

APRIL 2023

SPRING HOME & GARDEN



A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE MEXICO LEDGER AND THE MOBERLY MONITOR-INDEX

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When to Plant Your Garden

Year-round gardening has never been easier with indoor planters and greenhouses. But there's nothing like a traditional garden, which provides fresh flavors and a chance to enjoy the outdoors. Just be aware that many plants grow best when planted at a certain time of the year.

KNOW YOUR ZONE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides information on growing zones, based on climate and regular weather patterns. You may have to wait until later in the year to plant or, in some cases, your options may be restricted. You'll also need to study the needs of the plants you're trying to grow. For instance, popular garden staples like herbs, peppers and tomatoes fare better when they grow as seedlings before being transplanted.

On the other hand, things like beans, corn, peas, carrots, radishes, cucumbers and pumpkins are best planted as seeds. Whatever you choose, pay close attention to the weather. It's tempting to jump the gun on the first sunny day, but remember soil should be warm over several days in a row before planting seedlings or seeds.

BEST IN SPRING

Start transplanting plants that started indoors each April, and start seeding projects too. Germinating plants need the extra time in the ground. Beets, beans, carrots, corn, lettuce, cucumbers, melons and onions should be planted in April. Cabbage is one of the easiest things to grow; it's not too late for peppers and tomatoes, either. If all goes well with peas, they could be ready for harvest by May.

EARLY SUMMER

Unfortunately, a check of planting zones shows that many Americans live where April still brings freezing temperatures. That could mean waiting, or being prepared to cover your plants when wintry weather threatens. Most of these plants will thrive in May, if the temperatures where you live mimic those from April elsewhere. Plant beans, squash, melons and cucumbers as temperatures continue to warm in May.

HOTTEST MONTHS

Some plants simply love summer's heat, including zucchini and summer squash. Plant them in June, with an expected harvest late in July or in early August. Choose bean varieties like Kentucky Wonder, Contender or Topcrop in June and they may be ready to eat before mid-July. Lettuce and carrots can be planted until very late in the summer.



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Keeping Mosquitos Away

Some insects, like pollinators, are welcomed in any backyard or garden. But others are most certainly not — including pesky mosquitoes that seem to appear out of nowhere as temperatures rise each year. Here's how to fight back, the natural way.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS

Disease-carrying mosquitoes are actually a huge problem globally, killing hundreds of thousands of people each year. That's more than any other animal or insect. They feed on blood from unwitting host animals, then transfer sometimes deadly pathogens as they move from bite victim to bite victim. Among the most serious diseases associated with mosquitoes are malaria, West Nile virus and dengue fever, but there are many others.

Studies show that mosquitoes are more attracted to people with Type O blood, as well as pregnant women and people who are breathing heavily. Sometimes, it's simply a matter of timing. You're most vulnerable to a bite around dusk and dawn, as mosquitoes virtually disappear during other parts of the day.

KEEPING THEM AWAY

Sprays, candles and bracelets are popular repellents, but often rely on chemicals to do the job. Zappers can be loud and unsightly. That's why planting certain plants to keep mosquitoes away has become a growing trend. Marigolds and lavender, for instance, emit a smell that drives away these flying pests. Place these hardy plants in pots around your outdoor living space, and they will also produce gorgeous blooms.

Rosemary, sage and basil are typically only thought of as herbs used for in our kitchens, but they also keep mosquitos away. Allium likewise have a strong smell that they don't like — but, unfortunately, you and your guests might not either, since this plant is part of the garlic and onion family. Citronella and bee balm are other commonly used natural alternatives. Lemon-scented plants have also proven to be useful for many.

OTHER OPTIONS

Sometimes using plants to make your outdoor space inhospitable to mosquitoes simply isn't enough, in particular for those who live in humid climates. If you're still being hounded, be on the look out for standing water in nearby places. They're breeding grounds for more mosquitoes. Wear light, breathable long-sleeved clothing and over your legs. Use overhead fans, if possible, to move the air around. Treat pools and water features to reduce the number of mosquito eggs, as well.





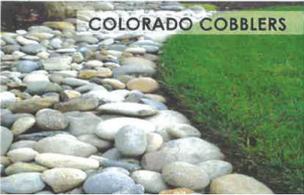
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Get Your HVAC Ready

As the mercury starts to creep up after winter's chill, you might start to be tempted to kick on the air conditioner to cool down the inside of your home.

