

# *fall* HOME & GARDEN



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# Kitchen remodeling can give a home new life

## *Hammond Lumber has experts in place*

BY VALERIE TUCKER  
Correspondent

**“We know customers see television shows that make everything look so fast and easy, but there’s a lot of planning behind the scenes.”**

**LORI WITHAM, DEPARTMENT MANAGER, KITCHENS, HAMMOND LUMBER CO.**

Most homeowners would agree that kitchen remodeling projects can be daunting and complicated. Planning a schedule that accommodates a family’s routine can seem impossible, especially with children in the mix.

All of the Hammond Lumber Company kitchen designers stay abreast of the current trends, according to department manager Lori Witham. Whether a dream kitchen’s style is farmhouse, vintage or rustic, the expert staff will spend as much time as necessary to ensure customers find what they want. They will ask customers if they are doing the work themselves or are working with a contractor. Hammond Lumber has a wide network of reliable contractors, so they can suggest professionals in the customer’s area.

“We can help maximize our customers’ dollars, figuring out options that might work with their budget,” Witham said. “We know customers see television shows that make everything look so fast and easy, but there’s a lot of planning behind the scenes.”

With so many beautiful, stylish and timeless cabinets to choose from, customers should understand that they are more than just looks. Hammond Lumber’s kitchen displays, featuring quality brands of cabinetry, including Omega, Dynasty, KraftMaid, Merillat, Candlelight, Woodmode, Schrock, Echelon and Contractor’s Choice.

“We explain the different types of construction, the materials used and even type of joinery,” Witham said. “We also explain many options, like soft-close drawer glides and hinges, as well as storage options.”

Many of the pull-out options allow the customer to customize interior spaces for specific storage for cans, boxes, spices and other foodstuffs. Other cabinets can be customized for dinnerware, cookware, flatware and cooking utensils. Witham asks customers if they have a preference for a natural wood,



*Photo contributed*

Kitchen remodeling can be on a budget or you can pull out all the stops, with plenty of options in between. Hammond Lumber design experts explain the latest trends in cabinets, sinks, faucets and inventive space-saving ideas. This open concept dining and meal preparation area combines a warm elegant country design with plenty of room for storage, seating, family or a dinner party for friends.

painted, stained or glazed finish, or maybe a mixture.

“There are classic choices, modern choices and mixes of both, and we can help pull it all together,” she said.

Selecting the cabinetry and the countertops together helps ensure optimal color and style matching. Popular and durable countertops can blend or stand out, with choices of quartz, granite and solid surface options in a range of pricing options. Granite countertops come in a dazzling choice of colors, with names like Alaskan White, Fantasy Brown and Scottish Meadow.

Installing a new sink and faucets can make an older kitchen seem new instantly and can fit into most budgets. Hammond Lumber’s sink brands

include Kohler, Blanco, American Standard and Rohl. Witham stays abreast of the trends and helps customers choose a style that fits their needs. Kohler offers both a cast iron and a stainless steel apron-front, or farmhouse, sink model. Because the apron, or front, is self-trimming, the countertop cuts are hidden once the sink is in place.

“Even though it’s shallower than some apron front sinks of old, a nine-inch interior depth will easily accommodate taller pots, especially when paired with a gooseneck faucet,” she said.

Hammond Lumber’s faucet lines include Danze, Moen and Kohler. Customers can choose a matte or brushed finish, a shiny chrome or steel finish, and a pull-out, motion sensor or traditional

faucet style.

Witham offers her customers time-tested suggestions that ensure everyone’s lives are disrupted as little as possible during the remodeling process.

“We suggest they pack kitchen items in categories, including frequently and less frequently used,” she said. “Pack everyday items last in clear bins or storage bags for easy access.”

The homeowner should take items off the walls, including those in adjoining rooms, to prevent falling. Also, take down curtains and cover furniture and electronics tightly to keep out dust. Freeze a few meals to have on hand and use paper plates, cups and flatware if there’s no sink or dishwasher for a few days.

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# How to make bedrooms more conducive to sleep

**I**nsufficient sleep causes more problems than many people may know. Fatigue after a poor night's sleep might seem like an inconvenience that can be easily rectified, but the long-term effects of insufficient sleep are significant.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, researchers have found a link between insufficient sleep and an elevated risk for type 2 diabetes. In one such study exploring that potential link, researchers asked healthy adults to sleep just four hours per night for six nights. At the conclusion of that period, participants' ability to break down glucose had decreased by an average of 40 percent and reached levels that are consistent with those of older adults at risk for diabetes.

Insufficient sleep may be linked to any of a host of factors, including one's bedroom environment. An environment that promotes restful sleep can help people suffering from insomnia or restlessness improve the quality of their sleep. The NSF offers the following tips to make bedrooms more conducive to sleep.

- **Set the right temperature.** The NSF notes that research indicates a bedroom temperature of roughly 65 F makes for the best sleep. Human beings' body temperatures rise and fall throughout the day, reaching their lowest level around 5 a.m. each day before slowly



climbing as morning begins. A room that is too warm overnight may interfere with this natural dip, leading to restlessness. If necessary, install a programmable thermostat in

the bedroom so the temperature in the room remains steady and in line with your body's natural temperature fluctuations.

- **Address allergens.** Some people may

trace their sleeping difficulties to allergies. Dust and pollen in the bedroom can make for a disruptive night's sleep. Wash bedding once per week in hot water if dust mites are proving problematic. If pillows cannot be washed, dry them using high heat to kill dust mites. In addition, cover the mattress in a mattress protector that guards against allergens and dust mites. If pollen is finding its way into the bedroom, always keep bedroom windows closed during allergy season.

- **Use a white noise machine.** Noise is another potential contributor to poor sleep. The NSF notes that some people may have their sleep interrupted by noise even if they don't know it. White noise machines are often used to help infants sleep, but such machines can be just as effective at helping adults. The NSF notes that the constant ambient sound created by white noise machines masks activity both inside and outside the house, helping men and women enjoy more restful sleep.

