Create an outdoor entertaining oasis

In the Keys, now is the perfect time for entertaining outdoors — the temperature is crisp and the skies are sunny. Creating a space that’s comfortable and stylish makes guests feel welcome for friendly gatherings. “Exterior spaces are just as much in need of decorat-
ing as interior spaces,” says Target Style Expert for Home and HGTV Designer, Sabrina Soto. “Before you begin to decorate, think about how you plan to use your outdoor space.”

Envision your patio, garden or deck as an extension of your indoor living space and design it based on how you will use it most. Even a small outdoor area can serve dual purposes if you choose multi-functional pieces, such as a bench or chairs that allow for dining as well as a casual conversation area.

Start creating your space with a great piece of furniture as the focal point. “It’s worth investing in outdoor furniture, like the Smith & Hawken Solenti collection,” suggests Soto. “The collection is made of Premium Grade A Teak, the best quality wood for the outdoors because it can withstand the elements and will last for years.”

Once the large furniture pieces are selected, accessories like cushions and toss pillows can add pops of color. Lush green, turquoise and rust add an elegant playful touch to neutral furniture. Create a more sophisticated environment by keeping accessories simple, or mix-and-match bright, patterned pieces to add a whimsical look to your outdoor space.

Planners and lighting can be used to complete the look, and will create a more festive setting outdoors. Tall planters filled with green foliage can define your space and add privacy. Hanging lanterns and string lights — especially LED lighting — are a great way to illuminate an outdoor space and create ambience for night-time gatherings, without spending a lot. Line the perimeter of your party area with lanterns and create a lit pathway to lead guests out when the party is over.

“Simple touches transform outdoor spaces into inviting summer retreats,” says Soto. “Layering in the right outdoor furniture and accessories will make your next outdoor event stylish and welcoming.” For more outdoor decorating products and ideas, visit Target.com.

Approach the design of an outdoor space by layering accents such as lighting, pillows and dishes.

New cooling technology in development

There’s a new type of air conditioning on the horizon called “DEVap” (for “desic-cant-enhanced evaporative”) cooling. It’s still in the developmental stages, but it could soon be in Keys homes.

The new, patented system abandons the power-hungry compressor-driven refrigeration process used in many domestic (and virtually all commercial) air conditioners in favor of a couple of high-efficiency pumps and fans. But it also uses water for evaporative cooling — a concept familiar to many people living in the arid West who have roof-mounted “swamp coolers.”

Swamp coolers work well when the outside air is dry, as evaporating water carries away heat, cooling and moistening the air that is re-circulated into the house. However, the shortcomings of traditional evaporative cooling are the wetted pads that are susceptible to mineral buildup and even bacteria growth. And if the outside air is both hot and humid, evaporation alone can’t lower the air temperature to comfortable levels.

In a warm, humid climate, like the Keys, most people turn to vapor compression cooling because it can cool (albeit somewhat inefficiently) with moist air. The problem with Keys-type climates is that air conditioning systems need to accomplish a lot of cooling and a lot of drying to make people comfortable.
Gardening made easy

BY SARA MATTHIS
Special Sections Editor

It’s growing season in the Florida Keys, an often-frustrating time for residents who want to grow their own fruits and vegetables. There’s either too much sun or not enough water. The pests get to it or would-be growers just run out of energy.

Dawn Kawzinsky and Bob Dagnall of Big Pine Key say they have hit on a perfect solution — the Tower Garden. The couple said they’ve had success with green vegetables, tomatoes, parsley and other herbs.

“Basically, you can grow anything in the Tower Garden except a root vegetable,” Kawzinsky said.

It’s a hydroponic and aerobic tube that is about 4½ feet tall and 2½ feet wide. A submersible pump in the bottom of the device pumps water to the top, allowing the water to trickle down. The tube can host up to 20 plants — roots neatly tucked inside the tube and the vegetation poking out to catch the sun’s rays. The pump can be powered by an extension cord and a timer conserves energy by cycling on and off throughout the day.

“It’s soil-less, so you don’t have to worry about bugs and it’s totally organic,” Kawzinsky said. “And it uses less water because it recycles the runoff.”

