

Compliments of Anet Granger

Good to Be HOME

issue 26

CREATING A HOME
water garden



Anet Granger
Associate Broker

WHAT'S YOUR HOME
REALLY WORTH?



SCAN TO SEE
YOUR CURRENT
HOME ESTIMATE!





If one word could summarize spring, it might just be "opportunity." After all, it feels like the sky's the limit when we store winter away, throw open our windows, and enjoy the sun's warmth on our skin. This issue of Good to Be Home encourages you to embrace this feeling by offering expert unpacking tips, suggestions for outdoor improvements, a guide for going minimalist in the busiest room, and more.

Springtime is a popular moving season, and one of the most challenging yet rewarding parts of the process is unpacking your belongings. Discover what a professional mover has to say about how to make the task as efficient and stress-free as possible.

This time of year also provides ample chances for you to improve your outdoor areas. Ideas are plentiful inside with tips for creating an alfresco office space, crafting a water garden, and trying organic lawn care. Plus, check out the pros and cons of gas and electric mowers.

If you're like many people, you've probably noticed how easy it is to accumulate stuff in your kitchen. But take heart: after you read the guide to implementing minimalist design, you might find this room transforming into a bright, clean-lined sanctuary.

How will you take advantage of the opportunities spring affords? As always, it's a pleasure to send you this magazine.

Anet Granger



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MARIETTA, GA 30064



THE ORCHARDS HOTEL Chocolate Chip Cookies

- 6 c. flour
- 1 tbsp. baking soda
- 1 tbsp. salt
- 3 c. margarine
- 2½ c. brown sugar,
firmly packed
- 1 c. granulated sugar
- 5 eggs
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2½ c. semisweet
chocolate chips

Recipe Excerpted from *101 Perfect Chocolate Chip Cookies* by Gwen Steege (Storey Publishing, 2000).



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The Orchards Hotel Chocolate Chip Cookies

MAKES 9 DOZEN COOKIES



Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Combine the flour, baking soda, and salt, and set the mixture aside.

In a large bowl, cream the butter with a large wooden spoon.

Add the brown and granulated sugars, and continue creaming until they're well blended.

Beat in the eggs, one at a time, and the vanilla. Mix in the dry ingredients, using your hands to blend them well. Gently stir in chocolate chips.

Drop by heaping tablespoonfuls onto parchment-lined cookie sheets. Bake for about 8 minutes. Do not overcook.

Place the baking sheet on a rack so that air can circulate under the cookies as they cool, or slide parchment paper, with the cookies still in place, onto racks to cool. When they're completely cool, store them tightly covered.



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GAS VS. ELECTRIC PUSH MOWERS



written by: MATTHEW BRADY

I come from a family that uses gas mowers, and it was my go-to choice for landscaping until recently, when I went out on a limb and went electric. Here's what I've found to be the primary pros and cons of each type and which one ultimately won out.

Convenience

No adding, replacing, and disposing of gas and oil plus no spark plugs, filters, and the like equals an **electric** win, despite having to charge its battery. As a bonus, my electric folds and can be stored or hung upright. That said, a corded version may be more cumbersome to use.

Eco-friendliness

Although there's debate about the negative impact of the battery-making process, forgoing said gas and oil and reducing overall noise pollution still gives the **electric** an environmental edge. (Some states also agree.)

Effort

While gas machines are normally heavier, that weight provides more power. Conversely, the lighter electric lawn mower is easier to push around but can feel flimsy. Both offer self-propelled versions, however, so it's a **tie**.

Performance

For a larger, thicker, or uneven yard, a **gas** mower will likely be your better option. My electric one stalls if it gets overworked, especially in high grass. Then there's the battery, which often needs to be recharged before I'm done mowing my quarter-acre lawn.

Price

The purchase price of gas and electric mowers isn't vastly different, so this mostly comes down to maintenance. The former requires more regular upkeep, as touched on earlier, but the eventual battery replacement of the latter can be quite expensive. Since which ends up costing you more can vary depending on time and mowing frequency, this factor is **incomplete**.

The winner? Electric by a blade. Ultimately, though, your best choice will depend on your and your yard's needs since there are great options on both sides of the lawn mower divide.

A Cleaning Guide for *Your Trickiest Clothing*

written by: LAUREN KIM

If you've been doing laundry most of your life, you likely have a routine down pat. But even the most seasoned pros may stumble over certain items or be washing them incorrectly due to their

unique care requirements. Follow this guide to cleaning some of the more difficult pieces of clothing to help ensure that you get them spick-and-span every time.

Jeans

Let's start with jeans, which are often washed too often according to Levi Strauss & Co. Unless they're noticeably dirty or have an odor, the iconic denim brand recommends laundering them only after every ten wears or so to preserve their original fit. Turn your jeans inside out to prevent color fading before washing them in cold water and on a gentle cycle in your machine. But don't toss them in the dryer, which can cause shrinking; instead, hang them or lay them flat. As a bonus tip, you can spot-treat any stains with a mild soap and damp cloth in between washings.

Socks

Your socks may be some of the smallest items in your laundry basket, but they require more of your attention. For one, wash them in a mesh bag; tossing them into your laundry pile with everything else almost guarantees they'll be separated. Also, turn them inside out so your machine can better remove sweat and bacteria transferred from your skin. Most socks can go in the washer and dryer, but delicate materials like wool should be air-dried to maintain their shape and avoid damage.

Sneakers

Though your sneakers may fare fine in your machines depending on their material, it’s generally recommended to clean them by hand when they start to look or smell a little worse for wear. Start by removing loose dirt with a dry, soft-bristled shoe brush or toothbrush. Then take out the laces and insoles and clean them separately in a solution of mild laundry or dish detergent and water. Give them a rubdown, rinse thoroughly, and blot dry with a cloth. Use the same cleaning solution to scrub the exterior of the shoes with a brush, wiping away the soapy residue with a dry cloth.

