

# HOME & GARDEN

**THIS SPRING THINK ABOUT YOUR BUILT STRUCTURES AND WATER IN LANDSCAPES**



CONTRACTOR SETH VACZY took advantage of the warm spring weather last week to move his home improvement work outside of the Middlebury home where he is doing some renovations. Cutting outside makes for a cleaner worksite inside and gives the carpenter extra elbow room.

Independent photos/Steve James

**A SPECIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ADDISON INDEPENDENT • THURSDAY, MAY 8, 2025**

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# Carefully plan your garden

By **BENJAMIN BLOCK**  
UVM Extension  
Master Gardener Intern

Early spring is an exciting and busy time for Vermont gardeners. Many prefer the thrill of choosing from a vast variety of seeds rather than settling for the offerings available at local nurseries.

San Marzano tomatoes, Strawberry Blonde calendula, Dragon carrots — check, check and check! However, as your gardening experience (read: obsession) grows, so will the list of seeds you may buy. My grow list includes 27 varieties this year!

For any variety, there are vital details to track. First and foremost, should the seeds be started indoors or directly sown? If indoors, how many weeks before the average last frost date? Do the seeds need darkness or light to germinate?

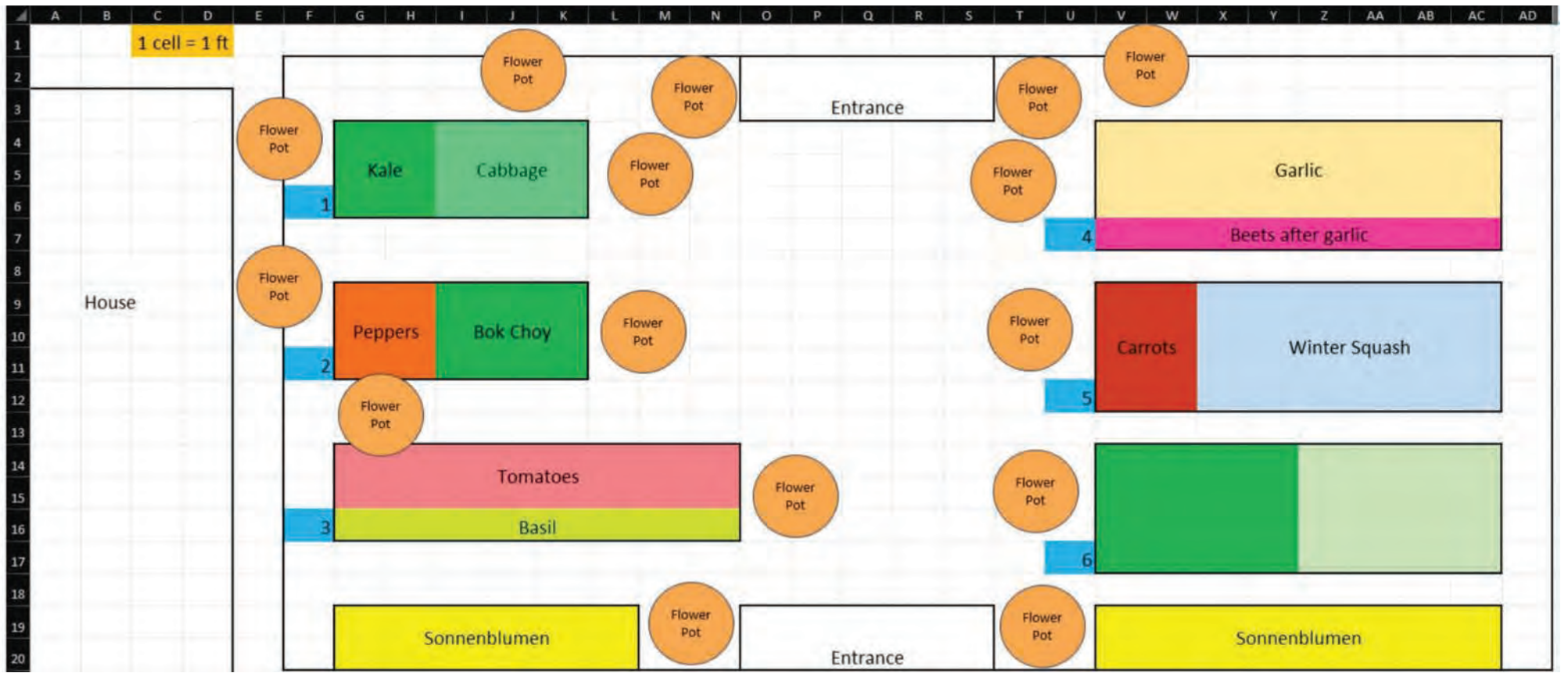
You'll also want to account for the space each plant needs in a garden bed and the days until maturity for successional planting. That's a lot to keep track of, especially as you get into dozens of varieties.

Here is a simple yet effective way to manage all this information. It may not be quick and completely effortless process, but the effort you put in now will be reaped throughout the growing season and in future years.

I track my garden using two main tools: 1) a spreadsheet with all my plant varieties and key information and 2) a grid-layout map representing all my garden beds and pots.

Starting with the plant variety list, I include important details like the indoor sowing date and the spring planting date. I color-code the spreadsheet and use functions to automatically calculate the indoor sowing dates based on the average last frost date in my area, subtracting the maximum number of weeks each variety should be started beforehand.

With this setup, I can simply check this ready-made list of what to plant each week. The spreadsheet can be further customized by adding columns for any additional details you find helpful, such as plant spacing requirements.



USING A GRID-LAYOUT, color-coded map showing all garden beds and pots is an efficient tool for planning a garden.

Images by Benjamin Block

Now onto the garden map. My garden layout consists of eight rectangular beds and several flowerpots. Each cell represents one square foot.

Within each bed, I specify what will be planted there. I color code the cells to correspond with the varieties listed in my plant variety list. If I am not sure what I will plant, I leave it blank, meaning I still need to decide what to plant there later.

While you don't have to be this detailed, I find that planning down to the square foot helps. This map ensures I know exactly where each seedling will be transplanted.

There are many ways you can create these resources for your own garden. The simplest method is using graph paper and a pencil.

For those interested in technology-based resources, there are downloadable gardening apps (though many require a paid subscription). Personally, I prefer computer-based spreadsheets.

They allow for easy edits and adjustments, and you can quickly replicate your work for future seasons. If, like me, you have favorite varieties you plant every year, your plan may change minimally, but all

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
4	Name (Variety)	Date of Spring Planting	Direct Sow (Y/N)	Indoor Sow Range	Indoor sow week max	Indoor Sow Date	Area Needed
5	Amaranth (Opopeo)	5/12/2025	No	8-12 weeks before	10	3/3/2025	18 inches apart
6	Basil (Gustoso)	5/12/2025	Yes	NA			4-8 inches apart
7	Bean (Jacob's Cattle)	5/12/2025	Yes	NA			18 inches apart
8	Beet (formanova)	5/12/2025	Yes	NA			3 inches apart
9	Cabbage (Caraflex)	4/15/2025	No Spring; Yes Summer	6-8 weeks before	8	2/18/2025	18 inches apart
10	Calendula (Strawberry Blonde)	5/12/2025	No	4-6 weeks before	6	3/31/2025	
11	Carrots (Dragon)	4/28/2025	Yes	NA			3 inches apart
12	Celosia (Flamingo Feather)	5/12/2025	Yes	3 to 4 weeks before	4	4/14/2025	
13	Chamomile	5/12/2025	No	Direct sow or 4/5 weeks before	5	4/7/2025	
14	Choy (Shanghai Green)	4/15/2025	No Spring; Yes Summer	4-6 weeks before	6	3/4/2025	6-9 inches apart
15	Garlic	Already Planted	Yes	NA			6 inches apart
16	Kale (Black Magic)	4/15/2025	No Spring; Yes Summer	4-6 weeks before	6	3/4/2025	8-12 inches apart
17	Lavendar	5/12/2025	No	10 weeks before	10	3/3/2025	12 inches apart
18	Marigold (Queen Sophie)	5/12/2025	No	3 weeks before	3	4/21/2025	18 inches apart
19	Noctiana (Jasmine scented)	5/12/2025	No	Direct sow or 6/8 weeks before	8	3/17/2025	
20	Pepper (Espelette)	5/12/2025	No	10 weeks before	10	3/3/2025	18 inches apart

the information will be right at your fingertips for next year.

Good luck with your 2025 gardening season!

A CUSTOMIZED SPREADSHEET listing plant varieties and key information, such as dates for indoor sowing and spring planting, is an effective way to organize information for planting a garden.

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# Lazy gardener finds a new way to do it

## No-dig method banishes frustration

By JESSIE RAYMOND

Over the winter, I heard about an intriguing vegetable-growing technique called “lazy gardening.”

As far as I knew, that was the kind of gardening I’d been doing for two decades. And based on my results, it was not a method I’d recommend.

But the lazy gardening I do — heavy on half measures, flagging enthusiasm and growing neglect — isn’t the same. This trendy version, also known as “no-dig gardening,” relies on proactive steps to create beds that require less maintenance and produce higher yields.

Is “lazy gardening” just a PR term to trick people like me into thinking it’s not a lot of work?

I’m about to find out.

I grow vegetables every year, but not well. Sometimes I water faithfully; other times I make the veggies fight for survival. Sometimes I spend many hours keeping the garden tidy; other times I throw a hoe into the bed and hope its mere presence will intimidate the weeds.