But before you reach for the thermostat, there's some maintenance you need to do to ensure a summer free of HVAC catastrophes.

CLEAN IT UP

After a winter running the furnace, call an HVAC professional to have your air ducts professionally cleaned out. Clear ducts means the cool air from your HVAC moves more efficiently around your house and without spreading dust, dander, mold, mildew, fungi or anything else.

You should also change your air filters at least every 30 days for most filtration systems (check your HVAC owners manual or the instructions on the filter). Dirty filters will overwork your HVAC and shorten the life of your system. It also won't work as well, meaning you'll be paying higher utility bills.

While you're cleaning out, you want to

check your outdoor components as well. Clear out leaves, branches and sticks from the equipment before kicking it on for the year. You may even find some small creatures have made their home inside your HVAC unit. Be careful when clearing out debris not to bend or break any of the metal fins on your condenser unit.

LOOK FOR LEAKS AND CRACKS

Check around the inside and outside parts of your HVAC and look for any leaks or cracks. Also keep an eye out for any unusual corrosion. If you see anything suspicious, have the HVAC technician out before turning on your system.

Finally, if it's passed every other test, turn on your A/C and make sure it's blowing an accurate temperature out of the air ducts in every room. Make sure the registers are all open, even if you rarely use that room, and look for



any abnormalities inside and out. You can also have a technician come out for a routine check of your system before turning it on for the year. Some companies even offer service plans that make this more cost effective and repairs less stressful.



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Make a Pollinator Buffet

Pollinators are what make the gardening world go 'round. Birds, bats, bees, butterflies, beetles and small mammals work to pollinate plants just by going about their busy lives in our garden.

This helps plants reproduce (meaning flower and fruit). Not only are the flowers and fruits pretty and tasty, but pollinators at work also help prevent soil erosion and shrink carbon footprints.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Help pollinators by creating space in your garden for them. Here are some pollinator favorites from the gardeners at Monrovia.

Stonecrop, or sedum: Rich foliage and clusters of flowers are the hallmark of this perennial. It's available in a variety of colors and heights, including a groundcover variety that's popular with bees.

Milkweed: It's not just a source of food for monarch butterfly larvae. Milkweed nectar is also good for a whole host of butterflies and bees. There are many varieties, but choose one that's native to your area to support your local pollinator population.

Coneflower, or echinacea: Traditionally petaled in bright pink, there are now varieties of coneflower in every color of the rainbow.

No matter what color you pick, these tall, showy blooms look great in the garden.

Lavender: It smells great and attracts hordes of pollinators. Gardeners in warm, humid climates may find lavender tougher to grow, but there are varieties that work.

Cape fuchsia: This hardy perennial is a favorite treat for hummingbirds. The plant boasts tubular flowers that are perfect for the tiny birds to sip from. Hardy from zones 6-10.

Yarrow: Beautiful yellow flowers and ferny foliage aren't the only treat these plants pack. Yarrow also attracts hoverflies, lacewings and ladybugs which, in turn, will eat up aphids, mealybugs and mites.

Goldenrod: Fluffy orange flowers are an important food for migrating monarchs and also benefit bees, the good kinds of wasps and helpful flies. Look for an easy care variety that brings beauty to the garden without a lot of work.

Bluebeard: Deep blue flowers appear in the late summer and go into fall, when pollinators need the nectar most. Add bluebeard to prairie and wildlife gardens to extend the pollinator feast into autumn.

A Mulch Primer

Spring is a great time to get growing again, and that includes laying a strong foundation in your garden. Mulch is probably part of your gardening plan and, if it isn't, it should be. Mulch helps control weeds, enriches soil, improves moisture retention and adds visual appeal to your gardens and flower beds.

WHEN TO MULCH

You should lay your mulch in the spring after you've gotten your spring plants in. It's the icing on your gardening cake. In autumn and winter, you lay mulch to keep plants from shifting and to protect tender plants from colder temperatures. You can also mulch around trees or other things in your yard to add visual appeal. When the mulch has fully decomposed into the ground, it's time to replenish and refresh.



