

A woman with a large afro hairstyle, wearing a light blue t-shirt and grey striped overalls, is kneeling on a wooden deck. She is smiling and painting a wooden rocking chair with bright yellow paint using a brush. The chair is tilted back and sits on a white plastic drop cloth. Next to her is a can of yellow paint and a roll of yellow tape. In the background, there are potted plants and a glass door leading into a house.

# In & around ■ the home

## *What's Inside*

She Sheds ■ Colors of the Year ■ Curb Appeal ■ A South Tampa Landmark

A SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION OF THE TAMPA BAY TIMES



# From the ground up

**By Kathy Saunders**

Mika and Brian Kleinschmidt are inspired by design, development and deadlines on their HGTV show, *100 Day Dream Home*. But mostly, they delight in sharing their love for the region they call home.

"We've spent most of our lives here in the Tampa Bay area and we feel like it's still a bit of a secret to the world out there," Brian said.

That passion inspired the couple to reach out to HGTV three years ago with the proposal for their show: to design and build a home for their clients in 100 days. Their nine latest episodes premiered in January.

"New construction wasn't being featured on the network and we thought it would be a cool concept," Brian said.

The Kleinschmidts help clients scout locations, select materials, and construct homes on a tight deadline. Their company, Dirt2Design, is in Brandon, and

they focus on projects within an hour's drive.

This season features a project in St. Petersburg's Shore Acres that included demolishing a home and building a new one — 14 feet higher to avoid flooding issues in the neighborhood.

The \$542,000, 2,500-square-

foot home featured modern, clean lines and floors of large ceramic tiles.

The couple took viewers into their new home for the final episode of the season in March. The clients were happy in River-view, but couldn't pass up the views from a piece of water-

front property in Ruskin. Mika described their new home as a coastal lake house.

Part of the show's charm is the relationship between Mika, the Realtor and designer, and Brian, the construction manager. The two, both 38, met at Riverview High School and reconnected 10 years later when they owned gyms. They moved into real estate investing before developing private homes.

Being in front of cameras comes easy for Brian, who has experience acting in community productions and who participated in season 15 of *The Amazing Race* in 2009.

Most of the homes they develop range in price from \$300,000 to \$750,000. "We try to be in the middle," said Brian.

Once they decide on the price and location for the new houses, the Kleinschmidts take clients through existing homes to help determine design elements such as

kitchen layout and color patterns. Sometimes they feature homes they have developed as well as those being offered by other local Realtors. Brian used his parents' home in their first season.

The 100-day clock starts the day they break ground on the construction sites. Admittedly, Florida weather comes into play. This season was filmed in the summer during hurricane season. Storm delays are built into the timeline. In the first episode of this season, the couple built a \$338,000, approximately 2,000-square-foot home in Plant City for two engaged deputies with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office. (They were wed 20 days after moving into the new house.) After torrential rains flooded the property, Brian and crews were filmed digging trenches to re-route the water before county inspectors showed up that day. The house was a one-story, farmhouse-style home in the center of the couple's 8.2-acre property.

At any time, the Kleinschmidts could have as many as 10 projects going at once, each with its own distinct features and challenges.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HGTV

Mika and Brian Kleinschmidt, left, show Zoe and Trey Larson, who were recently married, their new 100-day dream home.

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# Today's hot tubs & swim spas offer much more than fun and relaxation

Hot tubs and spas were once merely considered a symbol of luxury – the crown jewel accessories of any respectable backyard oasis. Throughout the years, however, they've evolved into high-tech, multipurpose life-enhancers that not only provide countless hours of fun and relaxation, but an array of physical and mental health benefits as well.

You know that sublime feeling of well-being that immediately hits your senses after settling into a spa? There's something to that: numerous studies have shown that the warmth and buoyancy of spa water helps reduce stress, pain and stiffness. When these healing properties are combined with the therapeutic effect of a spa's hydromassaging jets, tension is relieved and your muscles begin to loosen and relax. This makes spas and hot tubs ideal tools for hydrotherapy, which helps heal muscle and ligament injuries and alleviate chronic conditions.

In fact, the Arthritis Foundation has noted that spas can help reduce the pain and stiffness of arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions, including fibromyalgia and lower back pain. The water provides a weightless aerobic option and keeps the joints in motion, which increases circulation and decreases swelling.