The other day at the garden center (a place they’ll apparently let anyone go), a nice man asked me for some gardening advice. He had no way of knowing this was like asking a yellow Lab for advice on how to reformat a hard drive. Rather than be unmasked as an impostor, I said nothing and backed myself under a pile of bark mulch, where I covered until he wandered off.

Maybe this lazy gardening thing is my chance to finally succeed.

Here’s how it works: The first year, instead of tilling in your weeds in the spring and then

spending the summer pulling them as they fight their way back to the surface — stronger than ever and out for revenge — you smother them with sheets of cardboard. You ignore their faint screams as you lay several inches of well-composted soil on top.

Weeks later, when the cardboard has disintegrated, most of the weeds will have died (in a satisfyingly slow and agonizing manner). Your plants, luxuriating in the rich, loose soil on top, will, for once, have time to establish themselves without being choked out.

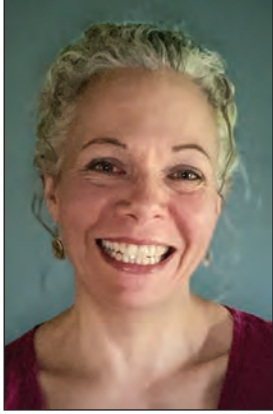
Each subsequent year, instead of turning over the soil, you add a light layer of compost on top of the beds. There’s science behind it, stuff about moisture retention and preserving the layers of organisms and fungi in the soil and so on. Whatever. I’ve spent years bending spades in Addison County clay; lazy gardening had me at “no dig.”

I began by hoarding cardboard boxes and then took an unprecedented step: I paid for dirt. Yup. Last weekend

I had a few yards of compost and soil dumped at the edge of the garden. I don’t want to say it was the most exciting thing that’s happened to me in 2024, but I did hug the delivery driver.

So far, as expected, I’m finding that lazy gardening isn’t all that lazy. I’ve spent hours laying cardboard on the ground and shoveling fancy new soil and compost on top. But I can already see a benefit: Unlike the native soil on our property, this stuff is movable.

When seed-planting instructions say, “Cover seeds with a fine layer



“Sometimes I spend many hours keeping the garden tidy; other times I throw a hoe into the bed and hope its mere presence will intimidate the weeds.”

— Jessie Raymond



## Learning the building trades

OTTER VALLEY UNION High School reaffirmed its commitment to career readiness in March with the successful hosting of its second annual OV Career Day. Organized by technology education teacher Devon Karpak, the event provided students with invaluable opportunities to connect with local employers and trade programs, emphasizing career pathways beyond the traditional college track. This year’s OV Career Day featured an enhanced structure designed to maximize student engagement and exploration. Here, students listen to and ask questions of a representative from Naylor & Breen Builders, who shared his expertise and discussed opportunities with students.

of soil,” I can do that now. In the past, I would just lob brick-sized clumps of clay onto the bed and hope for the best.

As with most ideas that grab me, however, I’ve allowed myself to be sucked in by well-produced YouTube videos on the subject. I’m currently fascinated with a British man named Charles Dowding — the Bob Ross of no-dig gardening. His gentle voice radiates peace, nothing like the emotions I’ve always associated with gardening — mostly frustration and disappointment.

His gardens are neat and beautiful and free of weeds, and when I watch his videos, I imagine I too could have 1.3 acres of orderly no-dig goodness where the vegetables practically grow

themselves.

Of course, I ignore that Dowding has deep knowledge, a complex composting system and a full-time staff who work tirelessly off-camera. If I had those three things — plus a decent attention span — I could have bountiful gardens, too.

I don’t know whether my interest in the garden will, for once, last as long as the growing season. But at the moment, this new version of lazy gardening has me hooked.

Now I’m looking into whether there’s some version of “lazy cleaning” that might work for me too.

*Editor’s note: This story was originally published May 2024. Read more online at [www.jessieraymond.com](http://www.jessieraymond.com).*

## Davis joins construction firm

MONKTON — Neagley & Chase Construction, a commercial construction firm based in South Burlington, recently hired Kyle Davis as a Project Engineer. Davis is a Monkton resident.

He has more than a dozen years of construction and project engineering experience, having worked in various roles at Vermont construction companies since graduating in 2013 from the University of Vermont.

“Adding somebody with Kyle’s experience to our firm strengthens our already solid team,” said Rob Higgins, vice president of Neagley & Chase. “He brings a deep understanding of energy efficiency



KYLE DAVIS

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# Year-Round Hazardous Waste Collection

The HazWaste Center at the District Transfer Station in Middlebury is open to residents from any of the District’s member towns.

Most items are accepted from residents free of charge.

Businesses must pay for disposal and must call 388-2333 for an appointment.

Common items include:

- |                       |                        |                          |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Acetone               | Drainer opener/cleaner | Mercury thermometers     | Primers or shellacs    |
| Acids                 | Driveway sealer        | Mercury thermostats      | Rechargeable batteries |
| Adhesives             | Dry cleaning solvents  | Mineral spirits          | Roach traps/poison     |
| Algaecides            | Flea & tick killer     | Mothballs                | Rug/upholstery cleaner |
| Aerosols              | Fluorescent bulbs*     | Motor oil                | Solvent-based          |
| Antifreeze            | Fly killer             | Mouse/rat poison         | Glues                  |
| Ant killer            | Formaldehyde           | Nail polish              | Stains                 |
| Ammonia               | Fuel additives         | Nail polish remover      | Stump remover          |
| Auto body filler      | Fungicides             | Naphtha                  | Tars or resins         |
| Automotive fluids     | Furniture polish       | Oil-based paint          | Transmission fluid     |
| Chlorine bleach       | Gasoline               | Oily waste               | Tub & tile cleaner     |
| Brake fluid           | Hair dyes              | Oven cleaner             | Varnish                |
| Bug spray             | Kerosene               | Paint thinner/turpentine | Weed killer/fertilizer |
| Button cell batteries | Latex paint            | Parts cleaner            | Wood preservative      |
| Contact cement        | Lead paint chips       | Pesticides/herbicides    |                        |
| Deck sealer           | Lead-acid batteries    | Photographic chemicals   |                        |
| Diesel fuel           | Lime/rust remover      | Pool chemicals           |                        |



Household hazardous waste includes any unused product that is poisonous, reactive, corrosive, or flammable.

You can easily identify hazardous products by reading packaging labels. Look for key words such as **Warning! Danger! Poison! Caution!**

Improper disposal of these products poses a risk to human health and the environment.

\*All compact fluorescents (CFLs) are accepted at no cost; other types of general purpose fluorescent bulbs are free to recycle in quantities of 10 or fewer per day. A per-bulb nominal fee applies for more than 10.

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## Now is the time for fantastic ferns

### Fractals show off in fiddleheads

By MICHAEL J. CADUTO

Fractals are sometimes referred to as a “visual representation of math.” They can be observed in the spatial arrangements found in many familiar forms, patterns and shapes in nature: from the branching of trees, ferns, river systems and lightning, to the patterns found in leaves, seedheads, crystals, seashells, snowflakes, clouds, hurricanes and geologic terrain.

### The Outside Story

The intricate branching patterns of blood vessels and respiratory structures are some intimate expressions of fractals in animals.

As a fractal grows, the pattern replicates itself on a larger scale. The mathematical foundation

for our understanding of fractal geometry was laid by the German mathematician Felix Hausdorff during his groundbreaking work modeling the mathematics behind geometrical shapes and patterns. In 1918, Hausdorff introduced the Hausdorff (fractional) dimension, a model that shows how to calculate the dimensions of spatial patterns that replicate, or repeat, at different scales.

The word “fractal” was first used in 1975 by Benoît Mandelbrot, a French-American mathematician, who described intricate shapes and patterns that repeat even when an object is viewed at different levels of scale. Mandelbrot defined a fractal as “a rough or fragmented geometric shape that can be subdivided in parts, each of which is (at least approximately) a reduced-size

copy of the whole.” No matter whether you are looking at a fractal zoomed in or from a distance, each view resembles the same pattern.

Ferns are among the best and most accessible examples of fractals. The leaves of each fern, which are called fronds, form the self-same pattern when viewed at any distance or scale. In fact, one of the most well-known formulas in fractal geometry is the Barnsley fern. In his 1988 book, “Fractals Everywhere,” Michael Barnsley, a British mathematician, describes how he created this fractal to simulate the frond of black spleenwort (*Asplenium adiantum-nigrum*), a common European fern.

The fiddlehead pattern of a sprouting fern is a perfect example of a fractal. The familiar fiddlehead is a classic shape which – along with the similarly spiral-shaped nautilus – has inspired countless works of art and sculpture, from the

(See *Outside Story*, Page 6C)

## Turn attics into livable spaces

Houses typically feature various areas that are traditionally designed for storage, such as garages, basements and attics. However, with some renovation, these spaces can be transformed into livable areas.

Homeowners who would like to convert attics into livable spaces need to take certain things into consideration before starting an improvement project. While the attic may seem like it has plenty of room and is structurally sound enough to walk in, that’s not necessarily so. To be converted into usable living space, an attic must be brought up to the standards of modern building codes, according to the design experts at Board & Vellum. Retrofitting beams and insulation can eat up available space in an attic. Thus, it is best to consult an expert to see if an attic can be converted.

Furthermore, an attic that was

not initially designed as a room when the house was built can add extra “load” upstairs if it is converted. That could present certain structural problems. That means a structural engineer also must be consulted to see if adding beams, flooring and drywall will necessitate other changes elsewhere in the home to accommodate the extra load.