TYPES OF MULCH

There are many types of mulch to use in your gardens, including wood bark, wood chips, plastic sheeting, rubber mulch compounds, colored woods, pine straw, grass clippings, manure and newspaper. You want to choose a mulch that works well in your environment and in a color that compliments your landscaping and your home. Dyed mulches should be kept dry for at least 24 to 48 hours to keep from staining hard surfaces around them.

WORKING WITH MULCH

Wear gardening gloves to protect your hands from dyes and splinters. You should also wear old, comfortable clothes that you won't mind getting dirty. You might also choose to wear a face mask if you're prone to allergies. Move the mulch with a wheelbarrow or cart and a shovel, making sure to lift with your knees and not with your back. Rake the mulch into an even layer.

MAINTAINING MULCH

If you see mold on your mulch, turn it gently and spread it evenly again. All the surfaces should be exposed to air and light. As the mulch dries, the mold should go away. If you see weeds sprouting through the mulch, remove them by hand or use a weed and grass killer for large patches. Sun and rain will fade and deteriorate your mulch — that's partially what organic mulches are meant to do to enrich the soil. Turn it gently to keep it looking fresher longer.

An advertisement for SN Partners featuring John Deere equipment. At the top, the text "SPRING HAS SPRUNG!" is written in large, bold, yellow letters with a green outline, set against a blue sky background. Below this, three pieces of John Deere equipment (a tractor, a riding mower, and a utility vehicle) are parked on a grassy field. A yellow banner across the middle reads "COME SEE US AT ONE OF THESE CONVENIENT LOCATIONS NEAR YOU!". Below the banner, four green banners list partner locations: Mexico (4803 S CLARK ST. | 573-581-5900), Salisbury (209 W 2ND ST. | 660-388-6166), Columbia (2004 BUSINESS LOOP 70 E | 573-476-0730), and Macon (1810 N MISSOURI ST. | 660-385-2177). At the bottom, the website "SNPartners.com" is displayed in white on a green background, along with the John Deere logo and the SN Partners logo (Sydenstricker Nobble).

Strong, Stylish Spring Home Upgrades

5 renovation projects where brick takes center stage

Springtime is a perfect opportunity for homeowners to begin planning renovations to enhance the interior and exterior of their living space. Because of its strong performance capabilities, low maintenance and design flexibility, brick is a popular building material choice when looking to improve or refresh your home in time for warm-weather hosting season.

Often selected for its functional benefits, brick is available in a wide array of colors, textures and sizes that can match varying design styles, from modern to traditional and almost everything between. If you're considering adding brick to your home's aesthetic, consider these five projects to tackle this spring from the experts at Glen-Gery, one of the largest brick and stone manufacturers

in North America.

Basement or patio bar — As homeowners spend more time at home, they often look to maximize livable space. One way to take advantage of unused living space is building a basement or patio bar, which provides an area for entertaining. Using an exposed brick wall can help designate the bar area and separate it from the rest of the basement, or lining a bar counter with brick can create a rustic contrast against the bar's seating.

Fireplace — To change the look and feel of a room almost instantly, you can use brick to give a fireplace a facelift or make it a focal point of your home. Available in a variety of colors and textures, Glen-Gery's diverse, premium portfolio of more than 600 brick and stone products can elevate



your living room's style in a big way and create a more inviting area to share with family and friends. An outdoor fireplace is another option for extending livable space in a cozy way that can be used throughout the year.

Accent wall — Create a statement in or outside your home with a brick accent wall. Accent walls can help bring color, texture and beauty to homes by breaking up the monotony of monochromatic color or decor, creating visual interest and dimension. While brick in a running bond pattern is expected, you can spice up rooms with an unexpected bond pattern like a stacked bond for modern appeal or herringbone for a rustic look.

Kitchen backsplash — One of the most overlooked areas of kitchen design is the backsplash. While its job is to protect your kitchen walls from the never-ending assault of kitchen splatters, there's no reason it can't look good, too. Brick backsplashes can accommodate most home de-

signs and styles thanks to the versatility of shapes, colors, finishes and sizes available.

Black or white glazed brick works well with more modern kitchens while irregular brick containing an abundance of texture and a messy mortar application can complete rustic farmhouse kitchens. An option like Glen-Gery's virtual design tool, Picture Perfect, can help you visualize projects in your home to see what fits your style and needs.

