

A woman with blonde hair and sunglasses is sitting in a red office chair on a striped outdoor rug. She is wearing a blue blazer and light blue jeans, and is talking on a phone while holding a black mug. In front of her is a round black table with a laptop, a water bottle, and other office supplies. The setting is a sunny backyard with a wooden fence and trees in the background.

Winnipeg Free Press

SPACES

SUMMER 2021

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SPACES

SUMMER 2021

Our homes have become more vital to us than ever before. Inside spaces have done double-duty. But what about your outdoor spaces?

Say goodbye to foldable lawn chairs with frayed edging, lawn darts with liability issues and stubby bottles of skunky beer. The outdoors has evolved. Your outdoor spaces can, too.

This issue of Spaces will share the glories of a backyard oasis; how to create the perfect outdoor office; the wonders of a bird-friendly yard and how to make a safe, fun “catio” space for your kitty.

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MEET THE DESIGNERS OF STUDIO ONE ELEVEN: TAMARA NYYSOLA AND KELLI JOHNSON. PHOTO BY DARCY FINLEY

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Must-have MUDROOMS

BY JENNIFER MCFEE

MUDROOMS RANK HIGH AS A MUST-HAVE FEATURE TO KEEP MUCK AND MESS FROM MIGRATING THROUGHOUT YOUR HOUSE.



HOOKS ARE ALSO USED FREQUENTLY TO HANG BACKPACKS, PURSES AND OTHER BAGS, AS WELL AS UMBRELLAS. IT IS NICE TO HAVE DRAWERS FOR STORAGE OF A FEW TOOLS, FLASHLIGHTS AND KEYS.

Chris Carroll, owner of Tailored Living serving Winnipeg, describes a mudroom as a transitional space from the outdoors to the indoors. It's designed as an area to remove outdoor gear without bringing dirty dripping items into your home.

"It has evolved over the years to accommodate more lifestyles, particularly to reduce chaos in the mornings and after school with children," he said. "It is a less formal entrance to the home, usually now off the garage."

The primary purpose is to add a space with durable finishes that are easy to clean while also offering an area to organize items that aren't stored in other parts of the home — such as outerwear, school or work

gear, keys, umbrellas and even sports equipment.

"There will be space for dry footwear storage, as well as a place for wet footwear where it will be out of the way of traffic and opening and closing of doors. Jackets can either be hung on hooks or rods, many times a mixture of both," he said.

"Hooks are also used frequently to hang backpacks, purses and other bags, as well as umbrellas. It is nice to have drawers for storage of a few tools, flashlights and keys. Baskets are useful for the storage of wet mitts and gloves. Most designs incorporate a bench, with or without cubbies above and shoe storage or drawers below."

► STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



MOST DESIGNS INCORPORATE A BENCH, WITH OR WITHOUT CUBBIES ABOVE AND SHOE STORAGE OR DRAWERS BELOW.



DOG SHOWERS ARE ALSO BECOMING POPULAR. THIS AREA COULD INCLUDE A TRAY OR BE BUILT INTO A TILE FLOOR SYSTEM WHERE YOU COULD WASH OFF A PAIR OF BOOTS OR CLEAN YOUR DOG'S PAWS.

► STORY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Depending on the design of the house, the space might also include laundry appliances and cleaning supplies.

"They are also a great place to have a drop zone for things coming in and out of the house," Carroll said.

"Hooks and finishes are becoming more upscale as it is an important area of the home for a family."

Consultations are key to creating the ideal mudroom to meet the needs of your household.

"When we consult, we discuss things such as the overall outerwear storage situation to determine where things should best be placed. Of course, space in a home

has constraints, along with the space for a mudroom," Carroll said. "Pinterest pictures are nice but cannot be used alone to design a mudroom."

Warren Koop, partner in Alair Homes, offers some creative ideas for making the most of this utilitarian space.

"The idea is locker-room storage, and it can take a thousand different forms. We see clients becoming increasingly more interested in doing things like tile or heated tile, which is very easy to clean if you have wet or dirty boots. Another idea is to put in a skylight or sun tunnel to bring some natural light into the space," he said.

"Dog showers are also becoming popular. This area could include a tray or be built into a tile floor system where you could wash off a pair of boots or clean your dog's paws."

If you're thinking of installing a mudroom, Koop recommends enlisting the skills of an interior designer and also ensuring that all required permits are in place.

"The most critical piece is to plan your space and then look at doing construction," he said. "You never want to start a project without having a complete set of drawings and a plan."