The devices cost about $500 before add-ons such as the tomato cage. Kawzinsky said it’s worth the price.

“In seven months, I probably grew $500 worth of produce,” she said.

There are a number of accessories available for the Tower Garden including extensions to make the tube taller and submersible heaters. The manufacturer also sells a nutrient solution to make the plants grow fast and stay healthy.

For more information, contact the Keys distributors at 305-872-9438 or e-mail bobndawn2@aol.com.

A standard Tower Garden stands about 4 feet tall and has room for 20 plants.

Contributed

Shedding light on the new lightbulbs

By Sara Matthis

You’ve probably been hearing the talk of federal light bulb regulations for years, but in two months, the talk will become reality. The federally mandated phase-out of less efficient incandescent light bulbs begins with the 100-watt light bulb on Jan. 1, 2012. As these rules phase in gradually, it’s a great time to educate yourself on the different types of energy-efficient light bulbs available. First, the lingo used to describe the brightness of the light bulbs is changing. We’ve become accustomed to identifying the brightness of a light bulb by the amount of power — watts — that it uses. However, more efficient light bulbs emit the same amount of light — measured in lumens — while using less electricity.

For example, the following light bulbs all produce roughly the same amount of light (450 lumens): 40-watt incandescent, 29-watt halogen, 11-watt compact fluorescent (CFL) and 9-watt LED. It’s still important to pay attention to wattage to make sure you don’t exceed the recommended level for your lamp, but it’s unlikely that will happen with the more efficient bulbs.

Following are the different types of more energy-efficient bulbs available.

• Compact fluorescent: CFL bulbs are more expensive than incandescent bulbs, but use up to 75 percent less energy and last up to 10 times as long. You’ve likely seen them in spiral or tube-like shapes, but CFLs also come in the A-line form.

• Halogen: These bulbs use the same technology as incandescent bulbs but last up to three times longer and are about 50 percent more efficient. Halogens are known for producing the highest quality light but aren’t as efficient as CFLs.

• LED: LED bulbs take the efficiency and durability of CFLs even further, as this bulb is rated to last more than 22 years and uses slightly less energy than a CFL bulb that also produces 450 lumens.

For more information on new light bulb laws, visit the Lowe’s YouTube channel for a light bulb tutorial.
Prevent iguanas from moving in

Iguanas in the Florida Keys adore carefully landscaped yards stocked with tender stalks and delicious shoots. One of the ways to discourage their presence is by installing tree wraps. The slippery fabric keeps them from nesting in the trees.

— Citizen Staff

BY SARA MATTHIS
Special Sections Editor

Iguanas earned the ire of Sugarloaf Shores homeowner Fred Greenberg by messing up the place.

“They left droppings on the dock which stains it,” he said. “It was a nuisance.”

Greenberg said what really prompted him to act, though, was when he saw the population exploding.

“We had a sand lot next door and the iguanas were burrowing there and having big families. We had to draw the line,” he said.

There’s an iguana infestation in the Florida Keys, no doubt. They eat homeowner’s carefully landscaped gardens. They poop in the pool. They stain the docks. They stage Mexican stand-offs with vehicular traffic in the street. And, yet, most island residents want to deal with the situation as humanely as possible. Enter the iguana control specialist — Tom Portuallo. For the past five years, he’s been helping homeowners manage the problem, primarily by using prevention techniques.

“I found that the sprays may slow some of them down, but it wasn’t a satisfactory solution. So I started investigating and doing research,” Portuallo said. He consulted reptile experts, conducted web searches and lurked on blogs. “I learned that in most cases you don’t have to destroy the animals, you just have to make them leave.”

Although the majority of iguanas are not aggressive, they do pose a health problem. Droppings can contaminate pools, muck up picnic sites and entice house pets to snack inappropriately.

Portuallo’s iguana eradication company, Blue Iguana Pest Control, has three important weapons — the tree wrap, the seawall barrier and the hole barrier. The first is a slippery plastic sleeve that allows the iguana to descend from the nest, but never ascend again. The seawall barrier creates a slippery ledge that iguanas can’t climb. And Blue Iguana Pest Control blocks the burrows by installing a screen mesh.

