



Tips and trends for homeowners, buyers and sellers

Water Feature Ideas to Transform Your Yard

Water features can transform an otherwise bland yard into an amazing oasis. Whether you want to create a peaceful atmosphere to unwind or a social space for entertaining guests, an aquatic accent can fit perfectly in any outdoor space. From simple fountains to sophisticated water walls, here are four water feature ideas to transform your yard.



Birdbath—A birdbath is a simple and affordable way to bring wildlife into your backyard. Installation is as easy as purchasing a birdbath, filling the basin with water and awaiting the arrival of your feathered friends.



Water wall—A water wall is a dramatic feature that adds curb appeal, provides movement to your yard and doubles as a beautiful backdrop. Water walls are the perfect way to add a unique touch to your yard and can be assembled from almost any material, from wood and stone to brick and metal.



Bubbling bamboo fountain—A bubbling bamboo fountain is ideal for creating a tranquil and meditative outdoor space. These fountains provide calming sound and motion and are relatively easy to set up. Bamboo fountains add a natural element to your yard, which



can be a welcome addition to landscapes that lack raw materials and vegetation.



Boulder stream—Perfect for larger yards, boulder streams can add a wow factor to your outdoor environment. Streams can blend your yard with the surrounding nature and act as a border, separating different spaces and providing natural pathways. This water feature is a perfect choice for those who want the calming effects of a water feature without the expense and upkeep of a pond or pool.

Keep Your Home Cool Without Air Conditioning

While blasting the air conditioning is a quick fix for the discomfort of a sweaty summer day, there are more cost-effective ways to keep you and your home cool during the summer months.

1 **Keep windows and blinds closed**

Closing your windows and using blinds or other window coverings can significantly reduce your home's indoor temperature. This

simple task rings true for homes with south- and west-facing windows. Blackout curtains can ensure that your windows aren't the culprit for a steamy home during summer.

2 **Optimize your fan**

A cooling cross breeze is easy to achieve with the proper position of your standard plug-in fan. To force hot air out of the room and circulate cool air throughout the house, place the

fan in the coolest room or corner of your home and direct it toward warmer areas. That same fan can morph into a DIY air conditioner with the help of a bowl of ice sitting in front of the fan.

3 **Reverse your ceiling fans**

Your trusty ceiling fan has a secret setting for the warm summer months. A ceiling fan should have two directional settings. The

counterclockwise setting is best for the summertime as it distributes cool air throughout the room.

4 **Open windows before bed**

If you open your windows, the lower temperatures of a brisk summer night are the perfect solution to a stuffy house. You can also create a wind tunnel by properly positioning your fans to provide an optimal cross breeze.



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How to Clean Your Bathroom Exhaust Fan

A bathroom exhaust fan is often an afterthought for homeowners but is necessary to remove excess moisture from the space, reducing the chance for mold and mildew growth. Here is a step-by-step process of how to clean your exhaust fan to ensure it runs optimally.

1 Remove the vent cover
First, turn off the power to the fan. For extra security, turn off the circuit at the breaker box. If the vent cover has a light, disconnect the wire first by pressing the release tab on the connector before removing the vent cover. If the vent has no light, remove the vent cover by softly pulling down on it, then squeezing the metal mounting wires together on both sides. Then, slide the wires out of their slots, fully removing them from the fan housing.

2 Clean the vent cover
Fill your bathroom sink with warm water and

a few drops of dish detergent. Soak the cover in the cleaning solution, then scrub it with a brush or cloth to remove dirt and debris. Once finished, place the cover on a towel and let it air dry. If your vent cover has a light, do not submerge it in water. Vacuum off the dust, wipe it with a damp cloth and then air dry.

3 Clean the fan without removing the motor
Use a vacuum with a crevice attachment to remove the dust. Switch to a brush attachment for the motor components and fan housing, if needed. Once the

dust is removed, take a damp microfiber cloth and wipe down the fan components and housing to remove any remaining dirt.

4 Remove the motor for deep cleaning
To remove the fan motor, unplug the connector or plug powering the fan. Next, remove the mounting screws that hold the motor. Hold the motor with one hand while using the other to remove the motor from the housing. Vacuum the motor or force air to blow the dust from the motor and fan blades. Use a small, soft bristle brush to remove caked-on dust if needed. Wipe down the



motor, fan blades and housing using a damp microfiber cloth.

5 Reassemble the exhaust fan
Place the motor back in and replace the screws. Plug in the fan, then put the vent cover back on by inserting the mounting wires into their slots, and gently push the cover into place.

