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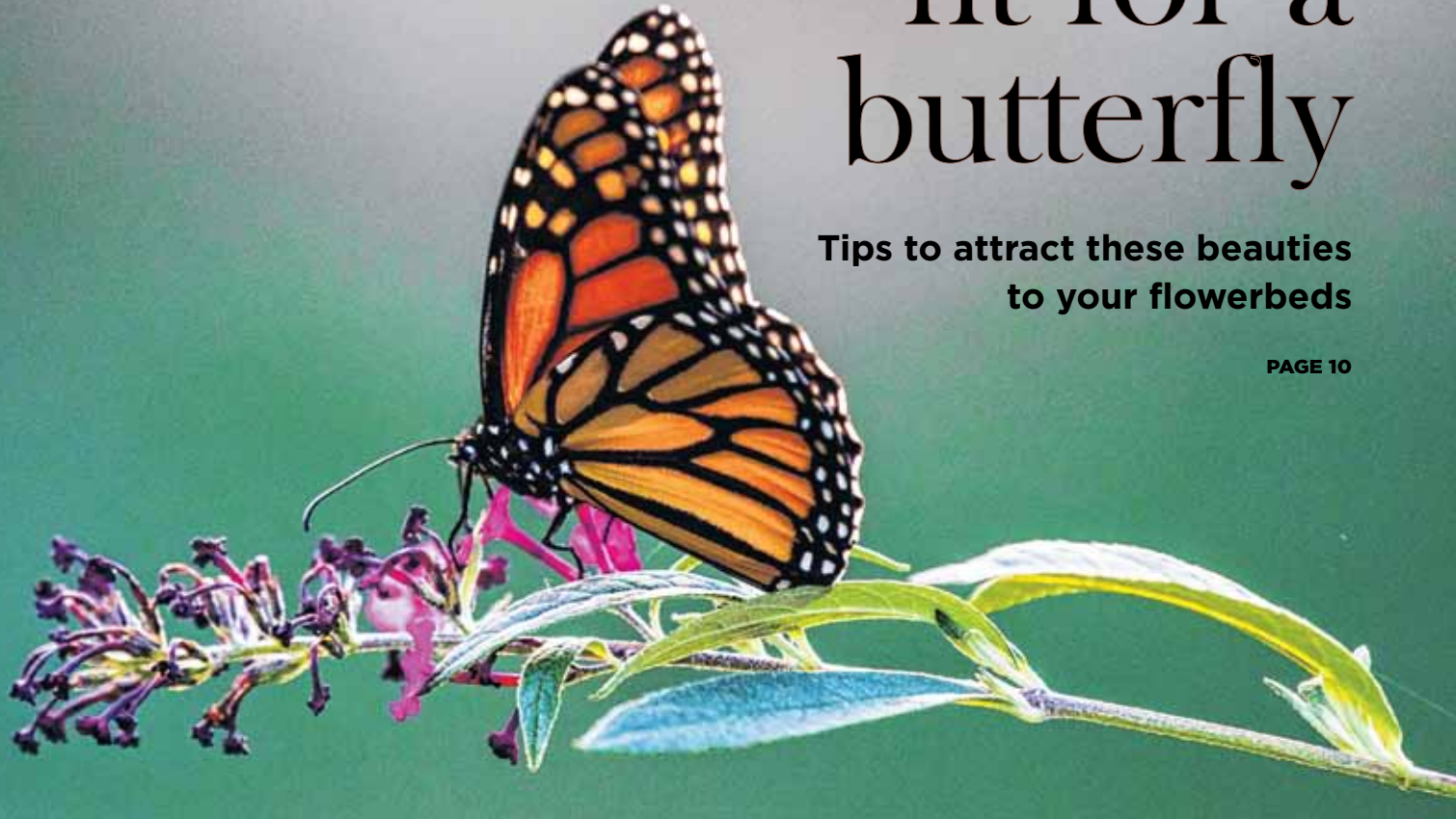
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fit for a butterfly

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DINING IN ... IN STYLE

Follow these tips to make a tabletop to remember.