“First we vacate the holes, searching out animals and eggs,” Portuallo said. “Then we put the tree wrap, the seawall barrier and the hole barrier. The first is a slippery plastic sleeve that allows the iguana to descend from the nest, but never ascend again. The seawall barrier creates a slippery ledge that iguanas can’t climb. And Blue Iguana Pest Control blocks the burrows by installing a screen mesh.

“First we vacate the holes, searching out animals and eggs,” Portuallo said. Blue Iguana Pest Control offers a variety of services ranging from “treatments” (using traps baited with fruit) to “monitoring” (where a crew performs regular checks of the property looking for new burrows or new sites for prevention measures).

Greenberg said it’s working. The pests are mostly gone but the war isn’t over.

“I just removed some shrubs next to the canal. I don’t want them to have anywhere to hide,” he said.

For more details, visit www.blueiguananestcontrol.com or call 305-296-5151.
Easy ways to boost home value in today’s market

Metro News Service

Though the housing market might not be booming, there are still buyers out there looking for a place to call their own. Some potential sellers might prefer a patient approach to selling their homes, choosing to do so when the market rebounds and homes regain some of their lost value. Other sellers might not have a choice and must make due with selling in a lackluster market.

Regardless of which category you’re in, there are easy ways to boost your home’s value. Making minor changes to a home can add to your asking price, whether you’re putting your home on the market this week or waiting for the market to rebound. The following tasks might not take much effort, but they pay dividends:

• Work on the yard.
  An appealing lawn is still a great way to catch a prospective buyer’s eye. When a home boasts a lush lawn and well-manicured trees, it’s hard to ignore that For Sale sign out front. If landscaping has proven an Achilles’ heel in the past, make an effort to take better care of your property in the months ahead. It doesn’t take long for even the most neglected lawn to rebound from disrepair. By the time you feel confident to put that for sale sign out front, you might just be putting it up in a lush lawn no buyer can resist.

• Upgrade appliances.
  Prospective buyers won’t be thrilled if they walk into a home and see outdated appliances. Some might even feel older appliances indicate a homeowner who cared little about appearances and might begin to wonder if there are any additional areas that might have been neglected around the house. Stainless steel appliances in the kitchen and even new fixtures in the bathroom are aesthetically appealing and tend to excite buyers. Homeowners who aren’t immediately putting their property up for sale can gradually upgrade their appliances to lessen some of the financial toll such purchases take.

• Replace the carpet.
  A clean carpet might make a world of difference to a home’s inhabitants, but a new carpet will be more appealing to prospective buyers. Choose a neutral-toned carpet that will boast a more universal appeal.

• Paint the home.
  A fresh coat of paint or new siding is always attractive to prospective buyers. If your home hasn’t had a new coat of paint in awhile that might make buyers feel the home is musty or old.

• Clean up around the house.
  A cluttered house will almost certainly repel buyers. Buyers want a home that’s roomy and well kept, but clutter creates the opposite impression. Organize the closets to make them appear more roomy and clean up any areas that have become cluttered — consider temporarily renting a storage unit to house excess stuff from closets. Basements or utility closets might be handy for storage, but they should be open and clean before hosting an open house. The less clutter a home has, the more spacious it will appear.

Uncluttered surfaces make a better impression on potential buyers. Consider renting a storage unit to store extra belongings.

\[\text{Contributed}\]

J. HO DESIGN GROUP
JOHNATHON HOENSCHEIDT
INTERIOR DECORATOR
KEY WEST
305-393-3730

Free Estimates 305-453-9377
Over 20 Years Experience
Licensed Insured Bonded Residential Commercial
WWW.BEACHHOUSEGARDENS.COM
How to accommodate overnight guests

Metro News Service

Keys homeowners joke there is no such thing as a spare bedroom because it's always occupied by visiting friends and family. Chances are many holiday hosts and hostesses will open their island homes to overnight guests.

Although visions of Cousin Eddy from “National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation” and his band of misfit family members come to mind, most holiday guests are more of a pleasure to have around. It might be mildly inconvenient to host guests for a day or two, but preparation can help alleviate such inconveniences.

There are a number of ways to get ready for holiday guests. Keep these tips in mind as you prepare your home.