To dry, stuff your shoes with paper towels and place them, the laces, and the insoles on a towel indoors. This process may take up to a day or two, but you can speed it up by replacing the paper towels every couple of hours and placing a small fan in front of the items.

Baseball caps

Whether worn to ballgames or on errands, these hats are among America’s favorite headgear. And, yes, they should be washed like everything else you wear. But don’t be fooled by their simple appearance—they require delicate care.

Use a soapy solution and a toothbrush or soft-bristle brush to pretreat stains, then soak your hat in the solution for at least fifteen minutes. Rinse thoroughly, and air-dry by placing it over a bowl to keep its shape.

High-performance activewear

To maintain the elasticity and moisture-wicking properties of your yoga pants and other workout gear, proper care is essential. First and foremost, wash them immediately after each exercise session to prevent odor and bacteria growth. (They can go an extra use if just worn out and about.) To better eliminate smell, presoak your gear in a solution of one part distilled vinegar to four parts water for at least fifteen minutes before washing. Always turn these garments inside out and place them in a mesh laundry bag, using a gentle wash cycle with cool water. Finally, air-dry or tumble-dry on low heat.

By following these general tips, your clothing will likely last longer and look better. Just make sure to always check for care labels so you can give all your favorite threads the proper TLC they deserve.





BRINGING LUXURY TO THE *bathroom*

interview with: SHELAGH CONWAY

written by: ALLISON GOMES

images by: EMILY KEENEY

Shelagh Conway, founder and CEO of Triple Heart Design in Austin, Texas, discusses how she transformed her clients' primary bathroom into a more luxurious and functional space.

Tell us about yourself: I have been doing interior design for a better part of my life, but it took a while to realize I had a knack for it, and I certainly never

thought about doing it as a career. Before, I actually worked a corporate job and would simply renovate houses on my own. Then I ended up renovating houses for my boss; I was working a full-time job while traveling and managing remodeling projects remotely. After about the fifth home, I found that I not only enjoyed it but was also good at it. So I quit my corporate career and opened Triple Heart Design in 2016.



Would you share your design philosophy?

Many times when clients come to me, they want the beauty of a renovation but don’t have a clear understanding of the functional aspects of planning one. In contrast, I’m looking at form, function, and flow before I even get into the aesthetics. I always start with the floor plan, using my 80/20 philosophy—80 percent of the time, a space will work in one particular way for the client, but for the other 20 percent, it has to be flexible and grow with them. I consider how the room will accommodate specific circumstances, whether it’s entertaining guests, hosting family members, or holding playdates.

I also believe that natural materials emit a palpable energy, and I take extra care when picking them to ensure that they match each project I’m working on. For example, when you walk into a room that has marble or granite versus one that is filled with plastic or laminate, it has a significantly different feel. I want to design spaces that have a zen-like quality to them, so I gravitate more toward such materials.

Tell us about this bathroom remodel.
What were the clients’ goals? We actually ended up redoing the three upstairs bathrooms. For the primary bathroom renovation, the clients wanted a luxurious, naturally energetic space with nice finishes, fixtures, and tiles. The main issues with the existing layout were the split vanities, which disrupted the flow of the room, and the underutilized window, so we focused on reconfiguring the space to open it up while also adding more storage. We turned the tub away from the window, created a large walk-in shower and a much longer double vanity with a makeup area for the wife to use, and added a massive cabinet with drawers and doors to provide ample linen storage.



When reworking the layout, did you borrow space from another area in the home? Yes, there was a little alcove at the end of the hall between their bathroom and primary closet. It was a weird niche that was probably designed as some sort of art accent, but it was perfectly located for me to close it off to the hallway and open it into the bathroom.

How did you pick the materials for this project?

I like to use visual and textural interest in the spaces I design, more so than I do a bold accent that automatically draws attention. I chose herringbone tiles for the floor, ran them up the wall in the shower, and mixed them with large-format marble tiles in a similar color palette. It created incredible visual interest in the room but still provided a calming essence, which you can feel when you enter.



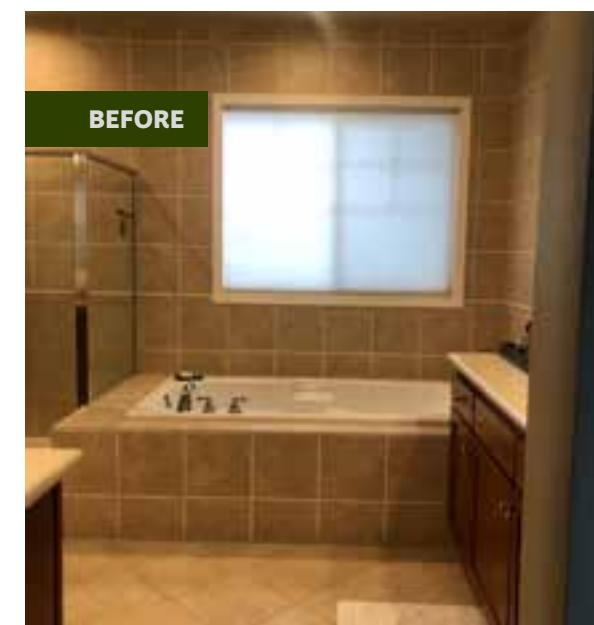


I also like to introduce different metals, so as you scan the room, you'll notice pops of two types—black and champagne bronze—that come out in different areas and help balance the overall theme. I was conscious of the trends at the time, and though brass was very popular, I opted for the champagne bronze instead to bring in a warm ambience. It satisfied the trendy desire for brass while introducing a classic appeal that will remain relevant over time. As a result, the space feels both current and enduring.

Do you have a favorite part of the remodel?