HOME TRENDS MAGAZINE

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Battery-powered equipment cutting its way into lawn care

BY JENN WILLHITE | PHOTOS BY ADOBE STOCK

There's a trend in lawn care that is making homeowners' time spent outdoors more enjoyable and less stressed, and it's battery power.

"Your job is going to get easier, especially if you have a smaller yard, with battery equipment," said Jerry Rode, owner of Premier Outdoor Power Equipment in Franklin.

There's a hard argument to be made on whether those with a typical size residential lot need gas-powered equipment, Rode said.

"The amount of advancement that the battery industry has done over the past three or four years has really put battery equipment at a price point and functionality level that would be on par with gas equipment," Rode said. "They're lightweight. We see a lot of homeowners going toward the battery line."

Runtime for a mid-grade to high-end, battery-powered piece of equipment, such as a trimmer or mower, is usually 45 minutes to one hour, Rode said. And that is more than enough time for most people to do basic trimming around their home.

Even larger battery-powered pieces, like chainsaws, offer the convenience of getting the equivalent of two gas tanks worth of power on one charge.

"While that may not be sufficient for someone who cuts firewood for a living, it is sufficient for a homeowner who has some broken tree limbs they need to get cleaned up," Rode said.

If you have a large lot, it is probably still beneficial to look into gas-powered equipment, Rode added.

Another boon of battery power is convenience.

"We are seeing trends toward what they call stand-on units," Rode said. "They're where customers can stand on the mower. It is like a

zero-turn but you can stand up on it."

Both comfortable and maneuverable, stand-on units are ideal for those with lots larger than one acre. Many of the commercial workers like them because they can quickly jump on and off of them to pick up limbs, trash and that sort of thing, Rode said.

"They take up less space in the garage and still give you a nice-cut quality," he said.

Those who have concerns about the seeming reinvention of battery-power need not worry when it comes to handling and power,

Rode said. As long as the piece of equipment is sized for the job you're doing, there's no difference in performance.

"Battery power has reached or exceeded what gas equipment does if you are comparing apples to apples," Rode said. "If you are comparing a high-end, commercial, gas trimmer to a residential battery one, that is not apples to apples."

Beyond the new advancements in battery power, most manufacturers haven't been producing much else when it comes to the latest and greatest advancement, Rode shared.

They've simply been trying to get the inventory out.

Though not equipment, the other trend Rode is seeing is just as important for the long haul.

The equipment is expensive and as a natural consequence, homeowners who make the investment are realizing more than ever the importance of maintaining their equipment, he said.

"Many are asking questions about serviceability," Rode said. "There's a big push towards someone they can relate to, chat with and get service from after the sale."



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A PERFECT MATCH



It's easier than you think to match paint colors

BY HUNTER BOYCE, THE ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION | PHOTOS BY TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

When you painted your home's walls years ago, they looked amazing. The color was absolutely perfect, but now it's faded. The problem: You have no idea what color you purchased for the walls all those years ago. It's a problem many homeowners find themselves struggling with at one point or another.

While the idea of matching year's old paint might seem impossible, a few tricks can make it a lot easier than you think.

JUST SCRAPE SOME PAINT OFF

The most straightforward way to match your wall's paint color with what is available at your local paint shop is to simply scrape some of the top layer of paint from your wall and bring it to the paint store as a sample.

"An easy way to match your existing paint color is to simply take a knife and peel off the top layer of paint," said Scott Specker, owner of Five Star Painting in Suwanee and Alpharetta, told Realtor.com.

"If you take that piece into any local home improvement store, they

should have computerized color-matching technology that can assess your paint and tell you its exact color."

USE THE FABRIC AROUND YOUR LIVING SPACE

According to Bobvila.com, a great way to get a shade close to your wall's color is to compare it to those matching throw pillows — or other accessories — you bought at the time. Most paint stores are equipped with spectrophotometers, which allow paint technicians to color match fabric samples with paint colors.

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

Most major paint brands have free applications designed specifically to identify paint colors. Behr ColorSmart and Benjamin Moore Color Capture, for instance, are free apps that allow users to take a picture of their existing wall color and upload the photo for analysis. The application will then identify the color and find the manufacturer's closest match.

