

The Anniston Star

HOME/GARDEN

Fall 2024

This vintage life

*Dara Murphy's cottage home
is filled with memories
Page 2A.*

HOME ENTERTAINMENT

*The basics of a home theater
system (popcorn not included),
Page 4B*

WINTER APPROACHES

*Experts chime in on
home winterization,
Page 2B*

HOLIDAY DECOR

*From spooky season to
Christmas time, your
home can shine, Page 5B*



Tucker Webb/Consolidated Publishing

Dara always dreamed of living in a little white house with a white picket fence.

THIS VINTAGE LIFE

Dara Murphy’s cottage home is filled with memories

BY LISA DAVIS
Special to the Star

When the charming vintage house in Anniston went on the market three years ago, a friend of Dara Murphy’s called to tell her about it. “It’s you,” she said.

It was, indeed.

“My whole life, I used to dream about living in a white cottage, with a white picket fence, in the woods,” Dara said. “In my dreams, I saw this house.” The only difference was that the house in her dreams had a red door, and this house had a blue one.

Five weeks later, she had moved in.

“I do know that things are divinely placed in your life, and if you can just see them, you will bloom,” she said.

Dara is the owner of Rosa Lee Boutique in downtown Anniston, which was recently named Sustaining Small Business of the Year by Main Street Anniston.

Together with her son, Reed Murphy, Dara turned her energies to transforming her new yard into a cottage garden.

They planted a hundred things, including roses. Lots of roses.

Dara personally hauled in 1,200 pounds of stone to create walkways and a patio and to bring personality to an otherwise bland concrete retaining wall. The new gardens received a Calhoun County Beautification Award.

Dara started her business in 2015, designing jewelry from her home, before opening the boutique in 2016. She continues to design her own line of jewelry — and her home reflects her sparkly taste.

“You can come into this house and know who I am,” she said.

For more than 30 years, Dara has been collecting “little treasures,” and they are displayed in every room in the most

Please see HOME | Page 4A



Tucker Webb/Consolidated Publishing

There is no china on display in the dining room. Instead, cabinets are filled with Dara’s collection of treasures. The painting on the wall is by Dara, who has a degree in art.



Tucker Webb/Consolidated Publishing

A collection of vintage and antique inkwells.



Tucker Webb/Consolidated Publishing

Artwork and family photos are in every room, including the guest bedroom.



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HOME

Continued from Page 2A

intriguing ways.

Dara has a penchant for antiques. The idea that something from the 1800s has lasted this long fills her with wonder. “It’s a treasure hunt for me — all the time,” she said.

A collection of vintage crystal inkwells catches the light in front of a window. Antique silver brushes fill a bowl. A lucite ice bucket holds a collection of angels. “People think you should just put ice in an ice bucket, but no no no!” Dara said.

Some people might keep their family keepsakes in a box in the attic, or behind glass in a shadowbox. Not Dara. Her treasures are collected on shelves and in decorative bowls, where they can be picked up and remembered. Her grandmother’s eyeglasses. Her daddy’s pipes. A small bottle of her granddaddy’s cologne.

Since every treasure deserves a treasure chest, Dara also has an extensive collection of decorative boxes. “You can put treasures inside, and if you close the lid, they can’t get out,” she said. “I try to get a little box everywhere I go. And people give me boxes.”

A bookcase in the living room is filled with small boxes. Some are crystal, some porcelain. Some are enameled, some bejeweled. A piano-shaped box was the last gift from her daddy before he passed. Her favorite box is actually the plainest: a small pewter cylinder, mellowed with age. It is her PawPaw’s old snuff can.

“The heart of this home is my family,” Dara said. And not just the ones who came before, but the ones who come after. She has three grandsons, and her dream is that they will always want to come and play at Dee Dee’s house. “I want my kids and grandkids to see themselves here.”



Tucker Webb/Consolidated Publishing

The living room is filled with light, bouncing off antique crystal, mirrored end tables and gilded lamp shades.



Tucker Webb/Consolidated Publishing

Supplies that Dara uses to design her line of Rosa Lee jewelry.



Tucker Webb/Consolidated Publishing

All sorts of antique objects are displayed together. “I like to intermingle things,” Dara said. “I want you to be interested in what’s there.”



Tucker Webb/Consolidated Publishing

Dara likes to entertain, and created lots of cozy seating areas in the backyard.