Spas also provide a full spectrum of healthy exercise options. According to Bobby Woltz, sales manager of Clearwater-based company Spa Manufacturers, swim spas, in particular, can yield all the benefits of a cardiovascular workout.

Additionally, spas provide an escape from the bustle of everyday life, giving you a tranquil, yet entertaining, place to connect, converse and have fun with family and friends. A short soak in the spa before bed can also work

wonders on your night's sleep.

This enhanced lifestyle is provided by the wide range of easy-to-maintain spas, hot tubs and swim spas offered at Spa Manufacturers, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this month. The now 40-year-old company offers factory-direct pricing on the 25 different styles of products it manufactures, which include pergolas, gazebos and more. The business also offers

custom-design services to fit your specific needs.

"We've designed and manufactured everything we sell," Woltz explained. "It's in our name – we're manufacturers, and by selling directly to our customers, we eliminate middleman mark-ups, saving you thousands of dollars.

"It's worth the drive to Clearwater to buy direct from the manufacturer," he added.

For more information, call **(727) 530-9493** or visit the **Spa Manufacturers** showroom at **6060 Ulmerton Road** (200 yards east of U.S. Highway 19), **Clearwater, FL 33760**. Just **"LOOK FOR THE BIG YELLOW DUCK."** Showroom hours are **8am-6pm, Mon.-Sat.;** and **11am-5pm, Sun.**





# Sweeten Your Home's Curb Appeal

By Sally Moe  
Times Correspondent

We hear it all the time – “little things mean a lot.” Nowhere is this more true than your home’s curb appeal. Little inexpensive changes can make a life-changing difference.

You can go all in with the more expensive stuff, of course – re-paint, reroof, new garage door, new front door, pavers on the driveway, new landscaping – but the little things don’t set you back as much, and arguably give a greater payoff of satisfaction and pride.

Let’s start with the front door.

**A bright yellow door and flowers along with a coir doormat create a welcoming entrance.**

Is it faded, sad looking? A good cleaning and a fresh coat of paint will make a huge difference. With a bolder color, even more. The addition of new hardware – such as replacing pitted brass or weathered nickel with matte black – will really give it presence.

Does your porch have a haunted house vibe? If you have cash to spare, hire someone to pressure wash your porch, home, windows, doors, concrete, and roof. It’s worth every penny. But if cost is an issue, rent a pressure washing machine and tackle those spaces (maybe not the roof!) yourself. Seeing it transformed by your efforts is the ultimate payoff.

Now that your porch is sparkling, hang some wind chimes or sun catchers there or from

nearby tree limbs. These will add life and charm and create a sense of welcome. How about a birdhouse? A wreath for the front door? A coir doormat? If you love cats, or dogs, or llamas – or have a snarky sense of humor – you can be sure: there’s a mat for that. Plus, bright weather-resistant pillows and cushions can make a bench or swing more inviting. Add a small table, an outdoor rug and a shade-loving container plant and voila: you have a revitalized space (with a proper spot to set the no-contact pizzas you order on the week-ends).

If you have a front-facing garage, you already know the door is a major ingredient of

**See Curb Appeal page 6**

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## Curb Appeal from page 4

your home's curb appeal. You can freshen it up significantly with pressure washing and a new coat of paint. If you decide to go all in and replace the door with one of your own choosing, pricing starts at around \$800 and goes up from there. Depending on how much you want to spend, you could change everything about your garage door – from windows and hinges to material, and even go for a wood look – for a stunning transformation.

Don't forget the mailbox. Does it look neglected? If it's still sturdy and functional, a fresh coat of paint and a new set of street numbers will freshen it up nicely, and prevent those occasional misdeliveries (so annoying when pizza is involved). Plant some sun-loving flowering plants around the base. If you're feeling creative and don't have to worry about an HOA, you could paint a

**Left: Some potted plants and a fresh coat of paint in a bold color add to curb appeal.**



**A seasonal wreath on the front door makes any entry more inviting.**

scene on the box itself – anything from a vintage mermaid to a seascape or even a mandala.

Finally, if your front yard gets plenty of sun, consider solar path lights for the nighttime. They help prevent accidents by light-

ing the way to the front door, and come in a range of styles. They're affordable, and since they're wireless, they're also easy to install – and create a finished look that makes your home look polished as well as welcoming.