I absolutely love the separation of space between the tub/shower area and the rest of the room. We also added a half wall behind the tub so the clients would have somewhere to put candles to create extra coziness while they're in it. And the window behind the tub, to which we later added a soft Roman shade, produces even more warmth at night. It's those elements that resonate deeply, creating a calming space that addresses the clients' desires and needs.

For more info, visit tripleheartdesign.com



Outdoor Office Oasis *Basics*

written by: LAUREN KIM

Now that the weather is warming up, you might be eager to find ways to spend more time in the sunshine. For those who work from home, setting up a workspace outside can offer an ideal solution—allowing you to enjoy the fresh air while also potentially increasing your focus and boosting your productivity. Use this guide to help you create such a serene space without spending a fortune.

Choose your location

Where you set up your outdoor office will depend on the layout of your yard and your requirements for an optimal work environment. Generally speaking, you'll want a location that is relatively flat, big enough for the furniture you'll need, and as free from distractions as possible. Also consider factors that can reduce your productivity, such as heat and lack of privacy. Your deck or patio may be the best option, especially if either offers some cover, or choose a shady spot in your yard out of view of your neighbors or passersby.

If you can't find somewhere private or out of the sun, don't fret! A retractable awning or a tiltable umbrella can provide adequate cover any time of day, while a privacy





screen can create some seclusion. And as for any sounds that may be a nuisance, a good pair of noise-canceling headphones can turn even the loudest nearby road traffic into a soft hum.

Provide furnishings

You don't need much furniture to assemble a functional workspace—even just a folding chair and collapsible table may work as long as they're sturdy and weatherproof. Just make sure that whatever you choose provides good ergonomic support for your spine and wrists along with a large enough surface for your work needs. If you have the space and budget,

consider also indulging in a luxurious outdoor sofa and a side table to set down a cool drink or energizing snack. Such additions may elevate your workspace to a whole new level of comfort and style.

Stay connected

You likely spend much of your day working on a laptop, so you'll want to ensure that you have the technology necessary to stay connected with your coworkers and the outside world. Ideally, your chosen spot would be near an outlet, but if not, simply acquire an extra-long cord; you could also invest in a

power bank for your devices, double-checking compatibility. Other essentials might include a Wi-Fi extender or mobile hotspot (which your smartphone might provide) and a cooling pad to prevent your laptop from overheating.

Increase your coziness

Incorporating elements that contribute to a soothing environment is key to maximizing your outdoor workspace. Even simple additions like a small pot of fragrant lavender on your desk, a leafy palm in the corner, an easy-to-clean rug beneath your feet, and a tabletop fountain that provides the tranquil sounds of trickling water can turn the space into your own oasis. For a final touch, hang some string lights or fit battery-operated ones to your umbrella to provide a cozy ambience and enough light to work outside even after the sun has set.

Remember, you don't need an expensive setup to enjoy working outside. Start with the essentials, including a chair and small work surface, and gradually include other functional and decorative items as you wish. However you approach it, you'll discover that creating an ideal outdoor work area for yourself is well worth the effort.



making a **LONG-TERM Selling Plan**

written by: MATTHEW BRADY

In life, preparation is a great motivator and stress reducer, especially when a lot is at stake. After all, the more time you have for planning a wedding, purchasing a car, or setting up a fund for your kids' college education, the better. This reality also applies to selling your house. While you don't have to worry about saving like with a home purchase, there are a number of factors that can make a long-term approach ideal. Discover some of the upsides of doing so and how to create an optimal game plan.



The benefits

When it comes to selling in real estate, there’s a generally agreed-upon timeline: it’s recommended that you live in your home for at least three to five years first, for both fiscal reasons and pragmatic ones. Financially, a home’s value will often creep up, or appreciate, during that time span, making it more valuable, while waiting gives you the opportunity to build equity on the property. Both realities can increase your net profit upon selling, even after factoring in fees like closing costs and commissions.

Holding off can also result in a tax benefit since you can avoid paying capital gains tax on any profit you gain from the sale. The general conditions to qualify for this exemption: you must have owned your home for five years, it must have been your primary residence for two of those years, and you can make no more than \$250,000 on the sale (or double that if married).

From a practical perspective, having years instead of months at your disposal gives you ample time to both get a lay of the land and prepare your place for maximum selling potential. When you aren’t rushed to get it listed, you become more able to make levelheaded decisions about which changes you want to make and which you’ll forgo. (More on that later.) You can also stagger your repairs and updates, making it easier to get them all done and absorb the total cost.



How to plan the perfect sale

A good starting point in determining when you want to sell is to take a bird’s-eye view of the current market and your home’s value to get a gauge of your window of opportunity. For example, say you bought your property in 2022 for \$300,000 and realtor.com says its current estimated price is \$375,000, which fares favorably to similar local homes. Since you’d be at the edge of the three-to-five-year ownership mark, you could realistically consider selling within the next year rather than waiting the full five years to take advantage of your home’s present value.

In contrast, if you discover that it’s now only worth \$280,000 or that a buyer’s market is emerging, it could be a sign to hold off for a few more years or longer. That will give you even more time to boost your home’s value through high-ROI upgrades or for the market to shift in your favor.

Making home improvements

Once you establish when you may want to go to market, you can start making a thorough checklist of what you could do to improve your home to pique interest down the road. Inside and out, look at your spaces from the critical eyes of a buyer, considering questions such as the following in both the needs and wants categories.

Needs

- Does the carpet throughout need to be cleaned, stretched, or replaced?
- Is the HVAC unit more than a decade old or the roof approaching three decades?
- Has your landscaping seen better days?

Wants

- Does the front door cry out for a sturdier, more eye-pleasing replacement?
- Is there faded paint and nail holes that make the home feel too lived in?
- Do the light fixtures give off a 1990s vibe?