- **Draw blinds, shades or curtains.** Waking up to sunlight each day might be nice, but that morning sunlight may be interrupting your sleep. Early morning rays from the sun might be triggering your body to wake up before it's had adequate rest, so make sure blinds, shades and curtains are drawn before going to bed at night so you are not woken up prematurely in the morning.



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# For gorgeous yards and gardens, professionals recommend native plants

BY TERRI HIBBARD  
Correspondent

Fall can be the perfect time to spruce up the gardens and landscape for a more beautiful spring, summer and fall next year. But take some time to learn what plants, trees or shrubs might work best, not only for your environment but for Maine's.

"Before introducing new plants to your environment," said Marjorie Peronto, Extension professor, "look around at what you see— things that are already growing in the area. These native plants will blend in and they're better habitat for creatures other than ourselves.

"Once they're established—and this is important— they'll perform better because they're adapted to growing in Maine and won't be as difficult to manage."

Peronto, who works with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension for Hancock and Washington counties, said creating functional habitats has been a priority on her own property.

"For example, at this time of year, blooming like crazy are goldenrods and asters. There are many varieties of goldenrods in Maine with variations in height, flower structure and blooming time. This is one of the best perennials you can plant because it draws an incredible variety of insects.

Biologist E.O. Wilson calls insects the "little things that run the world" because, she said, insects provide the bulk of the pollination for our food. There is a whole community of insects that can be fed and supported in home landscapes, providing food and pollination. And who doesn't love to have songbirds? Who doesn't love to have butterflies?"

Goldenrod, (*Solidago* species) by the way, is not an allergen, said Peronto. The pollen is too heavy to be carried on wind; the culprit is ragweed which flowers at the same time.

New England aster, (*Symphoricarpos novae-angliae*) another native, adds rich purple or pink flowers to a landscape and is a nice end-of-season combination



Reeser C. Manley photo

For fall-blooming shrubs, you might like summer-sweet, (*Clethra alnifolia*), a multi-stem shrub that gets larger over time. It needs plenty of sun but blooms late and is a magnet for butterflies, beetles, moths and hummingbirds, providing nectar and habitat. It also has a delightful fragrance.

for pollinator gardens.

To attract Monarch butterflies, clump-forming milkweed such as Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) is more manageable for home gardens and has beautiful pink or white flowers that are highly attractive to Monarchs. If it's not available at a local nursery, she said, ask that it be ordered.

For fall-blooming shrubs, Peronto likes summersweet, (*Clethra alnifolia*) a multi-stem shrub that gets larger over time. It needs plenty of sun, but blooms late and is a magnet for butterflies, beetles, moths and hummingbirds, providing nectar and habitat.

"It's highly fragrant. In the evening, I step out on my porch and I can smell my clethra. A lovely thing to have late in the season," she said.

Northern bayberry (*Morella pensylvanica*) is another plant

that she says is attractive to more than 20 species of birds who can nest in it and feed on the fruit, which persists into winter. Under the right conditions, it can grow to 7- to 8-foot tall. Shop in the fall for this one because the female plants will have fruit. Also needed is at least one male plant (no fruit).

To avoid confusion, it's important to use the scientific name when going to the nursery. "Red leaf maple can be red leaf Norway maple, which is invasive," she said.

Before adding things to your garden and yard, it can be helpful to check [extension.umaine.edu/publications/2500e](http://extension.umaine.edu/publications/2500e), a comprehensive list of recommendations for native trees, shrubs, vines, ground covers and perennials.

Catherine Hebert, who, with Ken Ellis, co-owns Sunset Flowerland and Greenhouse



Reeser C. Manley photo

To attract Monarch butterflies, clump-forming milkweed such as Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) has beautiful pink or white flowers that are highly attractive to monarchs. If it's not available at a local nursery, ask that it be ordered.

in Fairfield, said: "It's wonderful to plant trees in the fall because if you plant them in the spring, you've got to water all summer long. If you plant in the fall, just keep watering after leaves have fallen and until the ground freezes."

She also recommends rock maple (*Acer rubrum*) and sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), along with mountain ash (*Sorbus americana*) and cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*), because the latter two are good for the landscape and provide food for wildlife.

For a colorful bush that can replace the invasive burning bush, she said "Plant blueberries. High-bush blueberry is not native but it's okay to plant them. They have red foliage in the fall and berries for the birds. You'll be able to pick berries in a few years, but don't expect quarts for 10 or more

years," she says.

For shrubs to plant in fall, Hebert likes winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), a lovely shrub that provides beauty and food for the birds.

Susan McIntyre, who has provided customer service in the nurseries at Longfellow's Greenhouses for 18 years, is enthusiastic about chelone (*Chelone glabra*) as a native plant that can go in the ground now.

"It's a beautiful pink, late-blooming plant, also called white turtlehead. One appealing variety is 'hot lips.'"

She also recommends winterberry, "our beautiful, native holly (*Ilex verticillata*)", which is often seen growing where it's damp. It takes a male and female to bear the fruit, which turns bright red after a frost.

## Native

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

The purple dome New England aster is an especially pretty one among native plants she recommends.

Most trees, except magnolias or oaks, can be planted up to the first frost, she said, as long as they are kept evenly moist. Some gardeners give up watering in late fall, but roots keep growing and need water. After the freeze, pile on the mulch (which you've been sure to keep where it won't freeze). Evergreens don't go completely dormant, so it's best to plant them earlier in the season so roots have a chance to grow strong.

Smooth serviceberry (*Amelanchier laevis*), is another native tree, McIntyre said, one that will provide berries for birds in the spring.

With information about plants that will blend into and flourish in our Maine landscape, you can work with the helpful and knowledgeable people at your local nursery to create beauty in your surroundings.

