

SUMMER 2021

# HOME TRENDS

DESIGN/BUILD REMODEL • CUSTOM HOMES • CUSTOM DECKS



## A SUSTAINABLE & EFFICIENT BACKYARD

Feature article inside

# A Custom Deck Solution in Forest Hill

At T.W. Ellis, we want to build you a deck that will make your family happy for years to come. We accomplish that with our consultative design process and skilled technicians, and by using the highest-quality materials.

Working together with you, we'll create an outdoor retreat to meet all your needs. That dedication and attention to

detail is what brought the owners of this Forest Hill home to T.W. Ellis.

The homeowners knew they needed to repair or replace their existing deck, and quickly realized that they wanted something more than a simple wood deck. Our team worked with them to bring their vision to life to create two decks, one measuring 18 by 20 feet and the other 5 x 10 feet, crafted from Fiberon's Sanctuary Series in Chai.

The clients were impressed with the way the T.W. Ellis was able to meet all their goals, including a unique stair design and working with a walkout that wasn't level with the existing doors. We were able to create two sets of 5-foot steps from grade to address the level issue. We also encased the raw end of the board on the steps to give the whole project a more finished look.

One of the unique features of this deck—and the favorite feature of the homeowner—is a multicolor inlay in the center of the deck, using Earl Gray Fiberon decking, matching the deck border.

"To align a rectangular inlay of a different color within the gray color of the deck and get it centered so that it was visually appealing...was a challenge," the homeowner said. "The guys just did a great job on that."



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# A SUSTAINABLE & EFFICIENT BACKYARD

As we head into summer, it's a great time to think about better ways to use your yard and expand the livable space in your home. Building a deck, patio, or other outdoor living project is one of the best ways to take advantage of the beautiful summer weather.

Your outdoor living space may not be the first part of your home that comes to mind when considering ways to be more eco-friendly, but there's a lot you can do in the great outdoors to be more sustainable.

## Energy-efficient lighting

One of the easiest ways to save money and energy outdoors is by upgrading or replacing your traditional lighting.

Photovoltaic lights absorb sunlight during the day and provide illumination at night. These are a great option for path lights and deck accent lighting. There is a significant difference in the quality of lights on the market. We can help you find the best solution as part of your next remodel.

Instead of leaving floodlights on all night, consider lighting that works on a motion sensor or timer to provide security. For all of your lighting, look for Energy Star-rated fixtures.

It's also a good idea to replace traditional incandescent lighting with energy-efficient LED lighting. LEDs deliver brighter light than traditional bulbs and offer longer life, lower maintenance, and energy savings. LED lights have a higher up-front install cost, but will typically pay for themselves in just a couple of years. An LED bulb produces light 90 percent more efficiently than an incandescent, according to Energy Star.

## Opt for energy-efficient appliances

If your outdoor living space includes an outdoor kitchen, efficient appliances can make a big difference in your energy consumption. The considerations for choosing an efficient outdoor appliance are similar to the factors when choosing them for your indoor kitchen.



Refrigerators and freezers are the biggest users of electricity in a kitchen. Refrigerators in the range of 16 to 20 cubic feet are the most efficient. While brands and models vary, a simple rule of thumb is that the bigger the unit, the more energy it will use. You can probably get by with a small fridge in an outdoor kitchen, so keep that in mind. Some features, like icemakers, will also add to the operating cost.

If your outdoor appliances are not used on a regular basis, consider unplugging them during the down times to save on passive energy costs. (Most appliances draw energy even when they're not in use.)

## Water-conserving fixtures

For any outdoor water fixtures, such as an outdoor shower or faucets, you want to use the same strategies you would to conserve water indoors. Consider low-flow showerheads and faucets, and be sure to repair leaky fixtures to reduce water usage. WaterSense labeled showerheads, faucets and fixtures use at least 20 percent less water than older models—and many can cut usage almost in half.

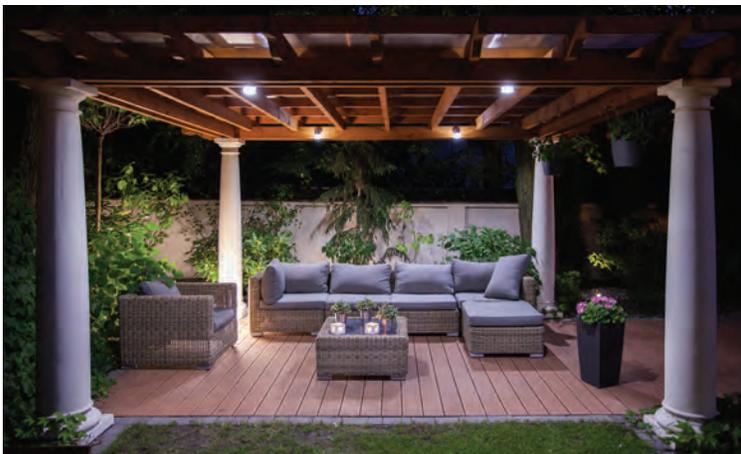
## Rethink other water features

Have a pool, fountain, or other water features? There are several actions you can take to lower your energy and water usage here as well. Regularly covering your pool and using a solar blanket will reduce heating (and cleaning) costs.

