

The Anniston Star

Home & Garden

Fall 2025





PHOTOS BY TUCKER WEBB

White walls, such as in this formal living room, are a hallmark of midcentury style, but that doesn't mean you can't bring in colors or antiques.

A view from up here

By LISA DAVIS | Special to the Star

Shawn Crawford never used to throw parties. But five years ago, Crawford, a real estate agent with the Joey Crews Team at Keller-Williams Realty Group, bought a mid-century house on top of a mountain in Anniston. With an inviting floor plan, a beautiful pool and a tremendous view off the back deck, the house was begging for visitors.

Since then, there have been parties for St. Patrick's Day, Mardi Gras, Halloween — and 130 people for Christmas.

“We want people to enjoy the house. It's like the community party house,” said Scott Skinner, owner of STS Decorating and Design, who oversaw the redesign of the house.

The house was built in 1962, and underwent an extensive remodel in 2016. Skinner was also the designer on that project, which took out several interior walls and opened up the rooms to the incredible view out the back. You can see Cheaha Mountain from here.



Shawn Crawford, left, and Scott Skinner

“I love buying from estate sales and antiques stores. When I buy from estate sales, I like knowing who it belonged to,” Crawford said. “It feels good to be surrounded by your personality.”

— Shawn Crawford





The sunroom was originally a screened porch.

“The house was designed to be panoramic,” Crawford said. “It was built around the view, to take in nature.”

“People say it’s a ‘before its time’ house,” Skinner said.

For this latest redesign, Skinner kept the white walls — a hallmark of midcentury style — but brought the rooms to life with a mix of contemporary and antique furnishings, and lots of color.

“People who like midcentury style don’t always understand how you can add to it,” Skinner said. “They can have trouble thinking about how color would look.” Just because you have white walls doesn’t mean everything has to be stark.

He pulled together Crawford’s eclectic collections — masks, jade carvings, colorful cloissone, mementoes from trips — and showcased them in different rooms of the house. “Instead of a piece here and a piece there, put them together for more impact,” Skinner said.

Paintings are grouped by color and feel. “I like portraits and art with people,” Crawford said. “I like to feel surrounded by people.”

Many of the artworks are by local artists, including Pat Potter and David Cummings. A personal connection to an object makes it even more special.

“We love buying from estate sales and antiques stores. When I buy from estate sales, I like knowing who it belonged to,” Crawford said. “It feels good to be surrounded by your personality.”



In the dining room, a contemporary painting hangs above an antique English chest. The china was bought at an estate sale. “I like knowing who it belonged to,” Crawford said.



The spacious kitchen — with a great view out the window — is where everybody congregates during parties.

HELLO FALL!

By **SHERRY BLANTON**
Special to the Star's Home & Garden

September 22 was the first day of Fall according to the calendar. For me, Fall is officially here when I plant my pansies the third week in October. By then there are subtle signs that autumn has arrived: a small drop in temperature, shorter days and longer nights.

Is autumn the finale for summer or a prelude to winter? Or both and a garden season all on its own?

Fall is the season of turning leaves, carnivals, hay rides, fresh apples and Thanksgiving.

Fall is the season to find farmers selling bright orange pumpkins at local markets.

Fall gives plants and people a chance to catch their breath before cold mornings and frost on the car windows.

As summer fades, trees begin their magnificent fall transformation with rich captivating colors. Every day is special.

Fall blooming flowers provide food for our pollinators as many of the fall flowers are great sources of nectar.

Fall weather is kinder on the gardener and the garden as the

extreme heat disappears.

Planting flowers to bloom in the fall extends the beauty in the garden and fills in the place between summer and winter.

Fall days are delicious ones to spend time in the garden. The days are cooler. Blue skies frame the brilliance of a fall display.

As the leaves fall, homeowners rake them up adding them to our compost piles or using them as mulch. Piles of leaves are an invitation for some curious child to jump into a crunchy mound. The sound of leaf blowers becomes an everyday occurrence.

Fall blooming plants waited until conditions were ripe for their growth and then they put on their show.