In order to have a functional attic room, building codes will dictate that it needs to be accessible by a full-size staircase. Also, it will need to have another exit in case of an emergency so that will likely be an accessible window. Homeowners’ budgets and renovation plans will need to factor into these considerations. Homeowners also are advised to check local permits to determine what else may be required to go forward. It is best to follow the rules. Lack of a permit for work can affect the ability to sell a

home down the line.

Individuals also should plan for heating and cooling upgrades as the home will need to have ductwork installed in the attic, or at the least, a stand-alone heating and cooling unit. As heat rises, it can get quite warm in an attic, so ventilation and comfort should be considered. The attic will need to be wired for electricity for lighting and other needs. Air sealing and additional insulation can the attic space more comfortable as well. Consult with a qualified electrician and an HVAC technician and have an energy audit done to discuss needs.

Attic renovations can give homeowners more space in their homes, which can be used as offices, bedrooms or cozy corners. This is no small undertaking and all of the right steps need to be followed to ensure a legal, safe and successful renovation.

— Metro Creative

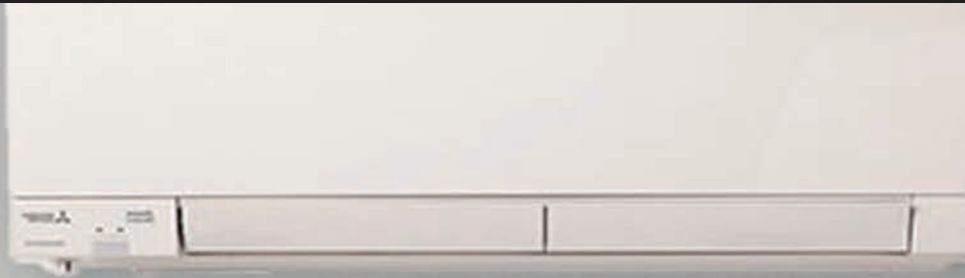


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Independent photo/Steve James

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Outside Story

*(Continued from Page 5C)*

carved spirals at the tops of violins and other stringed instruments, to the ingenious spiral staircases in the designs of the iconic Spanish architect Antonio Gaudi, and even to the spiral path at the start of the yellow brick road in “The Wizard of Oz.”

The spiral-shaped fiddlehead of a sprouting fern is formed by the petiole, or leaf stalk, as it unfurls into a frond. As the leaf stalk grows, each pinna, or leaflet, at first appears as its own minute fiddlehead. The next time you look at a lacy fern frond, try focusing in gradually closer and you will see how the overall pattern created by the entire frond is repeated in each of the gradually smaller elements that branch off of it.

Of course, not all ferns are intricate laceworks. Walking fern (*Asplenium rhizophyllum*), which is rare in most of the Northeast, has undivided fronds. Other fern fronds, including those of sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*), are simple divisions off of the main stem. Fronds of the ethereal maidenhair spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes*) has individual pinnae branching off of each striking black stem. The fronds on some ferns, such as long beech fern (*Phegopteris connectilis*) are divided two times, while the most delicate ferns, including evergreen wood fern (*Dryopteris intermedia*), are divided three times.

Two of my favorite examples of how nature weaves the threads of geometry into beautiful green tapestries, are the lacy arching fronds of northern maidenhair fern (*Adiantum pedatum*), which grows in moist, shady woodlands, and the tall, lush bushy masses of royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*) that commonly grows in and along wetlands. Both are found throughout New England.

The variety of shapes among ferns reveals that there are many examples of fractals found in the natural world. These are visually striking expressions of the hidden geometry that lends order to the fascinating forms that we see. As the ferns begin unfurling this season, take a moment to contemplate their patterns and reflect on fractals.

Michael J. Caduto is a writer, ecologist and storyteller who lives in Reading, Vt. He is author of “Through a Naturalist’s Eyes: Exploring the Nature of New England.” Illustration by Adelaide Murphy Tyrol. The Outside Story is assigned and edited by Northern Woodlands magazine and sponsored by the Wellborn Ecology Fund of New Hampshire Charitable Foundation: nhcf.org.



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# RIVER WATCH

## Green stormwater projects have some costs, many benefits

By MARIN HOWELL

ADDISON COUNTY — How often do you think about what happens to the water that runs off our roofs, roads and sidewalks during a rainstorm?

That water can have a big impact on the surrounding environment, potentially picking up pesticides, bacteria and other pollutants as it flows through storm drains and ditches into nearby waterways. Such polluted runoff is one of the largest threats to clean water in the United States, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

With that in mind, some property owners are turning to green stormwater infrastructure, or GSI, as a way to reduce stormwater runoff and its water quality impacts.

Green stormwater infrastructure is used to filter and manage stormwater runoff in a way that resembles the natural environment, such as with plants and soil. Examples of the infrastructure include rain gardens, green roofs, bioswales and riparian buffers.

This differs from “gray” or traditional stormwater infrastructure — like gutters, pipes and drains — that collect stormwater as it runs off impervious surfaces and ultimately directs it into a nearby body of water.

“For the most part, (green stormwater infrastructure) is not for you. It’s for your neighbors,” Tim Parsons, landscape horticulturist at Middlebury College, said. “Your own yard is just a small piece of a larger ecosystem that we all collectively

maintain. So, if you are slowing down stormwater on your property, you may or may not see direct benefits from that, but your friends and neighbors in low ground, or say on a flood plain, they will see that cost that you’ve helped them upslope.”

*“If your end goal is to have your yard look like a golf course, you will mow. If your goal is to help treat stormwater and increase biodiversity, your lawn will not be as effective as a bioswale is, but that comes at a cost of more physical maintenance.”*

— Tim Parsons

At Middlebury College, a lot of the stormwater on campus gets collected by storm drains and directed to a large retention pond near the running track, which then travels through a swale (a broad, shallow channel that helps convey and filter stormwater) that eventually hooks up to the Otter Creek. Parsons noted that the college has a lot of impervious surfaces, including around 16 miles of sidewalks, about 21 acres of parking lots and many roofs.

“We don’t want to see all of this (stormwater runoff) go down to the Otter Creek if we can treat it first,” Parsons said.

The college treats stormwater through various types of GSI, such as a couple of green roofs on campus and a system of collection areas, wet meadows and swales near Davis Family Library.

Another example of GSI sits on the southside of a building called the Axinn Center at Starr Library, which hosts stormwater retention and filtering features. Parsons said the building’s courtyard has been graded and planned to account for the structure’s roof space. So, the land is sloped and graded to collect rainwater that flows off the roof into a swale.

“This (area) was then planted with trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants to use that stormwater as



TIM PARSONS, LANDSCAPE horticulturist at Middlebury College, stands in front of a green stormwater infrastructure at the Axinn Center at Starr Library. The living infrastructure is used to filter and manage stormwater runoff in a way that resembles the natural environment, such as with rain gardens and green roofs.

Independent photo/Marin Howell

it sits and accumulates,” Parsons explained.

A bioswale in the courtyard collects rainwater that runs off another part of the building’s roof, as well as any overflow from the other swale. A raised storm drain in the area collects water if it gets too full of water.

“I have only seen it do that (in) about two or three really bad storms,” Parsons said.

### PROJECTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

The Axinn Center site offers an example of the type of a GSI project that homeowners can take on — but at a smaller scale.

“This, I think for most homes, is still big, but it’s a good idea of what you could do with, say, one tree, three of that shrub, one of this shrub, some tall perennial sunflowers, this and that,” Parsons

said. What other options exist for landowners interested in green stormwater infrastructure? Parsons

said he likes the idea of mowing less, though he’d advocate for adopting a “no mow midsummer” approach rather than the typical No Mow May.

“To not mow in May sets you up for a lot more lawn mowing in June, and I don’t actually think you save a lot of time,” he explained. “Whereas if you did mow in May and the first two, three weeks of June and then stop, you probably wouldn’t have to mow again until fall because that’s just the life cycle of grass.

“Think about all of the farms that we are surrounded by. They get most of their hay in first cut, which is in May or the first week or

two of June,” Parsons continued. “Then the grass slows down in the heat of the summer, doesn’t need as much maintenance ... to have a no mow midsummer, I think that would make a lot more sense, and it would promote good root growth, good soil structure, all the things that you want from plants that you don’t get as well in an average maintained lawn.”

Establishing low-mow or no-mow zones can also help promote wildlife habitat and decrease runoff.

Parsons said property owners could also think about ways to repurpose parts of their lawn they’re not using. That’s something he considers when it comes to the lawns on campus.

“I’m trying to get our lawns down to ones that are used because lawns are still used, they are still good, but perhaps you don’t need all of them,” he said. “There are sections of lawn here that see a lot of use — frisbee games, or they’ll hold classes out on the lawns. There are also lawns that haven’t seen a student foot in 20 years.”

That approach could be scaled down for homeowners, he said.

“You, I’m sure, have lawns that you want to hang out on. You might have lawns that your kids want to play on, but what is actually used and then what could be repurposed (See Stormwater, Page 8C)

## Why change my beautiful lawn?

Rethink it to create a beautiful, storm-resistant yard

By MATT WITTEN  
Addison County River Watch Collaborative

Gently sloping and smooth green landscape can be gorgeous. And flat, well-mown lawns are great for romping on, kicking a ball, picnicking on. And a neat lawn bespeaks an organized life.

