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HOME & GARDEN

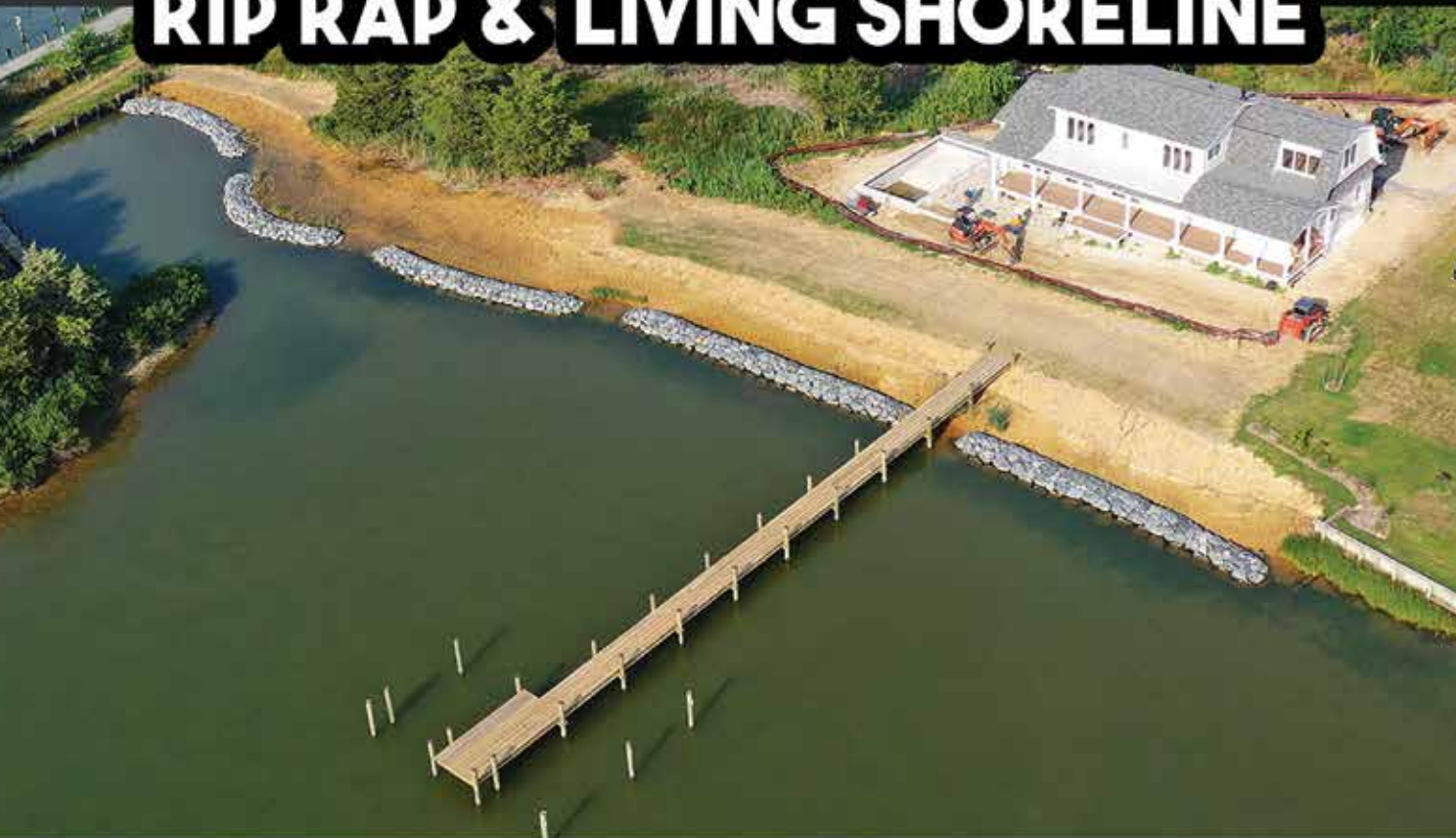
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Shore HOME & GARDEN

February 2025

12 **Take a hike!**
Whether you prefer catching glimpses of wildlife or enjoy a bit of people watching, there are happy trails ahead for hiking through the area.



18 **Early gardening tips**
It seems like we just stored our gardening tools and patio umbrella for the season. Yet, with the winter solstice in the rearview mirror, it's already time to start preparing for spring.



Let there be light!
Sunlight offers a full spectrum of color that can boost serotonin levels, a mood-enhancing neurotransmitter. And let's not forget, it's free!

32 **Spring symposium**
Beautiful Flowers in innovative forms will be the star at "Floral Fête," the Talbot County Garden Club's 2025 Spring Symposium and Luncheon from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 22.

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You made it this far; just keep going

We made it to February and while the month is associated with all things love and Valentine's Day, I can honestly say I often struggle with finding much to love in the heart of the winter months.

My immune system is strained, I am tired of the cold and lack of sunlight (hello seasonal affective disorder sufferers) — does this sound familiar? It makes those January resolutions a challenge to meet when your energy is literally at an all-time low — and Spring seems like a million light years away.

Because I always challenge myself to find the silver lining on even the cloudiest of Febru-

Sweet Simplicity



By Kristine George

ary days, one of the plus sides to the dreary winter months is that things inevitably slow down.

They slow down enough for me to take time for self-care.

This month's Sweet Simplicity is dedicated to ideas to help

you inventory your own self-care and find ways to invigorate your mind and body on even the coldest days.

Self-care is key to surviving those days when it is hard to find motivation to do much other than snuggle under a blanket a binge-watch Netflix.

• *Mindful Eating:* After spending much of December and January eating comfort foods, I am finding myself in need of a food reset.

I am also making it a point to not only be mindful about what foods I eat but how I eat them.

This means making time to enjoy my meals and taking time to enjoy meals with (PAGE 36)

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Pruning is an outdoor job for this month when the weather is nice, and spring and summer flowering trees will benefit from pruning.

Forget about what groundhog says

It is February already and regardless of what the groundhog says, the weather can vary widely.

Even though it may still be cold, damp, snowy and sometimes miserable outdoors, occasionally Mother Nature will bless us with a day or two of sunshine.

Be inspired to go outside and work on those days, cleaning up debris, leaves and whatever else the wind blows in.

Be sure to protect your desirable plants from deer rubbing and eating them.

It looks like winter will be a long one and it may have taken away a

Ken-Do Attitude



By Ken Morgan

lot of their food options.

We suggest applying a repellent to make your plants less desirable.

Continue doing this through April and if possible apply every three weeks. It is also recommended to use a different type of repellent each time.

I use Repels-All from Bonide for the first application and then Liquid Fence the next application, and then go back to Repels-All the next time.

Pruning is another outdoor job for this month when the weather is nice.

Spring and summer flowering trees will benefit from pruning.

Clear out any underbrush, saplings, and weedy trees under the trees. (PAGE 43)

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Beware of snow's weight on plants

February can be chilly, snowy or both, but many plants don't mind the wintery weather at all.

Some plants, however, do need a bit of attention if snow does drop too heavily out of the sky and onto our landscape.

Boxwoods have very bendable branches, but if heavy wet snow piles up on the boxwood, the branches will often bend too far and break.

Sometimes the branches look like they have bounced back, but the vascular system (or the plant's "plumbing") will have broken and will not look bad until the springtime temperatures warm up. Once the plants warm up, any branches that are broken will not maintain their dark green foliage, but will turn brown and begin to dry up.

