

Your Home&Garden

HOME SOLUTIONS



Determine the tree's purpose first, then plant

Q: What considerations should homeowners make when planting their own tree?

A: It is best to forecast ahead five to 10 years — this way, a homeowner knows exactly what they should expect out of their decision. Ask, “What do I need the tree to do for me? Do I need it for shade, ornament, privacy, sentimental or others reasons?”

The first one to two years of a tree's life, it grows very little and is establishing its root system. Proper fertilization and pruning is essential in giving the tree the tools to succeed. After a few years, most trees will take care of themselves with little to no maintenance involved.

Live oaks or sycamores should be in areas where they can stretch out and grow nice canopies, and magnolias or elms can be used in smaller areas. Understory trees can be placed in mostly any area of the yard, as their size is usually controlled by some type of pruning effect.

Red cedar, bamboo or podocarpus can be used to create a stately privacy feel and can be pretty much anywhere in the yard. Flowering trees like purple leaf plums and European olives are visually stunning and can be used in most places of the yard.

— Will Martinez, owner,
The Greenery Nursery and Garden Center
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DO IT YOURSELF



THROUGH THE WOODS FINE WOOD FLOORS, INC.

Dot the i's and cross the t's for a quality hardwood floor finish.

Hardwood floor face-lift

■ Refinishing requires thoroughness, patience

By NICK KOTECKI

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Revamping that lackluster hardwood floor can be difficult when going it alone. In worst cases, it's a nightmare.

“Do your homework,” said Dennis Prieur, owner of Tampa-based Through the Woods Fine Wood Floors. “Whether you are talking to a wood-flooring professional, [or] whether you are talking to a supplier, almost all companies have a technical desk and will give you some information.”

Prieur recommends researching the process. Paying a contractor to oversee the most crucial stages of the job is also a possibility.

Probably the easiest part of the process is applying a new coat of polyurethane, the finish that preserves and protects the wood. Here's a very basic run through:

The first thing to do is to give the floor a thorough cleaning, making sure no water or wax is on the boards. Next



The floors must be cleaned, sanded and, if desired, stained before the sealant is applied.

comes a light sanding. “You're not trying to sand through the polyurethane,” said Prieur, “you're trying to sand it enough so the new coat will adhere.” Last comes applying the polyurethane, which can be oil-based or water-based. How long the coat must set depends on the brand and type used, so consult the instructions.

Do-it-yourself work on hardwood floors might not be for the faint of heart do-it-yourselfer, but then again, “there is no shortcut for hands-on experience,” said Prieur.

AT A GLANCE



MR. PATIO

Concrete patios are easy to install and can add hours of enjoyment to your backyard.

Pouring a patio

By NICK KOTECKI

TAMPA.BLOCKSHOPPER.COM

There's an easy way and a hard way to install an 8-by-10-foot patio.

The hard way involves something like 45 bags of concrete, at \$4 and 80 pounds per bag, mixing it by hand then slugging it all into place.

The easy way involves a U-cart, or a miniature cement mixer that can hitch to a car, and already mixed concrete from a local supplier. The easy way only costs about \$150.

“This method is actually cheaper than mixing it and does not require hand-mixing,” said Bill Bellford, vice president of sales at Mr. Patio Concrete. “Anything bigger than one yard of concrete would require delivery by truck.”

It's advisable to have everything in its right place before the pour.

“Concrete, unlike other building materials, has a time limit. You have approximately one hour to get it in,” said Bellford. No cheating either. Tricks like adding water to keep it pliable will only weaken the concrete.

“Set up a string line with your stakes to not only your outside measurements, but to the needed height of the concrete being poured,” Bellford advises.

Making simple patches to cracks could be necessary but is less than ideal. If near a tree or the job is not well considered and planned, cracking will be inevitable. After all, “Concrete is a very permanent solution,” said Bellford.