## Invasive plants can damage Maine's environment

By Terri Hibbard

Marjorie Peronto, University Cooperative Extension Professor, said that many invasive species have done serious damage to Maine. Some of her examples:

Japanese barberry, (*Berberis thunbergii*) gets into the forest understory and crowds out beautiful spring wildflowers, actually changing the soil pH. It grows low to the ground so if birds nest in it, they are more susceptible to predators. It can also provide a hiding place for the white-footed mouse, a carrier of ticks harboring Lyme disease.

Oriental bittersweet vines, (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) climb up trees and overtake the forest environment. It can create so much shade, native trees can't survive. The vines also can pull down young saplings. People like the colorful berries for wreaths and fall decorations that later end up in a landfill. There is not a landfill that isn't surrounded with bittersweet, Peronto said.

Shrubby honeysuckle, (*Lonicera morrowii* and *Lonicera tatarica*) the ones brought from the Orient and Russia used to be recommended to control soil erosion. It tends to be invasive and the fruits are popular with birds. These fruits are low in lipids (fat) and if birds feed on them before migrating they don't have the nutrition needed to make the flight.

Japanese knotweed, (*Fallopia japonica*) looks like bamboo and becomes a huge problem because it is nearly impossible to get rid of. Even the smallest fragment left on the ground will

re-root. The story is that it used to be planted around outhouses for privacy.

Invasive plants can be spread when seeds are carried on the wind or by birds. That's why we see great fields and marshes of purple loosestrife although gardeners haven't planted it for years.

Catherine Hebert of Sunset Flowerland and Greenhouse in Fairfield knows about invasives.

"Twenty-seven years ago, when I moved here, my forest was all oaks and pines. Now there are some big oaks in the forest, but all new and young growth are the invasive species red maple (crimson) and variegated maple.

"These trees are sneaky," she said. "The seeds, whirligig things, went all through the forest. The Norway and crimson king maples come up green, so you don't think they're red. The young oaks are gone. Now it's these maples all through our forest.

Caragh Fitzgerald, University of Maine Extension Educator for agriculture in Augusta, said "Beyond native and invasive plants are a third category that are non-invasive but also non-native. They don't have the tendency to spread but wouldn't be naturally found in our landscape."

These are okay to plant, she said, but most don't do as well as plants native to Maine.

"We get lots of calls asking for help with plants that aren't doing well because they aren't appropriate for the Maine climate." One harsh winter, she said, can do them in.

These plants are now illegal to buy or sell

in Maine:

Acer ginnala (amur maple)  
Acer platanoides (Norway maple)  
Aegopodium podagraria (bishop's weed)  
Ailanthus altissima (tree of heaven)  
Alliaria petiolate (garlic mustard)  
Amorpha fruticosa (false indigo bush)  
Ampelopsis glandulosa (porcelain berry)  
Artemisia vulgaris (common mugwort)  
Berberis thunbergii (Japanese barberry)  
Berberis vulgaris (common barberry)  
Celastrus orbiculatus (Asiatic bittersweet)  
Elaeagnus umbellata (autumn olive)  
Euonymus alatus (winged euonymus)  
Euphorbia cyparissias (cypress spurge)  
Fallopia baldschuanica (Chinese bindweed)  
Fallopia japonica (Japanese knotweed)  
Frangula alnus (glossy buckthorn)  
Hesperis matronalis (dame's rocket)  
Impatiens glandulifera (ornamental jewelweed)  
Iris pseudacorus (yellow iris)  
Ligustrum vulgare (common privet)  
Lonicera japonica (Japanese honeysuckle)  
Lonicera maackii (amur or bush honeysuckle)  
Lonicera morrowii (Morrow's honeysuckle)  
Lonicera tatarica (Tatarian honeysuckle)  
Lythrum salicaria (purple loosestrife)  
Microstegium vimineum (Japanese stilt grass)  
Paulownia tomentosa (paulownia, princess tree)  
Persicaria perfoliata (mile-a-minute)  
Phellodendron amurense (amur cork tree)  
Populus alba (white cottonwood)  
Robinia pseudoacacia (black locust)  
Rosa multiflora (multiflora rose)

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# Apples native to Maine have special appeal

*Stop at a local orchard, the trees have stories to tell*

BY KATE CONE  
Correspondent

An apple is an apple is an apple, right? Wrong. There are significant differences, between apples that are native and those that are transported long distances.

The same applies to the orchard where the apples are grown. Next time you're tempted to take quick walk through a row of apple trees and stuff apples in a paper bag—maybe take more than a quick sniff of fresh air before scooting home. Stop and lean in. The trees have stories to tell. And because the trees can't talk themselves, listen to the orchardist who has nurtured them for decades.

Marilyn Meyerhans studied Russian and African-American history at Colby College, but when her husband, Steven, got a job at the Apple Farm in Fairfield, which they would eventually buy, they were both bitten by the apple bug.

"When I met my husband, he had gotten a job out here working



Boxes of antique varieties, Burgundy, Baldwin, Hudson's Golden Gem and Cox's Orange Pippins.

Photo courtesy of The Apple Farm

for Royal Wentworth, who trained him to prune the trees and learn the craft. Steven and I bought the farm from Royal in 1973. Before that, it was owned by the Coffins. When we bought it, it was a pretty small operation. We put in a cider press, bought a farm across the road and our lives unwound from there."

Marilyn Meyerhans knows her orchard like the proverbial back of her hand, pointing out the ancient crab apple tree across the road from the main farm. "It's called a honey crab apple. It's almost 150 years old and still bearing fruit."