Aucuba japonica and Nandina are also southern plants that can handle all the heat and humidity our East-

Gardening Tips



By Ginny Rosenkranz

ern Shore summers can toss at it, but it will also break apart under a heavy snow.

The simple solution is to lightly brush the snow off of the plants with a broom after the snow storm is over. The snow will not hurt the plants around the roots and the branches will be able to stay upright and healthy.

If branches of shrubs and small trees have been broken off by a heavy snow, it is always a good

idea to remove the fallen branches and trim up the wounds that were caused by the breaking of the branches.

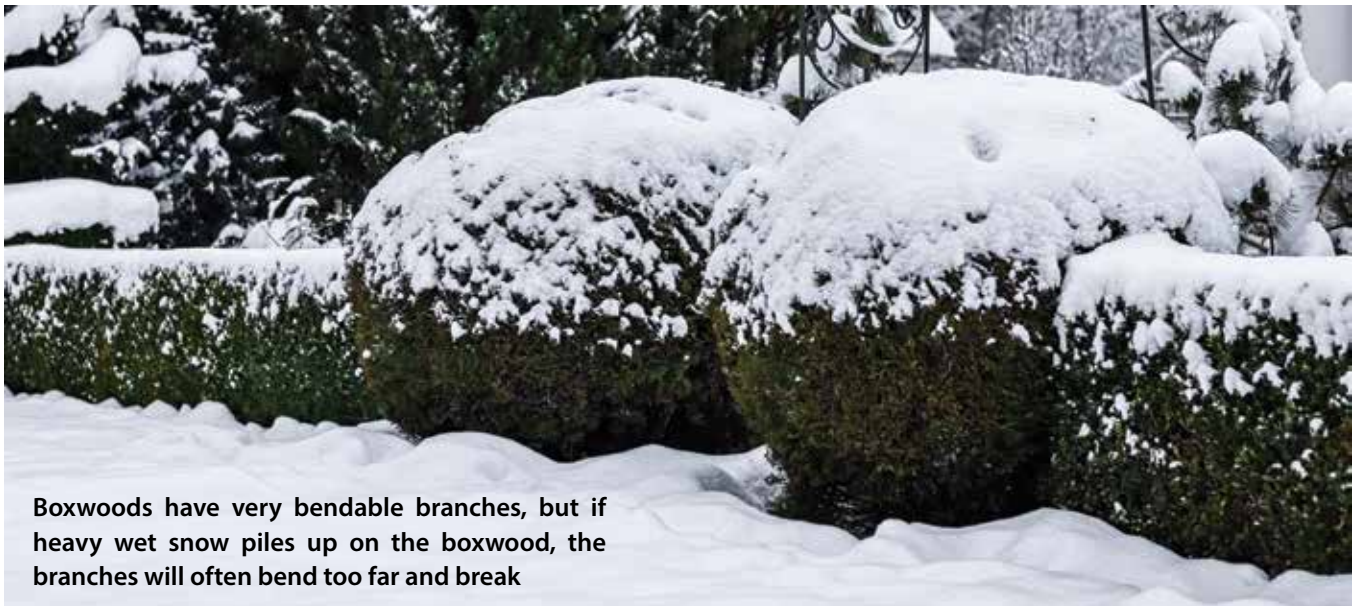
If the branch is no larger than a half-inch to an inch in diameter, sharp loppers can be used to trim the branch back to another branch or the main stem.

If the broken branch is more than one inch in diameter, a saw should be used to cut the branch back.

Sometime the snow will start to melt and reveal a springtime beauty that will brighten up that small part of the landscape.

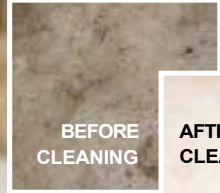
Spring bulbs like Crocus and Snowdrops will often bloom even through the snow as the warmer temperatures and the angle of the sun whisper that springtime is almost here. 🐾

(Editor's Note: Ginny Rosenkranz is a commercial horticulture specialist with the University of Maryland Extension.)



Boxwoods have very bendable branches, but if heavy wet snow piles up on the boxwood, the branches will often bend too far and break

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Tuckahoe State Park has walking and hiking trails, as well as mountain bike trails. There's also a disc golf course but you'll need to bring your own supplies.

(Photo courtesy Chesapeake Bay Program)

Hey, why don't you take a hike?

Story by Leslie Milby

After the snow has thawed, there's an opportunity to break out of hibernation for both the critters and the humans alike.

Pack some snacks and hit one of the great local trails in the area.

Whether you prefer catching glimpses of wildlife or a like a bit of people watching too, there are happy trails ahead.

Caroline County has several options to choose from. Tuckahoe State Park has walking and hiking trails, as well as mountain bike trails.

There's also a disc golf course; you'll need to bring your own supplies or see if a friend or neighbor has some discs you can borrow.

Shore Home & Garden • February 2025



Queen Anne's County offers the Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center, the Wye Island Natural Resources Management area, above, as well as the impressive 6.5 mile Cross Kent Island Trail, starting at the Chesapeake Heritage and Visitor Center at Kent Narrows.

(Photo courtesy Chesapeake Bay Program)

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If you haven't been in a while, Tuckahoe's tire park has had a few features taken out, but there is still lots of climbing and running fun to be had. Have a picnic and hit the nearby trailhead.

Have horses? Tuckahoe Equestrian Center is non-profit located within the park, offering 15 miles of equestrian trails as well as other special events for members and non-members.

Tuckahoe State Park and nearby Martinak State Park in Denton both offer fishing and when it gets nice out in May through October, kayak and canoe ramps and rentals.

Want to unwind for a few days close to home? Both parks also offer camping and camping cabins.

If getting out in nature is one of your family's goals this year, attempt the Tuckahoe State Park challenge which includes not only Tuckahoe and Martinak, but Wye Oak and Sassafras Natural Resources Management Area. Visit each spot and answer questions about your journey for a prize. Information can be found on their website.

Bordering Tuckahoe State Park is the non-profit Adkins Arboretum.

Entrance is free due to member support, but still plan on starting in their visitor's center to get set up for a self guided audio tour about the plants and ecology, or one focusing on "Nature's Role in the Flight to Freedom," where historians Anthony Cohen and Dr. Kate Clifford Larson discuss nature's role in the Underground



The entrance to Adkins Arboretum is free, thanks to member support, but visitors should still plan on starting a visit in the visitor's center to get set up for a self-guided audio tour about the plants and ecology.

(Photo courtesy Chesapeake Bay Program)

Railroad. The visitor center also has a curated collection of nature based gifts and books for all the nature lovers, young and old, and even hard to shop for.

From there, you can trek off on five miles of trails that will take you through the woods, meadows and wetlands to see a variety of wildlife.

Browse their website or ask in

the visitor center to see what's in bloom and what might be happening before you go.

Exploring with kids? Several trails are stroller and wagon friendly.

Head towards the First Light Village, a nature-based children's playground with wigwams and stumps to hop on.

Take time to peek over the

bridges to spot turtles, frogs and other wildlife.

Stop by Emily's Play Kitchen to whip up a mud pie and end with a picnic at the "gnome home."

Looking for the company of other nature lovers? Keep an eye out for the many guided walks on a variety of topics, art shows, native plant shows and other programming.

In Talbot County, Pickering Creek, which is operated by the Chesapeake Audubon Society, has four miles of trails offering some excellent birding platforms and blinds the further you travel.