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A collection of antique stoppers.



Tucker Webb/Consolidated Publishing

Dara likes to entertain, and created lots of cozy seating areas in the backyard.



Tucker Webb/Consolidated Publishing

Supplies that Dara uses to design her line of Rosa Lee jewelry.



Tucker Webb/Consolidated Publishing

This corner is Dara’s favorite spot in the house. The shelves contain her extensive collection of decorative boxes. The artworks on the wall are “Museum Bees” by Trace Mayer, who assembles vintage curiosities into antique picture frames.



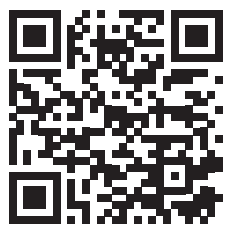
Tucker Webb/Consolidated Publishing

In the master bedroom, antiques are mixed with contemporary pieces. The antique wall sconce above the bed dates from the 1930s. Dara added the crystals.



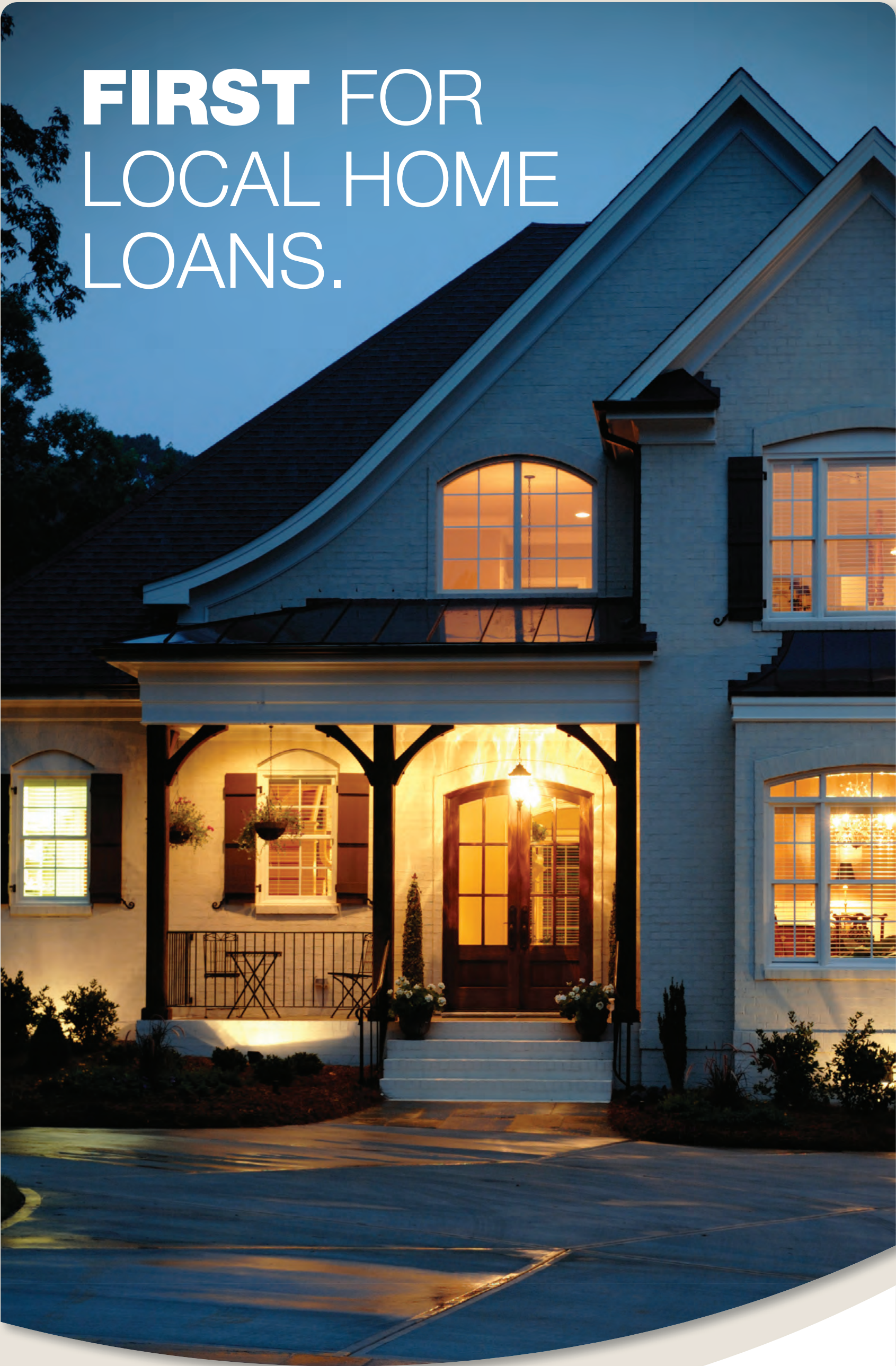
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Experts chime in on home winterization