THE OUTSTANDING OUTDOOR OFFICE

DESIGN AND CONTENT BY
KELLI JOHNSON AND TAMARA NYYSOLA

Working from home appears here to stay. As another beautiful Manitoba summer approaches, we have five tips to create a comfortable and inspired work-from-home environment at your cottage or in the backyard this summer.

SHOP THE LOOK

1. Outdoor Rug
flatlandersflooring.com
2. Umbrella
luxefurniture.ca
3. Do Not Disturb Sign
darcimadlung.com
4. Ergonomic Chair
coi.bz
5. Laptop Stand
apple.com
6. Stella Breeze 48" Table
luxefurniture.ca

► STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



SAVVY TECH

Wi-Fi and improved technology allows us to work from nearly anywhere.

SET THE SCENE

Carve out space in your backyard or cottage by setting temporary boundaries. An indoor/outdoor rug, umbrella, moveable planters can define edges. Don't forget your "Do Not Disturb" sign.

KEEP SMART STORAGE

Keep work items close to you with an outdoor-safe shelf or handy mobile cart.



PHOTO BY DARCY FINLEY

SHOP THE LOOK:

► STORY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

- 7. Draft Caddy Set eq3.com
- 8. Mobile Dining Cart luxefurniture.ca
- 9. HAY Sowden Water Bottles coi.bz
- 10. Uma Sound LED Lantern with Bluetooth anthonyallan.com
- 11. CANVAS Provinces Recycled Outdoor Toss Cushions canadiantire.ca
- 12. Magis Spun Chair coi.bz
- 13. Lift Stool hutk.ca
- 14. GSI Double Wall Glass mec.ca

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ADAPT TO THE ELEMENTS

While often serene, the outdoors also brings challenges. Be prepared for a Manitoba summer. Have an umbrella. Use a glare screen on your laptop. Keep paper weights handy. And that coffee needs a bug-resistant travel mug.



PHOTO BY DARCY FINLEY

ERGONOMIC OPTIONS MATTER

The top of your computer screen should be eye level. Elbows and legs are best when bent at 90 degrees, with feet flat on the ground. Choose adjustable chairs. And adjustable laptop stands and lumbar supports work well, too.



PHOTO BY DARCY FINLEY



PHOTO BY KELLI JOHNSON

- 15. Hot Mesh Lounge Chair & Ottoman hutk.ca
- 16. Follow Me Lantern hutk.ca
- 17. Swole Pull Up Table hutk.ca

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THE BEAUTY OF BACKYARD BIRDING

“SPRING MIGRATION IS AN IDEAL TIME TO START BIRD FEEDING AND BIRD WATCHING”



“THE REALLY WONDERFUL THING ABOUT BIRD FEEDING IS IT ALLOWS US TO BRING NATURE HOME AND CONNECT WITH THE WILD WORLD RIGHT IN OUR OWN BACKYARD.”

- Meredith Stoesz

BY JENNIFER MCFEE

The pastime of backyard birding has taken flight with new enthusiasts flocking to the hobby.

Meredith Stoesz, assistant manager of Wild Birds Unlimited Nature Shop, said bird feeding had already become one of the fastest-growing hobbies across North America — and then the pandemic boosted its popularity sky high.

“I believe many of us were able to slow down, take a deep breath and really appreciate the world around us during lockdown. It also provided a sense of calm when the rest of the world didn’t feel calm at all,” she said.

“Extra time spent outdoors meant more time connecting with the natural world. The really wonderful thing about bird feeding is it allows us to bring nature home and connect with the wild world right in our own backyard.”

Spring migration is an ideal time to start bird feeding and bird watching, Stoesz added.

“About 90 per cent of birds in Manitoba migrate south for the winter to escape the weather as well as dwindling food sources,” she said.

“May is a great month to be watching birds because the diversity of species coming back through southern Manitoba is high. Some species nest in the boreal forest, and on their way there, they need to stop for snacks.”

When birds fly over your yard, they’re looking for water and a food source, as well as shelter such as trees and bushes. They also seek places to raise young, like nesting boxes or different layers of foliage.

“Adding bird feeders brings in the birds nice and close,” she said. “But going the extra mile and using high-quality food will not only bring in more diversity but will also reduce the amount of food wasted.”

Black oil sunflower seed is a favourite choice of seed-eating birds and the simplest food to offer, she added.

“If you want to expand your bird feeding operation, you can diversify the food you are offering and the way you offer it. Suet feeders are great for attracting woodpeckers, tray feeders are a bird and human favourite, and seed cylinders are a long-lasting convenient buffet for the birds,” Stoesz said.

“Also, adding a source of water like a bird bath and planting native plant species will encourage a higher diversity of birds to visit your yard.”