If you are looking for birds that are native yet hard to find with their habitat dwindling, Pickering would be an excellent choice. Visit in the spring to see the wood ducks take their first jump out of their nesting box.

Wanting to learn more in a group? They also offer educational walks and programming, like the upcoming "Flight of the Timberdoodle" walk or walks featuring their new Mossy Woods Trail.

Some trails are more handicap and stroller-friendly than others, so check your route before you go.

You'll also want to leave your pets and bike at home as Pickering works to preserve the natural habitat as much as possible.

The St. Michaels/Oxford trail is also worth a stop, whether you plan on hitting all 29 miles of the bike trail, watching for wildlife, visiting the playgrounds or maybe even a quick walk to get ice cream



Visit the Sailwinds Park playground, walk down to the beach and then see what the big catches are down on the half-mile stretch of the Dorchester side of the Bill Burton Fishing Pier.

(Photo courtesy Forsaken Fotos)

and oysters in town afterwards!

Queen Anne's County offers the Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center, the Wye Island Natural Resources Management area, and the impressive 6.5-mile Cross Kent Island Trail, which starts at at the Chesapeake Heritage and Visitor Center at Kent Narrows.

Park at designated spots to use the paved trail for roller blading, biking and scooters. Make a mini-trip by joining the trail at Queen Anne's County Library, make a stop at the dog park and play at Love Point Park.

For the skaters in your life, there's a new skate park across from the Industrial Park.

For a beach jaunt on unpaved trails, park at Terrapin Park and enjoy a quick walk to the beach overlooking the Bay Bridge. Look for Bald Eagles at the nature overlooks.

Dorchester County has Sailwinds Park and Bill Burton Fishing Pier in Cambridge.

Visit the playground, walk down to the beach and then see what the big catches are down on the 1/2 mile pier on the Dorchester side.

For a historical hike, the 10,000-square-foot Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center in Church Hill is a can't-miss to learn about Tubman's life and work and other local history. Afterward, walk the trails and visit the meditation garden.

Other gems in Dorchester are the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge and the Izaak Walton League's Bolingbroke Park.

No matter if the chill hangs out for a few more weeks or if spring heads our way early, a fresh air adventure on the Shore is always a good way to spend a day! 🐾

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Is it too early to prep the garden for spring? Nope

Story, photos by Jessica Damiano

I feel like I just stored my gardening tools and patio umbrella for the season.

And yet, with the winter solstice in the rearview mirror, it's already time to start preparing for spring.

Testing Seeds

This morning, I sorted dozens of seed packets by their expiration dates.

Seeds are typically considered "fresh" within a year of packaging, but can be perfectly fine for longer.

We just can't be sure without testing them for viability.

So, I'll fold a few into a wet paper towel and place it in a plastic bag.

In about 10 days, I'll compute the percentage that sprouted to get an idea of how much excess I should sow to attain the number of desired plants. If less than 50 percent of them sprout, I'll likely ditch the pack and start new seeds.

If I don't do this now, the nurseries currently filling my mailbox with catalogs may run out of my favorite seeds before I realize I need them, and my procrastination will haunt me all summer.

Being prepared for early planting

I brought my grow lights up from the basement and will plug them in to ensure they're still glowing.

If necessary, I'll pick up or order replacement bulbs so as not to delay the seed-starting whim that's on track to catch me by surprise when I'm in my pajamas on a random morning six to eight weeks from now. I'll grab a bag of sterile seed-starting potting mix while I'm at it.

Caring for equipment

I also need to sharpen my pruning shears, which weren't as sharp as I would have liked last year.

And lawnmowers should undergo annual maintenance.

Bringing yours in for service now will keep you from getting caught in a spring backlog that may keep you waiting until your grass resembles shag carpeting.

The unpredictable fall weather took my poor plants and me by surprise this year, seemingly holding onto summer's heat until a millisecond before overnight temperatures dropped below freezing.

There simply wasn't time to properly clean hand tools, which were needed far longer than usual, before stashing them in a quick and chaotic rush.

Now, I can clean off dirt and rust, then, at my leisure, lightly coat my beloved trowel in oil to prevent corrosion.

And because of winter's late and sudden arrival, I didn't get to turn off my outdoor water supply.

I realized this last week when I




turned on the hose to rinse away a "gift" left on my walkway by my Havanese, Miguel, and instead was soaked by an erratic spray launched directly from the bib, or outdoor faucet.



Seeds may sprout past their expiration dates, so it's a good idea to test them for viability before disposing of (or planting) them

Yes, it was cold. If, like me, you were caught off-guard and then distracted with holiday preparations, inspect hoses, drip systems and sprinklers for damage now so that your spring

plants don't go thirsty while you scramble to troubleshoot. Sure, you could procrastinate until spring, but ticking off garden-related chores over winter bestows a favor on your future self.

And who knows? He or she may pay you back next fall. 
(Editor's note: Jessica Damiano writes weekly gardening columns for the AP and publishes the award-winning Weekly Dirt Newsletter.)

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Act natural: Maximize a home's light from the outside in

Story by HomeHow

Photos courtesy Getty Images

We all know the feeling of a sunny day. It's not just the warmth; it's the way natural light lifts our spirits. Unlike artificial light, sunlight offers a full spectrum of color that can boost serotonin levels, a mood-enhancing neurotransmitter!

And let's not forget, it's free!

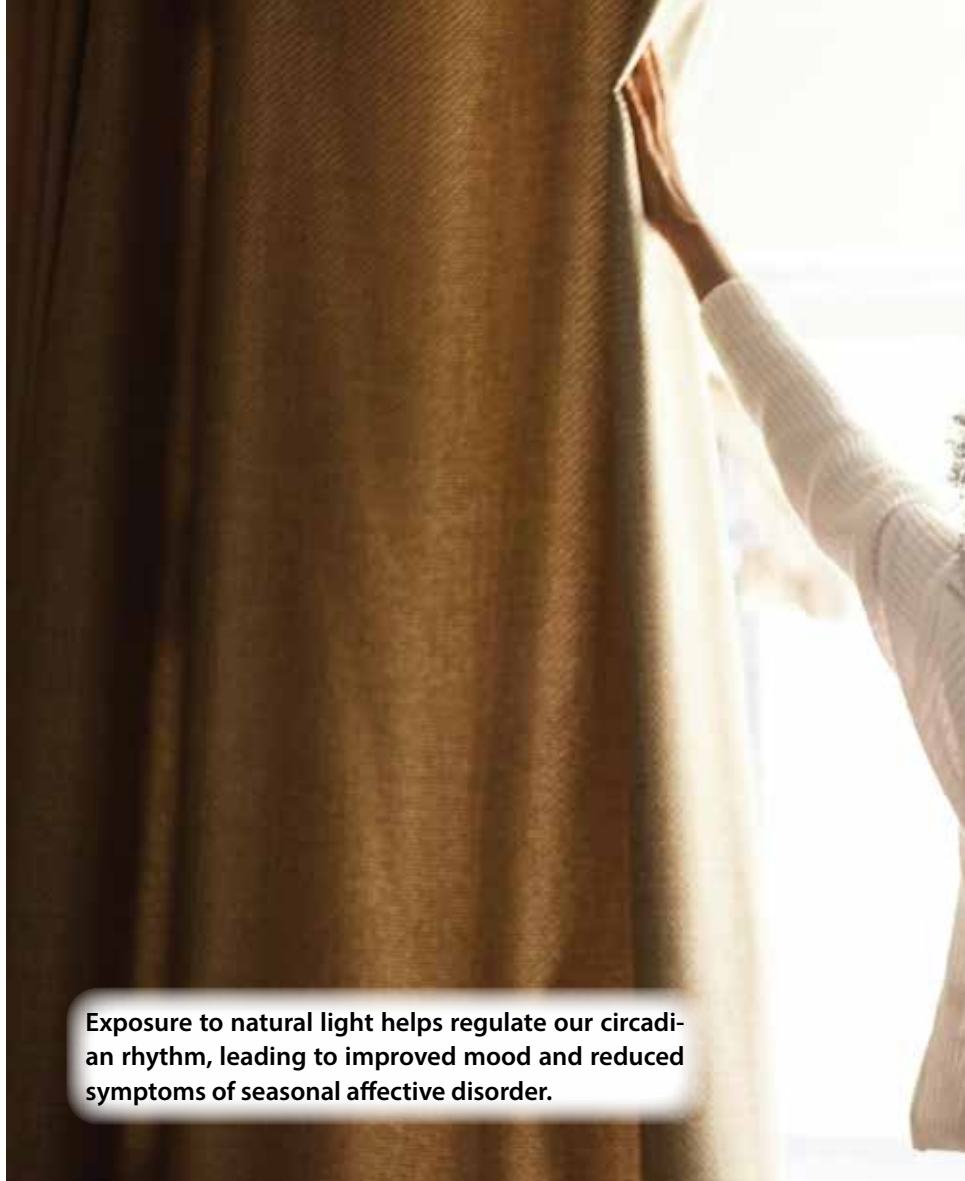
But what if your home doesn't get the sunshine it deserves? While a complete home renovation might be impractical, there are simple tricks to maximize natural light and brighten up your space.

