

Spring HOME & GARDEN

Supplement to the Seaford & Laurel Star, 2020

How color can affect your garden

Flower gardens can add color and awe-inspiring appeal to a property. The National Gardening Association notes that gardeners can find nearly every color of the spectrum in flowering perennials. So whether you prefer soft pink, are partial to bright red or want to relax in a garden and gaze at something deep blue, chances are you'll find a perennial to tickle your fancy.

The NGA offers the following breakdown of colors to help gardeners learn how their gardens can set the mood they're looking for.

Bright colors

A garden full of bright colors like red, orange, magenta, and yellow can provide a landscape with vigor and energy. The NGA notes that brightly colored flowers can withstand especially bright sunshine, meaning gardeners can marvel at their appearance even when the sun might be adversely affecting other plants and flowers.

Pastel colors

Pastels, which include soft pink, powder blue, lavender, and peach, create a tranquil feeling in a garden. This makes

pastel perfect for those who want their gardens to be a relaxing, peaceful respite from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. The NGA notes that pastels may look washed out in the midday sun, so they might be best enjoyed early in the morning or late in the afternoon.

Complementary colors

Complementary colors are those that are opposite one another on the color wheel. Orange and blue are examples of complementary colors. According to the NGA, complementary colors can add creative energy and vitality to a garden.

Harmonious colors

These colors are those that are next to each other on the color wheel, such as orange and red. The NGA recommends harmonious colors for gardeners looking to create a unifying feel in their gardens without resorting to a monochromatic color scheme. Harmonious colors give off a gentle feeling that can make for a relaxing garden atmosphere.

Monochromatic colors

Monochromatic gardens can be awe-



inspiring even though they stick to a single color and don't provide an array of awe-inspiring colors. The NGA notes that gardeners with monochromatic gardens make them interesting by using plants of various sizes and shapes.

When planting a garden, gardeners can choose whichever color scheme they prefer. To learn more about the effects of color on a garden, visit the National Gardening Association website at www.garden.org.

Five outdoor projects that add value to your home

Exterior renovations can enhance the appearance of a property and make it more enjoyable for homeowners. Certain renovations have the potential to add value to a home, while others may do the opposite. Learning which one have the largest return on investment can help homeowners select features that will have the most positive impact.

Curb appeal goes a long way toward attracting potential buyers. According to the National Association of Realtors, first impressions of a property have a strong influence on buyers. Landscaping and external features can do much to influence such impressions.

- **Lawn care program:** Investing in a lawn care program that consists of fertilizer and weed control application and can be transferred over to a subsequent home owner is an attractive feature. NAR says such a care program can recover \$1,000 in value of the \$330 average cost, or a 303 percent ROI.

- **Low-maintenance lifestyle:** When choosing materials for projects, those that

offer low-maintenance benefits can be preferential. These include low-maintenance patio materials, composite decking, vinyl fencing, and inorganic mulched beds.

- **Fire pit:** A fire pit can be used for much of the year. In the spring and summer, the firepit is a great place to congregate to roast marshmallows or sip wine and gaze into the fire. In the fall, the fire pit can make for a cozy retreat. A fire pit that has a gas burner is low-maintenance, and the National Association of Landscape Professionals says that most can recoup about \$4,000 of their \$6,000 average price tag.

- **Softscaping:** Hardscaping refers to structures like outdoor kitchens or decks. Softscaping involves the living elements of the landscape. Hiring a landscape designer to install trees, shrubs, natural edging, and rock elements can do wonders toward improving the look and value of a home.

- **Pool or water feature:** In certain markets, particularly hot climates, a pool



or another water feature is a must-have. However, in other areas where outdoor time is limited, a pool or water feature can actually lower the value of a home. Speaking with a real estate professional can give

homeowners an idea of how a pool will fare in a given neighborhood.

Outdoor improvements can improve the marketability of a home, as well as enhance its appearance and function.



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Delaware tree care company gains industry accreditation

Sussex Tree, Inc., a commercial and residential tree care company located in Lewes, recently became ac-credited in accordance with tree care company Accreditation standards put forth by the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA), the trade association for commercial tree care companies. Sussex Tree Care is the only locally owned company in the state of Delaware with this accreditation.

