

Rite of Spring

If you're itching for the arrival of spring (who isn't?) and planning your outdoor projects, be sure your new landscape design brings both enjoyment and a return on your investment.

Two reports can help you choose the best projects.

The American Society of Landscape Architects' *2017 Residential Landscape Architecture Trends Survey* found that people want to enjoy nature and connectivity simultaneously. That wish for wireless/internet connectivity popped up on its top ten project list for the first time this year.

Here are the 10 project types ASLA it expects will have the highest consumer demand.

1. Native/adapted drought tolerant plants – 82.31%
2. Native plants – 81.60%
3. Low-maintenance landscapes – 79.25%
4. Food/vegetable gardens (including orchards, vineyards, etc.) – 76.52%
5. Permeable paving – 76.31%
6. Reduced lawn area – 72.66%

7. Fire pits/fireplaces – 71.51%
8. Drip/water-efficient irrigation – 71.05%
9. Wireless/internet connectivity – 70.77%
10. Rainwater/graywater harvesting – 70.32%

And if making your outdoor space more sustainable is on your to-do list, see ASLA's list of most popular sustainable elements.

They are:

1. Native/adapted drought tolerant plants – 82.31%
2. Permeable paving – 76.31%
3. Reduced lawn area – 72.66%
4. Drip/water-efficient irrigation – 71.05%
5. Rainwater/graywater harvesting – 70.32%
6. Recycled materials – 64.91%
7. Solar-powered lights – 57.16%
8. Compost bins – 46.35%
9. Geothermal heated pools – 28.36%

For more about landscaping trends, also revisit the NAR's "2016 Remodeling Impact Report: Outdoor Features" <http://bit.ly/2mgsTYP> from fall 2016 to see what projects most appeal to buyers and add the greatest resale value to your property.

**REALTOR®
rank of
projects'
appeal to
buyers
(highest to
lowest)**

**REALTOR®
rank of
projects' likely
added value
to home for
resale
(highest to
lowest)**

1.	Standard Lawn Care Program	Landscape Upgrade
2.	Overall Landscape Upgrade	New Patio
3.	New Patio	New Wood Deck
4.	New Wood Deck	Standard Lawn Care
5.	Softscape	Sod Lawn
6.	Sod Lawn	Softscape
7.	Seed Lawn	Seed Lawn
8.	Outdoor Firepit	Outdoor Fireplace
9.	Outdoor Fireplace	Outdoor Firepit
10.	New Pool	New Pool

Bathroom Perils

You already know about the slip-and-fall dangers that lurk in the bathroom. But there are other perils too.

Bob Vila outlines 11 things (<http://bit.ly/2IRpUK3>) to watch out for to maintain health and safety in that space.

They include:

- **Mold** -- Proper ventilation – dehumidifiers, fans and open windows – can keep mold at bay, not only in obvious places like in grout between tiles, but also under walls, ceilings, floors and in ductwork.
- **Soap scum** -- Soap scum makes the tub slippery and increases the chance for falls. In addition to cleaning up, also install grab bars and non-slip strips.
- **Chemicals** -- That lemon-y fresh scent can be deceiving and may come from an unhealthy brew of chemicals. Stick to natural, inexpensive cleaners like vinegar and baking soda. And if you're refinishing your tub, ventilate the bathroom for a couple days after it's finished because the re-glazing process can off-gas chemicals that can be irritating and unhealthy.
- **Hot, hot water** -- Set your water heater at 120 degrees to prevent burns and save on energy costs.

Year-Round Wealth-Building Habits

America Saves just wrapped up its annual America saves week in March. It's a campaign to motivate low- to

moderate-income households to save money, reduce debt, and build wealth.

The site is full of resources and advice for everyone, and some of the suggested to-dos for America Saves week are worth doing all year.

Here are 7 simple strategies to start today.

1. **Save Automatically.** Use direct deposit, and automatically transfer money from your checking account to savings accounts and retirement accounts.
2. **Family Savings Day.** Build good savings habits at home by sharing budgeting, saving, retirement, and workplace benefits decisions with your children.
3. **Save for Retirement.** Participate in workplace savings programs

- and contribute to an Individual Retirement Account (or IRA).
4. **Saving at Tax Time.** Save all or a portion of your tax refund to meet your savings goals more quickly.
5. **Pay Off High-Interest Debt.** Find places to cut your spending so you can pay down debts faster.
6. **Save for Emergencies.** Start with small, regular contributions to slowly build an emergency fund.
7. **Assess your plan.** Check your savings plan annually to be sure you're saving enough and saving for the right things. See: <http://bit.ly/2IOT4Gz>

The Richmond Team

Pacific Union International Real Estate

37 Miller Ave

Mill Valley, CA, 94941

Jane Richmond

Lic# 00709300

415.531.4091

pjrichmond@pacunion.com



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