Start by making minor repairs yourself, such as adding a fresh coat of paint to your living room or fixing a leaky toilet, while scheduling out the jobs best left for professionals. And remember that this is a race and not a sprint—you don't have to get it all done at once!

To ultimately determine if the three-to-five-year math adds up for you, it's critical that you consult with your real estate

agent, especially about the current and near-future markets and the best potential return on investment. Also consider contacting your financial adviser concerning the capital gains tax. Overall, though, if you are afforded the luxury of taking a long-term approach to selling, the odds are that your stress will decrease while the benefits you receive will only compound.



the secrets to Stress-Free Unpacking

interview with: DAN MCLAUGHLIN **written by:** ANDRE RIOS
photography by: TWO MEN AND A TRUCK/GEOFF SHIRLEY

There's almost no process quite as intensive or exhausting as moving into a new home. But before you can sigh with satisfaction and settle in comfortably, you must endure a less-than-exciting task: unpacking. If this phase of moving incites stress, try using this practical advice courtesy of Dan McLaughlin, senior director of sales and business development for TWO MEN AND A TRUCK® of Twin Cities and Western Wisconsin.

What can people do before moving to make unpacking easier? Make sure to mark all your boxes with important details, including which room each one was packed in, what piece of furniture items came from (dressers, hutches, curio cabinets, and so on), and whether there's anything

fragile. Also, if you have items that you are going to need right away, put them in a box labeled as such and pack it last so you can unload it first.

What might you want to pack in such a box?

Toiletries will be necessary right away. Bedding is also essential; moving day will be exhausting, and you'll want your bed to be ready for that first night. And don't forget about your internet. You'll need to know where the modem, router, and power cables are located to assist the internet technician.

What are the most common mistakes people make when moving? Many customers overlook their driveways during moves. For instance, if the house is brand-new, the concrete is also sometimes new and only able to support cars,

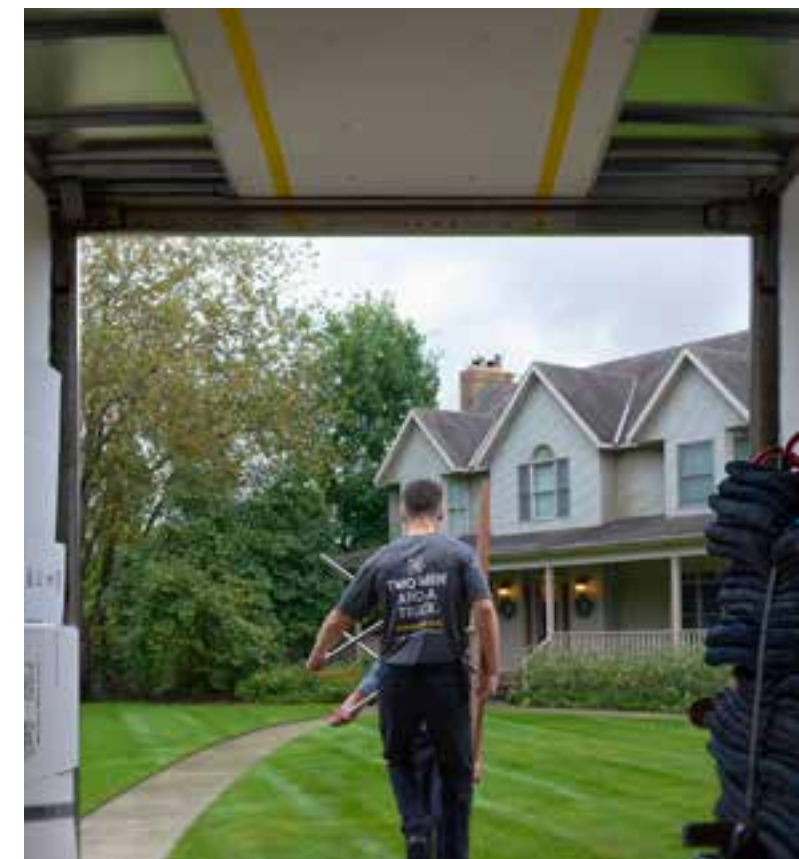


not moving trucks. We've trained our teams of movers to ask about the curing time before we arrive.

Additionally, customers often don't have a full understanding of their new home's layout. There may be a steep driveway, difficult entryways, or sharp turns. And the layout is typically different from their prior home, so some furniture may not fit into each room the way they hoped.

How do you tackle unpacking a larger home?

The first step is to stack all boxes that belong to a certain room within that room when unloading. Having items accessible in the right place will make the unpacking process go much faster and smoother. Do not overcrowd the room, though; make sure to leave yourself a workable area. You should also establish



one space for all empty boxes to be accumulated, such as out in the garage or the living room. This will make it easier to get them out of your house when you're finished.

What other unpacking tips would you like to share?

Do not overload your boxes. Most have a maximum weight limit, so be careful not to exceed it; for instance, bigger boxes should be used for large but light items like pillows and decorative goods. You should be able to move your boxes around as needed, especially if you're unpacking by yourself. If you would struggle to move one across a room, it may be too heavy.

Finally, moving is a great opportunity to start fresh. Take this time to clean house! If you haven't used some items for over a year, get rid of them. Use a haul-away service—such as our sister company, Two Men and a Junk Truck—for assistance. Doing so prior to moving will prevent you from having to spend time packing them beforehand and then throwing them away later.