• Set aside space. Not every household has a spare guest room available, but there are ways to make guests feel like they have their own private area. There's the possibility of giving up your own room for the night or set up a space in an out-of-the-way den or a child's bedroom for the time being. People who live in the house may be more comfortable bunking with one another than an outside guest.
• Offer individual linens. A fresh set of sheets and towels contributes to a hotel's comfort level. Welcome guests with a set of fresh sheets and soft towels.
• Stock extra toiletries. The holiday season is a busy time, and it's easy for travelers to forget a thing or two. Keep an extra toothbrush and some spare mouthwash at the ready. Travel-sized soaps and shampoos may be more convenient for guests and might help them feel more comfortable and less like a burden in your home.
• Accommodate guests' needs. Some guests may be allergic to certain foods, while others may prefer to watch the late-night news before bed. Find out their preferences beforehand so you can do your best to make them feel comfortable.
• Offer the use of the washer and dryer. Give guests their own laundry bag so they can wash clothes if they'll be staying for an extended period of time. Fresh clothes make anyone feel better.
• Invest in an air mattress. Having extra places for guests to sleep often comes in handy. Air mattresses are easy to inflate at a moment's notice for an unexpected guest and can be quickly deflated and stored in a closet or under a bed.
• Bend house rules. While certain rules may be set in stone, bedtime or meal times may have to be changed to accommodate guests who aren't used to the goings-on of the household.

It can be fun or frustrating to have a guest stay over for the holidays. But being prepared can make the time go by much more smoothly.

Better drains prevent pool accidents

Citizen Staff

Although it's required of public pools in the Florida Keys, homeowners with private pools may not be aware of the safety drain covers required by federal law. Called a VGB-compliant drain cover, it's a modified drain cover incapable of trapping a swimmer at the bottom of a pool or spa by suction.

Carol Snider of Swimline Pool Products in Key West said it's a relatively inexpensive item that costs a few more dollars to install.

“The piece doesn't cost very much, about $20 depending on the model,” Snider said, “it’s a matter of hiring a technician that is also scuba-certified to change the grate.”

The federal law is named after Virginia Graeme Baker, a seven-year-old girl who tragically drowned after she was trapped under water by the powerful suction from a hot tub drain. Her mother, Nancy, campaigned for the regulation change with the help of her family including her father-in-law, former Secretary of State James Baker III.

Drain entrapments are frequently the result of a swimmer's body, hair, limbs or clothing becoming entangled in a faulty or flat drain or grate. The best defense against entrapments is to prevent
Small bath remodels yield big impacts

Although the installation of an all-in-one whirlpool tub may be similar to a standard bathtub, with the addition of electrical hookup, the maintenance of the tub is somewhat different.

One of the plagues of any appliance that houses water is hard water. This can form scaling that may damage the internal components of the motor and water jets. Testing to see the hardness level of water may be a wise decision. This way a water softening system can be added to the home, which will also benefit when doing laundry or running the dishwasher.

Many whirlpool tubs list items that should not be used in the water while bathing. These may include sudsing bubble bath powders or scented oil additions, each of which may form a film inside of the system, causing it to malfunction. Be sure to read the users’ manual prior to first use or before introducing anything foreign to the tub.

For tough grime, fill the tub just above the jets with water. Place about a capful of bleach into the water. Let the tub run for at least five minutes to agitate the solution. Let the water drain and then rinse out the whirlpool bath afterward. Bleach can also kill bacteria and pathogens that may have been left behind in jet plumbing that did not completely drain.

— Metro News Service

Tips for maintaining whirlpool tubs

Although the installation of an all-in-one whirlpool tub may be similar to a standard bathtub, with the addition of electrical hookup, the maintenance of the tub is somewhat different.

One of the plagues of any appliance that houses water is hard water. This can form scaling that may damage the internal components of the motor and water jets. Testing to see the hardness level of water may be a wise decision. This way a water softening system can be added to the home, which will also benefit when doing laundry or running the dishwasher.

Many whirlpool tubs list items that should not be used in the water while bathing. These may include sudsing bubble bath powders or scented oil additions, each of which may form a film inside of the system, causing it to malfunction. Be sure to read the users’ manual prior to first use or before introducing anything foreign to the tub.

