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Table of Contents

6 Wilsey Nursery returns for one more season

8 Brothers aim to protect local homes from the elements

12 What is a Master Gardener?

12 Extend your living area to outdoor spaces

13 What to ask your builder: lighting

14 Top down approach to exterior updates

16 Low maintenance relaxation garden

18 What to know before replacing your roof

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Here they grow again!

Fairhope's popular Wilsey Nursery is back for one more season

BY ALLISON MARLOW

When Fairhope's Wilsey Nursery closed its doors at the end of 2019, devoted gardeners across Baldwin County wilted.

After three generations in business, the Brown family was ready to move on to their next adventure. The community, however, was reluctant to let them go. Good news, spring is back and so is Wilsey Nursery.

"We kind of left a void in the community. We didn't realize people were going to miss us," said Wanda Brown as the family prepped the greenhouse and surrounding grounds for the grand opening.

Brown said they kept the phone number and it continued to ring long after the garden center was shuttered late last year.

"People were like, 'please' and we relented. We love the work," she said.

"We're excited."

The garden center opened in late February and will remain open until the early summer. Be certain though, Wilsey Nursery is still for sale and the Browns have big plans.

Wanda and Bobby Brown own a coffee farm on top of a mountain in Costa Rica.

They are back in the U.S. for six months and decided that opening the nursery was more fun than just hanging out. A permanent move to the tropical nation is their end goal. Until then, they hope to find a buyer for Wilsey Nursery who will love the business and the customers as much as they do.

The couple is willing to help transition the new business to new ownership so that it continues to grow and bloom.

While Wanda said the family has loved being part of the gardening community, they look forward to operating their farm fulltime. Plus, they hated leaving behind the delicious coffee.

"Once you get spoiled on that stuff it's really hard to do Folgers," she said with a laugh.

Brothers aim to protect Baldwin County homes from the elements, one by one

BY ALLISON MARLOW

When it comes to insulation, brothers Joshua and Jonathan Fiala, have their customers covered.

As owners/ operators of the The Insulation Professionals, based in Loxley, they know it is important to customers to know not just what product is being installed, but to know how and by whom.

"One of the main questions we get is, 'who is doing the work'?" Joshua Fiala said. "We are the same guys from start to finish."

The men built their business after spending 20 years combined working for other insulation companies. The brothers said they always wanted to build a business together and insulation was a natural fit. They worked night and weekends, while working fulltime jobs, to get the business up and running.

"If you have a good work ethic and the skills to do it, just get out there and go for it," Joshua said of building The Insulation Professionals.

On the job, the pair works swiftly and quietly, almost as if they can read each other's minds.

"That's our relationship," Joshua said. "I know what he needs to do and he knows what I need to do."

While many customers may consider checking their insulation needs when the chill of winter begins to brush against their home, Joshua said they stress that insulation is just as important in the hot summer months.

Without the proper type or size of insulation, a house can be left unprotected from damaging heat. And, with frequently updated code requirements, many relatively new homes can quickly become outdated.

Joshua said current environmental codes require insulation to measure 14.5 inches thick, a code that was implemented just 10 years ago.

"If you look at a 10-year-old home, it still looks new but it's not up to par," he said. "Plus insulation settles over time. Now you are under-insulated and it's not doing a proper job. Insulation is there to protect against all environments, hot or cold."

Joshua said even if a house has the proper size insulation, it may not be the correct type.

"If your air conditioner is constantly running, if you have a high electric bill or one bedroom stays warmer than the others, it could be an issue with insulation. You could need a different type of insulation on that side of the house," he said. "That may be where the sun is beating down more vigorously and we may need a different strategy."

The pair said they always aim to treat every house like it is their own.

"We take care of your house like we would our own," Joshua said. "We're here to save energy and make customers happy."

Contact them at www.theinsulationprofessionals.com or 251-752-0809.

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What is a Master Gardener?

The Alabama Master Gardener Program is a volunteer training program by which the Alabama Cooperative Extension System expands its outreach mission to the citizens of Alabama. This program represents an effective partnership between the land-grant universities of this state and motivated volunteers interested in educating their communities with research-based information. Master Gardeners are trained volunteers that offer the local community Reliable, Relevant and Reachable gardening information and education opportunities

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I love hydrangeas – Wanta Martin
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How to extend your living area to outdoor spaces

STATEPOINT

When warmer weather arrives, it's all about spending time in your home's outdoor spaces. Here are a few new ideas for transforming your porch, deck or yard into an oasis of relaxation.

