



Spring Home & Garden

Update Your Curtains

As spring approaches, so do beautiful flowers, furry animals and sunshine. Now is the perfect time to update your interior window decor so you can have an attractive viewing point from which watch spring unfold in front of your eyes.

Before you decide on which curtains to feature in your home, it is important to know the many different styles and textures available. You also will need to take an accurate measurement of the width of your window and the length of curtain you want. The right curtains can give a dull room a breath of fresh air.

CURTAIN TEXTURE

Curtains can help take your home design to the next level. Consider the style of your living room before making a curtain purchase. Is your living room used as a formal area or more of a casual room?

Formal areas benefit from heavy silk or velvet curtains. Most curtains from this family are strictly dry-clean only. Decide if you are willing to drag your curtains to a dry cleaner each time they need clean-up. For a dignified curtain that is less restrictive on its washing methods, consider silk rayon blends or cotton sateen.

For a casual living room, billowy linen or cotton blends will do the trick. Be sure to read the manufacturer's washing instructions. Even some casual curtains require special cleaning methods.



CHOOSING A COLOR

If you are retaining your existing living room layout, you will need to choose curtains that will complement its current design.

When choosing a color, decide if you want your new curtains to blend in with the

room or make a statement. To blend, choose a color a few shades darker than your wall color or existing furniture.

If you are aiming to make your curtains pop, choose a bold color that is different from your current color palette.

LENGTH

The latest trend in interior design is floor-reaching curtains. The amount of curtain that is touching the floor is, of course, a preference.

Curtains that extend onto the floor by about 3 inches provide a relaxed and roman-

tic appearance. These longer curtains do require more maintenance and may get in the way during regular housework, such as vacuuming.

You may prefer curtains that rise above the floor by a few inches. These are more practical and easier to manage.

Refresh Your Patio

As the weather begins warming, you may be planning to get more use out of your patio. Patios are the perfect area for outdoor social gatherings. Get your patio in shape this spring by creating a comfortable meeting spot.

An attractive patio space can become the focus point of your backyard. Accents such as pillows, mirrors and lights can give your patio a wonderland feel, quickly making it your new favorite spot to relax.

OUTDOOR LIGHTING

Having a well-lit patio gives you the freedom to entertain your guests even when the sun goes down. Installing a lighting system on your patio can be expensive if there is not existing electricity outdoors. Contact a licensed local electrician for a quote to see if it is feasible for your budget.

If you're looking to brighten up your patio on a budget, solar lights are a good option. A simple strategy that can go a long way is to place solar spotlights around the perimeter of your patio. If you have a ceiling over your patio, consider hanging solar string lights above you.

FOCUS ON THE FLOOR

Over time, a patio floor can appear less than appealing. Weather can cause cracks or imperfections to your floor. A simple way to hide these imperfections and add some flair to your patio is an area rug.

There are differences between interior and exterior rugs. A rug that is meant to be



kept outside will be made of stronger materials that help it hold up to different weather conditions.

Another aspect to consider is the shape of your rug. Plan to choose a rug that is shaped the same as your patio table.

For example, a circular rug is a good choice under a circular table.

ADD ACCENT ITEMS

You can completely change the aspect of your patio by adding a few different accent

items. Consider some of these inexpensive items for a fresh new look:

- **Pillows:** Adding colorful pillows to drab or old furniture can give your patio new life.

- **Lanterns:** Creating a path

of lanterns leading to your patio creates an attractive welcome.

- **Mirrors:** If you have an unused fence or wall near your patio, mirrors in rustic frames will give your patio a whimsical feel.

Bed Chic

Winter has gone, and it's time to put the flannel sheets in the closet and get ready for warmer nights. Spoil yourself by buying new bedding that adds style to your room and a new level of comfort.

Creating a bed that provides style and comfort takes a little effort. Knowing the difference between the various types of bedding and how to use colors and accessories will help you choose the perfect bedding.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF BEDDING

If you have started the search for the new bedding that is perfect for you, you have probably noticed the many different styles available. Decide on the style of bedding that works best for you before choosing a color or pattern. There are three major types of bedding.