According to Home How property and construction expert Natalie Mitchell, the main benefits of natural sunlight impact health and a home's aesthetic.

Natural light is more than just a source of illumination, she says. It's a powerful force that can significantly impact our physical and mental well-being. Here are some of the key benefits of incorporating natural light into your home:

Health Benefits

- **Improved Mood:** Exposure to natural light helps regulate our circadian rhythm, leading



Exposure to natural light helps regulate our circadian rhythm, leading to improved mood and reduced symptoms of seasonal affective disorder.

to improved mood and reduced symptoms of seasonal affective disorder;

- **Boosted Vitamin D:** Sunlight is a crucial source of vitamin D, essential for strong bones and a healthy immune system;

- **Enhanced Focus and Productivity:** Natural light can increase alertness and concentration, making it easier to stay focused on tasks; and

- **Better Sleep:** Exposure to natural light during the day can help regulate sleep patterns, lead-

ing to improved sleep quality.

Home Aesthetic Benefits

- **Spacious and Airy:** Natural light can make a space feel larger and more open;

- **Enhanced Color and Texture:** Sunlight can bring out the true beauty of your home's colors and materials;

- **Reduced Energy Costs:** By maximizing natural light, you can minimize your reliance on artificial lighting, leading to lower energy bills; and

- **Increased Home Value:** Homes



with ample natural light are often more desirable to buyers, potentially increasing your property's value

How to Increase Natural Light in the Home

- **Paint Your Eaves White:** Often overlooked, your eaves and soffits can significantly impact the amount of natural light that enters your home. Whether open or covered, these architectural elements can act as natural reflectors, bouncing sunlight into your interior spaces.

A simple yet effective solution is to paint your eaves white. White is a highly reflective color, capable of bouncing sunlight back down towards your windows and illuminating your rooms. This trick is particularly useful for homes that don't receive optimal sunlight.

The best part? Painting your eaves white won't compromise your home's exterior aesthetic. Since they're typically angled upwards, they're primarily visible from inside the house. So, unleash the hidden potential of your eaves

and let the light shine in!

- **Choose Light and Bright Interior Paint Colors:** Painting your walls and ceilings in light, bright colors is a simple yet powerful way to maximize natural light in your home. Consider your walls as canvases that can reflect sunlight, brightening up your space. The Light Reflectance Value is a helpful tool to gauge a color's ability to reflect light, with white being the most reflective.

Beyond Basic White

While white is the classic choice for maximizing light, it's not the only option. If pure white feels too stark, explore other light-reflective colors. Soft whites with undertones of grey or cream can offer a more nuanced look. Remember, the goal is to choose colors that brighten your space without feeling overly clinical.

Don't Neglect the Ceiling

Your ceiling plays a significant role in light reflection. Traditionally painted white, a white ceiling helps to maximize the bounce of light throughout the room. Choose a flat white paint finish to reduce glare and create a more comfortable atmosphere.

By strategically using light, reflective paint colors, you can transform your home into a brighter, more inviting space, even without major structural changes.

Consider Using Gloss Paints for the Walls

Glossy paint can be a powerful tool for enhancing natural light in your home. The higher the gloss level, the more light it

reflects, creating a brighter and more vibrant space. Imagine a mirror-like effect on your walls, bouncing sunlight back into the room. This is particularly useful for darker rooms that crave extra sunshine.

However, high-gloss finishes can also create glare, especially when exposed to strong light sources. If you're concerned about this, consider a satin finish. It offers a subtle sheen that reflects light without the excessive glare of a high-gloss finish.

Ultimately, the best paint finish depends on your specific needs and preferences. If maximizing natural light is your top priority, a glossy finish might be the way to go. But if you prefer a more subdued look, a satin or matte finish may be a better choice.

Illuminate Your Space with Reflective Surfaces

If you're looking to brighten up a room, especially a bathroom or kitchen, consider incorporating reflective surfaces like glass tiles or glossy ceramic tiles. These materials act like mini-mirrors, reflecting light around the room and creating a brighter, more spacious feel.

Glass tiles, in particular, can offer near-100% light reflection in optimal lighting conditions. However, if glass isn't your style, glossy ceramic tiles provide a similar effect with a touch more texture.

For a contemporary look, metallic splashbacks are a fantastic option. They not only reflect light but also add a stylish, modern



If you're looking to brighten up a kitchen, consider using reflective surfaces which act like mini-mirrors, reflecting light around the room and creating a brighter, more spacious feel.

touch to your kitchen.

By strategically incorporating these reflective surfaces into your design, you can significantly enhance the natural light in your home.

Maximize Light with Mirrors

Mirrors are a powerful tool for enhancing natural light in your home. By strategically placing mirrors, you can effectively reflect and disperse sunlight, brightening even the darkest corners.

When placing a mirror, consider its relationship to natural light sources. For instance, if you have a window facing north, placing a mirror on the opposite wall can help to bounce sunlight deeper into the room.

Oversized mirrors are particularly effective at maximizing light reflection. They create a sense of space and openness while also adding a touch of elegance to your home.

By incorporating mirrors into your interior design, you can transform your home into a brighter, more inviting space.

Maximize Natural Light with Reflective Décor

To make the most of natural light, consider incorporating re-

fective elements into your home decor. These surfaces can bounce light around your space, creating a brighter and more inviting atmosphere.

Think of it like a beautiful chandelier catching the sunlight – it doesn't need to be switched on to illuminate the room. Similarly, shiny furniture, metallic accents, and strategically placed mirrors can all reflect and disperse natural light.