TCIA Accreditation is the only pro-

gram of its kind in the tree care industry. It ensures that professional practices and standards are met by all employees who work on a home-owner's property. This Accreditation proves Sussex Tree Care upholds their ethics and integrity through quality service and confident results.

In hiring an accredited tree care company, a homeowner can rest assured that this organization has been checked for proper insurance, applicable licenses, reli-

able and ethical customer service practices, and meets strict operating standards. The key objective for Accreditation is to help companies provide the highest levels of professional service to homeowners.

To achieve this accreditation, tree care companies undergo an extensive review of professional practices including:

- Consumer satisfaction
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In business for over 30 years, Sussex Tree is known for carrying these practices throughout every element of the business. They have made it a must be the best in their service, their team and their equipment. The combination has created a superior brand in their field. To learn more about Sussex Tree, STI Landscaping and Sussex Crane, visit www.sussextreeinc.com.

DIY projects that can conserve energy around the house

Home renovation projects can pay numerous dividends. Renovations can have a positive effect on resale value, make homes more livable for residents and, in some ways, make homes more affordable.

Renovation projects that aim to conserve energy can save homeowners substantial amounts of money. Such projects don't often require considerable effort or even sizable financial investments, which can make homeowners skeptical as to just how much they can save after completing the project. But the scale of a project may have little to do with how much homeowners will save. For example, the U.S. De-

partment of Energy notes that a relatively effortless task like turning back a thermostat between 7° and 10° F for eight hours per day can save homeowners as much as \$83 per year. A more labor-intensive task like planting shade trees saves homeowners an average of between \$35 and \$119 per year.

When looking for ways to conserve energy around the house and save money, homeowners need not necessarily commit to expensive projects. The DOE notes that the following are some energy-saving projects and details what homeowners can expect to save after completing them.

While each individual project may not result in jaw-dropping savings, homeowners who follow many of these recommendations may end up saving more than \$1,000 per year.

Project: Install exterior low-e storm windows.

What is it? Low-e windows reflect infrared heat back into a home. Such windows are coated with an ultra-thin layer of metal that improves the window's insulation ability.

How much can I save? Homeowners who install low-e windows can save between 12 and 33 percent on their annual heating and cooling costs.

Project: Seal uncontrolled air leaks.

What is it? Air leaks let cool air in during winter and warm air in during summer. Caulking, sealing and weather stripping all cracks and large openings can cut back on air leaks that are costing you

money. The DOE recommends hiring a contractor to seal any leaks on heating and cooling ducts.

How much can I save? Homeowners who seal uncontrolled air leaks can save between 10 and 20 percent on their annual heating and cooling bills.

Project: Plant shade trees.

What is it? If you plant a deciduous tree between six and eight feet tall near your home, it will begin to shade your windows within a year of being planted. Depending on the species of the tree and the home, the shade tree will begin shading the roof within five to 10 years. The DOE notes that shading is the most cost-effective way to reduce air conditioning costs.

How much can I save? Properly planted shade trees can reduce air conditioning

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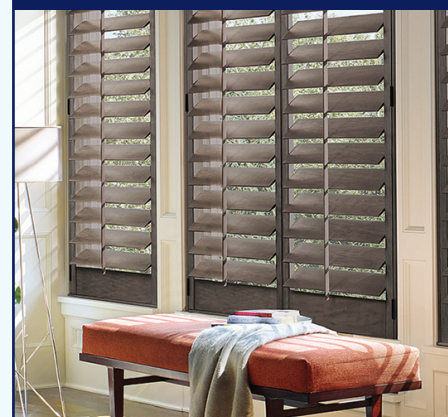
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DIY projects

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older hot water tanks can insulate their tanks with a water heater insulating blanket kit.

How much can I save? Insulating a water heater tank can save homeowners as much as 16 percent on their annual water heating bills.

Even the smallest DIY projects can produce big savings. More information about energy-saving home improvement projects can be found at www.energy.gov.

costs by anywhere from 15 to 50 percent.

Project: Insulate the water heater tank

What is it? New water tanks are likely already insulated. But homeowners with

How to create a budget friendly home landscape

Homeowners understandably envy the award-worthy photo spreads in lawn and garden magazines, wanting to emulate those same looks on their own properties. Scores of designers and landscape architects are involved in the process of creating those amazing lush lawns and perfectly placed plantings. Although not every homeowner has the budget to create lavish landscape designs, it's still possible for homeowners to create lawns they can be proud of.