- **Bedsread:** A bed cover that typically reaches the floor on all three sides and offers extra fabric to create an attractive fold at the top of the bed.

- **Comforter:** Generally much shorter than a bedspread. It will cover the sides of the bed but will not be nearly long enough to reach the floor. You can use shams to cover the area it doesn't cover at the top of the bed.

- **Quilt:** Usually only long enough to cover a bed's box spring. In addition to a quilt, use a bed skirt if you want your new bedding to reach the floor.

COLORS AND PATTERNS

Before you decide between a pattern or using solid-colored

bedding, weigh the pros and cons of both.

Solid-colored bedding will give your room a simple and relaxing atmosphere. This doesn't mean simple must be boring. Choose the main color you want to feature, then layer it with different shades of the

same color. Incorporating various shades will keep your bed from looking dull.

Patterned bedding also comes with advantages. You can use patterns to pick up different accents from your bedroom. Consider using floral prints to give your bed-

room a romantic feel.

ACCESSORIES

Once you have the perfect bedding style that suits your room, you can throw in some extra flair with different accessories. Use window treatments such as matching drapes or

scarves to add the finishing touches to your new bedding.

Vibrant pillow shams also will complement your new bedding. You can choose shams that go with your existing color scheme or make a bold statement with something totally different.



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Edging Your Yard

Clean edges around your flower gardens and walkways give your borders a neat, attractive appearance. Creating these edges is simple with the right tools. This spring, shape up your flower beds by learning how to create edges and maintain them.

THE RIGHT TOOLS

Chances are you already have a spade in your garage or shed. While it may take more work to complete the job with this tool alone, it is possible. There are a couple downsides of using only a spade. If you are creating edges for a large garden, it will take much more time and elbow grease to do it with a hand tool. Plus, it is harder to cut curves with a spade, which is a big aspect of an attractive edge.

A gasoline-powered edger is best for large jobs. There is no wait time to restart once you run out of fuel, and it will be stronger than an electric edger.