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Serenity Now

Design your living space to reduce anxiety

BY HUNTER BOYCE, THE ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION | PHOTO BY TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Homeowners are looking for ways to make their homes feel less like last bastion from the world's troubles and more like a paradise of rest and relaxation.

Here are some of the top ways expert interior designers are decorating homes to reduce anxiety this year. serenity

BIOPHILIC DESIGN

Biophilic design is the practice of incorporating nature into interior design, and designers are making the most of it this year. According to House Beautiful, simply using house plants can decrease stress levels — making this style of design perfect for a generation of homeowners looking for a way to bring the outside in.

NATURAL COLORS AND TEXTURES

While house plants are a great way to bring a calming mood to the living space, natural colors and textures can reinforce the effect in a powerful way.

“Softer neutrals with hints of color bring calm into an environ-

ment,” Suzanne Tick, creative director at Luum Textiles, told Forbes. “Woods, stone, natural fibers enliven the senses. Tactility plays an important role as well — we all want softness — but a feeling of safety and cleanability, not sterility, is also important. Natural fibers like wool offer softness, while using renewable resources that can be sanitized as needed.”

BETTER LIGHTING

Once your living space is accented with plant life and filled with natural textures and colors, your home will need some proper lighting to illuminate it all. But not just any lighting will do.

Take advantage of natural light during the day and bulbs that generate gentle, warm lights during the night.

“Having a bright, lighted room is an easy way to make a space feel more inviting and put together,” co-founder and principal designer of BANDD DESIGN, Sara Barney, told Better Homes & Gardens. “Consider adding in some sconces, a floor lamp, desk lamp, or pendants to bring more light to those darker spaces in your home.”



A NATIVE HOME

Plant local, showy flowers to bring in the butterflies

BY JENN WILLHITE | PHOTOS BY ADOBE STOCK



A successful butterfly garden not only offers beauty and a sense of Zen for those who visit, but more importantly, it offers immense benefits for the life living in the space.

Butterfly gardens are designed to attract butterflies, but these spaces also attract bees and other pollinators, said Alice Heikens, professor of biology at Franklin College.

As a 24-7 nectar source, the garden offers shelter and water for visiting and residing insects.

Before jumping in, consider the placement of the space you are intending for the garden, as well as who will be enjoying the space. If you have young children or overly curious pets, scaling back the use of plants that attract bees and wasps may be a consideration.

Native flowers are a guaranteed way to go for butterfly garden success, such as purple coneflower and gray-headed coneflower,

which is a pretty, yellow member of the sunflower family, Heikens said.

“I put in native plants and never fertilize,” she said. “I water the first year to get them established and from then on, they maintain themselves.”

Heikens cautions people to resist the temptation of using a store-bought, prepacked wildflower mix. Odds are the flowers included won’t all be native and that leaves an open invitation for invasive plants, pest issues and, ultimately, a hobbled garden.

Ideally, those who are starting out or who want to up their game by including more native plants in their garden should visit the Indiana Native Plant Society’s website, Heikens said. There, individuals can find what is native to the area and details about the plant’s origins, requirements, behavior and adaptability.

Once you’re familiar with what’s out there, it’s time to decide just what kind of butterfly garden you want.

“If you really want just butterflies, you are looking at the showy flowers,” Heikens said. “Butterflies are not attracted by scent, but by color, so the plants should be bright and showy.”

Topping Heikens’ list of go-to plants for butterflies is milkweed, with its beautiful orange color that monarch butterflies absolutely adore. These beauties can withstand drought, so once milkweed is established, it takes care of itself with no need for watering.

It is important to be selective when choosing native plants, said Blair Beavers, education coordinator for the Johnson County Soil and Water Conservation District and chair of the Johnson County Native Plant Partnership.

“My kind of philosophy is I won’t tell anyone they can’t have absolutely no ornamental nonnatives on their property,” Beavers said. “But one can never guarantee that nonnative plants will start behaving in a different way down the line. Anything that is nonnative has the potential to become invasive.”

If you live in a neighborhood with a homeowners association, your landscaping may be restricted.

“There are some that are homeowner association specific that are acceptable for landscaping and will pass that rule of thumb,” Beavers said. “It can get complicated. Some have plant height requirements, as well as stipulations on what plants can be used – like no invasive plants.”