BY JULIE EDWARDS
Special To The Star

Winter weather is just around the corner. Are you ready for it? We asked the experts what we can do to be safe and save on our energy bills when the cold temperatures hit.

John Heard Plumbing sends notices to their customers whenever they think the freezing temperatures could be a danger to their pipes. “The whole point is to not let any pipes freeze,” said Bo Taylor, service manager. “The heat in your home should be sufficient to keep pipes in the crawl space protected, but you need to make the crawl space as airtight as possible in the winter, closing access points.”

He also reminds customers to detach garden hoses from spigots. “You can remember to do that when you’re putting the foam covers over the taps,” he said, emphasizing that all exposed pipes need to be insulated. He says Heat Trace tape, which is wired in, is also available to keep pipes from freezing. “If the temperatures will be getting above freezing during the

day, you should be OK, but if it stays below freezing day and night you should keep the hot water dripping to keep water circulating throughout your system.”

David Gaddy of HVAC Specialists, LLC in Oxford says everyone needs a preventive maintenance checkup annually for their heat pumps and gas water heaters. “We check all gas appliances for combustion leaks which can lead to carbon monoxide entering your living spaces,” he said. “We check all venting systems for leaks, clean burners and ignition systems. We also check freon levels for maximum operational efficiency.”

Newer water heaters have carbon monoxide detectors built in, but older ones still need to be checked annually for leaks in the flue or vents. “It’s a good idea to just make sure everything is working safely and efficiently. And make sure your air filters are changed regularly,” he said.

Window World’s Sean McGeehan says that having sufficient insulation in your attic can make a big difference in your home’s ability to stay comfortable. “Adding

blown insulation in the attic is a popular option for increasing climate control in your home,” he said.

Plastic window insulation kits are low cost and available at any local hardware store. When asked about adding plastic to the inside of your window frames, McGeehan stated, “It wouldn’t hurt. It would create an air buffer between the glass and interior of your home but replacing single pane windows with double pane insulated windows is really the better option.”

Insulated windows with argon gas between the panes will decrease the loss of heat through your windows. “Making sure you have proper weatherstripping around all openings and insulated doors are also ways to reduce your HVAC costs,” he said.

Andy Edwards of Andy the Roofer says the main thing he sees people do wrong in the winter is cover their rooftop turbines with trash bags to trap heat in their attic in the winter. “Attics need to have air circulating to eliminate moisture,” he said. “Trapping the hot air in the attic leads to condensation and mold. Your house needs

to breathe.” Leave the turbines alone this winter.

Many people turn to electric space heaters to keep the cold at bay. While space heaters are known to be an expensive option for heating your home, for some it is the only option. Unfortunately, it is also a major culprit in wintertime house fires.

Space heaters should be plugged directly into an outlet, not with an extension cord. They should be placed on a flat, level surface and never be left unattended. Electrical cords and extension cords should never run under rugs or carpeting, it can lead to fraying and a fire hazard. Plugging too many devices into the same outlet can overload the circuit.

Trees limbs on power lines are a major cause of power outages in winter storms. Trim any unruly limbs away from power lines before they become a problem for you and your neighbors.

Being prepared before dangerously cold weather hits is the key to a safe winter season.

Five Alabama picnic companies that will help you host the perfect celebration

BY ANNA CLAIRE MARTIN
Alabama News Center

As the dog days of summer give way to cooler temperatures, it can be perfect picnic weather. Here are five Alabama companies that can take your outing beyond bologna sandwiches and a blanket.

Southern Charm Picnic Co.

Based on the Alabama Gulf Coast, Southern Charm Picnic Co.’s specialty is planning charming picnics at the beach, bay or the backyard. The company will help plan a picnic you won’t forget.

