

# your home

MAY/JUNE 2015

Tips and trends for homeowners, buyers and sellers

## YOUR ULTIMATE backyard

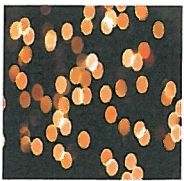
With spring coming to an end, it is time to prepare your home for all things summer. Whether you want to play host to summer barbecues or just want a place to relax in the sun, there are lots of options for outdoor recreation spaces. Working to build a premier outdoor area can not only serve as the ideal place to spend time with family and friends, but it can also add value to your home. Here are some ideas for equipping your ultimate summer backyard:

today, 13.6 percent say they are planning to add one. A recent study by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) found that outdoor kitchens can add to a home's value. Upgrading your standalone grill to a built-in grill with additional counter-space can go a long way.



**Cozy Up**  
Adding outdoor couches, throw pillows and rugs creates the perfect

ambiance for entertaining and invokes a feeling of comfort and serenity, according to the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR). These additions also provide value for staging and help potential homebuyers visualize themselves in the home.



**Let There Be Light**

Light up your outdoor space by installing lights along walkways

or on tables, or stringing lights around a seating area. This lighting not only creates a relaxed atmosphere, it's also great for night-time showings when it's time to sell.



**Create an Outdoor Kitchen Area**

While only about 4 percent of affluent

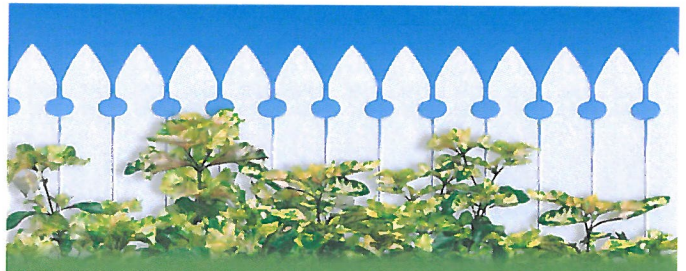
households have outdoor kitchens



**Bug Off**

There aren't many downsides to the summer, but one of them is the return of

the insects. To make your outdoor space critter-free, make sure you have citronella candles handy.



### NATURAL LANDSCAPING

According to a study conducted by the National Drought Resilience Partnership (NDRP), the drought across the Western United States and parts of the Midwest region will intensify in 2015. With so much sun and little rain, homeowners will need to prepare their landscapes accordingly. If you live in one of these drought-ridden areas, an easy solution for an efficient and attractive yard is a natural landscape.

Natural landscapes are gaining popularity for good reason. Plants native to a particular region have adapted to the surrounding environment, whether it features harsh winters, flooding or droughts. Native plants tend to flourish in local soils, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says these landscapes are good for the environment.

Aside from occasional pruning and weeding, maintenance on natural landscaping is minimal. Once implemented, native landscapes do not need fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides. Natural landscapes usually require less water and minimal maintenance, which make them ideal for busy homeowners.

Another growing trend in drought-ridden areas such as California is "xeriscaping." Plants required for this type of landscaping vary by region, but they are commonly waste-efficient and require extremely low amounts of water — if any at all, the EPA says. Maintenance-free "hard elements" in a yard can include rocks, fences, walking paths or lawn ornaments. These features help fill your landscape and require zero maintenance.

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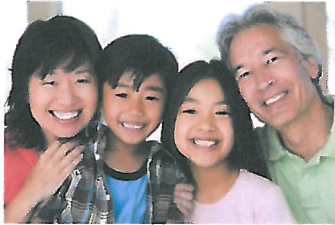
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# home designs FOR BUSY FAMILIES



With their calendars crammed with things to do and places to go, today's busy families want to spend as little time as possible handling mun-dane household chores. To help families stay organized, newer homes are being built with customized floor plans to allow for more flexibility and better use of space. Here are a few examples of these home design trends.

### Mudrooms

While mudrooms have been around for at least a decade, they have evolved into a larger, more centralized area for each member of the family, complete with individual cubbies for books and backpacks, drawers for hats and gloves, and a bench for removing wet shoes and boots.

Most mudrooms are 6 feet by 8 feet, although some can be as large as 8 feet by 12 feet, and some include USB outlets, walk-in closets and windows with natural light. These rooms once shared space with washers and dryers, but laundry machines have moved closer to the bedrooms where most dirty laundry collects, builders say.

### Study/Computer Stations

Parents want to keep a close eye on their kids as they do their homework, but where that study space is located differs among households. In many homes, kitchen islands double as a study area as well as an area for cooking and eating. Other homes are built with study nooks on the upper floor, a separate study in the lower level or a pocket office located off the kitchen.

### Self-Serve Kitchens

Newer homes are designed with the kitchen or pantry set up so family members can grab their own meals while on the go. These self-serve areas are located away from the main food prep area and are equipped with a mini refrigerator or refrigerator drawer to hold fruit and snacks, and a micro-wave at child-sized height for easy access.

Home design features like these can help today's families stay organized as they go through their busy lives.

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