- Establish your budget. The first step in any project is to determine how much money you can devote to the job. Once you have established the budget, all other factors can be built around it.

- Find an inspiration piece. Great landscapes are inspired by many things, whether it's a memorable piece of art or a landscape layout in a lawn and gardening

magazine. Use photos of other gardens or neighbors' yards as inspiration and build off of them. As long as the theme is cohesive, it will look pleasing to the eye.

- Consider the space and how you want to use it. Understanding the space will help you better allocate your budget. If your yard is more of a retreat, look for ways to create privacy and a vacation feel. If you have kids and entertaining friends is a main priority, focus on recreational aspects, such as a pool, playset and some durable plants. Understanding how to allocate your budget will help you to avoid spending money frivolously.

- Think about reclaimed or repurposed materials. Brand new items can quickly eat up a budget. However, repurposing salvaged or inexpensive items can stretch that

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Landscaping

Continued from page 4B

budget while adding some unique flair to a landscape. See if you can find an outdoor patio set that someone is giving away or selling for a lower price. All it takes is a coat of paint and some new cushions to make it look like new. Discarded bricks or stones can be worked into a patio space or used to create raised garden beds. Purchase inexpensive flower pots and then paint them to make them look like stone or another desired material.

- Buy native plants. Native plants, shrubs, trees, and flowers will fare better than non-native, exotic plants. That means you'll have to spend less time and money nurturing them into health, and less money having to replace plants that cannot withstand your climate.

- Consider perennial plants. Perennials

may cost more at the outset, but the savings will be realized in the years to come.

- Hire a professional. It may seem counterintuitive to spend money on a landscaping professional when you've established a strict budget, but that's one way to save money. Landscape artists or garden designers have the experience to guide you in the right direction and help you avoid potentially costly mistakes.

- Use gravel in spots where plants don't thrive. Gravel is an inexpensive landscaping material that can fill in voids where plants or ground cover simply do not flourish. Those working on limited budgets may be happy to learn gravel is typically less expensive than concrete or pavers.

- Ask friends or family for clippings. Don't be shy about admiring the plantings of those you know. Flatter their good taste and ask if you can have some clippings to propagate yourself. These clippings can turn into lush plants in no time — with no



additional spending required. With some frugal spending, planning

and budgeting, anyone can create a beautiful landscape.

Seven things to consider when buying a shed

Backyard sheds can be useful assets. Sheds can create storage space in the garage, basement or other areas of the house that have become gathering spots for gear typically used outdoors. Sheds are ideal for housing mowers, tools and even pool-care equipment. But they can be put to other uses as well, such as being key spots to engage in hobbies or even as a child's clubhouse.

Various factors should be considered before building or buying a shed. A storage shed can be a significant investment. Once placed, sheds may remain in their dedicated spots for years to come. That means careful thought should go into the planning process.

1. Check your local building codes first. Before you accumulate building materials or order a shed, be sure to know the ins

and outs of shed codes. The codes may impact the shed's placement, construction, the materials used, size, and numerous other factors. It's much easier to amend plans beforehand than to face the hassle and expense after learning you did things incorrectly.

2. Choose placement wisely. Spend several days assessing the yard and thinking about the uses for the shed. If you plan

to store pool floats and chemicals inside of the shed, it should be located close enough to the pool to be convenient. Look at the lay of the land. If there is a soggy patch of land that can turn swampy under the shed's foundation, that is a poor location choice. If you need access to electricity, placing it far away from the house could necessitate running expensive wiring.

3. Consider the design. Just because a

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EZ Clean Power Washing can make the outside of your house sparkle

By Carol Kinsley

It's time for spring cleaning, and if you'd like the outside of your house to sparkle like the inside, call Michael Schafers at EZ Clean Power Washing. This family-owned and operated company provides the best in house washing, concrete cleaning, deck cleaning, pressure washing and gutter cleaning services at affordable prices.

"We include a lot of things other companies don't, including the foundation, front steps, walkway and fascia — it's all included in house washing. We won't try to nickel and dime you with separate prices for these extras. It's all included in a package deal," Michael said.