For tough grime, fill the tub just above the jets with water. Place about a capful of bleach into the water. Let the tub run for at least five minutes to agitate the solution. Let the water drain and then rinse out the whirlpool bath afterward. Bleach can also kill bacteria and pathogens that may have been left behind in jet plumbing that did not completely drain.

— Metro News Service

Although the installation of an all-in-one whirlpool tub may be similar to a standard bathtub, with the addition of electrical hookup, the maintenance of the tub is somewhat different.

One of the plagues of any appliance that houses water is hard water. This can form scaling that may damage the internal components of the motor and water jets. Testing to see the hardness level of water may be a wise decision. This way a water softening system can be added to the home, which will also benefit when doing laundry or running the dishwasher.

Many whirlpool tubs list items that should not be used in the water while bathing. These may include sudsing bubble bath powders or scented oil additions, each of which may form a film inside of the system, causing it to malfunction. Be sure to read the users’ manual prior to first use or before introducing anything foreign to the tub.

For tough grime, fill the tub just above the jets with water. Place about a capful of bleach into the water. Let the tub run for at least five minutes to agitate the solution. Let the water drain and then rinse out the whirlpool bath afterward. Bleach can also kill bacteria and pathogens that may have been left behind in jet plumbing that did not completely drain.

— Metro News Service

Go Green and Breathe Easy

Install a New Energy Efficient Central A/C System and Indoor Air Quality Products!

For More Information
305-852-2960
CAC1815697

Oceanside Marina

Your Gateway to the Atlantic

More Than 400 IGFA Records

Lowest Prices in the Lower Keys

- wet slips - dry storage -
- boat-on-trailer storage - bait
- tackle - fuel - provisioning -
- fishing charters - paddleboarding -

5950 Peninsular Ave. Key West
305-294-4676
www.oceansidekeywest.com

Keys Window & Door Company

PROTECT & BEAUTIFY YOUR HOME WITH HURRICANE RESISTANT WINDOWS & DOORS
305-587-0477

- IMPACT WINDOWS
- FRENCH DOORS
- SLIDING DOORS
- STOREFRONTS
- SHUTTERS

Professional Window & Door Installation

30 Years of Installation Experience in South Florida
Florida Certified General Contractor CGC1513148

Go Green and Breathe Easy

Install a New Energy Efficient Central A/C System and Indoor Air Quality Products!

For More Information
305-852-2960
CAC1815697
The new air conditioning technology depends on desiccants — water-absorbing compounds that dry the surrounding environment. Desiccants have been used on a commercial scale in manufacturing processes that required strict moisture control; think of the little sugar-packet-sized sachets — clearly marked “DO NOT EAT” — found in the packaging for many consumer electronics.

In building a prototype, researchers used a calcium chloride salt solution as a desiccant and relied on a technical breakthrough from a company that had found a way to keep tiny, corrosive desiccant droplets from leaking into the metal ductwork of the device.

They turned to another vendor for a high-tech membrane that prevents liquid water from crossing from one side to the other but allows water vapor to freely move through it. The desiccant solution is contained on one side of the membrane, but as air is drawn through from the other side, it is cooled through evaporation and dried as the desiccant absorbs water.

“We’ve designed all that into a single core, in which the drying and the cooling are accomplished sort of instantaneously as the air passes through,” said a researcher. “We got rid of all the disadvantages of evaporative cooling, but we kept all the advantages — evaporative cooling is a very efficient form of cooling.”

— MillerMicune.com.

Drownings are a preventable cause of death and injury for children. By putting proven safety behaviors and systems into practice, you and your family will be much more secure in and around public and residential pools. Create a pool safety toolkit to have near the pool or spa to ensure that if the worst happens, you are ready to respond. Include:

- A first aid kit.
- A pair of scissors to cut hair, clothing or a pool cover, if needed.
- A phone to call 911.
- A flotation device.

— U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

**Pool**

Continued from page 6

them before they happen by installing federally-compliant drain covers. Although it’s not required for residential pool owners, it’s recommended. In addition, homeowners should inspect drain covers regularly to make sure they are not missing or broken.