The Meyerhanses have been growing heirloom apples, those varieties that were cultivated and grown "in the old days," way before it became trendy. It's a worthy cause, because hundreds of apple varieties died out when refrigeration allowed apples to be transported over great distances. No one wanted locally-grown

More APPLES, PAGE 7

## EDITH'S FAMOUS APPLE PIE

I grew up baking with my mother and my two older sisters. I can't remember a Thanksgiving when I didn't make a pie, or five. The pie crust recipe has varied, but in recent years I've settled on Julia Child's food processor recipe (below). It's easy and no fail. I use all butter in it, since I refuse to cook with lard or shortening. I'm going to assume you know how to roll out a pie crust. If not, find a good illustrated book—or heck, a YouTube video.

**Preheat oven to 450 degree Fahrenheit.**

### Pie Crust

1 ¾ cup unbleached white flour  
1 tsp salt  
1 ½ sticks cold butter  
1/3 to ½ cup ice water

Briefly pulse flour and salt in food processor. Quickly cut butter into lengthwise quarters then into ¼-inch pieces. Drop into food processor. Pulse for three seconds. Add all but 2 tablespoons water and pulse until the dough has just begun to mass on the blade.

Turn the mix onto a lightly floured surface. With the heel of your hand, rapidly and roughly smear it to 6 to 8 inches in front of you, by 3-spoonful bits (a lump the size of an egg), to make a final blending into dough. If it seems too dry, sprinkle a bit of the remaining water onto it.

Form into two patties five inches in diameter and chill in a plastic bag for at least an hour before using. Keep the second patty chilling until you need it.

Roll out and lay the bottom crust in a nine-inch glass pie.

Slice washed unpeeled tart apples into the crust, mounding up as far as you can. Seriously, as high as you can before they start sliding off. How many depends on the size of the apple, but local and fresh picked are best. You'll need at least five and possibly that many more.

Sprinkle liberally with granulated sugar and cinnamon.

Roll out and lay the top crust on top, stretching gently to reach evenly. Fold the edges of the top crust under the bottom, then crimp all the way around with forefinger on one hand pressing into thumb and forefinger of the other. Make a few slits in the top with a sharp knife—in initials or a flower pattern or a smiley face or whatever you like. Brush the top lightly with cream or milk. Sprinkle sugar over the top.

Place a rimmed cookie sheet on the lower oven shelf to catch drips. Bake the pie at 450 for 10 minutes. Lower the temperature to 350 and bake until the total time reaches 45 minutes to an hour, or until the top is lightly browned and liquid bubbles within.

Enjoy warm with ice cream, whipped cream, or a slice of sharp cheddar, or cold for breakfast the next day.



Adapted from "From Julia's Kitchen" by Julia Child, (Alfred A. Knopf, 1975.)

# Apples

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

apples any more.

“Take the Washington state Red Delicious,” she said, “those apples are watered—it’s called water-core— their cells expand, and they just don’t have the flavor that a New England-grown Red Delicious apple can have.”

The nice surprise about heirlooms is that “a lot of those varieties might be on someone’s Back-Forty.” Another reason to look around the back yard or along the road. It just might lead to the discovery of a rare tree.

“My favorite heirloom is one that we think is indigenous to our farm, the Gray Pearmain. It’s a great eating apple, a combination of apple and pear, sweet and tart.”

They have even been described by the writer Rowan Jacobsen in “Apples of Uncommon Character” (Bloomsbury, 2014) as “almost metaphysical” with tastes of “pear, lemon and blood orange juice.” Thought to have been cultivated in nearby Skowhegan, the Gray Pearmain is rare and special, she said.

All in all, the Meyerhans have more than 55 varieties of apples in their orchard, and among them, the heirlooms are the “ones we’re passionate about,” the Gray Pearmain, Golden Russets, Sweet Reds and Winter Banana. But if McIntosh is your preferred apple, there are plenty of those too. “These were cultivated in Canada in the 1800s and the actual McIntosh family came to visit us once.”

Turning to the topic of cider, Meyerhans makes a case for local:

“Cider is different and fresh all of the time, because you are using apples as they come into season, tweaking the flavor for tart and sweet,” she said. “If a cider is tangy, I might add Sweet Reds. A variety called Prima is great in cider.”

Then there are the desserts.

“One of the original ‘cooking apples,’ was the Duchess. We still have those. They’re very tart. The Cortland works well. We still have some of the original Cortland trees behind the barn. It came from Cornell University, a cross of Ben Davis and McIntosh. They sent out scions to test. We have some of the original scions from the original Cortland tree. We baby them.” Another combination for pie is McIntosh, Cortland and Northern Spy, because the latter two hold their shape, she said.

Every orchard has a story, and at Ricker Hill Orchards in Turner, now in its ninth generation, the apples

keep company with cranberries, blueberries and grapes. The bakery at the farm is jumping this time of year and Peggy Wills is one of the bakers turning out the goodies.

“Before I worked here, I never made a doughnut in my life,” Wills said, chuckling. Now she is turning them out by the hundreds, along with Whoopie Pies, crumb bars and much more. Describing the other attractions, she said, “We have iced coffee, the pastries and picnic tables where people can enjoy them. There is a play area for kids, and a petting zoo.”

Don’t forget the jaunt over to the family-friendly tasting room, where the over-21 crowd can sample and buy hard cider.

Steven Mayhew explains the difference between two of the canned hard ciders: “Mainiac Mac is sweeter, the Gold is drier, made from Golden Delicious. They’re gluten-free, too.”

Mayhew manages the bakery

and advises anyone making doughnuts at home to “pick a recipe and follow it to a ‘T.’ If it says to let the batter rest, let it rest or it won’t come out well.”

At Lakeside Orchards in Manchester, doughnuts also are on the menu, hand-glazed by one of their bakers. The cinnamon roll also gets rave reviews. The apples are the star of the show, but Kennebec Cheesery products are available, as are cheeses from Pineland Farms.