By making conscious choices about your decor, you can significantly enhance the brightness and ambiance of your home, reducing the need for artificial lighting and creating a more energy-efficient living space.

Add Some Skylights on the Ceiling

Skylights are a fantastic way to flood your home with natural light. They offer several advantages over traditional windows:

- **Maximum Sunlight:** Skylights can provide as much light as a standard window, but they're positioned to capture direct sunlight throughout the day;

- **Unobstructed Views:** Unlike ground-level windows, skylights aren't blocked by trees or buildings, ensuring consis-

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Garden Club's Spring Symposium a 'Floral Fête'



Sandra Sigman is a second-generation floral designer, author of *French Blooms*, founder and operator of Les Fleurs in Andover, Mass.

Flowers in innovative forms will be the star at “Floral Fête” — the Talbot County Garden Club’s 2025 Spring Symposium and Luncheon from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 22 at the Oaks Waterfront Hotel in Easton.

This celebration of floral inspiration is designed to captivate you and your friends

In addition to spectacular floral displays, the day include a plated luncheon, onsite vendor boutiques, and three speakers offering a range of demonstrations on floral and related horticultural topics:

- Author Linda Jane Holden: “The Art of the Possible: Stories and Lessons from a Self-taught Gardener”

Prolific garden design author, self-taught garden historian and White House & Bunny Mellon gardens expert.

Her book *Nantucket Looms: A Legacy of Style* will be released in March 2025.

- Floral Designer Sandra Sigman: “French Blooms: Floral Arrangements Inspired by Paris and Beyond”

Sigman is a second-generation floral designer, author of *French Blooms*, founder and operator of Les Fleurs in Andover, Mass.

- Artist Anne Thompson Blackwell: “Pressing Botanicals: Harvesting Nature’s Bounty”

Blackwell is a trained artist and plantswoman who employs centuries-old traditions, collects foliage and flowers for preservation from www.shorehomeandgarden.com



Linda Jane Holden, left, is a prolific garden design author, self-taught garden historian and White House & Bunny Mellon gardens expert. Artist Anne Thompson Blackwell, right, is a trained artist and plantswoman who employs centuries-old traditions, collects foliage and flowers for preservation.

some of the most picturesque regions of the eastern United States.

Tickets are available online at <https://talbotcountycg.org>.

Tickets are \$175 per person.

A limited number of premium tickets at \$200 per person may be available if tables are reserved for eight or 10 people.

According to organizers, tickets to this biennial event traditionally sell out well in advance.

www.shorehomeandgarden.com

Paige Connelly and Tracy Garrett co-chair this year's event.

For more information and/or questions, contact talbotcountycg@gmail.com.

As the club's major fundraiser for the year, proceeds will help support the club's good works and green projects for the Talbot County Community.

These include beautification and maintenance of four parks in the

Town of Easton; holiday decorations for public buildings; free gardening lectures open to the public; involvement with Young Gardeners, Meals on Wheels, Talbot Hospice, Talbot Interfaith Shelter, and The ARC and Benedictine Adult Services; and partnership programs supporting the Town's Rail Trail Extension and U.S. Post Office grounds landscaping. 🍂

February 2025 • Shore Home & Garden

The Blue Jay: a mimic with a good memory

Backyard Birds



By Suzette Stitely

(Editor's note: Suzette Stitely is a member of the Talbot Bird Club and travels extensively for birdwatching.)

Even if you're not a bird-watcher, you are no doubt familiar with the Blue jay. Colorful, noisy and numerous at times the Blue jay is hard to miss.

One of our most beautiful birds, the Blue jay has a lovely pattern of blue, black and white on its body and it sports a perky crest, black necklace and white face mask.

Put out some peanuts this winter and you'll be visited by Blue jays.

You'll hear them before seeing them as they give a loud "jay jay" call to let others know about the feast.

Did you know that Blue jays are good mimics? They are especially good at Red-shouldered Hawk calls and have tricked me many times.

As a member of the crow family (*Corvidae*), Blue jays are intelligent birds and will remember where they stash food.

Their summer diet is mostly



The Blue Jay has a lovely pattern of blue, black and white on its body a perky crest, black necklace and white face mask.

(Photo by Suzette Stitely)

insectivorous including spiders, grasshoppers and beetles. In winter, they switch to acorns so native trees are essential for their survival.

Found in most of North America, Blue jays do migrate and the birds at your winter feeder may not be the same ones that nest nearby in the summer.

Blue jays form monogamous pairs and work together for successful nesting. Eggs hatch after about 17 days and it's another three weeks before nestlings leave the nest.

Parents continue to feed them for another month or so as the fledglings learn to gather food and perfect their flight. If they're fortunate, they can expect to live for seven to

eight years in the wild.

Learn more about birds, including the Blue jay, by joining the Talbot Bird Club.

The Talbot Bird Club welcomes anyone who has an interest in birds, whether a novice or experienced ornithologist, and whether you enjoy watching birds at your feeder or traveling throughout the world.

Our members learn from one another and are willing to share their knowledge.

The Talbot Bird Club is part of the Maryland Ornithological Society.

You can reach out for more information through the club's Facebook page. 

(FROM PAGE 28)

tent light exposure; and

- **Diffuse Light:** Even on cloudy days, skylights can capture and diffuse light, brightening your interior spaces.

If you're looking to brighten up your home and create a more cheerful atmosphere, consider installing skylights.

Use Your Windows

Windows are your home's natural light sources. To maximize their potential, start by decluttering your windowsills. Removing obstructions allows more light to enter your space.

When it comes to window treatments, less is often more. Consider using sheer curtains or blinds that can be easily opened to let in plenty of light. For rooms where privacy isn't a major concern, consider leaving the windows bare.

If you do use curtains, opt for lightweight fabrics that won't block out light. Hang them high on the wall to maximize the window's height and ensure they can be fully drawn back.

Furniture Placement for Natural Light

When choosing furniture for your home, consider its impact on natural light. Bulky furniture can block light and create dark corners. To maximize natural light, opt for furniture with a lighter design.

Pieces with exposed legs allow light to flow freely beneath them.

This simple design choice can significantly improve the overall brightness of your room. By being mindful of furniture placement and style, you can create a more open and luminous space. ➡

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(FROM PAGE 6)

my family.

When you make time for healthy eating, it's also important to take time to savor your meals.

Avoid eating on the go or while distracted by your phone or TV.

Instead, sit down, take a few deep breaths, and focus on the taste, texture, and enjoyment of your food.

Mindful eating can help you tune in to your body's hunger cues, preventing overeating and encouraging a more balanced approach to food.

• **Stay Connected:** I confess, when it is cold outside, I spend a lot of time indoors. I come home from work, promptly put on comfy clothes and find my nearest sofa. Staying connected with loved

ones after the holiday season can be challenging as life returns to its usual pace.

The festive energy and frequent gatherings may fade, but maintaining those meaningful connections is crucial for emotional well-being and long-term relationships.

Below are some ways to keep in touch and strengthen those bonds once the holiday season has passed.

Schedule regular calls, video chats, or meet-ups on the calendar or simply create a group chat with your besties to stay connected.

Whether it's a weekly phone call, daily group chat or a monthly coffee date, having a set time for connection ensures it becomes a priority in the hustle of everyday life.