The Picnic Pairing Co.

The Picnic Pairing Co. in Huntsville is perfect for your next event. Whether it’s a romantic date, group picnic and paint or a gender reveal, it caters to your needs.

An afternoon park picnic setup with arts and crafts and refreshments.

Pretty Lil Picnics

Madison County’s Pretty Lil Picnics offers planning and design for all events, from corporate to anniversaries, birthdays, showers and weddings.

M&J Plush Picnics

M&J Plush Picnics is a luxury picnic service in Birmingham that offers a wide variety of services, ready to elevate your picnics to the next level.

Birmingham Picnic Co.

Birmingham Picnic creates luxury pop-up picnics. This is a great way to celebrate your friends, whether a birthday party for any age, bridal or baby shower, bachelorette party, proposal or just a fun night to try something new with family or friends.



Alabama News Center

Transform your special moments into unforgettable memories with these picnic companies - the perfect way to celebrate everything from anniversaries to birthdays.

Tips for winterizing your garden

BY BRETT BUCKNER

Special to The star

Winter is not a myth. With daily temperatures still hovering in the 90s, cooler weather feels like a dream. But as sure as the maple leaves changing from green to gold and carpeting the ground to announce the arrival of fall, the chilly winds of winter will soon follow.

Winter may be a dormant season for the garden, it's anything but dormant for gardeners.

"I do all my best gardening in the winter," said Hayes Jackson, Urban Regional Extension Agent with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. "Most people think because a large portion of the country has to sit inside all winter, it's too cold to garden, but there's plenty that needs to be done."

The best time to start planting is between Thanksgiving and Valentine's Day. But before planting, make a plan.

"Know where you're going to have everything planted and get that done during the winter," Jackson said. "I do all my cleanup projects in the winter. We're minus bugs. "We're minus snakes. We're minus heat. We're minus humidity, and you can work all day."

Despite the cold, winter provides a certain comfort level because gardeners can wear heavier clothing to combat briars and other prickly plants.

"It's much easier to dress properly in the winter," Jackson said, "and you can be just as active."

Winter is the best time for planning and preparing new beds or vegetable gardens by using some of the fall leaves as compost along with garden soil in order to combat red clay.

Perhaps the most important steps for winterizing your garden, is to add a layer of mulch in preparation for that occasional hard freeze. While not every plant needs to be protected from low winter temperatures, perennials and newly planted trees or shrubs need the added layer of protection. Winter mulch is a blanket for root systems and insulates the soil. Constant freezing and thawing of the soil pushes the roots of some plants closer to the surface.

After the first hard freeze, add 2 to 4 inches of straw, pine or mulch evenly around the plants. Keep it a couple inches



Pexels

away from the plants to avoid rot.

This brings up the big question — pine bark mulch or pine straw?

"It all serves the same purpose," Jackson said. "You're maintaining soil moisture, controlling erosion, and controlling weeds, but I prefer pine straw because it holds up better, doesn't wash away ... and it's easy to find. Just find a pine tree and grab some more."

Jackson suggests pruning dormant plants in the winter. While pruning evergreen shrubs and trees encourages new growth, winter is a good time to cut down weak or dead limbs.

Though it may technically be winter, warmer temperatures and prolonged droughts are not uncommon — that means occasional watering for new plantings.

"I always tell people, do not start planting until we get several good rains," Jackson said. "Always water and pack the soil to remove air pockets and get the soil settled."

Annuals and perennials guaranteed to bring color in winter:

- Ornamental cabbage
- Camellias
- Scarlet sage
- Tea olive
- Mahonia
- Winter jasmine
- Winter honeysuckle
- Snapdragon
- Sweet box
- Daffodils
- Dusty Miller
- Sweet alyssum
- Sweet pea

On Gardening: Miss America is a real beauty for the garden

NORMAN WINTER
Tribune News Service

There is a grand lady who has been gracing my garden the past couple of years. In fact I would say she is definitely Miss America. You know The Garden Guy is having fun, as I am talking about Shadowland Miss America hosta.

The past two summers have to go down as a hosta survivability challenge of sorts. If the hostas are not crying uncle The Garden Guy is.