Located 20 minutes from Augusta, Lakeside has about 60 acres planted in apples and several additional acres in blueberries, raspberries and honeyberries. It produces a wide range of vegetables, including tomatoes, peas, garlic, edamame, sweet corn, salad greens and pumpkins. Open year-round, their offerings of fruits, vegetables, and other products change with each exciting season.



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Courtesy of Lakeside Orchards

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# Many factors influence window installation

BY WANDA CURTIS  
Correspondent

One of the maintenance tasks that many homeowners don't look forward to is replacing windows.

La Pointe Lumber salesman Dave Rines said recently that, unless a homeowner has experience with installing replacement windows, he often recommends hiring a professional to do the job. He said that new construction windows are much easier to install than replacement windows.

"Installing a window leaves a big hole in the house," Rines said. "Knowing how to install a window to avoid air and water infiltration is very important."

According to Rines, windows are often replaced when there is leaking or rot in the existing windows, to seal failure between panes of glass that causes fogging, and/or to help with energy costs.

Rines said that whether replacing existing windows or installing new ones, there are a number of factors to consider before purchasing them; cost is a major one. He said homeowners should determine how much they can afford to spend before attempting to shop for windows because there are many choices available.

"Cost is a big factor," Rines said. "Generally speaking, vinyl windows are less expensive. They don't need to be painted or stained. No finishing needs to be done other than the trim itself."

Some of the most popular vinyl windows sold at La Pointe's in Augusta and Gardiner are the Matthew Brothers vinyl windows made in Belfast, Maine, which Rines said are just one of the many good quality brands they stock.

Another factor to consider when purchasing windows, Rines said, is the type of interior finish used in the home. If a home has wood trim, there are a number of options for windows, he said, including Andersen, Marvin and Integrity.

Also to be considered is the type of siding used on the exterior of the home. If the home has vinyl siding, then the homeowner would want to install vinyl

windows, which have a factory made J-channel that accepts vinyl siding, Rines said.

Another important factor that Rines advises customers to consider is safety. He said that it's important to become informed regarding the size windows needed to comply with the Life Safety Code, which requires windows to be a certain size to allow for a safe exit during an emergency such as a fire.

Rines deferred to Augusta's Fire Chief Roger Audette and Assistant State Fire Marshal Richard McCarthy for a more informed discussion of the Life Safety Code and what's required for egress (escape) windows.

McCarthy referenced the National Fire Protection Association 101 Life Safety Code, which states that, "In dwellings or dwelling units of two rooms or more, every sleeping room and every living area shall have not less than one primary means of escape and one secondary means of escape." McCarthy explained that one of the secondary means of escape defined in the Life Safety Code would be a window with a clear opening of not less than 5.7-square feet.

McCarthy said that the width of the window must be at least 20 inches and the height not less than 24 inches. The NFPA code also specifies that the bottom of the opening cannot be more than 44 inches above the floor.

Audette advised that the proper size egress windows are critical, not only for individuals in private or rented dwellings to escape from a fire, but also for the benefit of firefighters.

"The windows are very important for the people to have the room to get out, but equally important to allow enough room for a firefighter to enter with all of their gear and the air pack on their back," Audette said. "For our safety, having the required egress window may save a firefighter's life as well, if they are searching for victims and end up getting trapped by fire on the floors below."

For questions regarding how the Life Safety Code affects the installation of new or replacement windows, individuals should consult with their local code enforcement officer or fire marshal.



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# The Step Guys take the boring out of concrete entrance stairs

BY VALERIE TUCKER  
Correspondent

The Step Guys is a division of the George Roberts Co., a leading supplier of precast concrete products. From its start in 1962, the company built a strong reputation in New England for both commercial and residential applications. The division shook up the stodgy precast concrete step world by launching The Step Guys, said Production Manager Todd Meserve.

"Step Guys makes and installs residential and commercial precast concrete steps that are stylistically a notch above the standard, boring offerings from a generation ago," he said of locations that include Alfred, Maine.

Customized steps with warm and inviting colors, textures, shapes and patterns adds value and dramatic curb appeal to the home. The Rock-a-fella, one of their most popular designs, offers the beauty and appeal of granite steps with the affordability and functionality of precast concrete steps.

"Since the Rock-a-fella, we've added steps faced with real fieldstone and with brick," said Meserve. "We also now make rounded steps, which offer an elegant solution with a modern touch."

The Rock-a-round features a graceful curve in a seven-foot width, with plenty of space at each end for pots of geraniums or seasonal decorations. The Henry style has a Lazy L detail, which separates each tread with



Photo courtesy of The Step Guys

Customized steps with warm and inviting colors, textures, shapes and patterns adds value and dramatic curb appeal to the home. The Rock-a-fella, one of The Step Guys most popular designs, offers the beauty and appeal of granite steps with the affordability and functionality of precast concrete steps.

a vertical precast concrete corner. The Zeb steps have the Lazy L removed for a cleaner look between treads. The Big Boy feature a real fieldstone veneer on the sides and a three-inch tread that has all the appeal of solid granite.

The fieldstone veneers vary from light to dark gray, with warm brown tones blended in. The Jimbo style has a pebble finish aggregate on the sides. Edwina is a standard gray precast concrete step that's functional, affordable and durable. The top features a non-slip walking surface with

a broomed finish and, like its cousins, the concrete is steel-reinforced on the inside.

"Our customers' installation options are based on the size and type of step, along with the structure it will abut," Meserve said.

The most common installation rests steps on sturdy angle irons that are bolted to the foundation. This prevents the step from settling against the house and from getting out of level vertically and horizontally. The two front corners are centered on free floating concrete pads.

Another installation keeps the steps suspended on steel brackets that prevent steps from settling, even if the ground underneath shifts over time. This option is only available on step sizes up to and including three risers.

A third option places the steps on four, free floating concrete pads. This installation works when steps can't be attached to a house foundation. For example, the customer might want steps in front of a porch or on a free-standing in-grade location.