Brick skirt — For added curb appeal, consider adding a brick skirt around the foundation of your home. Given its resilient, durable and energy-efficient qualities, brick can help provide better insulation and protection while also adding visual appeal to the exterior of your home through texture, color and contrast. The skirting can also continue through to the front porch floor and steps, helping balance out the elevation of your home.

For more inspiration for your next home renovation project, visit glengery.com. (*Family Features*)

5 Steps to Prep Your Yard

When spring arrives, days of enjoying your outdoor living space aren't far away. Getting your yard ready for months of outdoor enjoyment will take a little work, but you'll quickly see and appreciate the results.

These five steps can have you on your way to a lush, healthy lawn and outdoor area in no time.

◀ Dethatch

Throughout the winter, dead grass and other debris accumulate on your lawn. This waste, known as thatch, can be quite a hindrance to your spring lawn. It promotes fungi, encourages pests and keeps new grass seed from sprouting. You can use a special dethatching rake or any rake with sturdy tines.

◀ Aerate

Before spreading grass seed, you'll want to give the new roots room to spread and grow. Aerating the lawn helps make your soil more welcoming to new growth by allowing moisture, nutrients and air to sink deeper into the soil. Depending on the size of area you need to aerate, two of the easiest options are doing the job by hand or using an attachment on a riding lawn mower.

◀ Prune

The lawn isn't the only place debris can pile up. Your flower beds and any other vegetation can become a holding ground for twigs, branches, leaves and other yard waste. Give your plants, shrubs and trees a close look to find broken, damaged or dead material and remove it to make way for new growth.

◀ Weed

Even the healthiest lawns are susceptible to weeds, but getting a jump start on weeding early in the season can help you keep control. You can manage weeds by treating with an herbicide before the sprout or, if you prefer, there are chemical-free alternatives like vinegar, salt or cornmeal. Be aware that many alternative products don't distinguish between the vegetation you want (like grass) and weeds, so these remedies are best used along borders and within beds to discourage weed growth.

◀ Seed

Winter weather and wear can cause uneven patches in the lawn. Seeding in the spring requires more work than the fall (especially if you tend to have hot, dry summers), but with enough nurturing and regular water, you can fill those spots in for a more uniform lawn.



Freshening Up Outside

After a few seasons, the sit-ting area in anyone's back-yard, patio or balcony space can begin to look grimy and old — particularly if you live in a more humid environment. But there's no need to buy a whole new set of furniture. With the right preparation, the right paint, favorable weather conditions and a little elbow grease, you can get it all looking good as new.

CLEAN SURFACE

Make sure you have a clean surface, otherwise the paint won't properly adhere to wood, metal or plastic. Wipe away all dust and dirt, as well as any rust or old paint flakes. Try to remove or smooth over any other imperfections. For wood, lightly sand before painting. Wash everything after each step. If hardware is in place, remove it and label everything for easy reattachment later.

RIGHT TOOLS

Make sure you have the right tools before work begins. For instance, brush-on paint



may require a pan and stir sticks. You may also need rollers or smaller brushes to get paint in tight spaces within the furniture. Table tops and bulkier items are more easily painted with large rollers. Invest in gloves, painters tape or masking tape, drop cloths and protective eye wear, as needed.

MANY CHOICES

There's a difference between paints formu-

lated for indoors and outdoors, and plastic furniture requires its own special products in order to bond properly. Make sure you buy the right version. Brush-on paints work best with primer, and make sure both are applied smoothly. Thinner coats go on more easier, while also drying more quickly. Two coats is usually a good rule of thumb on any painting project. There's no need for primer if you choose a spray paint option. Keep the can the recommended distance from the furniture as you paint, working in bursts to avoid drips.

WHERE YOU PAINT

Check paint can guidelines for temperature ranges, then pay close attention to the weather forecast. Some formulations won't adhere if it's too hot or wet outside. Make sure you paint in a well-ventilated area to avoid the accumulation of potentially toxic fumes. A shady spot will give you a break from the heat while encouraging the paint to dry more evenly. Don't forget to hydrate!

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Ready to Power Wash?

As winter recedes, take an opportunity to wash away winter grime. Power washers are a quick and easy option, and there are rental options for those who don't want to make a huge up-front investment. Just be ready to adequately prepare the space and then safely operate the machine.