Why mess with that? Well, there are many reasons to shake up our long-held visions of spacious and tidy lawns, but the reason we’ll focus on today is simple: rain resiliency.

Before we get there, though, let’s consider the short history of our crush on lawns, and maybe this will put in perspective the urge to mow down lots of grass.

### Some Lawn History

The word “lawn” derives from the 12th-century Old French *lande*, which meant heath, moor, barren land or clearing. In the 14th century England the word became *launde*, and then, by the 1540s, *laune* meant glade, open space in a forest or between woods. So, from the beginning,

a lawn was not necessarily meant to be a vast and uniform swath of green, but rather a grassy space among other vegetation.

The word “lawn” being used to mean a manicured area was first recorded in 1733 in Europe. When lawns were featured in landscapes at the time, they were a status symbol of wealth. Only the wealthy owned land, and only the uber-wealthy owned land that was maintained for aesthetics rather than profit.

When the United States cast off British rule in 1776, many American landowners had a sort of inferiority complex. At the time, visitors from Europe described the American homestead as unsophisticated, frequently mentioning “yard birds,” a term used derisively to describe the chickens commonly kept in the modest dirt yards of post-independence American homes. This portrayal did not sit well with the American elite, who wanted to showcase the young nation’s success and

sophistication.

Meanwhile, American diplomats and affluent individuals who had traveled to Europe returned with lawn envy. They were impressed with the grand, manicured gardens and lawns of European aristocracy. Motivated by the desire to reflect the prosperity of America, they imported this symbol of European refinement. Lawns began to appear on the landscapes of America’s grand homes, including the White House.

As the United States began to grow, parts of the nation became increasingly urban with cramped housing for the new immigrants that came in large numbers to work and establish new lives. The European notion of getting away to the countryside couldn’t really be practiced because we didn’t yet have countryside; we had a wild, rugged frontier, not a relaxing place to have a picnic.

Around the mid 1800s, “The Father of American Landscape (See Changes, Page 9C)

## Soak It Up assessments

As part of their Soak It Up program, Addison County River Watch staff are available to visit your property — if you so choose — to assess your site’s current conditions with the goal of providing suggestions to improve stormwater management around your home or business. River Watch will examine the characteristics of your site such as soils, slope, impervious surfaces and how stormwater circulates.

Subsequent recommendations might include a mini-meadow, rain garden, rain barrel, stormwater planter, permeable driveway, driveway trench, dry well, gutter re-direct, or other “green stormwater infrastructure.”

Following the visit, River Watch will send you a report back with suggestions with the hope that you will choose a stormwater management practice to install on

your property.

River Watch will assist residents to install new practices to manage stormwater on their properties.

There is some initial funding for planning, design and implementation of low-cost measures and the hope is that there will be additional funding and incentives for installations that are more equipment-intensive and costly.



RAIN GARDENS CAN be made particularly attractive to pollinators, like this one, and include native plants such as joe pye weed and bee balm.

Photo by Julie Parker-Dickerson

## Rain gardens: Practical & Pretty

By KENZIE HINES and MATT WITTEN  
Addison County River Watch Collaborative

You may have heard talk about rain gardens. Intuitively we can guess what they are: an area that has plants like a garden and collects rain. But what exactly are they and how do they work?

Rain gardens are a low-tech way to slow and absorb stormwater runoff from roofs, patios, driveways, sidewalks, and other hard — also called “impervious” — surfaces. Commonly the creation of a rain garden involves choosing a low-lying spot to dig an oblong depression ranging in size from just a handful of feet in

diameter to about 12 by 20 feet, depending on the site. The dugout area is partly re-filled with a layer of sand and/or gravel for water filtration/absorption, and then a layer of compost or rich soil. At that point it can be planted with a variety of native species of plants.

The function of the rain garden is to collect rainwater that otherwise would be increasing in speed as it goes downhill. The rain garden also allows stormwater to absorb more slowly into the landscape and simultaneously provides beauty and habitat. In addition, some studies have shown that rain gardens filter some contaminants out of the water that enters them.

Landscapers (and sometimes

volunteers!) usually plant in these gardens species that thrive in wet or semi-wet conditions such as sedges, willows, dogwoods and other flowering plants with varying blooming times throughout the spring, summer and fall. The root systems of the plants in rain gardens can filter pollutants out of stormwater runoff, and slow down and capture stormwater before it flows into an overwhelmed culvert or water body. Managing stormwater with methods to slow, filter and infiltrate rainwater is a great way to give streams and rivers a break during the rainy season.

Typically rain gardens are (See Rain gardens, Page 10C)



## Stormwater

(Continued from Page 7C)  
to something else, say, trees and shrubs,” Parsons asked.

Peter Norris often comes across green stormwater infrastructure projects in his work with Norris Landscaping and Nursery. He said common projects include rain gardens, swales, and planting the more native materials on slopes prone to erosion.

Jill Sarazen is the Green Infrastructure Collaborative Coordinator for the University of Vermont. She offered a couple success stories of GSI installations in the Burlington area.

“In one case the landowner had water in their basement and a dirt parking area eroding, so we installed gutters, permeable pavers in the driveway, two rain barrels and it worked,” she said.

Sarazen also pointed to a three-unit, older home on a steep slope that had issues in its basement.

“We were able to redirect water upslope, capture it and direct it to the side where we put in a permeable walkway, created a swale and dry well with plantings in it to infiltrate the water,” she said.

### COSTS AND BENEFITS

Sarazen noted that finding landowners willing to stick through the whole GSI process can be a challenge.

“Usually the most motivated people have erosion or flooded basements on their property,” she said, adding that, “GSI systems

can make a difference, but they can’t stop a flood.”

What other costs or challenges might come up in GSI projects?

“Part of it may require a little bit of excavation and some planting, but some of it is just a matter of management, keeping the vegetation or not mowing the lawn near erosion prone areas,” Norris said.

Parsons also noted there’s maintenance that comes with GSI projects.

“It’s not sitting on a lawn mower, it’s coming down to pull weeds,” he explained. “This is still a managed landscape. It’s just a different type of management, but it is still work.”

He said that at the Axinn Center site the amount of maintenance required has decreased over time.

“This is certainly not as much work as it was in the first two, three years to get established,” he

said. “We probably come through here once or twice a year to pull weeds ... The first couple of years to get a new planting established is quite a bit of work.”

In weighing the costs of different projects, Parsons noted it depends on what a landowner’s end goal is.

“If your end goal is to have your yard look like a golf course, you will mow,” he said. “If your goal is to help treat stormwater and increase biodiversity, your lawn will not be as effective as a bioswale is, but that comes at a cost of more physical maintenance.”

As for the benefits, GSI can provide aesthetic elements in communities and habitats and



MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE TREATS stormwater on its campus through various types of green stormwater infrastructure, including stormwater retention and filtering features just outside the Axinn Center at Starr Library. A courtyard at the site has been graded and sloped to collect rainwater that flows off the roof into swales, which are broad, shallow channels that help convey and filter stormwater.

Independent photo/Marin Howell

food for wildlife, according to the Rain Garden Manual for Vermont and the Lake Champlain Basin. Some GSI practices, such as planting larger shrubs and trees, can also provide shading and improved air quality.

The EPA outlines several

other economic, social and environmental benefits of green stormwater infrastructure, including reducing localized flooding and improving water quality.

Parsons noted there are also nontangible benefits of GSI

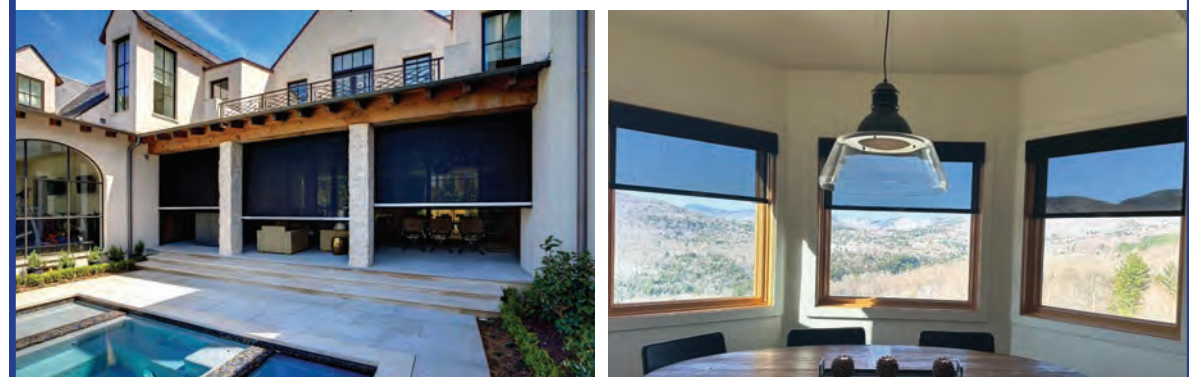
to consider, such as increased biodiversity.

“Not just in terms of plants, but now think in terms of the insects that live on these plants that then they turn into a food source for birds,” he said. “As we

live in a very built world, a long

ways from the woods, how can we bring smaller spots like (GSI at the Axinn Center) to increase biodiversity to help connect our real urban spaces to more natural ecosystems?”

Matt Witten contributed reporting to this story.



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# RIVER WATCH

## Changes

(Continued from Page 7C)

Architecture,” Frederick Law Olmsted, designed Central Park in New York. His design featured large grassy areas called “greenswards,” strategic plantings of trees, and man-made lakes. This work influenced other communities across the country to follow suit and design their public spaces with turf as a prominent feature.