Shadowland Miss America is giving my other two favorites a run to see who captures the gold at my zone 8 West Georgia garden. I haven't been a hosta grower for long but I already have Shadowland Autumn Frost and Shadowland Etched Glass high on the pedestal.

There is something special however about the way Shadowland Miss America maintains her creamy white center variegation and on green leaves that also has unique light green streaking. They are thick, sturdy and positioned as if she knows her name is Miss America.

I am always working with the goal of showy plant combinations. I've hit big a couple of times with Shadowland hostas and hydrangeas that are typically blue in my soil.

This year Miss America and Perfecto Mundo Red reblooming azaleas put a smile on my face. So you might guess that Perfecto Mundo Red and a blue Tuff Stuff Ah Ha mountain hydrangea hitting in sequence would be nothing but pure luck. But they should all match up at some point in time with Miss America.

I also like to try hosta and caladium combinations. Last year I tried Shadowland Miss America hosta with Heart to Heart Flatter Me caladiums and loved the look. This year I had the opportunity to get Heart to Heart Blushing Bride. It is a strap leaf variety and has given me a new appreciation for this type of caladium. You really do get a bounty of colorful leaves.

I am old fashioned too; I like hostas with hostas, ferns and impatiens. I love



Norman Winter/TNS

Shadowland Miss America hosta will add untold beauty to your shade garden.

blue green hostas with yellow leaf shrubs like anise or grown on the shady side of a golden needled chamaecyparis.

Shadowland Miss America will reach around 20 inches tall in zone 8 producing tall scapes or flowers reaching 56 to 60 inches. In my garden you can spot the hummingbirds flying like little acrobats through the shade visiting most all hosta flower stalks. The hosta clump itself will eventually spread to around 55 inches.

Fertile organic rich beds will pay huge dividends and make for hosta happiness. I am growing mine on a hillside where leaves have been falling for decades creating some good soils with their decomposi-

tion. The trees provide the needed protection from the hot afternoon sun. Now if I could return to a rainy pattern, I would be ecstatic.

The Shadowland Hosta collection is approaching 20 gorgeous varieties, most of which are recommended from zones 3-9. I used to make fun of hosta gardeners, particularly during the dormant season. The hosta area reminded me of a national cemetery. Here is where my loved ones are buried. How true that turned out to be!

Now that I am building my collection, I see the need for such an endeavor. I've been using wood stakes and it must look like my area is where the vampires are in

eternal rest.

So let this be a warning to you young hosta gardeners: You will fall in love with this plant. You will want all of the colors, patterns, textures and sizes of hostas that are in the marketplace.

This next spring I urge you to begin with Shadowland Miss America. She is a winner indeed!

Norman Winter, horticulturist, garden speaker and author of "Tough-as-Nails Flowers for the South" and "Captivating Combinations: Color and Style in the Garden." Follow him on Facebook @Norman-WinterTheGardenGuy.

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Submitted photo

The TV was installed above the fireplace, the wires were concealed and the components were hidden in a closet.

The basics of a home theater system *(popcorn not included)*

BY LISA DAVIS
Special to the Star

Aaron Storino, owner of Digital Entertainment Concepts — aka DishTek — in Oxford, started out in 1997 installing satellite dish systems. The company now offers sales, installation and service of TVs, sound systems and some internet products — everything you need for a home theater.

DishTek still works on satellite dishes — just maybe not where you’d expect.

In April and October, you’ll find Storino working at Talladega Superspeedway, servicing the satellite dishes atop the RVs that come for race week.

“People at your local RV shop are experts with campers, but they aren’t typically AV and satellite people. People at your typical satellite and AV shop generally are not knowledgeable about RVs. We have the unusual distinction of being knowledgeable in both fields, so we do custom AV work on RVs,” Storino explained.

“Thousands of people bring their RVs to Talladega during race week, and inevitably some of them need service. It can be overwhelming, but it’s a service we’ve provided for many years.”

Storino recently shared advice on home theater systems — including what you need if you can no longer understand movies and TV shows without turning on the subtitles.

(Contact DishTek at 256-835-3474.)

What’s the most significant change in home theater equipment?

The evolution of speakers. Decades ago, speakers were big and loud. However, not everyone appreciated those days.

Fortunately those days led to improved technology, and the ability to get big-quality sound out of smaller speakers.

That led to the era of little speakers mounted in the corners of the room — but there was still a lingering gaudiness to these little plastic boxes positioned in the strangest places.