HOW THEY WORK

Power washers are powered by either gas or electricity. The gas units usually boast more power, unleashing some 3,000 pounds of pressure per square inch. But bigger isn't always better. For instance, vinyl siding is rated for up to 3,000 but soft-grain wood, aluminum and stucco can be damaged above 1,500 pounds per square inch. Match the machine with your material before buying, renting or starting the wash. Attachments and wands can make the job a little easier.



gas-powered washers, since the force of the water can create balance issues. Avoid holes in siding, joints in furniture, and windows. Keep your wand well away from wires of any kind, and never point the wand at other people or animals.

PREPARING THE AREA

Before you begin, cover things like light fixtures, electric sockets, air-conditioner units and anything else that isn't waterproof. Fast-moving water can also be very damaging to vegetation, so remove potted plants and cover anything that's in-ground. For particularly stubborn dirt, stains or mold, consider pre-scrubbing.

GETTING TO WORK

Add detergent and water to the washer according to directions, then attach it to a water source. Select the preferred wand and test it against the desired surface, standing three feet back. Adjust the pressure and where you're standing as needed in order to remove dirt and grime without damaging anything.

BUYING OR RENTING

Owning a power washer may make the most sense if you keep a boat or deal with seasonal mold issues at home. But renting power-washing gear from local home stores is a more affordable option for those with only occasional needs. Driveways, for instance, might only need attention every other year. If you're unsure about purchasing, occasionally renting is a great way to try out a power washer to see how much you'd actually use it.



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How to Hire a House Painter

If spring has you thinking about an exterior refresh, you might be looking to hire a house painter to give your home a new look, follow these hints to make sure you get a pro.

EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR WORK

For this job, you want to look for an exterior painter. They will handle all the surfaces on the outside of your home. Some painters only do interior work; save them for when the kitchen needs updating. Before you start making calls, familiarize yourself with the surfaces on the outside of your home. Look around home stores and decorating magazines to get an idea of the look you want. You can even go so far as to get sample paints to give yourself a good idea of what colors you might like.

PICKING A PAINTER

HomeAdvisor says that exterior painting

can cost upwards of \$4,000, so it pays to do your research here. Always get three to five estimates for any work to be done on your home. Before you call painters out to look at your home, see if you can go look at work they have done in your area.

CONSULTATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Before giving you a price, a reputable painter will come out to look at your home. They will walk around and look at your current paint and evaluate any obstacles you have around the house. The more thorough the inspection that they do, the more accurate your quote will be.

Show each painter the looks and colors you have in mind and get their opinion. They may suggest that walls that get an extreme amount of sun be painted a lighter color or they may know that a certain product or finish doesn't work well in your weather conditions. Lis-

ten to their expertise, but beware of getting pushed into using something you don't want.

The painter will then give you an itemized quote. Compare the quotes that you got and note the differences in each one. Get references and call them to check.

8 QUESTIONS TO ASK

HomeAdvisor suggests these questions to ask a paint contractor:

1. How long have you been in business?
2. Are you licensed and insured?
3. Do you belong to any professional organizations?
4. How long will the job take?
5. How many people are in your crew?
6. Will I be in the way if I'm at home while you work?
7. Do you guarantee your work?
8. What type of paint do you use and how long is it rated to last?

Staying Cool for Less

It's that time of the year when many people's air conditioners ramp back up to constant use. That often leads to far more expensive utility costs. Luckily, there are a number of recommendations from the U.S. Department of Energy that can help ease the pain.

COOLER HOURS

Take advantage of the periods each day when it's not so hot. That's the best time to do chores around the house, so you don't have to turn the thermostat even further down. You also have an opportunity to capture some cool air. Turn off the AC and open your windows in the morning before everything heats up, or in the evening as night brings more comfortable conditions. Shut the windows and close their coverings in the midmorning hours and leave them closed again until the evening in order to protect your home from the sun's most powerful rays.

THERMOSTAT ADJUSTMENTS

Turn your thermostat to the highest temperature that you find comfortable, in particular during the day when it will have to work so hard to cool off your living space. Adjust it to even higher temps when you are away, in particular for long periods of time. Upon return, place your thermostat back at its usual setting. Turning it down any further won't cool the space any more quickly, and it forces the unit into a constant motion that is stressful - and expensive. Consider buying a programmable thermostat which can make all of these adjustments automatically.

