

Priority home projects: From painting to planting



This regular patron of Traverse City's Pine Hill Nursery can't wait to do some spring digging and planting.

BY HEATHER JOHNSON DUROCHER
Special to the Record-Eagle

Spring weather is just around the corner — really — and with it the opportunity to tackle projects around the house, from painting to planting.

Here are a few ideas from the experts to get you thinking about making the most of soon-to-arrive warmer weather:

Flowers

Container gardens and theme gardens are in this year, said Linda Veliquette of Pine Hill Nursery in Traverse City.

"Some people get into container gardening if they are limited to a smaller area, such as a deck," Veliquette said. "There are a lot of perennials that will do well in a container garden as long as they have a good soil base."

"A lot of people will do a theme to attract butterflies or hummingbirds, which are those plants that are usually bell-shaped. You can even use annuals, like fuchsia," she added.

If you're new to planting, keep in mind your soil type, Veliquette said. Is it a clay soil? Are there a lot of rocks or grass?

"You've got to prepare the bed with some good dirt," she said.

Also consider the amount of sun the garden will receive when choosing flowers and plants.

While planting a pattern of like-colored flowers can prove beautiful, some homeowners prefer a more random look.

"Some people might just do a cottage-type garden, where there's just cut flowers," Veliquette said.

This spring's expected-to-be-popular flowers include cone flowers, which look like a daisy but have color to them, Veliquette said.

"These cone flowers now are coming out in an orange color," she added.

This year's designated Perennial Flower of the Year — a distinction given by a national planting association — is the Hellebores. This is a hardy plant with cup-shaped flowers.

"They are really long bloomers and they prefer a shady spot," Veliquette said. "They'll pretty much grow anywhere."

House Painting

Most painted houses need to be re-painted every three to 10 years, depending upon the home's look and type of product used. Some cement board-sided homes offer guarantees

of up to 20 years.

Painting your home's exterior may feel like a daunting project, but it needn't be with the right tools and materials, said Tom Bischoff, owner of Northwood Paint and Supply in Traverse City.

Most importantly, he said, is the preparation required before any painting starts.

"Do the preparation right or don't do it at all," Bischoff said. "That's the whole key to a good job."

The first step is making sure your home's siding is clean,

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especially under its eaves, Bischoff said.

"Washing the house first is extremely beneficial," he said. "The biggest mistake people make is painting over a dirty surface and you end up with peeling."

House painting in northern Michigan typically begins toward the end of March and into early April, Bischoff said.

"You really just have to use common sense as far as giving the product time to dry before it gets rained on," he said. "Basically what you're trying to do is put a barrier between the sun and the surface."

Pools and Spas

As blessed as the region is

with numerous lakes, some people desire to create their own backyard oasis, complete with a pool, spa and other amenities.

"They're trying to create their own little private getaway, their own private resort," said Don Stephenson, who owns Larry's Pool and Spa in Traverse City with brother Larry Stephenson. "Most pools are not plopped in the backyard — they're usually part of a bigger thing."

That "bigger thing" is what Stephenson calls "an outdoor room."

"The outdoor room is something that started five or six

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2005 Spring Clinic Schedule

ABC's of Product Selection Tuesday, 04/05/2005 6:30 PM

This is the second clinic in the Product Selection Series. This session will explain how to choose doors, windows, siding and insulation.

Deck Building Tuesday, 04/12/2005 6:30 PM

Our annual deck clinic will cover the basics of building a deck, from choosing the right materials, to layout and design.

ABC's of Product Selection 3 Tuesday, 04/19/2005 6:30 PM

This is the final session in the three part series of Product Selection. This clinic will deal with selecting interior doors, molding, stairs, closets, hardware and floors.

Deck Restoration and Staining Tuesday, 04/26/2005 6:30 PM

This clinic will cover the proper care and maintenance for all types of wood decks and will feature some excellent new products for cleaning and protecting the wood.

All clinics are free, but seating is limited. Please call Brown Lumber to reserve your spot, 947-1400. For a complete schedule visit our website: www.brownlumber.com



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