"Best of all, because we're a full-service company, removal of old brick or concrete steps is part of the package," Meserve said.

Step Guys offer several choices of railing materials, finishes and styles that pair beautifully with new steps.

"The premium version of our aluminum rail is for those with a special eye for detail," he said.

A popular railing style features a classy high-gloss powder-coated pewter or black finish. Key points are its low maintenance, rust resistance and superior stability for those who need a very reliable

rail to grasp. The Step Guys also install customized entryways with spacious landings and planters. Their benches, mailbox posts and entryway pillars add an elegant touch and curb appeal.

"One of the most common uses of our retaining wall sections is to create planting beds in front of the house on one or both sides of the steps," Meserve said. "Customers don't have to worry about shabby containers that fall apart or have to be moved every year."

Step Guys in-grade precast concrete commercial stairways have become increasingly popular in the past 20 years because of the quality of the finish, the ease of installation and the affordability, compared to cast-in-place concrete stairways. They provide required safe and efficient access for varied or steeper grades.

Customers also can print the handy step measurement guide found at [stepguys.com/measuring-for-steps](http://stepguys.com/measuring-for-steps). For more information, visit [stepguys.com](http://stepguys.com), call (888)433-6010 or (207)324-6571 or email [info@stepguys.com](mailto:info@stepguys.com).

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# Dried flowers preserve summer's color for the winter months

BY WANDA CURTIS  
Correspondent

Summer is quickly coming to an end along with the colorful flowers that adorn your garden. If, like many people, you wish that the beauty of the garden could last all year, why not consider preserving some of those flowers by drying them?

There are a number of methods that can be used to preserve flowers. One of the simplest ways is to hang them. Flowers can be hung upside down on hooks or a wire, leaving space in between to ensure adequate ventilation. Trailing plants or vines can be arranged in a vase to dry.

According to Anna Brown Longfellow from Longfellow's Greenhouses in Manchester, flowers that are going to be dried should be picked early in the day after the dew has evaporated.

She recommends clustering a few stems together and then hanging them in a well-ventilated, dry, dark location until crisp. She said that it's important to store the flowers in a dark location because light will fade the colors.

When selecting flowers to dry, it's important to note that some varieties dry better than others. The product manager at Johnny's Selected Seeds in Winslow, Hillary Alger, said that as a rule of thumb, "any flower that has a dry feel to it when fresh will dry best."

She said that strawflowers, statice, gomphrena and celosia have a papery feeling when fresh and those dry really well. She said that some flowers hold their color better than other's but even the ones that don't hold their color may add interesting textures.

"Nigella seed pods are amazing and people are fascinated by them," Alger said.

Another factor that affects how well flowers will dry is picking them at the proper stage of maturity. Brown and most other flower experts recommend picking flowers before they're completely mature. The timing will depend upon the variety of flowers to be used.

"In general, pick the flowers before they are completely mature and keep them away from light and moisture," Brown said. "Acroclinium holds its shape if picked when fully open. Strawflowers look best when picked with only a few petals starting to open; the drying process causes the flower to open more. Goldenrod and liatris both should be picked when only a couple of florets have opened. Experiment with timing."

The website [www.johnnyseeds.com/growers-library/flowers/dried-flowers-instructions-slideshow.html](http://www.johnnyseeds.com/growers-library/flowers/dried-flowers-instructions-slideshow.html) includes detailed instructions.

**"In general, pick the flowers before they are completely mature and keep them away from light and moisture."**

**ANNA BROWN LONGFELLOW, LONGFELLOW'S GREENHOUSES**



More DRIED FLOWERS,  
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# Dried Flowers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

tions regarding when to pick each variety of flower to be used in drying.

According to Brown, zinnias, daisies, roses and delphinium maintain their shapes and colors best if they're dried in silica gel. She said that this sand-like product, which can be purchased online or from craft stores, is "an expensive alternative." However, she said that the results are outstanding and the silica is reusable. She stressed that it's important to follow the package instructions.

A quick method that can be used to dry flowers is by using a microwave oven. Brown said this method requires some experimentation because every microwave functions differently.

"It is a quick method but risky until you have gained a lot of experience," said Brown, who offers these and other tips for drying flowers in the handout "Drying Flowers for Crafts," which is available at Longfellow's Greenhouses.

One of the oldest and easiest methods of preserving flowers is by pressing them under something heavy, such as a stack of books or a flower press. Flowers may be placed

inside newspapers and then inside of a book underneath the weighted object.

Alger, from Johnny's Seeds, said recently, that with autumn frost right around the corner, now is the perfect time to begin storing away some color for fall and winter wreath making and decorating.

According to the Johnny's Seeds website, seasonal and holiday décor have become a major outlet for dried flowers. They advise on their website that celosia blooms in warm fall tones are just right for Thanksgiving centerpieces. They also note that many people are using dried flowers for winter holiday arrangements, including not only centerpieces but also bouquet arrangements, evergreen wreaths, roping and swags. They report that some holiday wreaths are made entirely of dried flowers.

Winter weddings have become increasingly popular in recent years. The Johnny's Seeds website includes the suggestion that, if brides speak with a grower well ahead of the wedding date, flowers can be planted, grown and dried according to specifications in time for a winter wedding. The bouquet, boutonnieres and any flowers used to decorate ceremonial and reception spaces can all be dried, and "kept for a more lasting reflection of the big day."



*Johnny's Selected Seeds photos*  
There are a number of methods that can be used to preserve flowers. One of the simplest ways is to hang them. Flowers can be hung upside down on hooks or a wire, leaving space in between to ensure adequate ventilation. Trailing plants or vines can be arranged in a vase to dry.



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# Fall lawn care produces a better spring result

BY VALERIE TUCKER  
Correspondent

Grass Eaters landscaping services include mowing, trimming, spring and fall clean ups, fertilizing and construction of new lawns using sod or seed.