Later in 1868, Olmsted designed the first planned suburb in Riverside, Ill. He required that the houses be set back 30 feet from the road for lawns. This was an aesthetic choice, but also a convenient one. When an architect draws up plans for a subdivision of homes, it’s easier to fill it in blank spaces with generic lawns than to draw up multiple garden plans.

In 1870, Ohio architect Frank J. Scott articulated a vision for the American lawn that emphasized openness and community over exclusion and division. In his popular book, “The Art of Beautifying Suburban Home Grounds,” Scott argued that “with our open-faced front lawns we declare our like-mindedness to our neighbors, and our distance from the English, who surround their yards with inhospitable brick wall.” Scott believed that the unenclosed front lawns of American homes symbolized a commitment to transparency rather than the closed-off, exclusive gardens of Europe.

That same year, Elwood McGuire from Indiana introduced the push mower. It weighed 40 pounds, could cut a 12-inch swath, and cost \$12. McGuire’s mower was a significant improvement over earlier, horse-drawn reel mowers, which were heavy and expensive. The push mower made lawn care manageable and less time-consuming, allowing a broader segment of the American population to cultivate their own lawns.

Gas-powered mowers of various sorts came onto the market in the 1900s. After the Briggs & Stratton Company gained experience during World War II with producing generators incorporating aluminum, the company developed its expertise in using this light metal, which helped lead to the widespread use of the vertical shaft single cylinder gasoline engine in lawn mowers.

After the war, suburbs took off. In the 1950s and ’60s, many people were ready for a quiet life away from the city, but close enough for work and consumer conveniences. The frequently mown lawn became an expectation and a symbol of communal identity and pride. The lawn became a measure of civic responsibility. The perfect, uninterrupted green of suburban landscapes represented a place where each homeowner contributed to the collective well-being of the neighborhood. This uniformity exerted pressure on residents to conform to standards

### Raise the blade!

The Lake Champlain Sea Grant and University of Vermont Extension in collaboration with the Lake Champlain Basin Program and other partners are promoting “Raise the Blade,” a campaign to reduce stormwater runoff. The campaign promotes healthy lawn practices to protect water resources in the Lake Champlain Basin, and recommends three simple practices.

Raise the blade on your lawnmower to **3 inches**. Longer grass will shade out weeds and retain moisture in the soil. Longer grass also has deeper roots, which aerate the soil and improve its ability to retain rainwater.

Leave lawn clippings where they are. A natural fertilizer, they will decompose into organic matter and support the health of the lawn.

Remove only one-third of the grass blade to reduce stress to your lawn. Grass will be greener and more resilient during dry periods.

of lawn care — including the use of pesticides and of close-cropped mowing — lest they disrupt the visual harmony of their community.

It is estimated that currently about **40 million acres** of lawn exist in the United States. Can the modern American lawn evolve once more, this time towards resiliency and biodiversity? Maybe it’s time to reevaluate the lawn and its place in our lives.

#### Because...

Alternative approaches to your yard can enhance habitat, create beauty and increase resilience to storm events. Some “green stormwater” practices around homes are quite easy, such as simply raising the blade of the lawnmower to encourage more robust growth, thus increasing root depth and absorption of water. Another fairly easy approach is to create one or more “mini-meadows” in your yard. These can be neatly arranged and bordered, and can also increase water absorption as well as pollinator habitat.

“Our built environment brings changes to the way stormwater behaves,” said Jill Sarazen, the Green Infrastructure Collaborative Coordinator for Lake Champlain Sea Grant. “In the natural environment, there is plenty of space for the absorption of rainwater, but in more urban settings stormwater is sent with increasing volume and speed downstream.” Green Stormwater Management techniques, she said, “are ways to deal with that water closer to the source” so that falling rainwater is slowed, spread and absorbed.

#### Rethinking Your Yard Routine

Alexandra Contosta, research assistant professor at UNH’s Earth Systems Research Center, has done research on “low mow” options as well as carbon storage in the backyards of New England cities. “Taking important small steps, like not mowing as often, can have a big impact on things like carbon storage and carbon emissions, which can influence climate change,” Contosta said. She added that trimming the number of times you run the mower around the yard, known as “low mow,” can help reduce carbon emissions, build soil organic matter and even enhance pollinating habitats for bees.

Some of Contosta’s tips are:

- **Mow every two weeks** — mowing less often allows for spontaneous lawn flowers, such as clover and dandelions, to grow. These flowers provide important nectar for bees, which are in decline and which pollinate food crops.

- **Try a “no mow” area** — for larger yards, consider creating a zone that is cut less, or not at all, providing time savings, rainwater absorption as well as a beneficial habitat for butterflies. This can be useful for hard-to-mow areas or parts of the property that are not used.

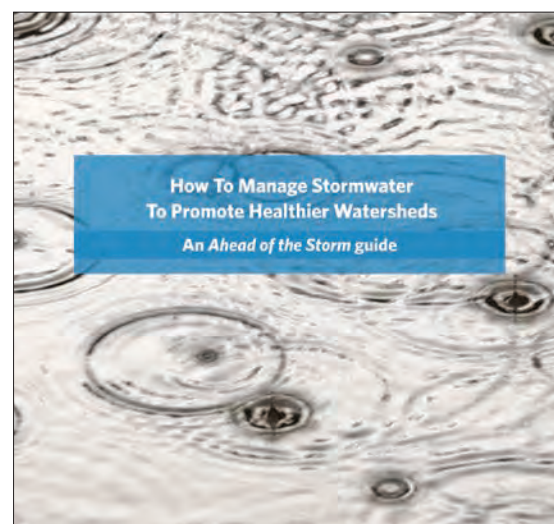
- **Give the rake a break** — skip raking grass clippings; returning them to the soil provides high-quality, carbon-rich leaf litter that organisms can break down and store in soil organic matter. This keeps the carbon out of the atmosphere, where it contributes to warming temperatures.

- **Get the neighborhood involved** — propose no- and low-mow months on your block (in the early spring or late fall), create a community garden and in the fall transform leaves into valuable mulch.

Mowing less also means less emissions, decreasing a household’s carbon footprint. The low-mow approach can be economical, practical and a timesaving alternative to replacing a lawn or even planting pollinating flower gardens. Researchers say if low-mow became more socially accepted, it could be a great way to do more for the environment by doing less.

From 2015-2019 the Urban Conservancy conducted a survey in New Orleans to assess long-term benefits and issues with residential green stormwater infrastructure (GSI). “This data... shows that residential GSI, when properly installed, is effective, economical, not overly burdensome to maintain, and enhances community safety and quality of life by reducing frequency and severity of flooding while keeping thousands of gallons of water per rain event out of our streets, catch basins, and pumping systems,” said Dana Eness, executive director of the Urban Conservancy.

The Center for Neighborhood

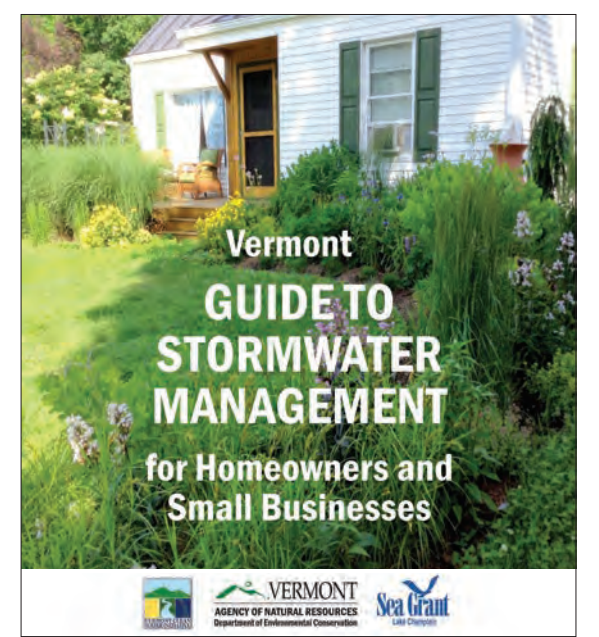


## Books & Manuals

Two excellent green stormwater guides for homeowners and small businesses published within the last few years here in Vermont. Anyone can download them for free off the internet. These books are:

“Vermont Guide to Stormwater Management for Homeowners and Small Businesses,” by the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (and partners), 2018. Download it at: [tinyurl.com/VtGuide2Stormwater](https://tinyurl.com/VtGuide2Stormwater).

“How to Manage Stormwater to Promote Healthier Watersheds: An Ahead of the Storm



guide,” by the Lewis Creek Association (and partners), 2024. Download it at: [tinyurl.com/AheadOfStorm](https://tinyurl.com/AheadOfStorm).

And below are two recently published books recommended by *New York Times* garden columnist Margaret Roach. The books aim at gardeners who are rethinking their landscapes by helping them maintain realistic expectations while they’re transitioning to a wilder style:

“Every lawn is a prairie screaming to come out of the ground,” said Benjamin Vogt. His 2023 book is “Prairie Up: An Introduction to Natural Garden

Technology (CNT) has done a study of green stormwater infrastructure’s impacts on property values. Their report shows that GSI also adds value to homes. CNT and partners modeled the impact of GSI installations, such as rain gardens and swales, on property sales data in two cities and found statistically significant higher sales prices of homes near GSI. These findings add to a growing body of research that shows that nature-based solutions to stormwater management provide many benefits in addition to flood resiliency.