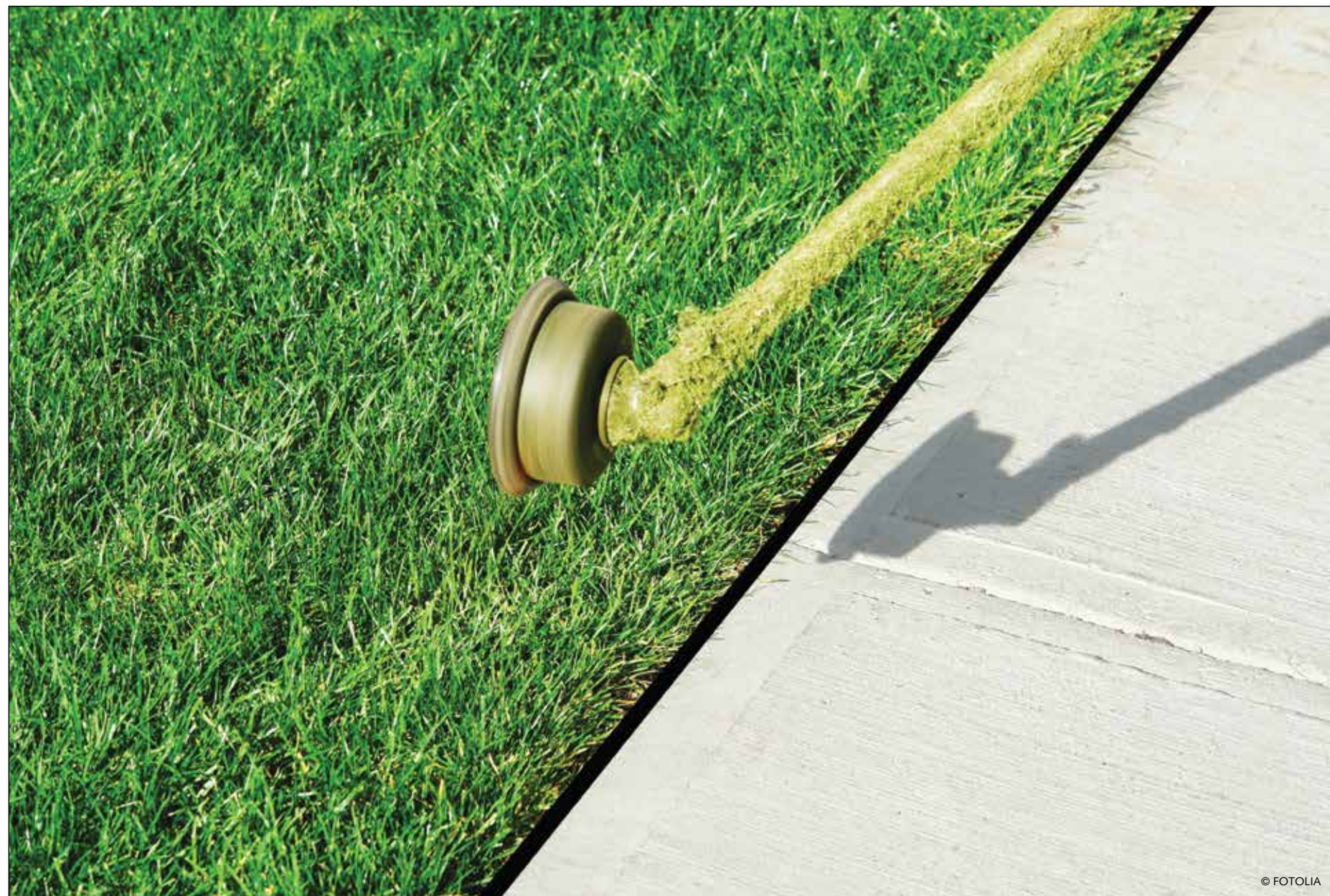
An electric edger is efficient for smaller jobs. As the battery drains, its strength will be reduced, and it will not be restored until it is placed on a charger. This can make edging take longer, as you will need to allow the tool to rest until it is fully charged.

CREATING THE EDGE

Creating a new edge can be an easy task but requires a little hard work. You will need a spade or edging tool and, to make it easier, a garden hose.

Here are a few simple steps to a perfect edge:

- Lay out the garden hose along the border of your gar-



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den. The hose will easily flex to be used as a guide to cut attractive curves.

- If you're using a spade, cut into the sod to a depth between 4 and 6 inches.

- Once you have one side of your border cut, follow your

slice again on the other side. This is to sever all roots from your edge.

- Using a powered edger is as easy as guiding your tool along your desired border path. Guide your tool slowly as it may get away from you