Halloween costumes are for sale in the big box stores. Racks of orange candy appear. Christmas ornaments occupy the adjoining spaces. Yes, fall has arrived.

Fall dresses the trees with vibrant shades of red, orange and yellow. The leaf peepers are mapping out trips to see the fall foliage.

If the conditions have been good, our fall gardens may still have summer annuals and perennials in bloom.

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PHOTOS BY SHERRY BLANTON, SOUTHERN GARDENER





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PHOTOS BY SHERRY BLANTON, SOUTHERN GARDENER



Fall encourages fat buds on the camellia sasanquas and japonicas. The early sasanquas begin to color our gardens with delicate blooms.

Trees and shrubs are entering their season of dormancy allowing all their energy to strengthen their root system.

Many gardeners are busy planting and caring for their cool weather crops.

Late fall is the best time to add shrubs and trees to the landscape. Our plants do not have to contend with the heat and work full time to grow leaves and blooms. The winter rains will keep them watered and give the gardener a rest from the hose.

The first autumn frost usually happens the first week of November; last year, however, our first frost was the first of December. Our gardens boasted impatiens, begonias and other summer delights until Thanksgiving.

Fall can be a very dry season; thus, we may still be watering to keep our landscapes in good shape. We may finally say enough is enough and let the summer flowers quietly pass away.

Fall is more than pumpkins and florists mums. Fall has its own gorgeous annuals and perennials. Invite them into your garden.

Following is a short list of plants to consider to keep beautiful blooms in the garden.

- aster (perennial or annual)
- chrysanthemum (perennial)
- goldenrod
- sunflower
- helenium
- sedum
- black-eyed susans
- autumn crocus
- toad lillies
- Japanese anemones
- Joe-pye weed
- pansies
- fothergilla (Mt Airy shrub) (for exquisite fall leaf color)
- camellia sasanquas
- Japanese maples (for spectacular foliage)
- lycoris (naked ladies)



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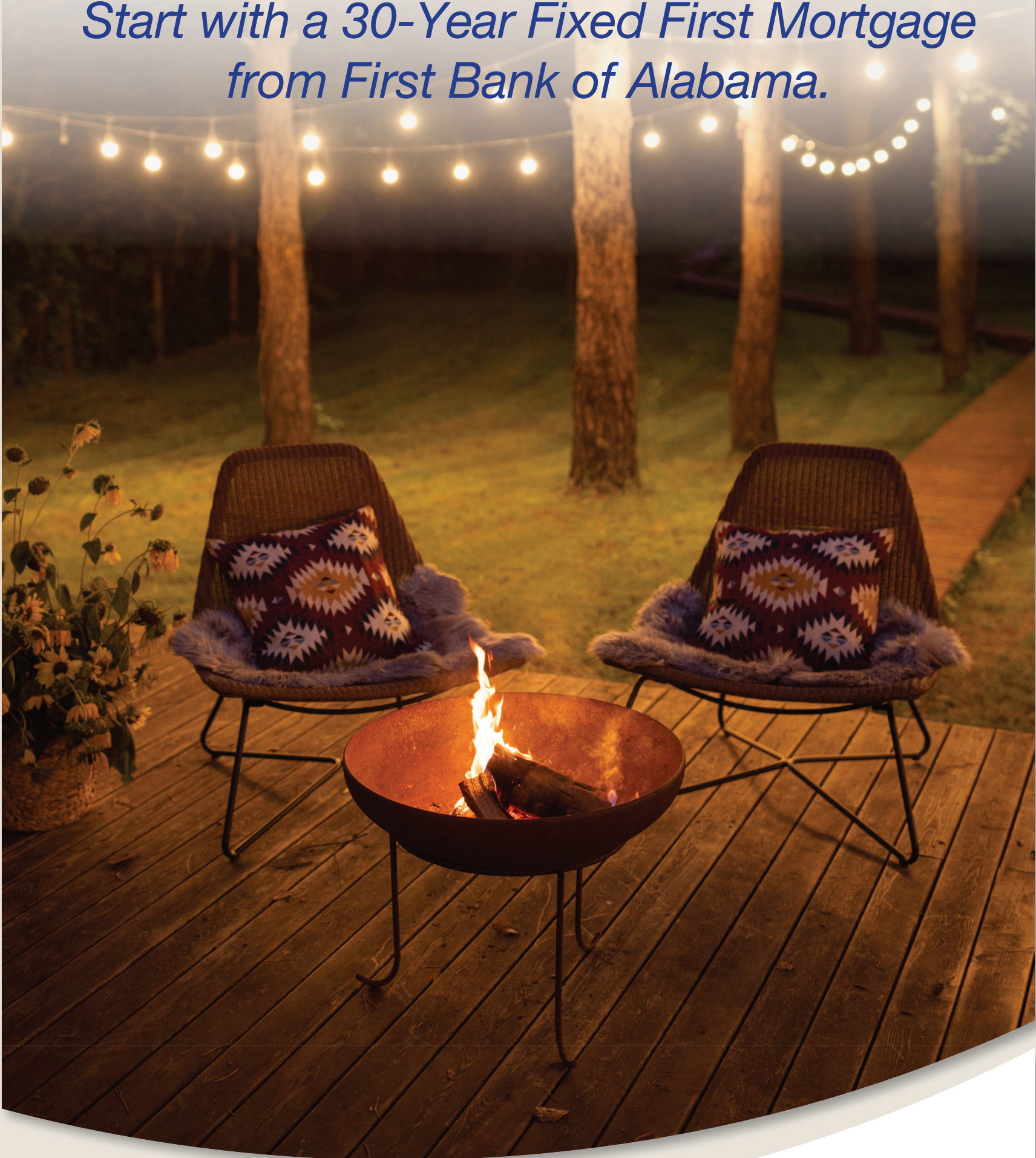
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Hoarding disorder