Fall also is a great time to create new outdoor spaces, according to Bruce Salsbury, owner of Grass Eaters Lawn Care and Maintenance in Waterville. Stone patios, steps and walkways can add a whole new look to a home or business. Adding an outdoor fire pit in the fall can provide a welcoming gathering place for a family sledding party, a fall cookout or just a place to unwind and enjoy the quiet evening in the crisp fall air. Salsbury's team also builds retaining rock walls and stone chimneys. At this time of year, he gets a lot of questions about the best way to ensure a lush green lawn in the spring.

"Give it great care in the fall," he said. "It's the most overlooked opportunity to prepare for a beautiful green carpet of grass in the spring."

Neglect in the fall has everything to do with why the grass looks so sparse and the weeds look so healthy in April. He has a list of tips and a crew ready to do the dirty work.

"First, I strongly suggest you let us get rid of those leaves," he said. "Those red and gold autumn leaves are beautiful, but they don't do any favors to the grass underneath."

They block the sunlight and trap molds and dampness, which weakens a lawn. His crew can turn the leaves into a productive compost or just remove them completely. Next, he advised, even though it's tempting to stop mowing when the weather is cooler, keep cutting. Grass continues to grow right up to the first hard frost.

"We provide our customers with regular cuts to keep it at an ideal three-inch height," he said. "But don't let grass get too long in the fall, because then it will mat and be susceptible to snow mold."

Salsbury said other bad

things happen if the grass is too short. The root depth is proportional to cutting height, so a three-inch lawn should have a healthy three-inch root system. That depth helps the lawn to survive winter temperatures and dryness, especially if weather is very cold with a lot of bare ground exposed. The next tip he offers is to keep watering, even though it's tempting to put away the hoses and sprinklers.

"Somehow, cooler weather seems to signal to folks that it's time to let nature take care of the lawn," Salsbury said. "That's far from the truth, because fall is the most important time to make the lawn as healthy as possible."

Even though cooler temperatures produce morning condensation, longer and warmer falls can leave lawns parched by mid-morning. Try to give a lawn an inch of water a week until the end of October.

Salsbury suggests aerating and dethatching the lawn every couple of years to loosen compacted soil and remove thick layers of dead roots. He also suggests fall fertilizing. A late-fall application of a slow-release fertilizer transitions the root system to colder weather. Specialty mixes protect roots from freezing and provide energy in spring. One other tip he suggested is fall seeding for a more weed-free lawn.

"A nice thick lawn naturally keeps out the crabgrass and other noxious weeds," he said. "Plan to aerate a lawn right before fertilizing, which gets that fertilizer to the roots."

Make sure the grass seed is tamped firmly to the soil and kept moist until germination before the first frost. The Grass Eaters experts use the latest in resilient, drought-tolerant grasses, Salsbury said. Since many of these fall lawn care projects are time-consuming for the novice and a big waste of money if not done properly, his team can handle the jobs that aren't getting done.

"We have all the equipment, so customers don't have to rent heavy machinery like core aerators and slit seeders,

which are hard to transport and operate," Salsbury said.

During the winter months, Salsbury offers snow plowing and snow removal services for both residential and commercial accounts. Visit [grasseater-slawnandauto.com](http://grasseater-slawnandauto.com); call them at 453-8222 or email [grassauto@outlook.com](mailto:grassauto@outlook.com). The office at 177 College Avenue is open from 8 a.m.- 6 p.m., Monday - Friday, and from 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. on Saturday.

"Give it great care in the fall. It's the most overlooked opportunity to prepare for a beautiful green carpet of grass in the spring."

BRUCE SALSURY, GRASS EATERS LAWN CARE AND MAINTENANCE



Photo contributed

Grass Eaters Lawn Care and Maintenance at 177 College Avenue in Waterville offers services that get their customers' lawns stronger for winter and healthier for spring.

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# Canning preserves the taste of summer

*Cooks take pride in seeing the fruits of their labor*

**WANDA CURTIS**  
Correspondent

Summer is the season to enjoy the delicious flavors of fresh fruits and veggies from the garden.

Fall is the season when many people take pleasure in canning produce to preserve some of those fresh flavors throughout the year.

Canning requires the heating and cooling of food to form a vacuum seal. There are a number of benefits to canning one's own food.

Campbell's True Value staff member Jon Smith agrees that one of the primary benefits of canning is being able to enjoy food harvested from the garden all year round.

"The food they can tastes fresher, and is from a source they know and controlled," Smith said. "It is a great way to save money as well. I think pride is probably the overall benefit. Who doesn't want to see all their hard work gardening turned into food they love?"

According to Smith, Campbell's True Value in Winslow stocks the supplies needed to ensure that area residents can have a successful canning experience. He said that they not only sell supplies but they also sell various mixes, including a tomato salsa mix, various pickle mixes, and a spiced apple mix that are favorites among their customers.

"We have all of the supplies to make your canning experience successful," Smith said. "Items like food mills, jelly strainers and apple peelers make getting the fruits and vegetables ready for canning easier. Beyond that we have all your other canning needs."

Kathy Savoie, an associate professor with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service, said that they took a survey several years ago to determine why people decide to can their own foods. She said that the majority of the people interviewed said the main reason they are involved in canning is the satisfaction that they get



"The food they can tastes fresher, and is from a source they know and controlled."

**JON SMITH, CAMPBELL'S  
TRUE VALUE**

*Photos by Edwin Remsberg  
courtesy of the Maine Cooperative  
Extension Service*

from being able to provide their own food. She said they also like being able to control what's used in preparing their food.

"You can use less sugar in jams and jellies," Savoie said. "You can also use less salt in canned vegetables."

Savoie said that a major concern they have at the Extension Service is that canning be done in a safe manner. She said that some of the older methods of canning, such as inverting jars to get a seal or using paraffin wax to seal jams and jellies, are no longer recommended. She said that all foods should be processed in either a pressure canner or a boiling water bath.