Spruce Up

Before getting down to brass tacks, it's time to give your outdoor spaces a once-over and note what basic maintenance and cleaning are needed; be sure to sweep up porches and decks of debris, dust off and move outdoor furniture out of storage and prune trees and plants that need it. This may be a good time to refinish or re-stain an older deck in need of some tender loving care. Want to add a splash of color to the space? Give some time-worn wooden furniture a new paint job in a bold hue.

Power Up

To match the true comfort of indoor life to your home's outdoor spaces, you'll need a safe, code-compliant and unobtrusive way to power fans, lighting, entertainment, electric appliances and more.

To add an outlet to raised outdoor floors, porches and decks, consider installing a Deck Outlet Cover from Hubbell TayMac. Accommodating two power cords, it lets you put the power where you want it — in a safe place where people are less likely to trip over cords.

Weatherproof, UV resistant and durable even in harsh environments, it also features a low-profile design that meets ADA standards, and an attractive slip-resistant texture available in gray, white and bronze.

Furnish

Given the broad scope of weatherproof furnishings, cushions, pillows and even rugs available on the market today, there is absolutely no reason that your outdoor spaces can't offer the same level of comfort and beauty as any den or living room, especially now that you've supplied your outdoor space with electrical power and the flexibility to install such amenities as an entertainment center, ceiling fans and even chandeliers.

Just be sure everything you install is weatherproofed and protected against the elements, and that you select only outdoor-grade products. However, you can extend the life of certain items by taking extra precautions during extreme weather and the off-season.

By giving your home's outdoor spaces the same attention to detail as the indoors, you can extend your living spaces and even create new "rooms" in which to dine, relax and entertain.

Building a home? What to ask your builder about lighting

STATEPOINT

While lighting is an essential piece of new home design; it's often selected and installed at the end of the building process. What's more, statement-making decorative lighting is often not part of the initial design at all.

"Many builders today are opting for only recessed lighting in new home builds. Not only does this provide inadequate light, it creates a sterile look," says Jennifer Kis, director of marketing communications for Progress Lighting. "It's important to consider decorative lighting in the initial budget to highlight all the other accents and purposeful design in your home."

The good news is that today, there are luxury lighting options that suit any budget and lifestyle trend. For example, Progress Lighting offers the Point Dume Collection created by influential interior designer, Jeffrey Alan Marks. Inspired by the California coastline, fixtures in this fashion-forward collection highlight artistic influence and rich finishes. Progress also offers the Design Series, which offers sophistication at accessible prices, along with hundreds of other decorative interior and exterior fixtures.

"For the style impact it gives the home, decorative lighting is definitely worth the investment," says Piper Stromatt, interior designer for Curate Custom Homes in Chattanooga, TN. "We've tested recessed-only lighting schemes and our clients immediately sense something lacking in the home's ambiance. We always recommend including decorative lighting, as it increases the perceived value of the home as well as offers a finishing touch."

Be sure to discuss the lighting plan during your design phase. Once the build has started, it may be more expensive to make changes. When talking lighting with her clients, Stromatt emphasizes these key points:

- Layer a combination of task lighting with decorative lighting. A properly layered lighting scheme creates comfort, functionality and beauty.
- Decorative lighting should be installed closer to eye level than functional recessed lighting and reinforce the home's unique design. As the single focal point for each living area, decorative fixtures define a space, which is especially crucial in open floor plans.
- Avoid installing recessed lighting in rooms where flattering and comfortable light is necessary, such as overhead in the master bathroom or in a nursery where high-wattage lights can be uncomfortable for baby's eyes.

When planning the lighting for your new home, Stromatt recommends asking these questions:

- Is the lighting package pre-determined? Often, builders offer a choice of one or more standard packages. Before confirming your selection, ask what upgrades are available, what the costs are, and if there any design limitations.
- What's the wiring plan? Pre-installed junction boxes, or pancake boxes, offer less flexibility, as light fixtures must be installed wherever junction boxes are. If your plan doesn't include decorative lighting, ask for the home to be snake-wired, which gives the flexibility to add lighting wherever and whenever you want.
- Are LED light bulbs an option? Often a builder has already selected bulbs, and they're not always LED. Even if it adds to the cost, the investment to substitute LED bulbs is worth it, providing energy savings, brighter light and longer life.