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# That's What She Shed

By Lisa Schillinger  
Times Correspondent

*She sheds provide a private oasis for women*

## HE SHED/SHE SHED

Most people have heard of a man cave, but what exactly is a she shed? A she shed is basically a storage shed that's reinvented and customized to give women a private oasis in their backyard. It may be used as a home office, a recreation room, a place to meet friends, a home gym or an art studio. It could be used for relaxing, crafting, reading or gardening. According to WideOpenCountry.com, "the main purpose of a she shed is to create a peaceful atmosphere with soft colors and comfortable furniture to help set a tranquil mood." Some women want lots of windows for natural light (see art studio above); others add chandeliers, cozy day beds, lanterns or string lights. Some want a simple garden shed focusing on plants rather than interior design.

## SHE SHED INSPIRATION

The idea of giving women a haven where they can go to escape and rejuvenate from their



**Above: *She Sheds: A Room of Your Own* is a book by Erika Kotite with a gallery of more than 100 photos.**

hectic lifestyle has been gaining momentum for several years. *She Sheds: A Room of Your Own* is a book by Erika Kotite with a gallery of more than 100 photos of she sheds as inspiration. The book includes examples of styles such as modern, romantic/vintage, classic, rustic, sheds for gardeners and modified utility sheds. According to Kotite, you should start by "defining the goal

and purpose of your space." Is it going to be used for painting or entertaining? Reading or gardening?

## SHEDDING SOME MYTHS ON PRICE

While you can spend a small fortune on a she shed — Lowe's has a 10-ft x 12-ft Aspen Lean-To Engineered Wood Studio Shed for \$24,600 — you can also find relatively inexpensive pre-built sheds for the exterior and customize the inside gradually as you go. OutdoorLivingToday.com has a 12-ft x 4-ft Garden Saver model with sliding doors starting around \$3,000. Prices can also range anywhere in between. SolidBuild-Wood.com has a 10-ft x 10-ft cottage-style garden shed for \$5,990. For the do-it-yourselfer, HomesteadSupplier.com has an EZ-Fit Sheds Riverside Outdoor Garden Shed kit for \$3,539.

**Below: Styles range from vintage to modern. Browsing antique shops for old windows, doors and other items can lend a shabby chic feel.**



PHOTO FROM LOWE'S

**Above: Lowe's offers this 10-ft x 12-ft Aspen Lean-To Engineered Wood Studio Shed for \$24,600.**

## BUILDING YOUR SHE SHED

A quick online search brings up dozens of sites that will ship she shed kits to your home. (See our sidebar story about one such DIY project.) Or shop locally. Wally Watt is one local business that specializes in aluminum sheds that are virtually maintenance free because they resist rust, fading, warping, termites and decay. It is located on Tyrone Boulevard in St. Petersburg and has a large selection of on-site displays. Once you have the exterior, you can customize the interior as you like. CountryLiving.com suggests

**Below: This rustic style she shed has windows with a more modern feel and is surrounded by a garden.**

these tips for creating your own she shed: 1. Clean out your old backyard shed — or use a kit to build a new one. 2. Give your shed a fresh coat of paint. 3. Define the purpose of your shed. 4. Search flea markets and antique shops for unique finds — from old windows to antique chairs. 5. Surround yourself with nature — from potted plants and flowers to fabrics with feminine floral patterns. 6. Create an inviting entryway. 7. Equip the space for entertaining — add an outdoor patio or fire pit. Whatever your vision, your she shed should reflect you and your interests.





# Step by Step

## *A She Shed DIY Project*

**By Mark Bolden**  
*Special To The Times*

**Mark and  
Patricia  
Bolden**



The finished project...



When we purchased our home, my wife, Patricia, mentioned that she wanted a "she shed." She is a nurse practitioner and wanted a place where she could "zen out," meditate and read in comfort and privacy. I have always been handy around the house and love to build things. During the pandemic and while working from home, I ramped up my woodworking and maker skills and purchased a lot of tools over a period of months.

So, she knew that if she asked, I would build it as I have built a home theater concession stand and other items around the home. She found a basic shed on Wayfair for a decent price. Since this is basically a pallet of wood, some people would shy away; but with the help of my childhood friend I tore down the old plastic shed and with a rented compactor, leveled the ground. I then mimicked the paver pattern that landscapers used in our gazebo area and laid out a small patio. With the help of my friend and a colleague from work, I dropped in concrete deck supports for the floor.