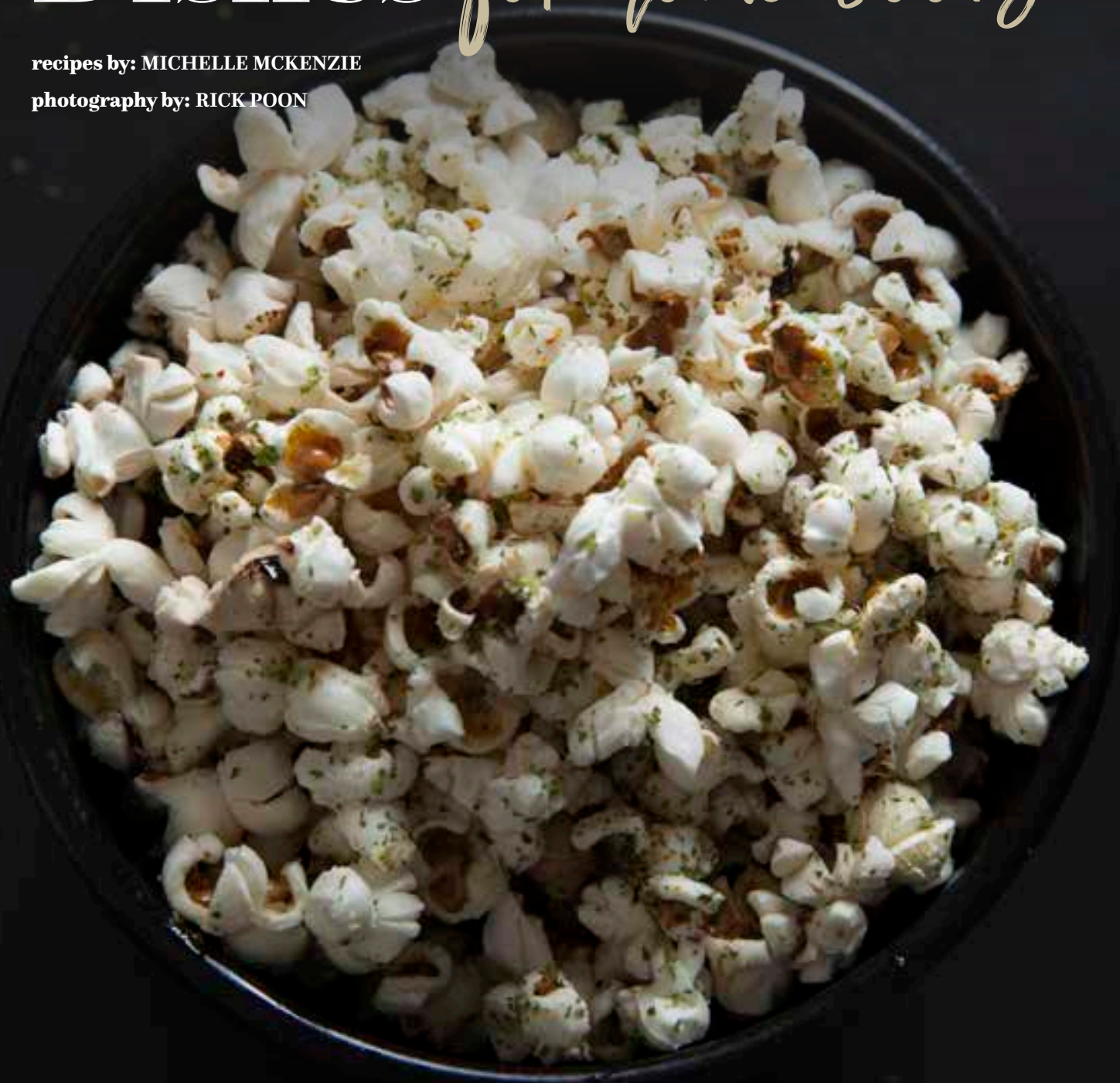
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Pantry-Based Dishes *for home cooks*

recipes by: MICHELLE MCKENZIE

photography by: RICK POON



Discover the power of your pantry with these recipes from *The Modern Larder*, a cookbook that takes commonly stored-away ingredients and turns them into simple yet delicious culinary masterpieces.

8 Cups; 4 to 6 Servings

Popcorn *with nori, citrus, and rosemary*

Popcorn is a snack that somehow seems light and indulgent at the same time. It is welcome at any time and for every occasion. Buttered and salted, popcorn is very good. But it is made remarkable when showered with a striking mix of nori, citrus zest, and fresh rosemary. Make more of this seasoning than you need and sprinkle it on fried eggs, cold soba noodles, green salads, grilled vegetables, or fish.

ingredients:

- ½ cup nori powder, store-bought or homemade
- Zest of 1 orange or yuzu (use a Microplane for best results)
- ½ chile de arbol, thinly sliced
- 1 sprig rosemary, leaves finely chopped
- ¼ teaspoon fine sea salt
- 8 cups (½ cup kernels) freshly popped popcorn

instructions:

1. Place all the ingredients (except the popped popcorn) in a spice grinder and pulse until well combined. Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 1 week. Add ¼ cup seasoning to freshly popped popcorn and toss lightly to combine.



SCAN QR CODE
for the full cookbook.

Recipes from *The Modern Larder* by Michelle McKenzie.
Roost Books, an imprint of Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2021.
Recipe photographs © Rick Poon.