The overall look one is going for may also be influenced by an HOA, Beavers cautioned, as many require the space look intentional with a defined, maintained border.

In addition to milk weed, Beavers said her go-to native plants include butterfly milkweed, fox glove and beard tongue.

Though the garden is about the plants and butterflies, it is more importantly about the caterpillars, Beavers said. Without them, there are no butterflies.

“The monarch butterfly cannot survive without milkweed,” she said. “It lays its larvae only on milkweed, so without that plant you don’t have the

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A monarch caterpillar munches on a milkweed leaf.

monarch butterfly. It is all about hosting plants and using those plants to feed those caterpillar species. Non-native plants don't have that relationship with our pollinators – that kind of symbiotic connection.”

Make sure something is always blooming in your butterfly garden, Beavers said.

“You want to make sure you hit all the blooming seasons,” she said. “So have something blooming from April until November to provide a nectaring source for the late emerging monarchs, as well.”

When purchasing plants, make sure what you're buying hasn't been treated with pesticides because the treated plants will kill what you are intending to attract, Heikens cautioned.

Once installed, maintaining a butterfly garden simply requires a bit of hand weeding and a little watering to start. A benefit of native plants is they're hearty and, once established, they're significantly self-sufficient.

“Mulch around the garden the first year to keep weeds out,” Heikens said. “Prepare the soil, cultivate it and get rid of the previous vegetation — be that lawn or other plants. Eventually, the native plants will take over.”

In the fall, Heikens said she leaves the seed heads of her plants where they are and lets nature take its course. The seeds will repopulate and allow the plants to spread, she said. It also provides nourishment for organisms during the winter.

Not only will the birds take advantage and eat the seeds, but the pollinators will stay and lay their eggs in the stems of those plants and in the leaf litter. Leaving that all winter long allows those organisms a place to live, Heikens said.

Ideally, cultivate the garden with the intent of supporting the life living in that space. Offer nourishing conditions for the life to thrive, Heikens said.

“We tend to think we don't like insects, but we need them,” she said. “Without insects, life on earth would stop.”

“We tend to think we don't like insects, but we need them. Without insects, life on earth would stop.”

— Alice Heikens
professor of biology, Franklin College



FUN AND FUNCTION

Try these easy tips to freshen up your office

BY STATEPOINT

Brightening up your home office can bring a sense of fresh energy to your workspace, but making changes can seem overwhelming if you're not sure where to begin. Family organizing expert Jessica Litman, also known as "The Organized Mama," shares her pro tips to creatively update your home office without stress.

UNIQUE STORAGE OPTIONS

Large plastic tubs can offer practical storage solutions, but for a more stylish look, change things up with woven baskets or colored boxes instead. "Regular tubs can be a quick way to organize," Litman said. "But if you're looking to create a chic appearance, try storing your files in a wire-framed basket for texture, or collapsible storage cube for a cool burst of color."

Label the baskets to keep things organized. Make bright, removable labels with multipurpose Masking Color Masking Tape, so finding office supplies is a breeze.

POWER OF PLANTS

Add nature-inspired hues to your office with a houseplant, either fake or real. Faux plants require no maintenance at all (which removes a task from the to-do list) and can brighten a workspace to bring some color to a room. Real plants provide the added benefit of clarifying the air and can be tailored to the environment of your office, whether you have a sunny window or a more shaded space.

"Plants have been proven to reduce stress, especially during those

winter months! Adding a fresh, easy-to-care-for plant is a great way to help boost morale on long work-from-home days," Litman said.

CASE CLOSED

Create a tablet or laptop case that's completely customized to you. "So many people like to personalize phone cases or bags," Litman said. "But creating laptop or tablet cases with colorful, printed Duck Tape can add personality and vibrance to office equipment."

Duck Tape brand prints are fun, trendy and available in a huge variety of colors and patterns to craft almost anything you can imagine.

SHIFTING SCHEDULES

Schedules are a part of everyone's life, but that doesn't mean getting your calendar organized has to be a chore. Use acrylic or dry erase boards, poster boards or cork as a blank slate to customize into a weekly or monthly chart. Adding items with colored markers or tape can be a way to stay ahead of due dates and meetings, as well as highlight important assignments or contacts.