Eventually that led to the era we are in now. I like to describe it as the “heard but not seen” era. A lot of the speakers we install now are recessed in the wall or the ceiling, and they can be painted to blend in.

Can you explain ‘surround sound’ to me?

Another driving force in the evolution of audio systems is movies. Filmmakers and theaters work together to produce an increasingly immersive movie theater experience — the phenomenon of a plane flying over your head from the



Before and after the TV was mounted on the wall and the wires and components were concealed.

back of the theater, while an explosion rips from the left and voices yell from the right.

To get that at home, you need to match the content with a system that is capable of decoding and playing it.

The minimum standard to be considered “surround sound” by today’s standards is a 5.1 system. The “5” is the number of positioned speakers, and the “1” is the subwoofer, which is used to provide low frequency tones, or bass.

A 5.1 surround is a 6-channel system, meaning the sound coming from each of the six channels is different.

The five positioned speakers are front left, front right, rear left, rear right, and center. Center is positioned at the focal point between front left and right, usually where your screen is.

The center channel is important, because today most of the dialogue is coded through the center channel.

Many people without a surround system complain that they can’t understand what people are saying while watching a movie. That’s because the stereo speakers in a TV alone often inadequately decode the center channel dialogue.

The center channel in a good sound system can be adjusted to improve the listener’s ability to hear what people are saying.

What a lot of people don’t realize is that practically all of today’s TV programming is broadcast to you in at least a 5.1 surround format. If you don’t have an audio system and you rely only on the use of the two speakers that are in the TV, you are at best getting a mediocre blend of the six channels of audio, missing some sounds, and not getting the whole experience.

If people had TVs that cut off half of the video signal, such that they could only view half of the movie screen, they would reject that. Unknowingly, people are cutting off more than half of the audio experience intended to accompany these



Submitted photos

programs by not having an audio system.

What would I need for a basic home theater system?

In my opinion, a minimal home theater setup basically consists of a TV and a 5.1 surround system. A traditional 5.1 surround system uses wired speakers and requires a professional-level installation. A modest traditional system is typically \$2,000-\$3,000.

Some people don’t want to spend that kind of money on audio, and some rooms don’t present practical situations for installing the wiring required for a traditional system. Luckily, we now have a second option — the soundbar.

The way soundbars work, multiple speakers are contained in one “bar” that is placed at the front with the TV. Good soundbars can decode 5.1 audio.

Entry-level soundbars are as low as \$100, but they probably only have two speakers, and serve only to increase your volume. For a little more money, you can get a soundbar with a wireless subwoofer (2.1) or left, right, center and wireless subwoofer (3.1), which could improve dialogue.

Above that would be soundbars that might have five speakers in the bar and a subwoofer (5.1) such that they can produce all six channels of sound. However, all of the sound is in front of you in the bar, so you are not surrounded by the sound.

If you want something closely approximating the experience of a true traditional surround system, starting around \$750 you can get a soundbar with wireless subwoofer and wireless rear speakers capable of decoding 5.1 audio. While not quite the same quality and experience as a traditional system, this is probably the best budget way to get a home theater experience.

What’s the job you’re asked to do most often?

Mounting flat screen TVs on the wall. People find it astonishing how much you can open up the space of a room and change the whole feel by wall-mounting the TV. There is definitely an art to it, though. It’s more complicated than people think.

How will you reorient the furniture? There are considerations like power, and how you will hide the wires? Where will the viewers typically be? Will you need to swivel the TV? Are there any devices that will need to connect to the TV? If so, where will we locate them?

A lot of people don’t know that we can hide the components in a cabinet or a closet somewhere away from the TV.

There’s a balance I like to bring to people’s attention. How does the TV look aesthetically when the power is off? Is it positioned naturally in the room, at a similar height to your other art or pictures that may be in the room?

A typical TV mounting job is going to start around \$159 plus the cost of the mount. Some companies may tack on an extra cost to conceal the wires, but we’ve built it in because we consider that to be an obvious part of the job. I like to tell people that in 25 years I’ve never had someone call me and say, “Please leave the wires hanging. We love seeing wires!”

Any advice if I want to put a TV outdoors on my patio?

The question that comes up most often is what kind of TV to get, and how to protect it.