This time of year, common backyard birds include black-capped chickadees, white-breasted nuthatches, downy woodpeckers and blue jays. You might also spot American goldfinch, chipping sparrows, house finches, rose-breasted grosbeak, Baltimore oriole and ruby-throated hummingbird.

For Stoesz, the appeal of bird watching

stems from the connection to nature that sets your spirits soaring— both in your backyard and beyond.

“It’s also a really relaxing activity. Once you’ve started bird watching or bird feeding, it’s hard to stop. It inspires us to create better habitats for the birds in our yards, which in turn provides food and shelter for a variety of different wildlife,” she said.

“It also encourages us to explore and look for different species of birds you might not be able to find in your backyard. So we head out and explore our big Manitoba backyard, which is wonderful.”



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"COLOUR REALLY HELPS TO LIFT THE SPIRITS. WHEN CHOOSING YOUR BACKYARD PLANTS, TOSS OUT THE RULES — JUST PLANT WHATEVER COLOURS MAKE YOUR HEART SING."

- Nicole Bent, one of the owners of Shelmerdine Garden Centre

YOUR YARD, YOUR SANCTUARY

BY JENNIFER MCFEE

Most of us are sticking close to home this summer, so it's an ideal opportunity to **let your creativity blossom** in your own backyard oasis.

Nicole Bent, one of the owners of Shelmerdine Garden Centre, suggests growing as many plants as possible to surround yourself with nature.

"The more plants, the better — especially flowering plants, which also attract pollinators such as butterflies and hummingbirds. Why not add a few bird feeders around the garden to en-

joy the sounds of songbirds?" she said.

"Want to create a true oasis? Add a fountain to enjoy the soothing sound of water and to drown out the sound of traffic."

Since 2020 was such a difficult year for many folks, Bent encourages them to incorporate bold, bright colour — and lots of it.

"Colour really helps to lift the spir-

its. When choosing your backyard plants, toss out the rules — just plant whatever colours make your heart sing," she said.

"Homeowners are also more interested in achieving the perfect lawn, and we can help them with that by offering superior grass seeds and specialty lawn fertilizers that have been developed by garden centre owners."

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Particularly during the pandemic, it's increasingly important to create a backyard space that you love. "Because we've been forced to stay home this year, we spent more time wanting to invest in improvements to make our home and gardens as beautiful as possible," Bent said. "After all, our home and gardens should serve as our sanctuaries from the world."

The pandemic has also made us think about our food supply chain and how reliant we've become on it, she added. "This is the perfect time to begin growing vegetables and fruits in your own backyard, if you're not already," Bent said. "The rewards of edible gardening are endless — from physical exercise to mental wellness and environmental

sustainability, not to mention delicious and fresh produce." And if you're a newcomer to the wonderful world of gardens, don't be shy to reach out to more experienced green thumbs. "If you're new to gardening, ask lots of questions," Bent said. "Independently owned garden centres have expert staff who love to share their knowledge."



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CREATIVE CATIOS

BY JENNIFER MCFEE

Your feline friends will think you're the cat's meow if you install a custom-built "catio" just for them.



Marissa Lajeunesse, better known as the Winnipeg Cat Carpenter, explains that a catio is simply a patio for your cats.

Typically, catios are outdoor structures made from wood, wire and screening to keep cats safe while exercising or lounging outside. This secure outdoor enclosure provides the purrrfect place for kitties to play while enjoying fresh air.

A Red Seal carpenter by trade, Lajeunesse discovered a niche when

she merged together her woodworking skills with her lifelong affinity for cats. She's been a residential carpenter for about 10 years, and is now going into her second year as the Winnipeg Cat Carpenter.

"I knew I wanted to build a catio for my own two cats after moving into a place without a balcony about two years ago. My cats could not wait to get into their very own catio as I built it. They watched patiently from the window. I had a feeling I was not

the only pet owner that would love to be able to give their cats this sort of experience," she said.

"So I turned to social media to see what kind of interest there was here in Winnipeg and the response was unbelievable. I had dozens of inquiries within hours of posting it online. With combining my passion in carpentry and love for cats, the Winnipeg Cat Carpenter was born."

For the upcoming season, Lajeunesse will offer different sizes of free-

standing pen-style catios with a covered roof, multiple perches and access door. As another option, she builds custom catios that can be affixed onto a house with cat access directly through a window.

For cat owners who'd prefer to build their own catio, Lajeunesse encourages them to start by selecting the right structure material — such as cedar, spruce, pine or PVC pipe — so that it's safe, sturdy and able to withstand Manitoba weather.

"My catio structures and perches are built out of 100 per cent cedar anywhere the cats come into contact with. Cedar is a great option because it is safe for the cats," she said.