• **Playfulness is Mindfulness:** Recess is not just for kids! Taking time out for playful and restorative activities during your day can completely boost both your mental and physical health. Here are some ways you can use "recess" as self-care:

• **Movement breaks:** Finding time to stretch or exercise can increase mobility and fitness. Do a quick yoga flow, dance to your favorite song, or take a brisk walk. If games are more your speed, find a frisbee or jump rope! These simple activities can rekindle joy and energize you.

Finally, don't let the cold weather deter you from enjoying the great outdoors. Taking a nature walk can be a great way to reconnect with nature and shake off the winter doldrums!

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• **Tap Into Playfulness:** Keep a deck of cards, a puzzle, or a board game nearby to play solo or with colleagues. Find ways to be creative by drawing with chalk, playing with clay, or coloring in an adult coloring book for a mental reset. Enlist your friends or colleagues in a mini ping-pong or cornhole game!

• **Sensory Breaks:** Studies continue to show that sensory activities are important for our mental health! Practice deep breathing exercises or guided meditation outdoors for a change of scenery.

Engage your senses by listening to birds, feeling the grass, or simply enjoying the sun on your skin to ground yourself.

Can't get outside? Bring the smells of nature inside with aromatherapy oils — essential

oils such as lavender, lemon and eucalyptus can help with focus, stress and relaxation.

• **Indulge in Quiet Moments:** Winter is a great time to curl up and read or listen to a good book or podcast. If you are looking to relax even more, create a quiet nook in your house that overlooks a favorite part of your yard — and snuggle up with a blanket and gaze out your window. I have some of my most relaxing moments watching two of my regular squirrels dash back and forth across my front porch!

• **Reconnect With Childhood Joys:** Just like recess is not just for kids, neither are some of the activities that gave us such joy.

Go swing on a swing, fly a kite, blow bubbles or color something on your sidewalk with some

sidewalk chalk! Take an adventure by exploring interesting leaves or rocks at your local park or nature trail!

Feeling creative? Get some finger paints, crayons, Legos or even blocks and see where the inspiration takes you! You may be happily surprised that the sense of wonder you had as a child is still lurking around!

No matter what you choose, simply set a timer for 10-20 minutes and enjoy every second that you commit to this form of self-care.

You will find the restorative nature to help invigorate you for the really grown-up tasks that you have ahead of you! 🐸

(Editor's Note: Kristine George is a freelance journalist who resides in Easton.)



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Vintage mechanical Valentines

Antique Discovery



By DeeDee Wood

(Editor's note: DeeDee Wood is the owner of Black Cat Curiosities, an online antiques research and sales venue.)

When you think of Valentine's Day, you might immediately think about an actual Valentine, which is a card that contains a message of love.

They once were very popular in the mail in early February, and as the Industrial Revolution came more into focus, more were produced.

A subset of these printed creations were mechanical Valentine's Day cards, which served not only as a greeting of love, but added layers of interest and nuance to the message.

For centuries, with Roman historical influences and evolution of a myriad of references to the day and name, a notion was created to have a day to celebrate love. As a



permanent day was imbedded into a more modern culture to do just that, greetings of love were sent during this time period, but usually it was done completely by hand and delivered in this manner as well.

As printing and wider distribution advanced, especially in the 19th century, specifically during the reign of industry during Victorian times,

Valentine's Day cards became more widely available to the masses.

Ingenuity dictated that cards could not only be flat missives of love, but could contain a novelty, or layers, of intricated design and moving parts, referred to as movables or mechanical cards.

The Germans, with their innovative printing techniques and early



die-cut methods, were some of the first manufacturers, in the 1900s, to create innovative, interesting cards that moved and entertained the receiver.

A mechanical Valentine could move a head of a person on a card with the pull of a tab, or cards could pop out as a 3-D garden of flowers if you pulled out the

honey-combed shape, a layered paper effect that created 3-D depth to paper. It was all about design in a mechanical card. Experimental printing techniques of the time created strings, tabs, cords and layered paper designs to create an ever-evolving design of popular cards that entertained and delighted the public during the holiday of love.

The cards were sometimes so elaborate and layered they would require a box to be mailed. Buttons, lace, tabs, fold outs, layers of different types of paper and many different types of content and ingenuity of design all went into creating mechanical specimens.

Manufacturing of such designed cards changed in not only elaborate display, but also in the intended audience. As the turn of the century approached, changing morays of society and courtship rituals offered a slight release on rigid romanticism of the era, and Valentine's cards receivers at this time also included children. The mechanical Valentine card was popular for the marketing viability of this group as well, with the moving parts, fold out elements and entertainment of birds, animals and other subject matter, as the necessity of courtship gifts and Valentine's Day meaning was changing to include all of society.

As costs and tastes changed in the era of missives by mail, the rise of the postcard or a more simplistic, cost effective card for a message of love, began to overtake more intricated Victorian choices.

The prowess of proof of manufacturing was waning, and the novelty Valentine eventually found a home in the history books.

In today's antique market, mechanical Valentine's Day cards, especially if they still have their mechanisms, can be worth a bit of money, and are collected and admired from a by-gone era where manufacturing and creativity of new materials went hand-in-hand.



Oh, baby! ... Fit for a king!

A blend of coffee cake and cinnamon roll, king cake is usually iced in yellow, green and purple — the colors of Mardi Gras — and is frequently packed with fruit fillings and decadent cream cheeses.

- The name “*King Cake*” comes from the Biblical story of the three kings who bring gifts to Baby Jesus.

- Hidden inside, or under a slice, is a small plastic *baby*. Whoever finds it must either bring the next cake or throw a party, thus sparking an unending round of food and fun.

- The sweet and buttery bread can be stuffed with so many different *fillings*. My favorite is probably cream cheese, but each bakery makes a special filling every year. Other varieties include: Pecan and praline; caramel; raspberry creme; chocolate; fruits and jams; cinnamon sugar; and Bavarian cream.

- The cake’s sparkling sugar *colors* represent purple for justice, green for faith and gold for power and prosperity.

- In 2009 the NBA’s New Orleans *Pelicans* introduced the King Cake Baby as a seasonal mascot.

- One of the king cake *traditions* states that king cake should only be consumed between Epiphany (Jan. 6) and Mardi Gras. (March 4 this year). If you eat a king cake outside of those dates, it will bring rain on the next Mardi Gras, which is bad luck.

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(FROM PAGE 8)

Remove dead and damaged limbs, and any branches that cross others and crowd the center of the tree.

Be sure to remove any limbs that spoil the symmetry of the trees structure or to enhance the looks of the tree.

Never take more than a third of the total plant mass. Be sure to dispose of all limbs, never leaving any debris under the trees.

These methods will work for deciduous trees as well. You can begin clearing and cleaning up annual and perennial beds.

Be sure not to compost any of the debris, in case it harbors any diseases or insect eggs.

Cut off any battered or damaged Hellebore foliage to make space for new growth and flowering.

Remember, regardless of what the Groundhog says, spring is still more than six weeks away.

Roses For Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is almost upon us and we are often asked what is the meaning of the different colors of roses.

- Red: Love or true love;
- Yellow: Friendship or jealousy;
- Pink: Youth, joy of life, gratitude;
- White: Eternal love, innocence, virtue, purity, reverence and humility;
- Orange: Desire, passion;
- Lavender: Love at first sight;
- Red and white together: Unity; and
- Red and yellow together: Joy, Happiness and Excitement.

If you do receive roses, refill the water twice daily as fresh roses are very heavy water drinkers.