Whole Roasted Eggplant

with tahini, crispy chickpeas, and sumac

Eggplant is one of my favorite vegetables—I could fill an entire book with recipes singing its praises, and I don't see why it can't be the star of the show rather than just a supporting act. In this large-format dish, whole eggplants cook until slightly charred on the outside and meltingly tender within. Tahini adds much-needed richness and creaminess, crispy chickpeas add texture (and protein), and lemon and sumac bring brightness. I consider this a lovely vegetarian main course, but it could also serve as a side dish for chicken, lamb, or fish. Any leftovers can be blitzed into a fine eggplant dip in the food processor (add an ice cube for the smoothest result) and refrigerated for up to 3 days.

ingredients:

- 4 medium eggplants (each approximately 12 ounces)—Listada or similar egg-shaped variety such as Globe
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup olive oil, plus more to serve
- Fine sea salt
- 3 cups cooked chickpeas, homemade or canned, drained and patted dry with paper towels
- 1 tablespoon sumac
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon
- 2 cups tahini sauce
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup coarsely chopped flat-leaf parsley

instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 475°F and line 2 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper (make sure the parchment fits inside the pan; at this high temperature, any overhang could burn). Peel the eggplants, leaving stems attached; on each, poke the center of the base a few times with a fork or cake tester and divide between the 2 pans. Toss each eggplant with 2 tablespoons olive oil and a pinch of salt, massaging the salt into the flesh a little as you work. Create space between the 2 eggplants on each pan and roast for 40 to 50 minutes, turning the eggplants every 10 to 15 minutes to get even browning on all sides. Remove from oven and set aside.
2. Meanwhile, heat a 12- to 14-inch sauté pan over medium-high heat and add the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil. Once the oil is shimmering, add the chickpeas and a pinch of salt. Pan-fry the chickpeas, stirring occasionally, for 8 to 10 minutes, or until crispy (as they crisp up, a few may pop out of the pan like popcorn). Lower the heat slightly, add the sumac, and cook just 1 minute more. Taste and add more salt, as needed.
3. Season each eggplant with a squeeze of lemon. Place on warmed plates or in shallow bowls and top the center of the base of each eggplant with a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup tahini sauce. Top the tahini sauce with a heaping $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sumac-coated, crispy chickpeas. Drizzle a little olive oil around the sides of the eggplant and top the olive oil with a sprinkling of chopped parsley. Serve at once.





2 to 3 Servings

Pan-Seared Rib Eye

with black garlic ghee

I believe two things separate a mediocre steak from a great one: quality of meat and technique. And my technique is always the same: dry brine, temper, pan sear, baste with ghee, then rest with more ghee. I do occasionally, however, vary the basting mix. Here, black garlic steps in, its molasses-like sweetness and subtle tang accentuating that intensely savory beefy flavor of the choice rib eye.

Tip—Be sure to leave 24 hours for brining the steak.

ingredients:

- One 1¾-inch-thick bone-in rib eye (approximately 1½ pounds)
- Fine sea salt
- 4 black garlic cloves
- ⅓ teaspoon fine sea salt, plus more for seasoning the rib eye
- 3 tablespoons ghee or unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- Flaky sea salt

instructions:

1. Season the steak generously with salt. Place on a rack set over a pan or plate and refrigerate overnight.
2. Put the black garlic in a small bowl; add a pinch of salt and use a fork to smash it into a paste. Add the ghee and use a spoon to mix thoroughly.
3. Pull the steak from the fridge 45 to 60 minutes before you plan to cook. Rub oil on the steak. Heat a 10- to 12-inch heavy-bottomed skillet, preferably cast iron, over medium-high heat for 1 full minute (it should be scorching hot). Cook the steak, turning every 3 minutes or so, until a dark brown crust forms on both sides and the internal temperature is a few degrees below your favored doneness (120 to 125°F for medium-rare), about 10 minutes.
4. Turn down the heat to medium and wait for about 30 seconds before adding 2 tablespoons black garlic ghee to skillet. Tilt the pan toward you so that the ghee pools on one side, and use a large spoon to continually baste the steak with ghee for about 1 minute. Transfer the steak to a rimmed plate or large shallow bowl and top with the remaining black garlic ghee. Let the steak rest 6 to 10 minutes.
5. Transfer the steak to a cutting board, reserving any buttery juices on the plate. Use a sharp knife to cut 1-inch slices of steak—always slicing against the grain. Pour the melted black garlic ghee from the rimmed plate over the steak and sprinkle with flaky sea salt.

4 to 6 Servings (as a Side Dish)

Charred Cucumber

and shiso quick pickles

Charring cucumbers may seem like an odd move, but it is a quick way to make the familiar interesting again. They retain their refreshing quality—with additional brightness from the vinegar—but they become a shade darker, more savory in flavor, and almost meaty in texture.

ingredients:

- 1 to 1¼ pounds Persian cucumbers (approximately 5 small)
- 1 to 2 tablespoons neutral vegetable oil (such as cold-pressed rice bran oil or grapeseed oil)
- Fine sea salt
- 1 tablespoon vinegar (rice wine, white wine, champagne, or red wine)
- ½ cup (loosely packed) shiso sprouts, or 6–8 shiso leaves cut into 1-inch squares

instructions:

1. Halve the cucumbers lengthwise and then again, crosswise. Set a 12- or 14-inch heavy-bottomed skillet, preferably cast iron, over high heat and add the oil. Swirl the oil around the pan until no bald spots remain. Place the cucumbers in the skillet cut side down and char 4 to 5 minutes (you may have to do this in batches so as to not overcrowd your skillet; add more oil between batches if the skillet seems dry). Transfer the cucumbers to a rimmed plate or baking sheet and sprinkle with salt and vinegar. Let cool to room temperature. Taste, and add more salt, if needed. Toss gently and then shower on shiso sprouts or shiso leaves. Stack in small serving bowls.



organic LAWN CARE MADE SIMPLE

written by:
ALLISON GOMES

When the first weeds appear in your yard this season, you may be tempted to reach for the synthetic weed killer you got from your local gardening store. But while it's sure to quickly zap those pesky intruders, it may not be the best option for you, your lawn, and the environment. Luckily, there is a healthier alternative—organic lawn care. By embracing natural

methods, you can not only create a safer outdoor space for your family but also contribute to the overall well-being of the planet.

What is organic lawn care?