PENS & PENCILS DOWN

Who says students get to have all the fun? Jazz up your desk décor with some pencil cups, a stapler or sticky note holder to keep office supplies organized and fabulous. There are no rules when it comes to how artistic you can get — make your home office as unique as you.



DINING IN STYLE

Creating a designer tablescape

BY KATIE LAUGHRIDGE | PHOTOS BY TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Spring is in full swing, and with it comes a host of opportunities to bring together family and friends in your home. But what happens once you get them all around the table? And what are the makings of a great tabletop?

Building a tablescape is a challenge every host faces at least once in their lives — but it's not one you have to face alone. Whether you're a seasoned decorator or a beginner looking for guidance, we've got you covered.

I've compiled some of my most frequently asked questions into this handy tabletop guide for you to save and review the next time you're hosting a dinner party, or are just in the need of some inspiration.

How many plates do I need at each place setting for a dinner party?

While the answer to a question like this is more dictated by the menu than a set standard (at least in this day and age), here are a few items I like to keep in mind when building up my place settings:

Chargers: Don't forget about this foundational piece. It's a great way to add texture and design to your place settings. Chargers can be made of a variety of materials and add a little extra oomph between your tableware and the table that makes each stack of dishes really pop.

Dinner plates: Depending on how you stack it, your dinner plates might not get that much time in the limelight before dinner is served, so feel free to stick with a simpler, more versatile option. Perhaps the hardest working piece, the dinner plate's job is to make your meal look fabulous and help the food shine.

Salad and appetizer plates: Depending on the formality of your dinner, this could

be one or two pieces and is a great place to incorporate more personality into your table. Use the appetizer plate as a way to tie in the colors from your centerpiece for a polished look.

Bowls: Bowls are a great opportunity to make your tabletop sparkle. Use them

for a standard event. I prefer the shape of a red wine glass, so I tend to lean in that direction.

Water glass: So many options available here, from goblets, to glasses and stems, in endless colors and textures. Incorporating fun drinkware is an unexpected way

to add a dash of your style into the design and playing up the water glass makes it fun for everyone, since not all your guests may require the use of wine glasses.

Dessert glass: Are you planning a dessert wine or a toast of champagne to finish off the evening? If not, or if your event isn't as formal, we say go ahead and skip it.

Hot beverage glass: During the cooler months and especially around the holidays, I love to offer a warm beverage that can be served with or without alcohol. To accommodate this libation, I like to tuck an Irish coffee mug or something similar among the other glasses.

How do I create a tablescape centerpiece for a dinner party?

Consider layout. If you plan to keep food on the table after it is served, think through

how much space you have to work with for decor. If food will be kept elsewhere, or you're serving buffet-style, you'll have a little more room for decor.

Pay attention to scale and lines of sight. While a larger room and table may be able to accommodate a large arrangement, you don't want to prevent your guests from seeing each other and easily conversing by plopping a huge centerpiece in the middle of the table. Draw your arrangement out across the table and keep the bulk of it low so guests can talk over it.

Incorporate varying heights. The goal is for your eye to travel throughout the



practically — for berries, soup or something else yummy — or for decor, topping them off with design elements like boxwood balls or seasonal decor like sweet birds or bunnies during the springtime. What glassware is appropriate at each place setting for a dinner party?

Stemware is typically located at the top right of the place setting, in a way that is convenient and symmetrical. For hosting an elevated soiree, here's what you might need.

Wine glass: For elegant occasions (or events attended by wine lovers), you might have a glass each for white and red, but we think it's acceptable to pick one

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tablescape vignette. While your guests should be able to see and speak over most of the centerpiece, incorporate a few taller elements to add some dimension. My favorite element to polish off a dinner party table is light candlesticks for both movement and ambiance.

What are the essentials for creating a beautiful table?

I hesitate to create rules around design, because it differs so much from depending on a person's goals and personal style, but here are the things I like to have on hand when creating a table:

A tablecloth, runner or place mats: Although these pieces aren't necessary, they do help anchor your centerpiece or place settings and are a great foundational element to build upon.

Plates, bowls and other necessary dinnerware: Tailor your dishes to the menu being served. At a dinner party, the goal is to use every dish presented, not just creating a stack of pretty plates at each place setting.