Fruit Tree Care For February

Pruning a fruit tree is one of the most important tasks while the tree is dormant and it does more good for the tree than fertilizing.

Why prune a fruit tree? Three very important reasons: Survival, Stimulation and Shaping. After a single growing season, a pruned tree will be larger than an unpruned tree.

It is important to train your tree to a strong central leader and prune it to a pyramidal shape with lower branches being longer than the higher ones.

Branches should generally be cut back by no more than a third of the total plant mass.

Taking any more than this will result in the formation of "water sprout" growth which is useless because it produces no fruit and robs important energy from the tree. Be sure to remove any growth below 10 and 2 o'clock, as these branches cannot support the weight of ripening fruit, or ice and snow and usually break.

Do not leave any crossing or rubbing branches and any branch forming a V-shaped crotch which splits easily and is a good place for

insects to go undetected.

Since every branch has buds going in all directions, make sure you prune right above a bud that aimed outward to encourage a spreading shape.

Your cut should also be on a slight angle. Use the angle of the bud you have selected as your guide, leaving no more than an 1/8-inch of wood above the bud.

When planting a fruit tree be sure to dig a hole 1½ to 2 times wider than the root ball and dig 6 to 8 inches deeper.

Apply a fertilizer like Espoma's Biotone Plant starter in the bottom of the hole as per label instructions to prevent transplant shock and provide the necessary nutrients for healthy plant growth.

Use a 50-50 blend of compost such as Leafgro or composted manure as your backfill. Use the end of the shovel to fill in all the air pockets in the hole tightly.

It is very important when planting the tree that you keep the grafted part above the ground.

Not following this procedure could result in your dwarf or semi-dwarf tree becoming an old-fashioned standard fruit tree that will grow way too big to harvest!

It is a good idea to apply a dormant spray of horticultural oil and liquid copper to kill any overwintering insects and diseases.

This spray should be applied when air temperatures remain above 40 degrees for a 24- to 36-hour period.

You can apply this same spray to any dormant tree or shrub and even roses. 🌿➡️

(Editor's Note: Ken Morgan is the owner of Robin's Nest Floral and Garden Center in Easton, Md.)

Deviled Eggs with Caviar a classic pairing

Food For Thought



By Deborah Walker

(Editor's note: Deborah Walker has written about food and recipes for 15 years. She resides in Ocean City.)

The path of intention peaks behind the tedious metronome of daily routines. Submission to repetitiveness could become a way of existence.

However, my passion for individualism entices me to a point of no return.

But in the interim of progression, I allow myself to take a much-deserved break and enjoy a glass of Pinot Noir.

This symphony of red fruits with layers of earthiness and hints of vanilla eases my soul.

Sometimes the smallest recollection can trigger a mound of cherished memories.

It's hard to believe that it will be nine years since the passing of my father.

Some say time has a way of healing; I think it is more appropriate to say we adjust and incorporate it into the book of life.



Hard-boiled eggs are a classic pairing with caviar. Their bland foundation allows the caviar to be the star of the dish.

(Photo by Deborah Walker)

My father and I adored caviar and every so often he would surprise me with a sampling of the finest fish eggs from all over the world.

Deviled eggs with caviar

Ingredients

- 8 large eggs
- A third-cup of good, quality mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon rice vinegar
- Salt to taste
- Caviar as a garnish

Directions

1. Bring a large pot of water (enough to cover the eggs by one inch) to a boil. Reduce heat and carefully add eggs. Once the water reaches a hard simmer, simmer for 13 minutes.
2. Place the pot in the sink, drain hot water, and fill with cold water

to stop the cooking process. You will have to refill with cold water a few times. Peel the eggs under cold water. Pat dry with paper towels.

3. In a small bowl, combine egg yolks, mayonnaise, mustard, and vinegar and blend with a hand-held immersion blender or hand-held mixer.

4. Place yolk filling in the freezer for 20 minutes.

5. Using your favorite piping tip, fill egg whites with egg yolk mixture and top with caviar.

(Option: Serve half of the deviled eggs plain and the other half garnished with caviar.)

Mother and my sister could not fathom such a liking.

Caviar is one of those foods that you either scarf it up or walk away in disgust.

I am so thankful that my palette relishes such a delicacy, it is a true blessing from the sea.

If one decides to incorporate caviar into their menu, there are a few protocols you should know.

First and foremost, fine caviar should be served very cold in a non-metallic bowl nestled inside a larger bowl filled with ice.

Caviar does not freeze until it is below 28 degrees, so you should store it in the coldest part of the refrigerator to get it as ice-cold as possible without it actually freezing, which can affect the texture of the eggs.

Avoid metal utensils which may impart a metallic taste to the caviar. Choose servers and utensils made of glass, plastic, or traditional mother-of-pearl.

Purists will insist on a shot of the finest chilled vodka to accompany their caviar.

If you prefer champagne, choose the driest version possible.

Take small bites of caviar.

It is an expensive product and should be enjoyed and not gobbled up.

And whatever you do, do not park next to the caviar setup and continually indulge.

Partaking of more than two ounces is considered “rude.”

If one’s budget cannot include caviar, consider black lumpfish or salmon roe.

It looks like caviar but is much

cheaper.

Hard-boiled eggs are a classic pairing with caviar.

Their bland foundation allows the caviar to be the star of the dish.

New Year’s celebrations are here and deviled eggs topped with black lumpfish or salmon roe is decadent and affordable.

Following are a few helpful hints when making deviled eggs.

Once the eggs are cooked, drain the hot water and replace with cold water several times.

This helps stop the cooking process.

While the eggs are warm, peel them.

They will peel much easier if they are warm as opposed to being cold.

Remove the warm egg yolks and

Secret ingredient is ‘Desire.’

“The starting point of all achievement is desire.”

— Napoleon Hill

place in a small bowl with your mayonnaise mixture.

Warm egg yolks are much easier to break down and become lump free than cold ones.

If you own a hand-held immersion blender, this is the time to use it.

It will puree the egg yolk filling in one to two minutes with no lumps.

A hand-held blender is perfectly acceptable but takes a lot more time.

Piping the yolk filling onto the egg whites adds beautification to the dish.

This is why it is so important to make sure the filling is lump free.

Otherwise, they will clog your piping tip.

Freeze the egg yolk filling for 20 minutes before piping. This gives your piping a more defined look.

The following deviled egg recipe is easy to make and so delicious!

No matter how many I make, it never seems to be enough.

Deviled eggs are always a huge hit. Deviled eggs with caviar will steal the show. Enjoy! 🍴

Now we're cooking!

The Ultimate Guide to Game Day Hosting



Photo courtesy of Shutterstock

6 tips to host a game day gathering like a pro

FAMILY FEATURES

From kickoff to the final whistle, game day is all about spending time with friends and family while rooting for your favorite team. When it's your turn to host, you can bring all the fun of a tailgate party to the comfort of your couch with the proper plan for hosting.

Show Your Team Spirit

Make your guests feel excited from the moment they walk through the door – or as soon as they pull in the driveway – by decking out your space in team colors and memorabilia. Use football- or team-themed banners, flags, balloons, coasters and tablecloths to set the mood.

Wear your favorite jersey and create a stadium-like atmosphere with fun props like foam fingers or pom-poms for guests to use and cheer on their team.