Although this can be done by one person, having friends definitely speeds up the process.

We dropped the floor on top and put up the walls and the roof. After they left, I assembled the French doors and windows and installed accents. For the interior, I installed a vinyl floor covering and drywall, painted, ran electric, and added baseboard and trim. Additionally, I cut openings for the portable AC we purchased and installed an exterior junction box for the electricity. As a finishing touch, I added her initials over the door and a "Welcome Home" decoration on the back wall. I am thinking that I might add some small solar panels, batteries, and possibly a small wind turbine so it will have power independent of the house.

So far, it has been a really fun project with the exception of working in the hot sun. It was done out of love for Patricia, and she loves it. I am sure that it adds some value to the property. Overall, the entire experience was well worth it.

**1. The pallet, the way it arrived from Wayfair. 2. Concrete deck supports for the floor and pavers for the patio. 3. Vinyl flooring and drywall were next. 4. French doors and windows added. 5. and 6. I ran electric and cut openings for the portable AC. 7. Paint and baseboards added. 8. A "Welcome Home" decoration I made for the back wall. 9. Furniture was added. 10. As a finishing touch, I added my wife's initials over the door.**

Be sure to check with your county building department for the permits you need, and always call 8-1-1 before you dig. Know what's below!

PHOTOS BY  
MARK BOLDEN



# Ornamental grasses

By Lynn Barber Florida-Friendly Landscaping™  
Agent, UF/IFAS Extension Hillsborough County

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Ornamental grasses are a great addition to any landscape. They add texture, color, form and interest. As with all types of plants, consider the site conditions of your landscape, which include sun, shade, mature size (height and spread) for placement purposes, soil pH, soil moisture and soil texture. The following ornamental grasses thrive in central Florida:

- **Muhly grass**, *Muhlenbergia capillaris*, a native plant, reaches a height of three to four feet and spread of two to three feet. It prefers full sun, can tolerate extreme drought and flooding, has moderate salt tolerance and works well in wetland sites and beachfront landscapes. Muhly grass has narrow foliage and pro-



Muhly Grass

PHOTO FROM UF

duces pink/purple fall flowers. It is used as a border, as an accent, in mass plantings and as cut flowers.

- **Fakahatchee grass**, *Tripsacum dactyloides*, another native, reaches a height and spread of four to six feet. It prefers full sun, does well in partial shade/partial sun and tolerates flooding and standing water. Fakahatchee grass produces cream/yellow/orange/red flow-



Fakahatchee Grass

PHOTO BY LYNN BARBER

ers from spring through summer and is a larval food plant for the Byssus Skipper butterfly. This or-

namental grass also requires minimal maintenance, which consists of pruning once a year, late winter or early spring (February and March in central Florida) before you see new shoot growth.

- **Purple fountain grass**, *Pennisetum setaceum* 'Rubrum', can reach a height of four to six feet and spread of two to four feet and prefers full sun. It has moderate drought tolerance and needs well-drained soil moisture. Purple fountain grass has narrow purple leaves with purple-pink or copper flowers in summer and fall. This is an excellent ornamental grass when used in mass plantings, containers, as an accent, border or cut flowers. It can reseed into surrounding areas, which could be a good or bad thing, depending on your location and preference.
- **Elliott's lovegrass**, *Eragrostis elliottii*, has a height and spread of one to three feet and is a fast-growing native. This grass prefers well to medium-drained soil and has high drought tolerance. It prefers full sun and does well in partial sun or shade. Elliott's lovegrass produces year-round tan flowers, which are abundant in the fall. All are easy to divide,



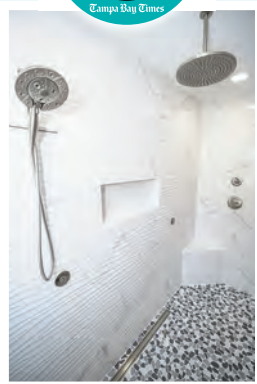
Purple Fountain Grass

PHOTO FROM UF

share with your friends and neighbors or create more color in your own landscape. Once established, irrigation may not be needed at all. For assistance with horticultural questions, contact your local UF/IFAS Extension office. In Hillsborough County, call us at (813) 744-5519 or visit our calendar of events at our website. Remember to reuse, reduce, recycle and repeat.