#### Resiliency

Which brings us back to where we started: Our time in history — defined partly by extreme weather events — demands that we rethink the American concept of our home landscapes. When it comes to our yards, our civic responsibility now means contributing to slowing, spreading and absorbing stormwater. And at the same time we can enhance habitat for pollinators and other wildlife that are native to our area.

Although there is no guarantee that green stormwater management will keep our communities from flooding during the heaviest rainfall events, a collective

effort can lessen the impact of storms. Since 2013, China’s “Sponge City” program has used ecological methods to transform the traditional “fast drainage” principle to widespread methods of infiltration, detention, retention, purification, utilization and discharge of rainwater. The city of Wuhan has initiated 389 separate sponge city projects covering almost 15 square miles of the city, the sum of which have resulted in improvements in stormwater management with side benefits such as cooling and additional natural spaces for recreation. We can Soak It Up too!

## Soak it Up!

ADDISON COUNTY  
RIVER WATCH

# A Workshop on Flood-Resilient Yards

### About the Event

Your yard can save you money, support pollinators, and slow down stormwater runoff. You’ll discover new possibilities for your yard and connect with pollinator experts and contractors. By mowing less or building a rain garden, you can help your yard soak up stormwater more effectively.

### What You’ll Learn

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# RIVER WATCH

## Rain gardens

(Continued from Page 7C)  
placed in residential yards, in municipal lots or in commercial properties that want to contribute to flood resiliency and water quality in their community. Here it must be said that some businesses and developments are required by law to manage stormwater, in which case green stormwater infrastructure can be part of their overall management plan.

Rain Gardens can:

- Be shaped and sized to fit your yard.
- Use a special mix of sand and compost that allows water to soak in rapidly and supports healthy plant growth.
- Can be landscaped with a variety of plants to fit the surroundings.

“A rain garden can be a lot of work to maintain for the first couple of years,” said Tim Parsons, Landscape Horticulturist and professor of Architecture Studies at Middlebury College. “But after that, they are much less work — maybe just weed and prune once a year.”

Local landscaper Lauren Slayton agreed:

“I water plants only in the first year of planting and can’t think of any major losses.”

Parsons believes that shrubs are a very important element of rain gardens. Shrubs offer good uptake of water, cover and food for birds and beauty above the lower herbaceous layer.

A rain garden in your yard can provide abundant benefits both for

you and the environment. Native plants provide food and shelter for birds, butterflies and other pollinators. In a world of mowed lawns, a rain garden could be an oasis for songbirds, butterflies and beneficial insects.

An ideal site for a rain garden is one that is not over any utilities, septic tanks or wellheads; more than 10 feet from buildings with basements; has a gentle slope of not more than 12%; is in the flow of runoff from hard surfaces; and is free of trees that do not like to be wet. If your yard or business fits the bill, a rain garden is a great option for managing stormwater.

By holding on to water, rain gardens can also recharge groundwater, which is great news for folks who use well water. A rain garden of native plants is a great (and great-looking) solution for standing water in your yard, runoff from your roof or road, supporting pollinators and birds, and making your yard more beautiful. After it is established, rain gardens are fairly easy to maintain.

Is a rain garden right for you?

“In Middlebury and Vergennes there are areas underlain with clay that will not be efficient at letting water soak into the ground,” said Addison County River Watch Director Matt Witten. “That said, where there’s lots of clay, there are still fine options for slowing water down, options that can create both additional habitat and beauty.”

### Typical Rain Garden



\*Not to scale.

Illustration by Andrew Mack, Washington State University

**Dig Safe!**  
Before embarking on a rain garden, dry well or other project involving excavation, a call to Dig Safe is in order: **811 or 888-344-7233.**

Rain gardens are most effective at permeable sites such as those with sandy, silty, gravelly or even slightly clay soils. The parts of Addison County with heavy clay soils might do best to look to other Green Stormwater Infrastructure methods, including mini-meadows and stormwater planters. Bioswales are a low-maintenance way to vegetate a soggy part of your lawn with water-loving native plants, and water bars can help with erosion by redirecting water off of an unpaved area and on to vegetated area.

Managing stormwater on your property is a great way to show our streams and rivers — as well as your downstream neighbors — a little bit of love. During a big rain event, waterways (and our municipal stormwater systems) can get overrun with the surge of stormwater filled with pollutants from roads, lawns and agriculture. Rain gardens and other green stormwater management strategies can act as a much needed speed bump in the way of stormwater when big rains come to town.



THIS RAIN GARDEN in Middlebury’s Marble Works complex is classically situated in a low-lying spot where it can collect and absorb rainwater and also filter some contaminants out of the water that runs off the nearby parking lot.

Independent photo/John S. McCrirt

## Rain gardens in Bristol?

It may be that the village of Bristol is a prime location for rain gardens due to its gravelly subsoils. These permeable soils can give a chance for rainwater — if slowed down and stored in a depression — to absorb into the ground rather than zooming downhill and causing erosion or other problems.

The 2019 Town of Bristol Stormwater Master Plan proposed potential projects “that rely on a mixture of Green Stormwater Infrastructural development

whenever possible” along with more traditional end-of-pipe stormwater Best Management Practices.

The part of the village near the elementary school — and perhaps the school grounds themselves — may be a very appropriate area for considering the installation of rain gardens and other green stormwater management.

In April the town of Bristol issued a request for proposals to do a study of the Mountain Street drainage system. According to

the town administrator, the part of Mountain Street between the school and Spring Street has experienced increased stormwater runoff due to more frequent and intense weather events.

“The existing drainage has been consistently overwhelmed, causing water to flow down Mountain and Spring streets, resulting in property damage and infrastructure impacts,” the administrator said.

Perhaps some rain gardens could help!

## Ways to slow, spread and soak up stormwater

Homeowners and businesses can contribute to managing stormwater. Here are a few methods:

- Raise the blade! (of your lawnmower to 3 inches).
- Have a “no mow” or “low mow” area of your yard.
- Plant a mini-meadow (that is

also ideally a pollinator-friendly area).

- Redirect gutter downspouts.
- Install rain barrels and/or stormwater planters.
- Create a bio-swale.

Want to learn more? Join River Watch for their *Soak It Up* workshop: Saturday, May 24,

1-3 p.m. at the Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist Society at 2 Duane Court in Middlebury. A short green stormwater garden tour will take place outdoors afterwards. Contact: acrcwvt@gmail.com. More info at acrcw.org.

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# 5 cleaning tips and 5 rebates

Spring forward into energy savings with Efficiency Vermont

WINOOSKI — Spring cleaning and saving energy go together like seeds in the garden. That's why Efficiency Vermont is sharing five tips — and five rebates — that can help Vermonters save money and use less energy during their spring clean-up. Keeping energy in mind while preparing for warmer weather can also kickstart planning for home improvements in the months ahead.

Here are five spring cleaning tips for a more energy efficient home:

• **W o r k efficiency into your spring cleaning routine.** Clean appliances and systems in your home to optimize their performance. Dust bathroom fan covers and behind your fridge. Remove grease and dust from your kitchen's stove hood or exhaust fans. Clear lint and debris from your clothes dryer's exhaust and filter. And sweep or vacuum near any vents, ducts, or registers. Keeping these systems clean means they'll use less energy and save money on your power bills.

• **Replace or clean filters in the equipment that keeps you warm.** Check filters on your heat pump, furnace, or boiler. Replace or clean any filters on your heat pump or connected ductwork. Consider replacing these filters every few months (for some circumstances, like homes with pets, more frequently may be best). Portable air purifiers and window AC units also have filters to clean or replace.

• **Schedule annual maintenance for your heating system.** Book a professional to clean and service the indoor and outdoor components of your heating, ventilation, or air conditioning system. This ensures they're working and ready for next winter (or the next chilly day).

• **Manage your home's moisture.** Moisture and water in your basement can be a serious hazard to the health of your home and the people living inside. Take steps to fix a wet, damp, or leaky basement. Follow CDC guidelines to clean any mold you find. You can use an ENERGY STAR-certified dehumidifier to remove moisture, but addressing the underlying issues can save energy and money in the long run.

**C**heck filters on your heat pump, furnace, or boiler. Replace or clean any filters on your heat pump or connected ductwork. Consider replacing these filters every few months (for some circumstances, like homes with pets, more frequently may be best). Portable air purifiers and window AC units also have filters to clean or replace.

on those projects.

Planning ahead is a great time to review Efficiency Vermont's rebates for weatherization, heating/cooling systems, and energy-saving appliances. Here are five spring cleaning rebates to consider for your home energy goals:

• **Cool off with DIY Weatherization and get a cool \$100.** Sealing around windows and doors isn't just for winter weather. Air sealing can help keep your home comfortable all year long—using less energy to stay cool in warmer months. Now you can get \$100 back for completing a qualifying DIY home weatherization project, including weather-stripping, insulation, and air sealing.

• **Stay cool — or warm up — with boosted heat pump rebates.** Starting in April 2025, Efficiency Vermont is offering increased heat pump rebates. That means bigger savings on these efficient heating and air conditioning systems. Plus, your utility may offer additional rebates. Learn how heat pumps can cool (and heat) your home, then explore our

heat pump rebates.

• **Complete comprehensive weatherization while the sun is shining.** Weatherizing a whole home can take time, so starting those projects in warmer weather makes sense. But comprehensive weatherization makes sense in other ways, too: it can reduce household energy bills year-round, and address health and safety concerns in a home. Get up to \$9,500 cash back for comprehensive weatherization, and explore ways to pay for your project over time.