A lot of people don’t know that there are TVs on the market made specifically for outdoor spaces. They are water-resistant and UV-resistant.

Actually, I usually advise people NOT to get these TVs.

The only time I suggest that you buy them is if the TV will be directly exposed to sun and rain.

These outdoor TVs are three to five times the cost of a regular TV.

If the TV will be in the usual outdoor spaces — on a porch or patio, or a free-standing structure like a gazebo or a boathouse — they are under a roof of some kind. In these cases, you are better off buying a regular, entry-level TV for a couple hundred dollars, accepting that it’s disposable, protecting it as best you can, and replacing it after a few years.

Think about it this way: If you spend four times as much to get the outdoor TV, and everything works as well as you hoped, in 10 years you’ll have an overpriced, outdated TV that still works. With a regular TV, you’ve spent less, and when you replace it you get updated technology.



Submitted photo

Skelly can be at home in your front yard!

IT’S TIME TO DECORATE

From spooky season to Christmas time, you can make your home shine

BY FAITH DORN
Special to the Star

Now that summer only has a few “official” hours left, it is time to plan for decorations for this holiday season, including occasions such as Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas. If you are not much for the commercialized versions of these holidays, there is also the option to decorate generally for the time of year.

Decorating for autumn usually brings to mind large bunches of mums, pumpkins and other gourds stacked neatly and sometimes a friendly-looking scarecrow on a hay bale or in a rocking chair. One aspect of decorating for this time of year that is sometimes overlooked is aromatics. Consider making a simmer pot to let season-associated scents waft through your home. Simmer pots are filled with water, sliced seasonal fruits with peels intact and spices. Simmering for a few hours is recommended, but you could let it go all day — just keep an eye on it, and refill the water as needed. Recipes vary, so the cost will, as well.

One of the most popular Halloween-themed decorations in the last four years is Skelly, the 12-foot tall skeleton sold by Home Depot. Some people choose to display scary scenes with the skeleton, and others choose to go a sillier route by dressing it in costumes. New this year for Skelly is the debut of a five-foot tall companion, Skelly’s Dog. Other major retailers also offer their own takes on giant skeleton yard decorations. Skelly retails for \$299, and Skelly’s Dog retails for \$199. Limited stock is currently available at the Oxford Home Depot location.

When planning to decorate for Thanksgiving, a minimalist approach might be just what you want. A table with a variety of dishes spread out does not quite leave room for a huge decorative cornucopia or similar decorations. Consider using a neutral-color table runner and spreading out a few small gourds and a little greenery and one or two pillar candles, scented or unscented. Neutral-color table runners are available online starting at \$6.99 plus shipping, or you might already have an appropriate fabric at your home. Gourds are available at grocery stores and craft stores. For greenery, consider clipping some from your yard, or visit a local florist. Pillar candle prices vary depending on style and retailer.

What’s old is new again for Christmas decorations this year. Bring out the heirloom Nativity set and older decorations. Metals are also regaining popularity. There will be a surge in Burl Ives’ two favorite metals: silver and gold. However, do not limit yourself to only decorating in the usual areas and the traditional tree. Consider how to make other areas in your home festive for the holiday season. You might put some Christmas flair on succulents or other house plants, or simply line the surrounding area with a small set of Christmas lights.

Faith Dorn is a freelance writer in Anniston, Alabama. Contact her at faith.h.dorn@gmail.com.



Submitted photo

A simmer pot is a good way to fill your home with good cheer.



Submitted photo

A golden wreath could help pretty up your space for the holidays.



Alabama News Center

Charcuterie originally consisted of pork only, then expanded to various meats. Today’s charcuterie boards offer a variety of tempting treats, including breads, cheeses, crackers, pretzels, veggies, fruits, nuts, chocolate and spreads.

Alabamians offer plans for next-level charcuterie boards

BY ALABAMA NEWS CENTER

What is charcuterie?

According to britannica.com, “Charcuterie is a French term that refers to prepared meats, such as sausage, ham, bacon and pâté. So-called charcuterie boards have become popular as appetizers or party snacks in the United States in recent years. Strictly speaking, these should contain only French meat products, but the term has broadened to include, in addition to assorted meats, a variety of cheeses, nuts, fruits, vegetables, breads, crackers and even sauces.”

Charcuterie derives from the French phrase chair cuit, meaning “cooked meat.”