They clean off roofs using a low pressure spray. If your roof has moss growing on it, EZ Clean can kill it 100 percent of the time, he added. He can also get rid of black streaks on the roof, gently scrub your solar panels or sanitize a play area.

EZ Clean is committed to the mission of providing premium level exterior cleaning services with complete satisfaction guaranteed.

"You take pride in your home; you need a cleaning professional who takes the same pride in his work," Michael said. "At EZ Clean, we not only make the process easy to hire us but we understand and

share your need for excellence. Regardless of the project, we will provide you with excellent results and your satisfaction is guaranteed!"

Michael started EZ Clean four years ago with the goal of building a business that takes care of the community and the people in it. He also wanted to be able to provide more efficiently for his family and give them a better life.

Michael is committed to the success of his family, business and the community. This sort of commitment is what drives EZ Clean to be the best at everything they do.

EZ Clean serves the area from Seaford to Salisbury and west to St. Michaels, Md. When he sets a date, that's when he will be there, "barring mechanical issues or an act of God," he said. "We allow time to get the job done, and we don't rush."

For images that show the difference EZ Clean can make on your home or commercial building, visit www.ezcleanmd.com.

A recent comment posted on the company's Facebook page includes this praise: "Professional. Always on time. Fair priced. Honest. Reliable. Hard working. There is nothing not to love about Ez Clean Powerwashing! Hands down the best in the area!"

Call (302) 381-8305 to talk to Michael and arrange your exterior spring cleaning.



Why homeowners should add more exterior light to their properties

Homeowners are increasingly realizing the benefits of improving the exteriors of their home, which can be just as valuable as improving the interior spaces. As individuals design picturesque garden beds and cultivate lavish lawns or revamp exteriors with architectural features, they probably want to spotlight these improvements. This is where exterior lighting can be put to great use.

Exterior illumination can cast a glow on various features, but there are many other reasons to increase lighting around the exterior of a home.

- **Safety:** Trips and falls can occur at night when trying to traverse walkways and landscapes in the dark, as it can be difficult to see rocks, stairs and uneven pavement. Outdoor lighting can illuminate pathways, entryways and other areas for safer access for homeowners and their guests.

- **Extend outdoor entertaining:** Ample

lighting can increase the amount of time one can use outdoor spaces and make them the perfect gathering spot. As autumn arrives, days become shorter. However, patios, porches and more can get extended use with lighting.

- **Safeguard security:** A well-lit home may be less likely to be targeted by burglars than one swathed in darkness and shadows. Lights can remain on all evening or be motion-triggered. Setting lights on timers also ensures that the home is illuminated whether residents are home or not.

- **Create drama:** Landscape lighting designers can establish focal points around the landscape and highlight the best features of a property. Uplighting in trees, silhouetting techniques to showcase plants and spotlights to show off architectural features are all options for homeowners to consider.

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shed is for storage doesn't mean aesthetics should be overlooked. Choose a shed style that complements your home. You may also want to match certain architectural features, like arched doorways or dormers. Design also may relate to practicality. For instance, storing a riding mower inside may necessitate dual doors that open widely.

4. Invest in quality materials. Spending a little more and using quality materials can ensure it lasts long enough to be cost-effective. The right materials will be resistant to splitting, cracking, decay, and insect damage.

5. Prepare the site well. A proper foundation for the shed is almost as important

as the shed itself. You cannot just drop the shed on the lawn and leave it, as the shed can sink or structural issues may arise if it is placed on a weak base.

6. Blend into the environment. Surround the shed with shrubs or plants so that it blends into the yard and complements the space.

7. Deck out the interior. Use every storage tool at your disposal to maximize floor, wall and even rafter space for storage. Plan where items will be kept and customize the storage options around those locations.

Sheds can be an asset and improve storage capability in the backyard.



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Improve soil quality for a better lawn

A lush, green lawn can vastly improve a home's curb appeal. Thick, healthy grass indicates that homeowners care enough about their properties to invest the time, effort and money to make them beautiful.

According to the landscaping tool company Troy-Bilt, soil fertility is the foundation of healthy lawns. In fact, the quality of the soil is essential whether one is growing acres of grass, potted plants or vegetable garden beds. No matter which type of soil a homeowner is working with, there are various ways to make it better.