By **ASHLEY MORRISON** | Star Staff Writer

Hoarding disorder, a complex mental health condition, affects millions of people, yet it often remains misunderstood and stigmatized. Many individuals silently struggle with an overwhelming accumulation of possessions, leading to unsafe living conditions and significant distress. For those witnessing a friend or loved one battle hoarding, offering support can feel challenging and overwhelming.

Shelby Moore, owner of A Mama's Touch Cleaning Service, based in Alabama, has extensive experience working with individuals in hoarding situations.

"When we first started A Mama's Touch six years ago, I did not expect to have any type of hoarding homes for us to clean out, but we have received so many calls," Moore said. "It's really more common than people realize."

Moore emphasizes that hoarding isn't limited by socioeconomic status.

"A lot of these homes are very, very nice homes and really good people that live in the home," Moore said. "It can definitely affect anyone."

"Some people might think that

or adult protective services may become involved," Dryden said. "While the safety risks are real, compassionate support and treatment will assist individuals in making positive progress while reclaiming their lives."

For those seeking to help, here are five tips, compiled by professionals like Shelby Moore, to support someone struggling with hoarding issues:

1. Start small, one step at a time

Tackling an entire cluttered space can feel overwhelming for anyone, especially someone with hoarding disorder. Encourage your loved one to begin with one drawer, one shelf or one small corner. Every small step forward is a victory, and it's crucial to move at their own pace. Patience and understanding are key.

According to Priscilla G. Wilson, Ph.D., a licensed professional counselor and professor at Jacksonville State University, this gradual approach is vital.

"As a counselor, I would assess the client's background, including family history and trauma exposure. Treatment planning would include goals to reduce distress and improve functioning," Wilson said. "I recommend clearing one area at a time to build momentum and using calming strategies like music during decluttering."



PHOTOS BY A MAMA'S TOUCH CLEANING SERVICE

begin by educating themselves about hoarding disorder to reduce stigma and judgment," she said. "It's important to approach the person with empathy and curiosity, not criticism."

She suggested asking questions like, "What meaning does this item have for you?" to open a dialogue about its emotional value. "Validating the person's feelings and avoiding confrontational language helps build trust," Wilson added.