Organic lawn care is a holistic approach to maintaining your lawn without relying on harsh synthetic chemicals. It includes prioritizing all-natural products like organic

fertilizers and compost to enrich the soil with essential nutrients, help improve its overall structure, and promote plant health. Additionally, it encourages the use of natural weed-control methods like pulling or spreading corn gluten meal. Together, these practices create a sustainable and balanced ecosystem in your yard, resulting in a greener, healthier lawn that is ultimately safer for the people and pets who come in contact with it.





Making the transition

When swapping to all-natural lawn care, first test your soil to better understand its current pH and nutrient levels. Knowing where it's lacking will help you determine what amendments you can add to improve its overall health. You can purchase a soil-testing kit online or through a local nursery or university.

Once you have your game plan, prep your lawn by pulling any visible weeds, mowing your grass to about two inches, and aerating the soil to allow air, water, and nutrients to better penetrate it. You can then add whatever compost or organic fertilizer will serve it best. Such an amendment will slowly release nutrients into the soil and provide your grass with what it needs to stay healthy and grow deep roots.



Maintaining your yard

It's best to mow your grass with sharp blades and leave it between three to four inches tall in spring and summer; the taller it is, the more it shades the soil, thereby keeping it moist and reducing weed growth. As a general rule, don't cut more than one-third of the grass each time you mow to avoid putting additional stress on it. You can also leave the clippings on your lawn to let them decompose and release nutrients back into the soil.

Another key step is to water your lawn deeply but infrequently, at least once a week depending on the amount of rainfall in your area. Early morning is generally the best time since the

sun won't be as intense, causing less evaporation. As for weed control, hand-pull or use tools to remove any as soon as you notice them, cutting them off before they have a chance to take root. You can also apply a layer of corn gluten meal in spring to better prevent their germination.

Organic lawn care is a sustainable practice that benefits both your home and the planet. By focusing on soil health and implementing natural practices, you can achieve a beautiful, healthy yard to create a safe and eco-friendly outdoor space.

how to get your **Dream Minimalist Kitchen**

written by: LAUREN KIM

Whether you're seeking an uncluttered, organized kitchen or have an open floor plan and want it to blend seamlessly with your other living areas, a minimalist design may just be the way to go. Its sleek surfaces and lack of ornamentation can provide clear and tidy workspaces, while its simple lines can create the illusion of space. In short, it both performs well and looks good.

You may imagine that developing such a highly functional, aesthetically pleasing space will exhaust your budget, but that doesn't have to be the case. Whether you're building a new home or making over your current one, these ideas can help you get the look you want without an extensive renovation.

Neutral color palette

A chief hallmark of minimalist kitchens is their peaceful ambience. To achieve this vibe, avoid colors that are too bright or distracting, instead painting your walls white or a soft hue like sage or greige. Likewise, opt for a simple backsplash composed of sleek glass or large ceramic tiles in a neutral shade. Of course, if you like bold colors, you don't have to forgo them entirely. Simply bring them in sparingly, such as with a brighter rug, curtains, or countertop decor, making sure to pick tones that complement the rest of your design. This will give your kitchen a nice pop of color without marring the refined look you desire.

Simple floors and lighting

Grounding your kitchen with wood or stone floors, or ones that look like such, can boost its warmth and elegance. For example, hardwood and luxury vinyl floors provide a light, smooth appearance, while large-format ceramic or porcelain floor tiles resembling pale stone or concrete offer a contemporary touch that suits a neutral color scheme.

As for lighting, bring in as much sunlight as you can, either by hanging roller shades or blinds that can be opened easily or eliminating window coverings altogether. Additionally, instead of a traditional chandelier, consider installing a sculptural one with metallic finishes, transparent glass, and exposed bulbs; the simpler shape and muted tones will better suit a minimalist design. Or for an even cleaner look, opt for recessed lights that blend into the ceiling. And choose high-performance LED bulbs, which may allow you to minimize the number of light fixtures needed in your space.

Simple cabinetry

Cabinets are a standout element in any kitchen, so make sure to give yours some consideration. Depending on your budget, you could swap them out for simple, flat-front ones in a light wood such as white or maple. Leave them unadorned without knobs, or select something sleek like chrome bar pulls; aim to match them with your sink hardware for a comprehensive look. Alternatively, you can get a minimalist feel for less by keeping your existing cabinetry and updating your more vintage knobs with less conspicuous ones.





Uncluttered countertops

Like your cabinets, your countertops are a main focal point of the space and can make or break your kitchen's design. An unassuming shade like gray or white will lend an unfussy vibe, whether you go with quartz, marble, or laminate. For an uncomplicated appearance, seek a surface with little to no veining or speckling, and consider installing an undermount sink. Just as important, always keep your counters as neat as possible, tucking away items you don't often use in your pantry or cabinets.

Limited belongings

As indicated, your kitchen can only fully reflect a minimalist, "less is more" aesthetic if it's well organized. Therefore, pare down your dishes, glasses, pots, and kitchen tools as much as you can, keeping only what you need so they can fit neatly inside your storage spaces. You could even organize a swap with friends and family—exchanging duplicate or no-longer-used items for ones you're missing. Another option is to sell what you don't want, such as on Facebook Marketplace, and put your proceeds toward something more useful, such as shelf organizers to help you keep your cabinets tidy.

Achieving a minimalist design doesn't have to be complicated. With a few changes, you may find that you can easily make over even a highly traditional kitchen into one that exudes both grace and efficiency.

CREATING A HOME

written by:
ANDRE RIOS

Water Garden

With its gently lapping ripples, lush plant life thriving on the edges, and light-dappled surface, a water garden adds an invaluable calming element to any yard. Whether you're up for DIY installation or decide to work with a professional, follow this guide to craft one that elevates your landscaping and takes your visitors' breath away.

DECIDING ON A DESIGN

Water gardens are endlessly versatile, so your design choices are only as limited as your imagination. Do you dream of something quaint like a flowery fairy garden or something functional like a stone-lined drainage system? Would you prefer to mechanize your feature for continuous flow or let the water sit tranquil and undisturbed?