An energy-efficient pool pump and filtration system, while costing more on the front end, can save you thousands of dollars in the long run. For smaller water fountains or ponds, a solar-powered or hybrid pump offers a more eco-friendly solution.

## Incorporate shade

Planting trees in your yard offers multiple benefits. The shade will make your outdoor living space more enjoyable, and require less usage of ceiling fans or air conditioning in a sunroom or porch. Well-developed trees offer the dual benefit of helping block sunlight and heat from your home which further reduces energy costs. Other shade solutions, such as awnings or pergolas, can also help achieve those goals during the hot summer.



# ADDING TECH TO YOUR KITCHEN

If a kitchen remodel is in your plans this year, you'll want to be sure to check out some of the latest improvements in appliances.

Appliance manufacturers have made great strides in technology and energy efficiency over the last decade. If your appliances are more than a few years old, replacing them can make a significant impact on not only your energy



consumption and utility bills, but also on the way you live your life.

Connected appliances can bring a new level of convenience to your home: turn on the oven with your voice, monitor your refrigerator and food quality remotely, or schedule a new order of dishwasher pods. Internet-connected appliances can make it easier to diagnose problems with the units as well as track energy usage. At its simplest level, you can use voice control devices like Amazon Echo or Google Home to set timers and access recipes. Many new appliances will sync with these devices as well.

And when it comes to energy, kitchen appliances alone can be responsible for more than 30 percent of home energy consumption. Appliances that are more efficient may have a higher price tag, but could end up saving you money down the road in lower operating costs.

Appliance technology is changing constantly. We can help you make the right choices for your family!



## Touchless faucets

Besides appliances, advances in faucets and fixtures are changing the way we use our kitchens. With touchless faucets, there's no need to touch the handles when you've been cutting chicken or kneading sourdough.

Sensors on the faucets, usually at the base and sometimes on the spout, will start and stop with a wave of your hand or even a dish. These aren't like those horrible faucets we've all used in public bathrooms that can be endlessly frustrating. The newest faucets rely on advanced infrared technology and are easy to customize.

Even more exciting are the latest voice-activated models. Turn them off and on with a simple command or even set the water temperature or ask it to produce a certain amount of water for baking or cooking.

# The pros and cons of engineered wood floors

Engineered wood floors can be a great choice for your next remodel. It is made up of several layers of ply, topped with a solid wood veneer, usually pre-finished. There are benefits and drawbacks to engineered wood products, so let's explore some of them.

## Pros

**Aesthetics** – Engineered woods are an attractive option that mimics the look of solid wood. Most likely, if there's a species of wood you want for flooring there is an engineered version and any people can't tell the difference between them.

**Stability & moisture resistance** – For areas that may occasionally have some moisture, engineered wood is more resistant than products like solid wood or linoleum. It is less likely to shift, contract/expand, or warp due to high humidity or temperature changes. It's not waterproof, so if that's a concern, consider tile or some vinyl and laminate options.

**Wide planks available** – In order to meet sustainable harvesting goals, most solid wood planks are not available in widths of more than 5 inches. Engineered wood gives the look of classic wide plank flooring, and probably the best way to do so without using reclaimed wood.



## Cons

**Harder to refinish** – The thinner layer of wood veneer means that if the wood is damaged or scratched, it is more difficult to sand and refinish than solid wood floors. If this is something you are worried about, look for a thicker wear layer or consider non-wood products.

**Off-gassing** – Some engineered wood products are made with adhesives, resins, and other chemicals that can cause off-gassing of potentially harmful materials. We can help you figure out which could cause problems.

**Price** – Engineered wood is less expensive than solid wood floors, but it is more expensive to install and care for than many other flooring options.



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# A Custom Deck Solution in Forest Hill

Besides creating a beautiful deck, the clients were also impressed by Ellis's ability to navigate local codes and create a project that still met their wants and needs. That became especially important when meeting the goal of protecting the view of the backyard. While the client's original desire of using a horizontal rope railing wasn't allowed by Harford County code, we were able to come up with a solution. The Westbury VertiCable Railing meets local code, but also gives the homeowners a mostly unobstructed view of their yard.

The entire experience went smoothly from design to construction and on to completion, with no surprises,



which the homeowner credits to the company's ability to anticipate potential problems.

"For other people interested in T.W. Ellis, they're so thorough in [designing] your vision of the project that you don't have any surprises," the homeowner said. "When you're the customer, you have this vision...and then a few months later, that's what it looks like."

T.W. Ellis has been delivering award-winning outdoor living projects in Maryland for nearly 20 years and is certified by the North American Deck and Railing Association. We look forward to helping you create your dream outdoor space!