3. Focus on what they truly love or need

The process of letting go can be incredibly difficult. Instead of focusing on what to get rid

about possessions. "CBT is effective in challenging distorted beliefs about possessions and gradually reducing clutter through exposure tasks," Wilson explained. This reframing helps individuals see value in living space rather than solely in possessions.

4. Don't be afraid to ask for help

Whether it's a trusted friend, a professional cleaning service like Mama's Touch or a therapist specializing in hoarding disorder, seeking support is a sign of strength, not weakness. The right team will support without judgment. Moore noted that while grants are rare, some homeowner's insurance policies may cover the costs of hazardous cleaning situations. A Mama's Touch also offers one pro bono cleanup per year for those in dire need.

Wilson emphasized that professional help is often crucial. "Individuals with hoarding disorder often experience comfort or relief from saving items, whereas those with OCD perform compulsions to reduce anxiety," she said, distinguishing it from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. "A therapist can also mediate family interventions to ensure a supportive, nonjudgmental environment." She also warned against enabling behaviors. "Family members should avoid enabling behaviors, such as purchasing unnecessary items, and should never remove possessions without consent."

5. Celebrate every victory

Every bit of progress, no matter how small, is a significant achievement. Whether it's clearing a countertop, giving away a bag of clothes or simply deciding to discard one item, take a moment to acknowledge their courage and progress. Positive reinforcement can be a



hoarding only happens to those who don't care about nastiness or a mess," she continued. "They just don't care. But that's not true. Things happen to people in people's lives that just really make them want to give up."

Moore also highlighted that prior to a hoarding situation, many individuals were "super clean people." She recounted a story of an elderly woman whose home became unnavigable after her husband and daughter passed away within three months of each other.

"You would never think to open the doors and not be able to walk in, but she just kind of gave up," Moore said.

Dr. Torsten Dryden, Ph.D., Licensed Professional Counselor Supervisor (LPC-S) at Jacksonville State University, provided further insight into the complexities of hoarding disorder and its treatment.

"Lasting recovery from hoarding disorder requires licensed mental health professionals and a supportive team. Accounting for safety risks, such as fire hazards or falls, is also crucial. In some cases, child

2. Be gentle with yourself (and them)

Hoarding is often connected to deep emotions, trauma or past experiences. Remind your loved one that they are not lazy or broken; they are human. Healing and decluttering is a process, not a race. Avoid judgmental language and focus on compassion.

Wilson underscored the importance of empathy.

"Supportive individuals can

of, shift the perspective to what truly matters. Ask questions like, "Does this item bring you comfort, joy or serve a purpose?" Learning to let go isn't about loss; it's about making space for the things that truly matter in their life.

Wilson noted that indecisiveness is a common trait among individuals with hoarding disorder. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) can be effective in challenging distorted beliefs



powerful motivator.

Wilson highlighted the broader implications of the disorder, reinforcing why every step forward is important. “Hoarding disorder affects both the individual and their environment in profound ways,” she said, listing potential consequences such as restricted access to living spaces, safety hazards, social isolation and health concerns. “One client shared that her partner, a hoarder, created a narrow walking path through their home. When she reached into a drawer for a spoon, roaches scattered — she didn’t use the spoon,” Wilson recounted. “This anecdote illustrates how hoarding can escalate into serious health and relational consequences.”

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-5-TR) defines hoarding disorder as a persistent difficulty discarding or parting with possessions, regardless of their actual value. This difficulty stems from a perceived need to save items and distress associated with discarding them. This leads to cluttered living areas, compromising their intended use. “The disorder causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational,



or other important areas of functioning,” Wilson stated. “For example, clutter may prevent access to clothing, hygiene facilities, or sleeping areas, and may interfere with interpersonal relationships due to shame, criticism, or avoidance of visitors.”

Current estimates suggest that approximately 2.5 percent of the U.S. adult population — roughly eight million individuals — meet the criteria for hoarding disorder. Wilson noted that this figure may be conservative, as many individuals do not seek treatment or may be misdiagnosed. Both genetic and environmental factors contribute to the disorder, with more than 50 percent of diagnosed individuals having a first-degree relative who also hoards.

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