ultimately kill your plants.

Once you've dug up your plants, knock a little dirt loose from the compacted root ball. This enables roots to hang free, and encourages plants to take root in their new home.

- **Relocation:** Always dig the new holes at the same depth as the existing ones. Planting too deeply can encourage water pooling around the root system, effectively drowning your plants. Planting too shallowly has an opposite, but equally deadly, impact: it exposes the root system to warmer weather and can dry it up. For an even easier reference when transplanting shrubs, the root flare – the area where the stem expands at the base – should be partially visible at the soil's surface. Now fill the remainder of the hole with soil, water generously, rinse and repeat.

Now get outside and get moving – your plants will thank you for it!

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On-trend ideas for sprucing up your deck

Courtesy of StatePoint Media

Installing or updating a deck can transform your outdoor living area. Not only is a deck aesthetically appealing, but it also allows you to create additional space for a wide range of uses, whether it's a lively entertainment zone or tranquil, relaxing retreat.

If you're planning a deck build or renovation in 2022, consider incorporating one or more of these design trends identified by Westlake Royal Building Products, a leading manufacturer and distributor of materials for home remodeling, building and construction.

Creativity in design

While decking design features used to be reserved for luxury upgrades, creative flair is increasingly mainstream. Some options for incorporating greater depth and style into your deck design include mixing and matching boards to create patterns, inlays and focal points or utilizing two-tone designs for more visually interesting aesthetics.

On-trend colors

Classic lumber-toned decks never go out of style, but adding some flair with an eye-catching color is a subtle way to elevate your deck's aesthetic appeal. Some designs incorporate color throughout while another way to bring color to your deck is through distinctive inlay design or other design features.

Working with a product like Zuri Premium Decking gives you a selection of six on-trend colors, including Hickory, a true mid-tone brown, as well as Chestnut, Wal-

nut, Pecan, Brazilia and Weathered Gray. The planks feature minimal grain repetition to capture the look of true exotic hardwood with no painting, staining or resealing needed, and all are backed by a 25-year warranty against color shifting.

Multi-seasonal spaces

Once you create an incredible outdoor space, you'll likely want to use it as often as possible. That's why many homeowners are designing decks with multiple seasons in mind. Features like retractable walls can help you block cool breezes and trap the warmth of space heaters or a fireplace while roofs provide shade and fans help circulate the breeze during warmer months. Decks built with clean, simple lines can offer a connection to nature as well as convenience for homeowners transitioning from indoor to outdoor spaces.

Popularity of composite decking

Weather patterns can cause substantial damage to a home's exterior materials, including a deck where natural wood is prone to drying out. This creates an upkeep cycle that requires ongoing investments of time and money. An alternative to natural wood, such as Zuri Premium Decking by Royal, combines the low-maintenance, high-durability properties of composite decking with the exterior environment-defining presence of exotic wood. The result is an authentic look with zero-maintenance upkeep.

Bringing the inside out

A deck's design elements

were once limited to predictable furnishings like a picnic table and grill, but those days are gone. Homeowners seeking to create an outdoor oasis are bringing amenities of the indoors outside. You'll find outdoor kitchens and weather-proof TVs, rugs and furniture, allowing homeowners to incorporate the convenience and comfort of indoor living rooms and kitchens into their outdoor spaces despite elements like snow, wind and rain.

Masonry as an accessory

If you love the look of masonry but have your heart set on a deck, you can take the path of many homeowners and incorporate masonry as an accessory or design element. Mixing building mediums provides texture, which creates an immersive tactile experience through sight and touch. Options like a fireplace or firepit, pillars, skirting, bench seats, planters, water features, kitchen or bar space and walkways can all complement and enhance the decking so you get to enjoy the best of both worlds.

Clean sightlines

A deck is an ideal vantage point when you have a beautiful view to enjoy and using the right materials can enhance that experience. Creating a clean, sophisticated and unobstructed view is easy when you outfit your deck with the right lighting and use cable or glass railings, which provide safety along with clear views of the landscape beyond.

Find more tips and ideas to spruce up your outdoor living space at liveabode.com.



Easy updates for renters: transform your apartment from drab to fab

Courtesy of StatePoint Media

When living in a rental, it can be chal-

lenging to make the space feel like home. While you may not be there long term, that doesn't mean you can't

make it your own with some creative, non-permanent updates. Here are a few tips to make your rental feel more

customized to you.

- **Prepare and plan:** With any rental property, it's a good practice to check in with your landlord before you make changes to the space. If you're given approval to customize your rental, be sure to store anything you remove and keep a list of any other physical changes you make in order to ensure your security deposit is returned when your lease concludes. It's also best to research and purchase items that don't cause damage to the wall.
- **Enhance lighting:** Brightening a space in a rental can be tricky if you have limited windows or ceiling fixtures that can't be upgraded. Enhance your area by adding new table lamps and installing lighting in sections that might need more illumination, like under cabinets or in closets. Secure push lights or rope lighting with a removable adhesive like Duck Max Strength Nano-Grab Gel Tape, which provides easy mounting with extreme holding power. Nano-Grab's double-sided gel adhesion

- creates a clean look, with a removable grip so you can clean the space after you move.
- **Create eye-catching walls in bathrooms and kitchens:** Investing in high-end upgrades like new tile or flooring isn't an option when renting, but reinventing the space with quality removable items is absolutely possible. Enhance your bathroom walls or kitchen backsplash using a product such as Duck Brand EasyLiner Brand Removable Adhesive Shelf Liners. The sheets adhere directly over existing tile or paint and can be removed easily, which means you can choose from the wide variety of fashionable designs and trendy patterns as often as you'd like.
- **Add some shower power:** A quick, straightforward way to make an ordinary bathroom feel a bit more spa-like is to swap out your showerhead. There are simple-to-install options that include everything from a large, flat rainfall experience to a handheld nozzle for ease of use. Best of all,

- they can be installed manually without the help of a plumber and are simple to change, meaning you can uninstall your new fixture and take your upgraded experience with you wherever you go.
 - **Showcase Your personality:** Infusing a bland space with a touch of personality is the best way to transform it into a cozy, sophisticated living area. Add fresh pops of color with lush plants in bright pots or vases. Wall décor like artwork, macrame hangings or photo collages can add hues to empty walls and enhance the mood of a room. If your landlord is a little more flexible, painting an accent wall, hallway or even adding a stripe or paint pattern into a bare space can bring your rented space to the next level.
- Upgrading a rental location doesn't have to be daunting or complicated to complete. With the right products to help brighten up your temporary space, it's easy to create a unique (and removable) look.

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