For more tips and inspiration, visit Progress Lighting at progressltg.com/Shop.

The bottom line: don't settle for recessed lighting alone. By asking the right questions, you can easily combine form and function.

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Taking a top down approach to home exterior updates

STATEPOINT

Whether you want to boost the beauty of your home for your own enjoyment or you're looking to sell in the near future, experts recommend taking a top-down approach to evaluate the outside of your home.

"When making updates to your home exterior, it's helpful to think of how all the parts of the whole work together to create a unified look," says Kate Smith, chief color maven with Sensational Color.

With that in mind, here are a few remodeling ideas to get you started:

The Roof

A new roof not only adds aesthetic appeal, it can add value too. Indeed, Remodeling's Cost vs. Value 2020 report shows that a roof replacement can have a return-on-investment of over 60 percent.

Composite roofing is particularly durable, long-lasting and low-maintenance, and an all-around smart investment. Not only does a high-quality roof help home-sellers get foot traffic, but the low-maintenance aspect really resonates with house-hunters. An attractive, more affordable alternative to the real thing, the composite slate and shake roofing options available from manufacturers like DaVinci Roofscapes, for example, reduce pesky maintenance concerns, offering impact-, fire- and wind-resistance, as well as the peace of mind that comes with a strong warranty.

This is also a good choice for both those with a clear color palette in mind, and

those who might need some direction, as free resources on the DaVinci Roofscapes site include a Color Visualizer offering users the ability to see how different colors may look on their home exteriors, as well as a variety of free e-books with project inspiration and advice. To learn more, visit www.davinciroofscapes.com.

"Using these free color tools can be both fun and empowering," says Smith. "They take the guesswork out of crafting a pleasing exterior color palette for the home and help create increased curb appeal."

Siding

If your home sports traditional siding, you may have noticed that the tiles contract and expand in fluctuating weather conditions and temperatures. What's more, the color of these oftentimes thin and flimsy materials can fade quickly.

Rather than replacing siding with more of the same, consider composite siding built to resist impact, fire, mold, algae, insects, salt air and high winds. The hand-split shake siding available from DaVinci Roofscapes is made of virgin resins, UV and thermal stabilizers, plus a highly-specialized fire retardant. Whether you add accent panels with composite siding or go for the whole house, this can add a hassle-free aesthetic benefit to your home and boost its value.

Walkways

Cracked or uneven walkways and steps are not only an eyesore, they can present a tripping hazard to you and guests. Evaluate whether it's time to give yours an overhaul. Be sure to select low-maintenance materials that complement the look of the other elements of your exterior. This is a good time to consider lighting that adds drama to the walkway at night and makes for safer walking.

Sprucing up? Go for high-impact projects that boost curb appeal and add value to the home.

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Create your own low maintenance relaxation garden

BY MELINDA MYERS

Create an outdoor space to relax and recharge. Transform a corner of your landscape, deck or balcony into your own escape from everyday deadlines and stress.

Use decorative fencing, sheer curtains or plantings to define the space and create a bit of privacy. An outdoor carpet, steppers or groundcover can also help define the space and create added comfort.

Provide a bit of protection from the blazing hot sun with a shade tree, pergola, umbrella or retractable awning. Deciduous trees and vines add shade during hot summer months, but let the warm sunlight shine through during the cooler months of the year.

Reduce maintenance by growing plants suited to your climate and growing conditions. Use fewer varieties and more of each to provide unity while reducing maintenance. Include permanent plantings of low maintenance trees, shrubs and perennials. Further reduce maintenance by selecting All-America Selections (AAS) winning plants (all-americaselections.org) that have been trialed across the US and Canada and selected for their performance in home gardens and containers.

Select varieties known for being low maintenance. Interspecific Supra Pink and Jolt dianthus are both such plants. Their showy flowers brighten the garden all summer long despite the heat and with no deadheading.

Add some therapeutic fragrance to your space by growing a pot or patch of Lavender lady, an English lavender. Brush your hand over the foliage and flowers to enjoy its relaxing fragrance. This compact variety flowers just 90 days from sowing and is hardy in zones 5 to 9.