• **Tidy up your monthly bill with more efficient appliances.** Find energy-saving options for dehumidifiers, window AC units, heat pump clothes dryers, and more. Pair these appliances with a smart thermostat to keep your home at the perfect temperature no matter the season.

• **Electrify your lawn care.** Using a gas-powered lawnmower for one hour emits as much pollution as driving a car 45 miles, according to the EPA. Battery-powered or plug-in lawnmowers, leaf blowers, and trimmers avoid those noxious emissions — and electric lawn care tools are a lot quieter, too.

Your household income can qualify you for bonus rebates and additional partner offers. Income-eligible homes can get free services and products through Efficiency Vermont, including a voucher to replace an inefficient appliance that may be impacting your electric bill. Low-income households can also qualify for free weatherization from Vermont's Weatherization Assistance Programs. Unsure if you're eligible for income-related rebates and programs? Contact Efficiency Vermont's Energy Advisors — call 1-888-921-5990.

Updated annually, income guidelines vary by county, household size, and annual income. Currently, a family of four earning \$142,700 in Chittenden, Franklin, or Grand Isle Counties qualifies as moderate-income, while in Washington County, earning \$126,500 qualifies as moderate-income. Visit our website for details on income-based programs.



## Steady as she goes

SETH VACZY USES a long, metal jig to guide his table saw to a perfectly straight cut so the floorboards he is installing will fit snugly.

Independent photo/Steve James



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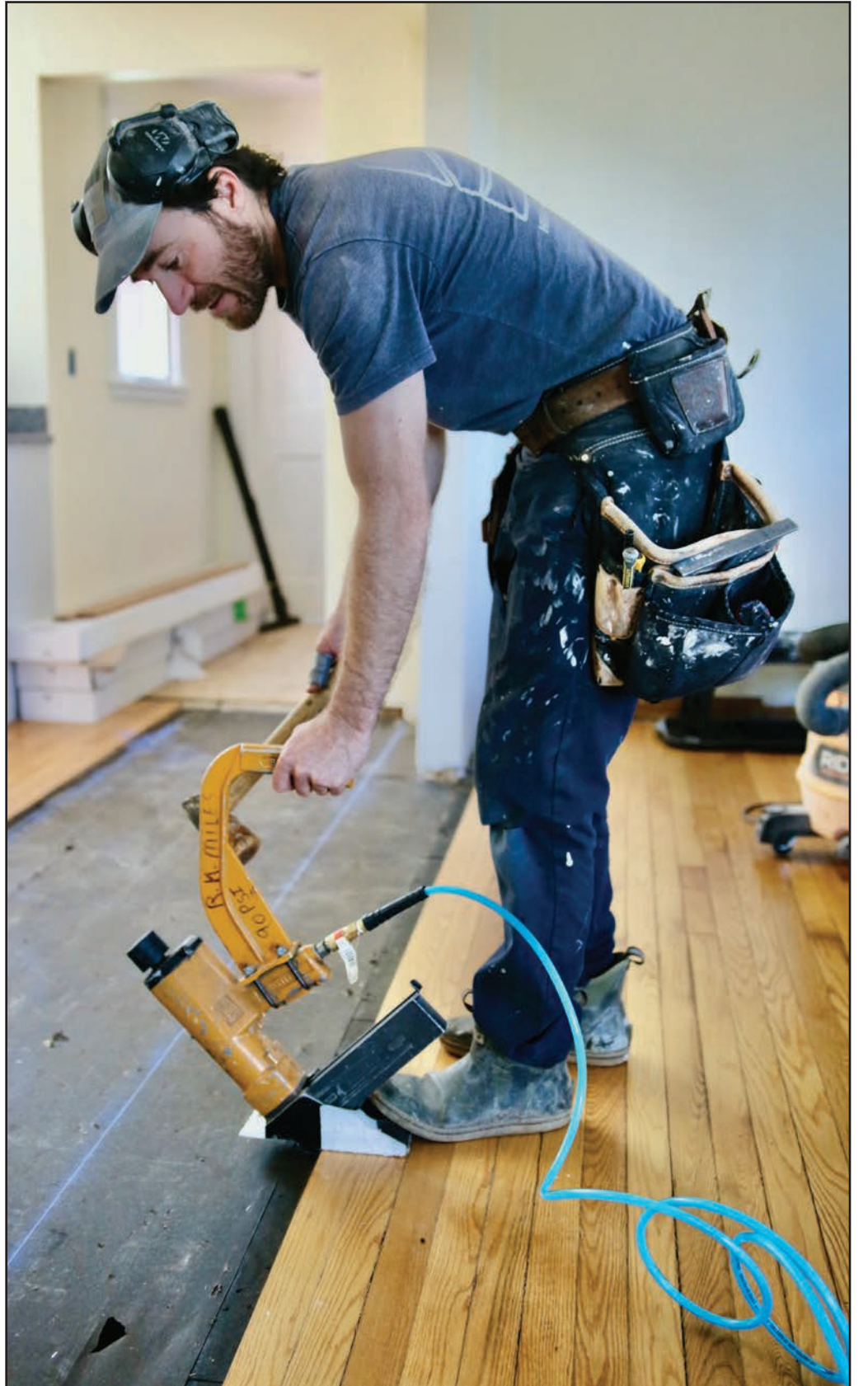
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**The Install**

LAYING THE BEST hardwood floor starts with dry-fitting a piece into place to ensure that the end is aligned with the wall (top left), then the contractor from Vaczy Construction of Salisbury taps the piece into place (left). Finally, Seth Vaczy uses a hydraulic nail gun to guarantee that the flooring will stay in place for years to come.

Independent photos/Steve James

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# HOME DECOR WORD SEARCH

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 B E L Y T S M M I L H Y N O M R R A H V A  
 P V C B E O O L A N O I T I D A R T D G  
 M O S I S A F C O N C E P T O R O E N S  
 L E Y E T I R E N O V A T I O N S I M Y  
 F L N N O A C I R B A F H G N I R D S N  
 V I V X D D M E P I M H P R G O G U G G  
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 N H P E A O E X R D R O E L R A G A G A  
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 Y I R F T T V L E O C V P N L Y N C L E  
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 G N I D L O M L O O P R T S I B T Y P C  
 A R M O I R E P X F I U G N Y B X O Y S

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

## WORDS

- ACCENT
- ARMOIRE
- ARTISTIC
- ASYMMETRY
- BALANCE
- COLOR
- CONCEPT
- CONTRAST
- DESIGNER
- FABRIC
- FLOORING
- FOCUS
- HARMONY
- LAYERING
- LIGHTING
- MODERN
- MOLDING
- MONOCHROMATIC
- PROPORTIONS
- RENOVATIONS
- SOFA
- STYLE
- TEXTURE
- TRADITIONAL

(See Answers, Page 16C)



Metro Creative photo

## Health problems linked to mold exposure

Mold is a natural part of the environment and can be found growing just about anywhere that moisture and oxygen are present, advises the Environmental Protection Agency. Mold is a fungus that can be helpful because it breaks down dead organic matter. But mold growth indoors can prove problematic, not only to personal living spaces but to one's health.

When mold grows outdoors in the fresh air, exposure to it can be minimal. However, mold growing indoors can cause concentrated conditions that adversely affect indoor air quality and overall health. The Rhode Island Department of Health says exposure to a large number of mold spores may cause symptoms associated with allergies, such as runny nose, watery eyes, headache, fatigue, and sneezing, among others. Exposure to certain molds, such as *Stachybotrys* and *Aspergillus*, can cause more serious illness because of the mycotoxins these molds produce. Aspergillosis is a fungal lung infection with emerging antimicrobial resistance, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The World Health Organization, the National Academy of Medicine and the National Toxicology Program report that occupants of damp, moldy buildings have an increased risk of respiratory problems. Repeated exposure to mold can lead to asthma, which is a chronic airway disease characterized by inflammation, states the National Institutes of Health. Individuals can experience shortness of breath and airway obstruction from the overproduction of mucus.

Additional conditions also can be attributed to mold. For example, valley fever is linked to the fungus *Coccidioides*, which lives in soil in some areas of the southwestern United States. Mucormycosis is a severe but rare fungal infection caused by a group of molds known as *mucomycetes*, says the CDC. It affects the sinuses or the lungs of people with weakened immune systems.

Though some people who come in contact with mold will not develop any adverse symptoms, it is still best to address indoor mold problems promptly. These steps can help.

- Use dehumidifiers in damp areas, such as basements.
- Ventilate bathrooms, kitchens and laundry areas.
- Fix any leaks in pipes, walls or windows promptly.
- Use mold-resistant paint.
- Make sure that clothes dryers and exhaust fans vent to the outdoors rather than an attic or another room.
- Remove mold with mold-killing products. The CDC says mold can be cleaned from hard surfaces with soap and water or a bleach solution of no more than one cup of household bleach to one gallon of water.

— Metro Creative

## Carpeting questions? We've got answers

No two homeowners are the same, and that's perhaps most evident in the design decisions individuals make when decorating their homes. Flooring is among the first things a person notices when entering a home, and the array of options consumers have when choosing flooring materials underscores how unique each homeowner is.

Carpeting is a popular flooring option. Many homeowners prefer carpeting because they feel it helps to create a cozy, welcoming vibe in a home. Consumers considering carpet for their homes may have some common questions, and answers to those inquiries can help homeowners determine if carpeting is for them.