It was originally confined to pork, for medieval guild regulations required charcuteries to sell only pork and pork fat. The term referred originally not to the meat itself but to the shops where it was sold, the venue of the charcutier, who prepared, cooked and preserved cuts of pork and, on occasion, other foods, as during Lent, when the observant ate cured fish rather than meat.

How are charcuterie served?

Charcuterie are typically served on wooden cutting boards of various sizes and shapes, although any platter will work. This part of the process can be fun as you experiment with surfaces that work

the best for your particular needs. For a simple charcuterie lunch or snack for two or three people, small rectangular or circular boards will work just fine. When planning for a large party or celebration, several larger boards may be needed. For a twist, roll out a large sheet of butcher paper covering the length of a table or island, then add your foods of choice in the same manner as using a board.

The basics

Boards can have many different themes and styles, limited only by the imagination of its creator. For most situations, though, it’s helpful to build from the basics. Begin with the accessories: Anything

being served in a smaller dish should be arranged on the board first. Lay out dips, jams, nuts, seeds, olives or pickles. Then begin filling in spaces with the larger items: meats, cheese, fruit and crackers, etc. Typical for most charcuterie are the selection of meats: salami, ham, pepperoni and prosciutto. A variety of hard or soft cheeses to pair with the meats is included as well and can include Brie, soft herbed cheese spreads, goat cheese, mozzarella slices or balls, Gouda, cheddar or other cubes and slices. Small pieces of fruit such as berries or sliced apple along with crackers, pretzels or other items complement your other selections.

Here are three Alabamians’ plans for appealing charcuterie boards:



Alabama News Center

Robin Sellers created this diamond ring-themed charcuterie board for a friend’s bridal shower.

BRIDAL SHOWER THEME

The diamond ring shape was created for a friend’s bridal shower. My husband assisted in the design and wood cutting, making the diamond and ring two separate pieces so I can also use the ring, without the diamond, as a Christmas wreath.

Instructions

1. Make roses using large slices of pepperoni and salami (see rose tutorials on YouTube) and place first.
2. Place fruit and cheeses around each rose: pepper jack slices, Vermont white cheddar slices, smoked Gouda triangles and cheddar cubes.
3. Add a small bowl of olives and a honey pot, decorating around those.
4. Add sliced ham (toothpiked into rolls), then the various salami shapes (salami chain and salami folded in half.)
5. Fill the extra spaces with small clusters of cheese and fruit so no gaps are visible.
6. Use rosemary sprigs and faux leaf branches for added greenery.
7. Make the “diamond” of cauliflower clusters and white cheddar cheese.

— Robin Sellers



Alabama News Center

Candice Hightower uses locally sourced ingredients as much as possible in her charcuterie business, Wood + Rosemary.

LOCALLY SOURCED

The owner of a charcuterie business, Wood + Rosemary, Candice Hightower customizes each board based on a client’s likes and individual preferences. She says a variety of color and flavor are key and uses locally sourced ingredients as much as possible. She recommends using several cheeses that pair well with chocolate or wine when serving at a party.

— Candice Hightower



Alabama News Center

Racheal Amaradio doesn’t skimp when it comes to charcuterie.

OVERSIZED BUTCHER PAPER BOARD

Ingredients

- **Fruits and veggies:** raspberries, grapes, strawberries, blackberries, mini bell peppers, cucumbers, olives
- **Crackers:** soft pretzels, croissants, baguette, yogurt-dipped pretzels, breadsticks, oatcake crackers, crostini, cranberry hazelnut crackers, chocolate wafer cookies
- **Cheeses:** muenster, cheddar, espresso cheese, cranberry goat cheese
- **Nuts:** almonds, macadamia nuts, pistachios
- **Spreads:** hummus, garlic mustard, garlic dip, chili fig spread, spiced cherry spread
- **Meats:** soppressata, chorizo, calabrese, Genoa salami, peppered salami

— Racheal Amaradio

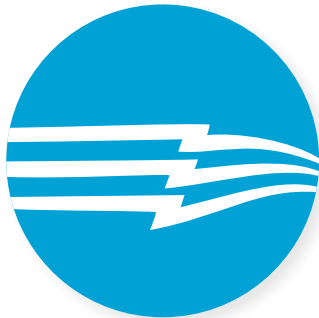
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