"It is very durable against our climate and weather. It is naturally mould and insect-resistant, so there is no sealing or staining necessary. It also has a natural beauty to it."

When building a catio, another important consideration is choosing the right type of screening or wire.

"The purpose of screening or wire is to keep the cats safely inside the catio while allowing them to be able to see and enjoy the outdoors — bird watch, feel the fresh air and sun on their fur," she said. "Choosing what best suits your need may also depend on the location of the catio."

Some options include aluminum screening or wire mesh, known as chicken or hog wire.

"For my catios, I primarily use aluminum screen. It is durable and tear-resistant. The aluminum screening also adds to the attractive design while still keeping the cats safe," Lajeunesse said.

"It is also great for controlling the types of insects the cats could come into contact with, such as bees, wasps or ticks."

In addition, she suggests ensuring the space within the catio is comfortable for your cats to move around freely. When installing perches, make sure they're an adequate size and height for your cat to safely enjoy. For a personal touch, you could incorporate

their favourite toy, scratching post and cat-safe plants.

For all current and future catio owners, Lajeunesse shares a few precautions.

"It is very important, when allowing your cats to enjoy time within their catio, to have fresh water and shade readily available to them," she said.

"Regularly inspect the catio screen, wiring and structure for defects or damage to ensure your cats' safety. Remember to never leave food or treats in the catio for long periods of time or overnight as you may have unwanted guests enter or damage your catio."

Especially now that spring is in the air, catios are proving to be a popular pick for both cats and their owners.

"It is one of the most rewarding feelings, watching the cat owners with huge smiles on their faces as they place their cats in their new catio for the first time. As for the cats, their first reactions are often filled with some caution and a lot of curios-

ity," she said.

"But without a doubt, each time before I have cleaned up my tools, the cats are right at home in their new catio, laying on the perches purring with uttermost joy. My absolute favourite clients now are the ones with four paws and are covered in fur."

"WHEN INSTALLING PERCHES, MAKE SURE THEY'RE AN ADEQUATE SIZE AND HEIGHT FOR YOUR CAT TO SAFELY ENJOY."



- Marissa Lajeunesse,
Winnipeg Cat Carpenter
artist @ art.of.callisto



Fresh paint and stucco work magic on renewing your house

Mehdi Madani is a business owner, but there are times when he feels like a bit of a magician

Madani is the co-owner and general manager of Madani Group Painting and Stucco Coating, a Winnipeg-based painting company that provides interior, exterior and commercial painting services as well as specialized stucco coating.

For Madani, the most rewarding aspect of his company's work is the reaction of owners of older homes who have used his services. The most common response is, "my house looks like new", he said. "That has a double effect. It helps give a home more curb appeal and it also helps to increase the value of the home," added Madani.

While Madani Group handles all kinds of residential and commercial painting jobs, a big part of the company's focus is stucco coating.

Madani explained that stucco can be a particularly challenging surface to work with and requires a highly specialized approach to ensure it is done right. Properly preparing the surface before applying any kind of coating is crucial. To that end, the company follows an exhaustive preparation check list before applying any paint.

The first step is pressure-washing the surface to remove dirt and debris. Madani and his team then closely analyze the type of stucco on the home to make sure they use the right kind of paint. The company even has its own in-house stucco repair specialist, who can fill in any cracks or gaps to perfectly match a home's existing exterior.

The company prides itself on being thorough. "Something I see in the painting industry is the stucco repair is often not up to par. If you are repairing stucco you need to do it right. If you do not match it exactly then it's not going to look as good," he said.

One of the more unique services Madani Group offers customers is an interactive colour consultation. A company representative will meet with homeowners to discuss their colour preferences, answer any questions they might have about colour choices and offer suggestions. As part of the consultation, they can even provide homeowners with a snapshot of what their colour choice will look like on their home's exterior, courtesy of a specialized software system they use.

"Sometimes people will look at a house in their neighbourhood or a magazine and say, 'I love those colours, they would go great on my house.' But that is not always the case because the layout is different," said Madani.

"That's where we come in and give you some options and tell you what we think. Customers like that and find it helpful," he added.

"We've had opportunities to grow more but we didn't want that. We want to keep our base smaller. It's all about quality control and that personal interaction with the client," Madani said.

Madani offered advice for those considering if they should seek new paint or stucco:

- Outdated colours that lack curb appeal for a home upgrade or for home sale;
- Visible cracks in the stucco, damage or signs of rotting wood exist;
- Stubborn moisture stains and mold that cannot be removed with some elbow grease; and appearance of cracking, peeling or bubbling.

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