Perfume the air with blue Evening Scentsation petunia. Perfect for containers and hanging baskets, its fragrance peaks during the evening hours. Set a container of compact Deep Purple nicotiana near your chair or entryway for a fragrant greeting in the evening.

Get a boost of color and health benefits by inviting birds and butterflies into your sanctuary. Being in nature lowers your blood pressure and improves your mood and adding bird watching to the mix increases these benefits.

Plant Tip Top Rose nasturtium to bring in the hummingbirds and butterflies. This compact plant boasts showy rose-colored flowers that bloom all season long. Pluck a few of the edible leaves and flowers to enjoy in your salad.

Summer Jewel Salvias include red, white, lavender and pink flowered wind and rain tolerant beauties. You'll enjoy the butterflies and hummingbirds visiting the flowers and goldfinches feasting on the seeds.

Extend your enjoyment into the evening with some night lighting. Drape a string of lights over a pergola, arbor or tree. Lead the way to your retreat with some solar powered path lighting. Within the space, light a few candles or lanterns for more intimate lighting.

Brighten the night garden with a few flowers that shine during the darker hours. Gypsy White baby's breath is a non-invasive species and has better branching and heat tolerance, making it an attractive low maintenance option.

Mega Bloom Polka Dot vinca's bright white flowers are a standout in the garden. Its pure white petals with bright pink center provide a nighttime glow as well as daytime interest.

Be sure to include a comfortable chair, hammock or glider to relax into the space. Add the soothing sound of water to help mask any unwanted noise.

Then grab a good book, your favorite beverage and escape to your own backyard retreat. You'll leave the space refreshed and ready to embrace and enjoy whatever comes next.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including Small Space Gardening. She hosts The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" gardening DVD series and the nationally syndicated Melinda's Garden Moment TV & radio segments. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine and was commissioned by AAS for her expertise to write this article. Myers' web site is www.melindamyers.com.

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What to know before replacing your roof

STATEPOINT

Not only does your roof need to withstand the elements over the years, it needs to look great while doing it. If it's time to replace your roof, experts say that there are some important things to consider, particularly when it comes to the materials you select.

If you've started the research process, you've likely investigated asphalt, which is by far the most popular choice of roofing material. This is because it's lightweight; inexpensive and fast to install, and because many people believe that asphalt will help them avoid the durability problems experienced with natural alternatives like slate and real shake. Ironically, asphalt does not always stand the test of time as one might hope. Experts point out that many homeowners are left disappointed when their decision to prioritize function over form doesn't go as planned.

"Do a search for asphalt roofing, and you may see more complaints than satisfied customers," says Michael Cobb, general manager, DaVinci Roofscapes. "These days, not all asphalt is the same, and due to some new blends in asphalt manufacturing on the market, many roofs are failing well before their warranties."

If you'd rather not take a chance on your home roofing's durability, and curb appeal is of importance to you, Cobb says that composite tiles can offer a cost-effective alternative to asphalt. It can also, provide a more aesthetically appealing look, stand up better to Mother Nature, and help increase the value of your home.

"There's no denying the beauty of natural slate and shake, but that beauty can be fleeting," says Cobb. "Natural slate is susceptible to damage caused by freeze and thaw cycles, and when it comes to natural shake, rotting, cracking and curling is inevitable."

To get the look of natural materials and have it last, take a look at durable composite roofing options on the market today. For example, the Bellaforté slate and shake tiles offered by DaVinci have a long life and are low maintenance. They resist hail, impact, decay and fire, while offering the beauty of natural roofing materials. Staggered edges, color variations and dramatic shadows of the brand's polymer shake tiles contribute to their beauty, and mimic the appearance of natural shake.

One more important thing to consider is the quality of warranty that accompanies the product you select. Before replacing your roof, be sure that your new roof is backed by a limited lifetime warranty. This can save you headaches and expenses down the line. And, check with your insurance company. A new composite roof may be able to save you on homeowner insurance premiums since it is impact- and fire-resistant.

For more roofing tips, curb appeal ideas and visualizer tools, visit davinciroofscapes.com.

When it comes to curb appeal, the importance of a beautiful roof can't be overstated. But a new roof should do more than appeal to the eye. It should protect your family, and the rest of your house, providing peace of mind for years to come.

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