Drinkware and stemware: These should also be tailored to the menu; we wouldn't add a wine glass if we had no intention of serving our guests wine. In many instances it is completely acceptable to stick to having a water glass and allowing guests to bring their drink of choice to the table with them.

Flatware: This is another great opportunity to incorporate more fun details into your design and elevate your table. I love the weight of quality flatware and like to match the formality of the event by keeping a couple of options on hand.

Napkins: Incorporate the napkin into your design. It could add visual interest to a stack of dishes or flourish to a wine glass. Adding a beautiful napkin ring is another way you can get creative.

A centerpiece: Of course, the centerpiece is quite often the star of the show. Although your centerpiece and place settings don't have to match, per se, we do recommend using color or theme to tie them in together.

If you can only splurge on one thing for the table, what should it be?

Definitely the table. This piece of furniture is the foundation for your entire table, after all. Investing in quality dining room furniture makes a statement and helps create a space that feels designer.

When searching for the right table, take into account the size and shape of your space. In a square room, a round table is a great option. In a longer space, a rectangular table works best. If you like to entertain often or have a large family, perhaps a piece with a removable table extender is something you'd like to invest in.

With careful planning and attention to detail, you can create a table that not only looks beautiful, but also serves its intended purpose. So take your time, be creative, and have fun designing your perfect tabletop!





UPGRADING YOUR OASIS

Homeowners looking for stability, sustainability

BY FAMILY FEATURES

Picture this: You've purchased your home. You're on the land you've dreamt about and you've got great ideas to turn your property into the personal oasis you've always wanted.

As you consider developing your land, building with environmentally sensitive choices becomes more important than ever. According to LightStream's ninth annual Home Improvement Trends Survey, more than 93% of homeowners see the benefits of undertaking renovations that have positive environmental impacts. Yet, one of the top barriers to making eco-friendly upgrades is that people don't know what to do (27%) nor where to begin (24%).

As a first step, homeowners can take on renovations to make their existing home or building greener. Among the many smaller-scale eco-projects are new insulation, HVAC systems, lighting or appliances.

"One popular upgrade is installing custom windows and doors that are thermally broken, meaning they're designed to keep out cold or hot temperatures," said Sean Cain, president of Morton Buildings, a specialized construction company with decades of experience in eco-conscious construction. "It's a big improvement that is not only energy-efficient, but it will immediately impact the overall comfort of your building and save money on energy expenses."

Reflecting larger visions, the survey also found that many

homeowners are thinking outside the home itself, enhancing their properties by adding a separate garage, hobby shop, barn, office or accessory dwelling unit.

"Today's homeowners are looking for a solid property improvement investment as well as construction specialists with the unique knowledge and know-how to deliver eco-friendly best practices and sustainable products," said Todd Nelson, senior vice president at LightStream, an online lending division of Truist Bank.

In addition to return on investment and environmentally sustainable upgrades, homeowners are also increasingly interested in the longevity of their improvement projects.

"People today are keenly interested in the long-term sustainability of their building decisions including construction of ancillary buildings on their property," Cain said. "Post-frame buildings with steel exteriors have advantages both for longevity and recyclability whereas shingle roofs or vinyl siding may need replacement more frequently, which often results in additional waste that cannot be recycled. Moreover, they have protective benefits as well, helping to mitigate inclement weather and extreme climate events. Most of all, their design flexibility makes them modern and stylish."

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FROM START TO FINANCE

Sustainability begins with material selection and production.

“There are many ways to make the manufacturing processes more sustainable, such as recycling or repurposing unused or misdirected materials and even capturing and reusing water,” Cain said.

MANAGING THE COSTS

Sustainable building options can also be more affordable, particularly if you’re looking at cost savings over time.

“Reducing energy costs is important to many building owners,” Cain said. “Make sure your building or home is well-insulated because this can save you a considerable amount of money.”

CONSIDER THE OPTIONS

As consumers seek sustainability in their residential structures, more are considering their long-term financial impacts, too.

“We’re in era of rising interest rates,” Nelson said. “A fixed rate loan can save money and be the right choice for many reasons.”

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