Contact Lynn Barber at [labarber@ufl.edu](mailto:labarber@ufl.edu).

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# background check

When Tampa Bay Times political editor Steve Contorno made some national media appearances from his kitchen during the 2020 election, he got slammed by the comical Room Raters on Twitter. After attending hours of Zoom meetings in the past year, we decided he wasn't the only staffer who needed a Zoom Room makeover. Our stylist Tim Creagan visited the homes of three editors and reporters and foraged for items to make some simple but valuable changes to their backdrops.

## LIGHT SHOW

"Dark. Peering into abyss beyond fridge. There's art back there. Light it up." That was the Twitter review political editor Steve Contorno received from @ratemyskyperoom during an election appearance on MSNBC. The site gave him an abysmal 5 out of 10 points. First, Creagan advised moving Contorno's videos from the kitchen to his living room to improve the lighting and rid the shot of major appliances. "We brought in a small desk that could double as a bar when Contorno and his fiancée entertain guests," Creagan said. The need for color and texture was solved by a bargain find brought back to life with a jar of liquid gold leaf. Total cost to, we hope, overcome the low marks on Contorno's room: \$180.



## TROPICAL OASIS

Food critic Helen Freund likes to sit at her dining room table during video meetings, but the background is an opening with a sliver of her kitchen in view. "It seemed only appropriate for those who are on calls with her to get more of a glimpse into her kitchen," Creagan said. "I also wanted to create a garden vibe, so I used a foam board covered with wallpaper and affixed the panels to the wall with adhesive." With a few added plants and some of Freund's favorite cookbooks, the background was complete. Total cost: \$75.



By Kathy Saunders

PHOTOS BY TIM CREAGAN



"The home's original wood paneling made for a light-grabbing background that needed to be brightened up," said Creagan. "Not wanting to permanently change the wall, a quick and easy fix was to attach a curtain panel to the top and bottom moldings." He also added a console table to delineate the space and become a platform for additional props. Because Hosey had so many keepsakes from his career in photojournalism, Creagan decided to use

some of Hosey's most treasured pieces as a background gallery. One of the highlights is a photograph Hosey took of Tiger Woods' final shot for his first Masters win in Augusta, Georgia. A vintage camera, clock and pottery round out the design. Total cost: \$90.

## PHOTO FINISH

Boyzell Hosey, deputy editor of photography, does his video calls and conferences from the billiard room in his St. Petersburg home.

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Lush tropical landscaping surrounds Dundee House, also known as Sunset Park house, in South Tampa.

# A South Tampa landmark gets a Remodel

By Maggie Duffy  
PHOTOS BY SEAMUS PAYNE

South Tampa residents know the Sunset Park house, perched on the corner of West Shore and Bay to Bay boulevards. It is a historic South Tampa landmark. Designed by architect Wilbur

B. Talley and built in 1927, the 3,200-square-foot home, known as the Dundee House, was the first in Sunset Park. Its rendering was featured in a 1924 *Tampa Sunday Tribune* advertisement

encouraging others to build in the neighborhood. It has been home to Gerald "Shorty" Wilson, a former principal of H.B. Plant High School and assistant superintendent of Hillsborough County

Schools. He lived there with his wife, Dorothy, from 1943 until his death in 1975. Dorothy lived there until her death in 1984. Later, Fred Smith, a sea captain and harbor pilot who was president of the Tampa Bay Pilots Association, lived there from 1984 to 2005 with his wife, Susan.

New life and a modern interior have been breathed into the home by its most recent owners, married architects Jody Beck and Ross-Alan Tisdale, who own Tampa-based Traction Architecture.

Beck, who is a Tampa native, was familiar with the house. When she was chairwoman of the City of Tampa's Architectural Review Committee, she saw it come up for sale.

"I've always been very engaged and interested in historic homes, so when I saw this one go on the market, I was very intrigued," Beck said. "With all the details and features the house had, I thought that we could make something really interesting here. Even for historic architecture in Tampa, it's very unusual."

It's unique in that the structure, featuring a wire-cut brick exterior, was built around a massive ballroom with vaulted ceilings. A plaster frieze of acanthus leaves imported from Paris wraps around the Mediterranean-inspired exterior. The H-shaped floor plan allows for cross breezes.