Remove thatch

Thatch is a tightly knotted layer of leaves, grass roots, stems, and other debris that accumulates between the grass blades and the soil. Too much thatch can hinder the movement of water, air and nutrients into the soil. According to organic fertilizer company Organo-Lawn, thatch often occurs if the production of dead organic material in the lawn exceeds the ability of the microorganisms in the soil to break down that organic matter. A half-inch of thatch is normal. If thatch gets too thick, it will need to be removed. The home improvement resource DIY Network says dethatching can take place in the summer, fall and winter using a thatching rake.

Aerate

A lawn aerator will create holes in the soil. This can improve drainage and encourage worms and helpful microorganisms that require oxygen to thrive in the soil. The best time to aerate a lawn is during the growing season when the grass can heal and fill in any holes, such as spring and fall.



Aeration can help develop deeper grass roots for a healthier lawn.

Test and amend soil

A great lawn has loamy soil, which has a key ratio of clay, silt and sand. Silt is a granular material of a size between sand and clay that originates from quartz and feldspar. It is the most fertile of the three types of soil components. Sand does not retain water, but it helps to create spaces in the soil that permit air to circulate. Clay particles are small and bind together tightly, but clay is naturally nutrient-rich. Loamy soil should have equal parts sand and silt and half as much clay.

If the lawn is not yet established, loamy soil can be created and then the grass seeds planted. For established soil, after removing thatch and aerating, top-dressing the lawn can help. This involves adding a thin layer of soil over the lawn. It can improve the soil without killing the existing turf. Ideally, it should be done in early fall or spring, as this gives the grass time to grow through three to four more mowings before severe heat or cold sets in.

Healthy soil is vital to a lush lawn. It takes a little work, but improving soil can create vibrant, healthy, green grass.



Mulching mistakes to avoid

Landscape features vary significantly from house to house. Some homeowners may prefer water features on their properties, while others focus on flowers that would be the envy of a botanical garden. Regardless of those preferences, lawn and garden enthusiasts who want to make their properties as idyllic as possible may eventually look to mulch to help them accomplish that goal.

Mulch helps soil retain moisture, which promotes strong, healthy flowers, plants, trees, and shrubs. And because soil beneath mulch retains more moisture than soil that's not protected by mulch, homeowners won't have to spend as much time watering mulched landscapes. That saves time and conserves water, which can be a big benefit in areas prone to drought and/or especially hot summers. Mulch also helps to suppress weed growth, which can ensure all that hard work needed to create an eye-catching garden won't be compromised by the presence of unsightly, thirsty weeds.

Mulching seems like a simple task, and it can be. But that does not mean homeowners cannot make mistakes when mulching. The following are some common mulching mistakes to avoid as lawn and garden season hits full swing.

- Not enough mulch: Mulch is ineffective

when spread too thin. The Virginia Cooperative Extension at Virginia Tech and Virginia State University recommends applying mulch no less than two inches in depth. Anything less than that will prove ineffective at preventing weed growth and helping the soil retain moisture, and that means you will need to water more often.

- Poorly located mulch: Mulch should not be placed too close to plant stems or tree trunks. When it is, tissue is so wet that it makes for a perfect environment for disease and insect infestation.

- Failing to mulch to the drip line: The drip line of a tree refers to the outermost circumference of the tree's canopy from which water drips onto the ground. The VCE recommends mulching to the drip line of a plant or tree, which ensures the plant or tree will get the most out of the mulch. Mulching to the drip line also minimizes competition from the grass, leading to stronger plants and trees.

- Failing to weed before mulching: Weeds should be removed prior to mulching. If they're not, the mulch can provide the same growing environment for weeds that you're trying to create for your plants and trees.

Mulching benefits a landscape in myriad ways, especially when homeowners avoid some common mulching mistakes.

Lighting

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- Add value: Exterior lighting can add roughly 30 percent to the value of a home and 50 percent of all home buyers say that

outdoor lighting is important when buying a home. If current residents are thinking about selling, now may be the time to invest in exterior lighting.

Improving a home's exterior may be as simple as adding more lighting to improve functionality and beauty.

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