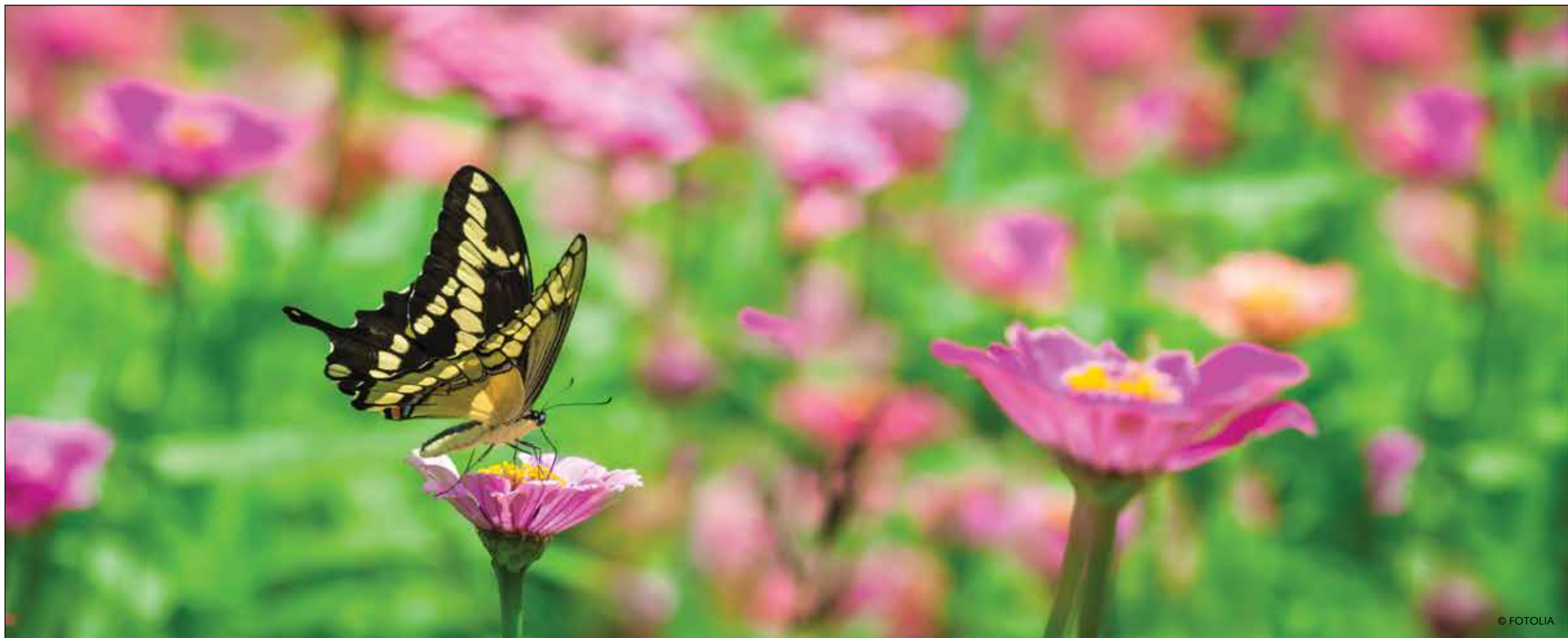
and create sloppy edges.

MAINTAIN AN EDGE

The edge itself won't require much maintenance, but it is important to keep its surroundings sharp and intact. Plants within the bed

may begin to grow over the edge. Prune these plants so they stay in the bed.

The lawn on the other side of the edge also should be mowed regularly. Any grass or weeds that grow over the edge should be eliminated.



Attract Wildlife

Spring welcomes more than just warm weather. Create a safe, attractive habitat to draw beautiful birds and other welcome wildlife to your backyard.

Animals are no different than people when it comes to wanting a safe place to call their own. You can create that safe habitat by knowing which plants will bring a variety of wildlife to your yard.

NATIVE PLANTS

A plant is considered native if it occurs naturally in an area without human introduction. These plants have had a relationship with wildlife over thousands of years. Involving these plants in your garden

will make wildlife more likely to visit your garden.

The best way for you to find out which plants are native to your area is to visit a local nursery. The professionals there can tell you which native plants will draw the most wildlife to your new garden.

WELCOMING BUTTERFLIES

Generally, insects get a bad name for being annoying pests that carry diseases. However, butterflies are beau-

tiful insects that will enhance the beauty of your garden and assist in pollinating flowers. The National Wildlife Foundation has some great tips on attracting butterflies this spring.

• Importance of color:

Adult butterflies are attracted to brightly colored flowers. Aim to grow red, yellow, orange and pink blossoms.

• Avoid insecticides:

Insecticides may keep harmful insects away from your plants, but they also can be

fatal to butterflies.

• Butterfly rest stops:

Butterflies rely on the sun to warm their wings before flying. Place flat stones in a sunny spot in your garden for them to get the sun they need.

BRING IN THE BIRDS

A good indicator of spring's official arrival is the chorus of different songs and sounds made from a variety of birds. Colorful birds can create beautiful views and sounds

for your backyard this spring.

