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Building a water feature

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Adding a water feature to your yard or patio adds a cooling, relaxing element to your environment.

It can serve as a focal point of your outdoor living space and also as a pleasant scene setter for outdoor parties or even just a relaxing evening with a book. Here's how to build your own water feature with steps from the DIY Network.

Pick a spot

Choose a flat spot in your yard and remove any existing plants, rocks and debris. Dig out the shape of your new pond. For a natural shape, make your pond with rounded edges that aren't perfectly symmetrical.

Sand it and layer it

Once you've got the pool dug, add a layer of fill sand that's about an inch or two thick. This will act as a cushion for your pond liner and keep it from tearing on rocks or other debris in the soil. Build up the sand around the edges to be a little bit higher and taper it off around the sides.

Next, lay down the pond liner to keep the pond clean. Choose a tick liner that's unlikely to tear but still flexible enough to mold to the shape of

your pond. Don't be afraid to use more than one piece so it doesn't leak. Your liner should completely cover the pond with excess liner on all sides, up and over the border you made with sand. Put rocks down to pin the liner in place and then cut it to size.

Rock it

Wash off your rocks with a hose before placing them in and around your pond. The pond liner should be covered with small to medium-sized stones, with larger rocks around the edges for contrast. Roll them into place if you can and don't be afraid to flip them around to find the best look for your space.

Put down roots

Plants around the edges of your pond will soften the look of the stone and bring in some color. Choose native plants that are friendly to pollinators and use a range of colors and sizes. Install drip irrigation to keep your plants healthy and watered.

Finish it up

Add a store-bought fountain and water. Fill the pond up with water per your pump's instructions and keep an eye on it to make sure it doesn't empty out in hotter months.



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Make sure that the visible parts of your system are clean and free of debris.

Keeping your cool

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Hotter weather means running your air conditioner more to keep you and your family cool inside the house. For many families, that means more of an expense when it comes to the utility bills.

There are things you can do to help minimize the expense and keep your home and your family as cool as can be.

HVAC maintenance

Here's a checklist for keeping your air conditioner running in tip-top condition. Make sure that the visible parts of your system are clean and free of debris. Your components should have at least two feet of clear space around them. Regularly inspect your refrigerant lines for leaks. There are two lines, typically copper, that connect your outdoor air conditioner to the indoor evaporator coil.

You should also regularly replace the system's filter with a high-quality filter and continue to do so every 90 days. If your system as a humidifier filter, you could replace it at the beginning of the heating system.

Another annual task to complete is to lubricate the HVAC motor and replace the fan belt, if needed. Clean

your condensation drain line with bleach to keep it free of algae and other debris, which will allow your system to run more efficiently.

Hiring an HVAC technician

Some local HVAC companies will offer maintenance plans to help homeowners take care of these regular tasks on their own, including replacing filters. These maintenance plans also usually come with discounts on service and repair. For older HVAC systems, consider having a qualified technician come and check it at least twice a year.

Call for help

Depending on your climate and other factors, your HVAC should last you anywhere from 10-20 years. You should count on it needing not only routine maintenance during that time, but also the occasional repair. Here are some signs that your unit needs immediate attention from a pro.

- The HVAC unit is blowing warm air in the summer.
- The system turns itself off and on intermittently.
- There are pockets of warm and cool air throughout your home.
- Your energy bills go up unexpectedly.

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Machine

Continued from Page B1

being maneuverable in small areas and the options for multiple attachments to handle a wide variety of projects at once makes the machine ideal for tasks around the property. The multiple attachments also makes it easier for the homeowner since it requires renting out less machinery.

"This is one of those things that not a lot of people know

about, but anybody can use it," Bryan said.

The current attachments available for the MT52 are a tiller, angle broom, auger, bucket, pallet forks, jack hammer, stump grinder and a trencher.

Courtney said customers who rented out the machine had a great experience and enjoyed its size, which made it less intimidating compared to full-sized excavators or bigger machinery.

"It's not intimidating. You

get into an excavator, and the machinery in it will be intimidating for an average homeowner," Bryan said. "But this is a small and simple machine, and you can easily maneuver it on any project."

The Montagues also said the MT52 can help a homeowner save money.

"It's small, it's easy to use, it's easy to put on attachments and it's great for any project," Courtney said. "That machine is something everybody can use."

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