"The pH of the food they're canning can determine which method of canning they use," Savoie said.

According to Savoie, it's very important to use updated information on canning and reliable recipes, such as those provided by the USDA [www.nal.usda.gov](http://www.nal.usda.gov) or the Extension Service <https://extension.umaine.edu/food-health/food-preservation> or the National Center for Home Food Preservation [nchfp.uga.edu](http://nchfp.uga.edu). She advised against just pulling recipes or canning information from random websites.



Cleanliness is also important, according to Savoie. The produce should be in good condition and cleaned well before canning. The environment in which the food is canned and the equipment used should also be very clean.

Once canning is complete, Savoie said that canned goods should be labeled and dated. Then she said the canned goods should be stored in a cool, dark, dry place. She said that all

canned goods should be used within a year. Once opened, she said that all canned items should be refrigerated and used within two weeks.

If there's any concern that a canned item is spoiled, Savoie said that the item should be immediately discarded, because spoiled food can cause serious illness. She said that signs that a canned item is spoiled may include an odd smell, bubbles

inside the jar, discoloration, visible mold in a jar, or squirting of liquid when a jar gets opened.

The University of Maine Cooperative Extension offices have food preservation workshops in Adult Education programs, out in the community at public events, and in county offices. They also offer free testing of dial gauges on pressure canners, which she said should be checked for accuracy annually.



## Make garage organization go smoothly

**G**arages tend to fall victim to disorganization during the winter, when homeowners want to hurry inside and get some respite from the cold. As a result, many homeowners resolve to clean their garages come springtime.

Cleaning a disorganized garage overcome with clutter can be an all-day job, so homeowners would be wise to reserve a springtime Saturday or Sunday to get their garages back in order. Upon designating ample time to clean their garages, homeowners can then utilize a few additional tips to make the project go as smoothly as possible.

- **Empty the garage.** The first step when organizing a garage is to empty it completely. Old machinery and rusted lawn and garden tools have a way of disappearing in garages, and those items may remain there for years if the garage is never emptied. Once you have emptied the garage, you might be surprised to learn just how much or even how little space you have to work with.

- **Clean the garage top to bottom.** After you have emptied the garage, give it a thorough cleaning. Cleaning the garage serves multiple purposes. A clean garage is less likely to be overcome with dirt and/or critters, both of which can contribute to the deterioration of tools and machinery stored in the garage. In addition, you may be less likely to let a clean garage fall back into disorganization, saving you the trouble of reorganizing the garage next spring.

- **Look up.** Many homeowners fail to make adequate use of the vertical space in their garages. But keeping items off the floor can make it easier to clean the garage and will provide more room for your car or other machinery you don't want to leave in the driveway or a backyard shed. Install shelves so you can more safely store automotive fluids and cleaners, and hang some hooks or hammer a few nails into the garage walls so you can hang tools like rakes and garden shears.

- **Group tools by season.** Grouping tools by season can make for a more organized garage and one less likely to be overcome with clutter. Designate one corner of the garage for lawn and gardening tools and another for winter tools like snow shovels or snowblowers. This makes it easier to find tools when you need them. When grouping tools, you can also group items by who uses them. For example, parents can designate one area of the garage for their tools, while kids can get their own area for their toys and bicycles.

- **Resolve to park in the garage.** One of the best ways to keep a garage organized is to park your vehicle or vehicles inside the garage each night. Parking in a garage protects your vehicle(s) from the elements, and you also won't be tempted to leave items lying around on the garage floor if you know you will eventually be pulling your vehicle in.

A few simple strategies can make springtime garage organization more effective and efficient.

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# 7 uses for fallen leaves

**B**y the time autumn hits full swing, many trees will have shed their leaves for the season, and the last vestiges of red, yellow and orange magic will have faded to brown. Raking, blowing and collecting leaves becomes the primary chores of lawn and yard maintenance, and presents most homeowners with large piles of gathered leaves to tend to.

It is impossible to count just how many leaves fall to the ground each year, or just how many pounds of leaves get collected curbside, but the numbers are substantial. Cleaning up leaves is considerable work, but not all of those leaves need to be carted away. In fact, there are several different uses of leaves that can be beneficial.

**1. Spread leaves as a protective mulch to cover tender perennials or root crops/bulbs in the ground.** The leaves will form a natural insulating cover that keeps the soil and the plants within a bit warmer over winter.

**2. Create a pile of leaves that will break down and form a crumbly, compost-like material called leaf mold.** Even though leaf mold may sound like a blight, it's actually a good amendment to garden soil, improving its structure and ability to hold water. Leaf mold also attracts beneficial organisms that are vital in healthy soil.

**3. Brown leaves can be added to green materials in compost piles to improve the health of the compost being formed.** According to the healthy living resource Care2, the ideal ratio is 75 percent brown to 25 percent green materials in compost. Turn compost piles regularly to aerate them.

**4. Store dried, mulched leaves in a dry spot so they can be used in the spring as a weed barrier for spring plantings.** They will keep weeds at bay and help retain soil moisture to ensure small sprouts have the resources to grow.

**5. Use shredded leaves as a lawn supplement.** Pass a lawn mower over leaves left on the lawn to break them down into pieces too small to rake. This will help keep the lawn healthy throughout the winter without blocking out needed sunlight.

**6. Bag dried leaves and pack them tightly together in cold areas of the home, such as basements or garages.** They can act as added insulation. Bags of leaves also can be placed around planting containers to protect them from frost.

**7. Gather a few of the best-looking leaves and preserve them.** Use an iron on a low setting and press leaves between two pieces of waxed paper until the waxed paper seals together. Or use clear contact paper to achieve the same effect.



Fallen leaves can be used in many different ways throughout the year.

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