If these myriad options make your head spin, start by selecting a theme, looking to your own home for inspiration. For example, an elaborate stone fountain would be an excellent focal point in an old-fashioned estate yard, whereas a lily pad pond might pair nicely with a quaint house built from natural materials. Get creative using a pen and paper to draw up your concept, working with a professional landscaper to craft exacting details if desired.

SELECTING A LOCATION

The next step is to find the ideal spot for your water feature. If you're pursuing a drainage solution, identify areas where water tends to collect after a watering or rainfall. Likewise, if you intend to generate flow, choose a position closer to your house so you can easily wire electricity to power machines like filters and pumps. Whatever your concept, you'll want a place that receives a balance of full sun and shade. Just don't get too

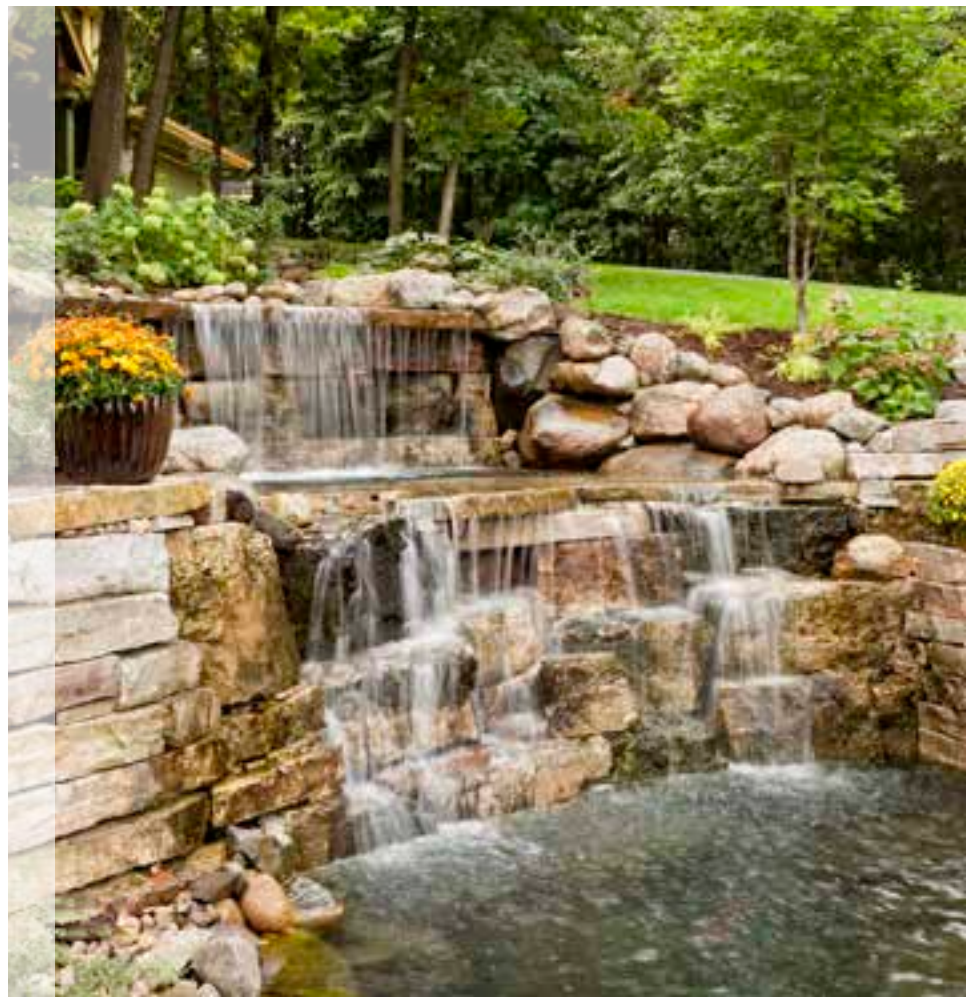
close to mature trees—some deep digging will be involved, and you won't want to damage their roots.

CHOOSING MATERIALS

Before breaking ground on your project, you'll need to determine which materials to use. Naturally, these choices will affect your feature's durability, water resistance, and overall appearance, so shop carefully. Consider, for instance, a liner made from polyvinyl chloride (PVC) or ethylene propylene diene monomer (EPDM) to prevent water leakage if you plan to dig and form a pond from scratch. As for finishing materials, you can't go wrong with options like pond stones, which are natural looking and hardy, or flagstone pavers, which will make the garden feel more inviting.

PRACTICING CARE

The last step is installation, a process that may be more or less time-consuming and complex depending on the feature and whether you tackle it yourself. But once your water garden is all set up, you can kick back and revel in its tranquility. Just don't get too caught up idling—to remain attractive, sanitary, and functional, this feature will require occasional ongoing maintenance. This may include cleaning skimmers and applying water treatment solutions. But as with any other component of your landscaping, your hard work will reward you with a serene natural vista and breathtaking outdoor centerpiece.





Cheers!

TO SALTY DOG COCKTAILS

Whether you make the classic salty dog or try one of these flavor twists, this cold and refreshing cocktail is a must for summer.



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measure

- Fruit slice
- Coarse sea salt (for the rim)
- 1 c. crushed ice
- 1 c. red grapefruit juice, freshly squeezed
- 3 oz. quality vodka
- Mint leaves, for garnish (optional)

shake

1. Using the fruit slice, wet the rim of a glass. Dip it into the sea salt.
2. Fill the glass with the crushed ice.
3. In a shaker, combine the juice and vodka, and shake well.
4. Pour into the glass, and garnish with the fruit slice or a few mint leaves.



Not a grapefruit fan? You can make different variations of this drink by using half the grapefruit juice and replacing the other half with either strawberry juice or watermelon juice.

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