The couple purchased the home in December 2017. They were living in a 1,000-square-foot 1919 bungalow in Palma Ceia and, with two growing boys, were outgrowing that home.

While their award-winning architectural firm skews way more modern, Beck said the house has a bit of a modern sensibility in the geometry of its proportions. "Our whole idea was to respect the details of the house and to make our interventions distinctly different so it wasn't competing with the shell and the beautiful architectural details," Beck said.

They spent two years renovating the house while researching its history. During that time, they made the decision to move their architecture firm from a rented space into the iconic ballroom.

That decision proved to be beneficial for getting the work completed and as a showroom of sorts for clients. "We use the house as a way for people to understand that there's a difference between living in a house that's been thoughtfully considered and designed by an architect and a house that isn't," said Tisdale. "Since we do a lot of residential work, it's kind of a palpable eyep opener for people to look around and see the care in which this house was originally produced. In architectural terms, that's called embodied energy."

There was a learning curve to adjusting to working and living in the same space, but there are now "private zones" for the couple's two boys, Jonah, 8, and Robin, 11.

When the renovation began, they found they had to replace all of the plumbing, electrical wiring and duct work. On the exterior, the wire-cut brick was cleaned and re-pointed. Mullion windows were revealed by removing



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Ross-Alan Tisdale, Jody Beck and sons Jonah and Robin relax around the portico of the house, which they purchased in December 2017.





**Above:** The ballroom at the house was transformed into working space for the couple's firm, Traction Architecture.



**Left:** A large island has been added in the Dundee House kitchen.

aluminum awnings that were probably added in the 1950s.

Major changes were made to the once-cramped kitchen, removing a wall to open it up and installing a large island. The black and white linoleum floors were replaced with wood floors. An etched glass window depicting Capt. Smith's beloved ship remains intact, another nod to the home's history.

What is now the living room had once been an outdoor space that was enclosed at some point. They chose materials that evoked the feeling of being outdoors.

The color scheme is largely bright white, to accentuate the architectural details and allow for shadow play with all the light that comes in. It's contrasted by vibrant pops of color in blues, greens and golds. Beck said the colors reflect the lush tropical landscaping outside.

In the master bathroom, hexagonal tiles reminiscent of the original flooring were installed. A bathtub was removed in favor of a stand-alone shower. The jade green tile wall makes a dramatic statement while keeping things minimal.

The ballroom, where lavish parties happened throughout the years, got a modern makeover

with bright white paint. Strips of LED lights were installed in the crown molding and in a medallion on the ceiling. That replaced a clunky, brass 1980s-era chandelier. They also took down sconces that had lights meant to look like melting candles. "It reminded me of *Beauty and the Beast*," Beck said with a laugh. "We just wanted to use lighting that was all about the shell and the architecture, and the molding. It's modern and subtle and just lets the building itself sing and show itself off."

Another cool historic feature is the outdoor portico, where partygoers would retire to smoke cigars, according to Beck and Tisdale's research.

All of that hard work earned them an Honor Award of Excellence from the Florida chapter of the American Institute of Architects. "It's a nice landmark in the community," Tisdale said. "I feel lucky that we were able to shepherd this house into another generation and hopefully it will last many, many years. Tampa has a rich history, and it's nice when people can look around and see architectural heritage, whatever that may be."

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# *Livin' the Life* Al Fresco

**By Sally Moe**  
Times Correspondent

As summer begins to recede, the promise of cooler, drier weather brings a sense of relief. This is when heat-battered Floridians can finally exhale. We survived another Florida summer! How about an outdoor party?

With COVID still on the front burner, outdoor entertaining remains a great way to enjoy some face time with your (vaccinated) friends, and it's a far safer bet than indoor gatherings. And who can resist the aroma of sizzling burgers?

## SET THE ATMOSPHERE

If you have a patio, deck, pool or hot tub (or some combination), you already have an awesome focus for your party. If your pool is

screened, all the better. After the sun sets, set loose some floating candles in the pool to heighten that festive atmosphere. Do you have a **firepit**? (A brief online search will yield a number of them for under \$100 at places like Lowe's, Home Depot and Wayfair.) Firepits create the perfect spot for swapping stories or making smores on cool evenings.