AROUND THE HOME

How you use fans, baths and showers, and the oven can also have a big impact. A fan moves air around, making it cool enough that thermostats can be turned roughly four degrees higher without a noticeable difference in comfort level. Take cooler, shorter baths and showers — and try to schedule them during the coolest part of the day. Vents and fans can also help evaporate the associated humidity more quickly. Finally, limit the use of your oven, since it can heat up the entire house. Use a stove, toaster oven or air fryer, since they generate far less heat. Be aware of other sources of ambient heat, like clothes and hair dryers, dishwashers, curling irons and electronics. In combination, they can add up, too.



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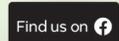
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Get Your Patio Ready

With spring in the air, it's time to dust off your patio and get ready to enjoy the great outdoors again. Before you start planning the cookout, here's what you need to do to get your outdoor spaces picture perfect.

CLEAN IT

Wipe off winter's gloom by sweeping off the patio and clearing it of debris and grime. Sweep off the surfaces and the furniture, then spray everything down with a cleaner appropriate to the surface. If you have a stone patio, pay special attention to the grout. For wooden decks, make sure you remove any slippery moss or mold that may have accumulated.

If your furniture was stored for the winter, take off the covers and launder them according to the care tags. Wipe down your patio furniture and check if it needs any repairs or freshening — perhaps new cushions or throw pillows — for the season. Open umbrellas and look for holes, tears or other signs of wear. Make sure light fixtures work.

PLANT IT

Take out your old planters and clear out last year's debris. If you've got perennials in, top them off with a fresh layer of soil and water them to get them growing again. If you're planting annuals, add dirt as needed and put in your fresh pops of color. For flower beds, remove any leftover leaves and debris, then put down fresh soil and mulch as needed. Make sure to clean up the edges and replace broken or peeling edging.

LIGHT IT

Look over your patio lighting and make sure it's in working order. Replace bulbs that need replacing. Consider adding more lighting for seating areas, conversation spots or to highlight new plants in the garden.

PAINT IT

If you're tired of your patio furniture's look



or if winter left it a little shabby, whip out the spray paint and give it fresh life with a new coat of paint. Top it off with weather-proof throw pillows and cushions to make your outdoor space sing.

Lastly, look over your space and see if you can make any additions. Garden centers are adding their spring looks right now and a fire pit, string of twinkle lights or a fresh new hammock may be just the touch your patio needs.



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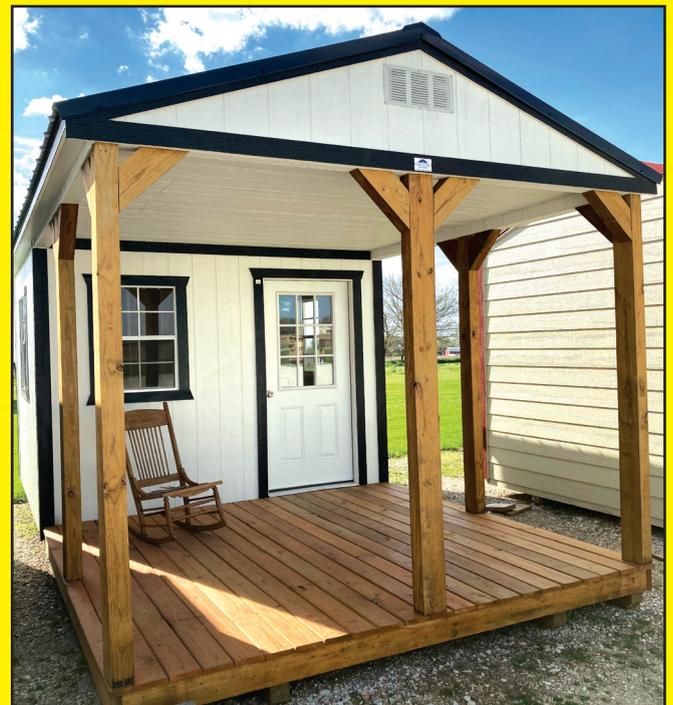
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Check our Facebook page for more details!

Mark your calendar now: Fall Fun Festival on the Prairie is Saturday, Sept. 30, starting at 9 a.m. Please join us for a day full of local craft and food vendors!

We will open the corn maze and pumpkin patch that day as well to kick off the season.

(Our corn maze runs Sept. 30-Oct. 31)

Stay tuned for more details!