Is carpeting expensive? Home renovations are expensive, and the cost of a project is often the first question homeowners

have. The cost of carpeting varies widely and is contingent on an array of variables unique to each home and homeowner, including square footage, materials chosen by the homeowner and the cost of labor associated with installation, which can vary significantly between locations. According to the online renovation resource HomeAdvisor, the average cost to install or replace carpet is between \$782 and \$2,812. That wide range illustrates how much the cost of the project will be affected by variables unique to each project. However, even homeowners who come in around or above the high end of that estimate may find carpet installation is among the more affordable ways to give the interior of a home an entirely new look and feel.

How different are carpeting materials? Carpeting materials differ in

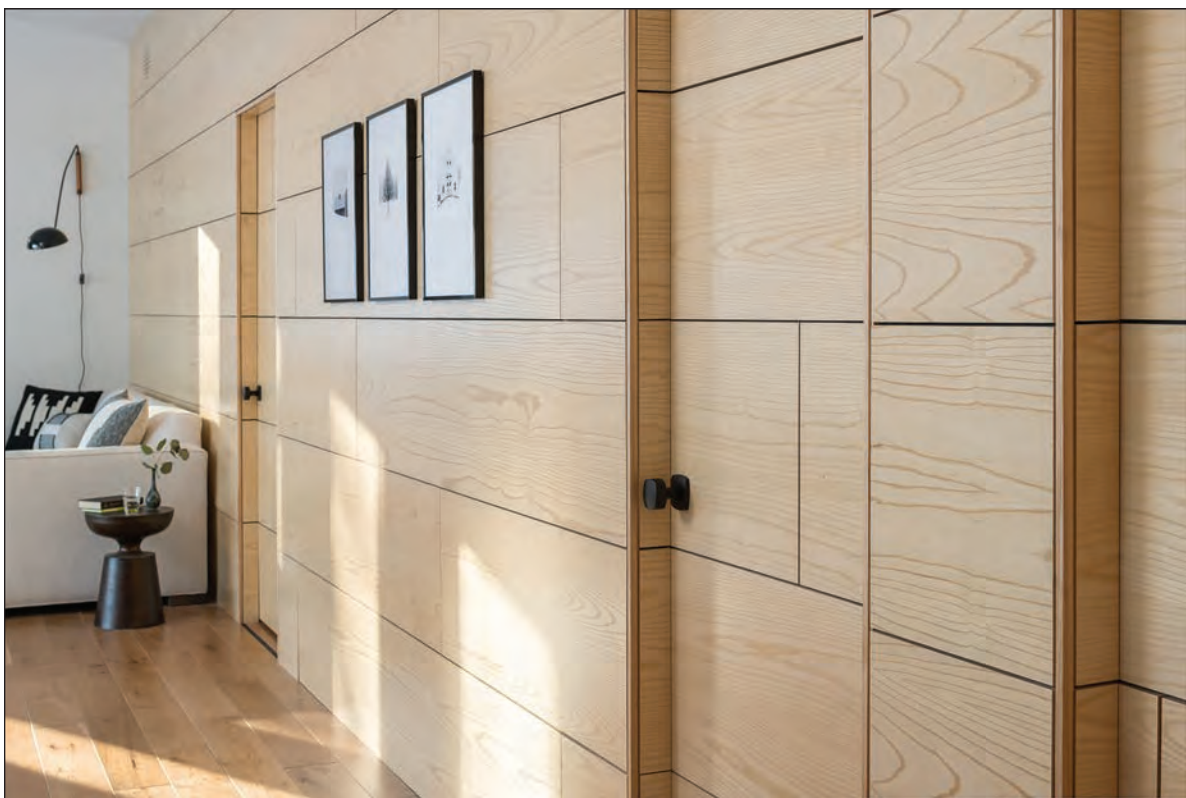
their look, feel and function. The home renovation experts at Angi.com note that some carpet fibers are better suited to areas in a home that attract a lot of foot traffic, while others make for better options in areas with less use, such as a bedroom or home office. For example, one website notes that polyester has a luxurious, soft feel, making it a strong option for bedroom floors. Nylon carpet fiber is resistant to stains and damage and maintains its height under heavy weight, making this a good option in heavily trafficked rooms. Homeowners can discuss each carpeting material with their flooring retailer to determine which suits their budget and which is best in each room of their homes.

Is carpet padding a must? Carpet padding is one of the costs associated with carpeting. When shopping for carpeting for

the first time, homeowners may notice carpet padding costs on their estimate and wonder what it is and if it's truly necessary. Carpet padding is necessary, as Flooring101.com notes that it keeps the underside of the carpet from wearing against the subfloor while absorbing the impact of foot traffic and furniture. That absorption helps to reduce stress on the carpet and thus extend its life expectancy. Carpet padding also can have an insulating effect and help to reduce sound in a room. So while carpet padding might be a costly expense on an itemized estimate, it's well worth the investment.

Carpeting can help make a home feel more cozy and welcoming. Homeowners can work with a local carpeting retailer to find a carpet that meets their needs and fits their budget.

— Metro Creative



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# Word search answers

(Continued from Page 15C)



# Why hiring a painter is the right choice

Few home improvements can change the look of a room faster and more affordably than a painting makeover. In fact, homeowners often turn to paint before they make any other renovations. Home Light, a real estate technology company, says painting a home's interior can net a return on investment as high as 107 percent.

Although painting is a project that can be tackled by do-it-yourselfers, there are various advantages to calling in a professional to handle painting projects. Here is a look at some of the benefits of working with a professional painter.

**Cut down on the job time**  
A professional painter can reduce the project timeline. Painters have the skill set and experience to complete a project in a timely manner. This means the job will be streamlined from preparation to clean-up.

**Pay attention to details**  
Professional painters are likely to do a job that is nearly flawless, especially after homeowners exercise their due diligence and vet painters carefully. Professionals will pay attention to the small details that less experienced

*A professional painter can reduce the project timeline. Painters have the skill set and experience to complete a project in a timely manner. This means the job will be streamlined from preparation to clean-up.*

painters wouldn't think about.

**Reduce your workload**  
Painting can be a time-consuming job, and most of it occurs even before you pick up a brush. It can take hours to prep walls, patch holes, remove moldings, and apply painter's tape. Homeowners who do not have much time are better off leaving trusting the project to a professional.

**Painters already have equipment**

Do-it-yourselfers may need to buy new tools before beginning the job. This means brushes, rollers, tape, tarps, trays, and much more. Unless you plan to paint multiple times, this can make stocking up a considerable investment.

Professionals already have all the right gear and tools of the trade.

**Lasting results**  
Professional painters understand which products will produce the desired results, depending on the wear and tear of the space. Paints are not all created equal, and certain walls, floors and trim may require unique priming and preparation that novices are not familiar with. Professional painters can help ensure durability and save homeowners from having to do the job again in a few months or years.

**A safer experience**  
Painting can be a challenging job when it involves painting hard-to-reach spaces and/or climbing and balancing on tall ladders. Homeowners are not at risk of injury when hiring a professional painter. In addition, professional painters should be licensed and insured. This means if an injury or incident occurs, the homeowner will not be on the hook for the cost.

A fresh coat of paint can produce amazing results. Leaving the work to a professional can ensure a job is done correctly and beautifully and completed on time.

— Metro Creative



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# Make your living space comfortable

A kitchen is widely recognized as the most popular room in a home. Though it might be true that the hustle and bustle of home life runs through the kitchen, many a memory is made in the living room as well.

Living rooms tend to be go-to spaces for family movie nights, game watches with fellow fans and places to gather during holiday celebrations. That's a lot of quality time spent in the living room, and those moments can be more enjoyable if the space is as comfortable as possible. With that in mind, people can consider various ways to make living rooms more comfortable.

- Prioritize comfort over aesthetics. In an era of Instagram, it's easy to fall head over heels with images when designing a living room. Aesthetic appeal certainly has its place in a living room, but it's important to remember how much living will be done

in these rooms when designing them. Comfortable couches and furnishings like ottomans can make it easier to relax in the living room whether you're watching a movie, cheering on your favorite team or reading a book.

- Ensure there's ample seating. It can be hard to feel comfortable in cramped quarters whether you're welcoming friends and family into your home or simply lounging around on Sunday mornings. If comfort is your top priority, arrange the room so there's ample seating throughout and people don't feel like they're sitting on top of one another when spending time in the room.

- Consider neutral paint colors. Furnishings are not the only things that can affect how comfortable people feel in a living room. The home improvement experts at The Spruce note that neutral paint colors with warm undertones help to establish a cozy feel in a living

room. Various shades of white, beige, tan, or even gray can help to establish a warm, comfortable vibe in a living room.

- Incorporate the outdoors into the room. The great outdoors can have a calming effect on anyone, so it makes sense that incorporating the outdoors into a living room can make the space feel more comfortable. Furnish the room with plants and look for items with earth-toned furnishings to create a calm and comfortable vibe in the space. In addition, new windows that allow for more natural light and offer views into a yard can help lift spirits and make the room feel more comfortable.

A comfortable living room is a space where people will want to spend their time. A few simple strategies can help create an inviting and comfortable vibe in any living room.

— Metro Creative

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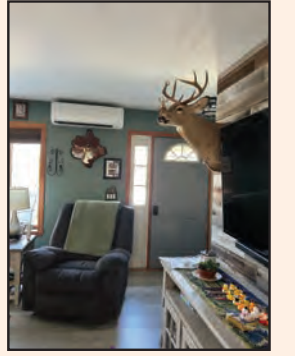
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*Megan Nedzinski and Joshua Faulkner –  
South Starksboro, VT*

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