The NWF suggests placing a birdbath in your yard as a great way to attract birds. A birdbath also makes a nice accessory to an attractive garden.

Hummingbirds can be attracted by planting red, tubular flowers in your yard. You also can find feeders designed for hummingbirds. Hang these feeders in a spot where you relax and watch these unique, colorful birds all spring.

Create a Tile Backsplash

A well-designed kitchen will offer many benefits for your home's appearance. Overall value also should not be ignored. Your kitchen is likely a high-traffic room used to host gatherings for family and friends. Consider upgrading your kitchen with a tile backsplash this spring.

You may not be getting the most out of the space between your countertop and cabinets. A tile backsplash will complement your home's cabinetry and become a talking point for your guests.

USE YOUR SURROUNDINGS

A colorful tile backsplash will add a tremendous amount of flair to your kitchen. It is important to consider your existing kitchen design first.

Traditionally a backsplash is used to add an impressive view that joins your countertops and cabinets together. Be sure to choose a tile that mixes well with your other fixtures.

Consider the color of your countertop when deciding on a tile color. A colorful countertop will benefit from a neutral backsplash color but can shine if you mix it up with patterns. Remember, neutral colors such as black, blue and white create stunning results when blended together.

COMPLEMENT YOUR CABINETS

Keep in mind that changing the color of any room will cause an instant transformation. This transformation will add or take away from your kitchen's design, depending on how the colors mesh together.



Your cabinets will be another factor in deciding which tile color you choose. Amber-colored cabinets look great with a neutral-colored backsplash. Using a mixture of blue and gray tiles will create a

warm and welcoming appearance.

Oak cabinets will pop when featured with a red-ceramic tile. Be sure to choose a lighter shade of red if your cabinets have a dark finish.

CHANGE IT UP

Don't choose a tile color that is too similar to the rest of your fixtures or you may find yourself with an uninspired backsplash. Using different shades of your kitchen's pri-

mary colors can tie your kitchen's design together and show off an extravagant flair.

Experiment with different shades and tones to achieve the tile backsplash that works best for your home.

Plant a Small Garden

While a garden will provide you with healthy, rich produce throughout the warmer months, it also can consume valuable space. You may think your yard lacks extra space to contain a large garden, but you can grow an efficient garden in a smaller space.

Small gardens can hold many different types of produce. They also can be easier to manage. Even a small garden plot will require a lot of maintenance, so, don't think you need to plant a large, overwhelming garden to get rewarded.

LOCATION

When choosing a location for your small garden, keep in mind that most vegetables require a minimum of five hours of direct sunlight per day. Your garden will need to be planted facing south on your property. This will ensure your plants get the amount of required sunlight.

Before you begin prepping your land for a garden, analyze the plot during the sunnier parts of the day. If you notice shadows appearing on your plot, you will need to either move the obstructions causing the shadows or choose a different spot.

Moving obstructions may not always be feasible, especially if the shadows are caused by permanent fixtures such as a fence or tree.

You also should avoid planting near trees. Not only will the shade hinder your gardens' growth, but they also have deep roots, which may get in the way of your budding plants.



BUILD A RAISED BED

Raised-bed gardening is great for keeping your plants contained in one small area. It also is effective at keeping out pests due to the tall border.

To build a raised-bed garden you must first determine

how much space you plan to use. Next you will need to lay the frame.

Either set up concrete blocks around the perimeter or piece boards together with screws.

Lay weed resistant cloth on the floor of your new bed.

This is to keep weeds from entering your garden. Fill the bed with a 50/50 mixture of soil and compost. Leave about 2 inches of space between your mixture and the top of your frame.

Vegetables such as carrots, lettuce, radishes and onions

will do great in a raised-bed garden. You can still even use trellises for plants that require support, like tomatoes or cucumbers.

Avoid planting melons or potatoes because they require a large amount of room to grow properly.