For fuss-free decorations, buy grocery store flower arrangements and arrange them in a classic pitcher, separate them into repurposed soda bottles, or float the stemless flowers themselves in clear bowls of water. You could also add greenery cuttings from your own yard. Then bring on the lanterns, hurricane lights and especially, string or **bistro lights**! They make a party wherever you hang 'em. Alternately, you can

use an assortment of **flameless candles** for the same effect as real candles, but without the worry of dripping wax or anything catching fire; especially good if there are kids at your party.

Speaking of kids, how about a **piñata** (or two)? They're decorative, loads of fun for grownups as well as kids, and you can fill them with whatever captures your imagination. Candy always works, but consider fun items like dollar store beach toys, funky pens, flip-flops, bubble-blowing kits, sunglasses and mini-water pistols. Even lottery tickets.

Add a few standing or box fans to your party space to help keep mosquitoes at bay while they keep the air moving. Stand-up **sunbrellas** are great for afternoon gatherings and do a colorful job of defining spaces as well as creating much-appreciated shade.

As for music, how's this for an easy-peasy solution? Program your smartphone with hours of party music and pop it into a **ceramic speaker**. No wires to trip over. It's the ultimate marriage of



**A patio, deck, pool or hot tub is an awesome focus for a party.**

low and high tech.

## SMOOTH OUT THE DETAILS

If you're setting a table, **tablecloth weights** are a great way to keep the cloth where it belongs when the wind gets feisty. If you don't have enough outdoor chairs to accommodate everyone, bring out the dining chairs, drum stools, even poufs. If your party area isn't screened, place an assortment of citronella candles, or hang a few **citronella spirals** in choice places. Start them burning before guests arrive and they'll keep your area

bug free. Another option: keep refreshing **bug-repelling wipes** on hand.

Station tables in separate areas — i.e., drinks in one spot, snacks or desserts in another — to encourage guests to move around. **Drink stakes** are a festive, functional accessory for lawn seating. Additionally, stock a **bar cart** with essentials so guests can serve themselves when they need a refill: glasses, plates, ice, a cocktail shaker, napkins and swizzle sticks. Wheel it back to the kitchen if supplies run low, then slide it back outside.

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# Color trends

## 2021

By Sally Moe  
Times Correspondent

A room using Pantone's colors of the year — Ultimate Gray and Illuminating (yellow).

For 2021, Pantone parted from tradition and named two colors of the year: a mid-tone gray (Ultimate Gray) and a sunny yellow (Illuminating). The gray represented a solid, enduring foundation (ie., stone) and the yellow, warmth and optimism. According to Pantone, when paired together, the two create the feeling of "thoughtfulness with the optimistic promise of a sunshine-filled day."

There's also a sense of minimalism suggested by this choice. With as much time as we have spent at home in the last 18 months, simplifying has become a mission for many – as in, get rid of the stuff that doesn't work or makes you feel stressed, and embrace the stuff that does, and makes you feel calm. Make your home the supportive, functional haven you need it to be.

Explains Leatrice Eiseman, Ex-

ecutive Director of the Pantone Color Institute, "The selection

of two independent colors highlights how different elements come together to express a message of strength and hope that is lasting and uplifting, conveying the idea that it is not a color or a person, but more than one."

If you'd like to bring these colors into your home, there are a number of ways they can be used, from bold to subtle. You could have your house painted yellow; or if you want to make a more targeted statement, paint your house gray and the front door yellow. For a still smaller pop of yellow, try a bow on a wreath, or adding some container plants – either in yellow pots, or plants that blossom with yellow flowers (or both). A bright yellow outdoor

rug would warm up your front porch, as would yellow outdoor pillows or cushions. And the yellow needn't be solid; it can be in a print, perhaps a geometric print or an ikat-style print.

Indoors, gray could be in your carpet or flooring, walls,

drapes, pillows or upholstery. Incorporate yellow in accents and accessories like candles, lamps, placemats, wall art, pillows, poufs, a well-placed throw, drapes or tablecloths. Either color could be featured in area rugs. Or go all in and paint the walls

yellow. According to Pantone, either color can "take the lead." It's your space: what pleases you is key. After all this time spent at home, what that is will likely be crystal clear.



This room uses an overall gray palette for flooring, walls and furniture but adds pops of yellow with pillows, artwork, flowers and even a bowl of fruit.



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