Prep Ahead of Time to Score Big

Avoid a rush before kickoff by making a checklist of everything you'll need. Ensure your TV and sound systems are working correctly and that you have access to the right channel or streaming platform.

Make a store run at least a day in advance to grab everything you'll need for your watch party: dishes, snacks, drinks, tablecloths, trash bags and some household essentials like Finish Ultimate Dishwasher Detergent. Finish Ultimate tackles dish cleanup in the kitchen like a pro, so hosts can enjoy all the fun parts of game day without the worry.

If possible, pack your coolers the night before – just as you would for tailgating at the stadium – and prep and cook any dishes you can ahead of time, so you can enjoy the action with minimal interruptions.

Feed the Fans

Football fans are often foodies, too. A buffet-style food setup allows guests to help themselves to their favorite snacks and dishes throughout all four quarters.

Review your game plan ahead of kickoff to make sure your game day menu offers a variety of finger foods, such as wings, sliders and nachos. Then, take your menu to the next level with unique eats like this new saucy, cheesy creation – the TRUFF Hot Honey Bacon Cheddar Dip with Pretzel Bites – to add a spicy twist.

To complete the roster of game day eats, include a veggie tray or charcuterie board and a variety of beverages, including water, soda and juice. To stay on theme, consider serving cake or brownies in the shape of a football for dessert or topping cupcakes with icing in the team's colors.

Tackle Cleanup

All those delicious snacks your guests are enjoying are sure to make a mess. For hosts tackling cleanup during the game, don't miss out on all the on-screen action—turn to the star player to make cleanup a breeze: Finish Ultimate Dishwasher Detergent.

Finish Ultimate tackles tough game day messes, even without pre-rinsing, leaving hosts more time to cheer on their team and less time in the kitchen cleaning up.

Create the Perfect Viewing Environment

Ensure everyone has an unobstructed view by arranging your seating strategically. Use a combination of couches, chairs and floor cushions to accommodate your guests. Scatter small tables throughout the area within easy reach for guests to place their drinks and snacks while the action is live.

To ensure fans never miss a moment of the action, turn the TVs in other rooms to the game as well; just ensure the sound is down in case the main screen is ahead or behind of the secondary viewing options.

Consider Downtime Entertainment to Keep the Energy High

While the main event is watching the action, you can keep the excitement going during halftime and commercial breaks with fun activities like cornhole, football trivia, bingo, mascot matching or an old-fashioned game of catch. Also have some board games, card games

or video games on hand for those who might want to take a break from watching or children who aren't as engaged in the on-screen action.

For the ultimate game day recipe and to find more ways to tackle dish cleanup in the kitchen on game day, visit finishdishwashing.com/truff-hot-honey-bacon-cheddar-dip.



Hot Honey Bacon Cheddar Dip with Pretzel Bites

Recipe courtesy of Finish

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 1 hour

Servings: 12

- 5 slices bacon
- 1/2 cup honey
- 2 tablespoons TRUFF Original Hot Sauce
- 16 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 2/3 cup lager-style beer
- 1/4 cup Dijon mustard
- 24 ounces cheddar cheese, grated
- 1/2 cup fresh scallions, chopped
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/2 teaspoon cracked black pepper
- 24 ounces frozen pretzel bites, baked according to package instructions

Preheat oven to 400° F.

Evenly space bacon in 13-by-9-inch dishwasher-safe ceramic or glass baking dish.

Bake bacon 10 minutes.

Microwave honey 15-20 seconds. Add hot sauce and whisk to combine.

Remove bacon from oven and carefully pat dry with paper towels.

Brush bacon with hot honey and return to oven. Set aside any remaining hot honey for later use.

Bake bacon 10-15 minutes until brown and crisp. Set bacon aside to cool.

Chop bacon into small, bite-sized pieces.

Pour bacon pan drippings into bowl and discard once cool.

In bowl, whisk softened cream cheese, beer and mustard to combine.

Add grated cheddar cheese, chopped scallions, garlic powder, onion powder and black pepper. Stir until thoroughly combined.

Spread mixture evenly in 13-by-9-inch dishwasher-safe ceramic or glass baking dish.

Bake 20-25 minutes, or until hot and bubbly.

Remove from oven and rest 5 minutes.

Sprinkle top of dip with chopped bacon and drizzle with remaining hot honey.

Serve dip alongside baked pretzel bites.

February events

Easton hosting Fire & Ice on Feb. 14-15

EASTON — The Chesapeake Fire & Ice will return on Feb. 14 (5-9 p.m.) to Feb. 15 (noon to 9 p.m.) to feature dozens of ice sculptures spread throughout Easton's historic district.

The event will kick off Friday night with live music and ice carvings. Outdoor ice skating will be

open by nightfall and the streets will be alive with fun! Live carvings will be all over town, including one sponsored by presenting sponsors Preston Automotive Group and Bay Security/Safehouse, LLC — all outside and easy to view with a stroll through town.

The festivities continue all week-

end with opportunities to tour the ice sculptures.

Events will include an activity-filled Fire Trail, family fun events, outdoor ice skating, children's ice-house at the Talbot County Free Library, entertainment, seasonal sales and shopping, restaurant specials, lodging specials and more. 🐾



Chocolat: A chocolate lover's delight

DENTON — The Caroline County Chamber of Commerce is inviting the public to indulge in their senses at Chocolat on Feb. 7 at 6 p.m.

The evening's festivities, at the Shore Home & Garden • February 2025

Chesapeake Culinary Center 512 Franklin St., is designed to benefit the Caroline Culinary Arts Center, featuring a chocolate-inspired menu, savory cuisine, cocktails, decadent dessert, and more! It's "All

you can eat and drink."

The admission fee is \$70.

For more information, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/chocolat-tickets-1099179548619?aff=oddtcreator>. 🐾

Murder-mystery event based on 1980s theme

GRASONVILLE — Welcome back to the '80s.

Bust out your leg warmers, neon headbands, acid-washed jeans, and big hair for an evening of “gnarly” audience interactive comedy murder mystery at Hyatt Place Kent Narrows & Marina and the Queen

Anne Event Center!

Doors and the bar opens at 6 p.m., and the dinner buffet starts at 6:30 p.m. The show begins at 7:15 p.m.

The \$79 ticket price includes dinner and entertainment. A cash bar is available for beverages.

Seating will be limited per table.

For group seating or requests or dietary restrictions, e-mail brandy-lynn.valdez@hyatt.com no later than Feb. 4.

For more information, contact the banquet office at the above e-mail or call 443-446-6000. 🐾



Make a Celtic wall hanging on Feb. 15

DENTON — The Fiber Arts Center is offering hand applique Celtic wall-hanging classes on Feb. 15 and March 15.

The center will host the classes at 7 North 4th Street.

The cost is \$40 for club members and \$50 for non-members.

www.shorehomeandgarden.com

The cost for a pattern is \$10.

A class supply list can be found at www.fiberartscenter.com.

Participants are invited to join the rest of the Fiber Arts Center folks to learn the technique of back basting hand applique.

They will be making a lovely

Celtic wall-hanging that's bound to bring the luck of the Irish to any household.

For more information, call Kay Butler at 410-829-5136 or e-mail: mrs.kay.butler@gmail.com. Call Kathleen McCulloch at 443-448-4611 to sign up for this class. 🐾

February 2025 • Shore Home & Garden



'Where the Light Begins:' A Winter Concert Experience

EASTON — Allegro Academy invites you to escape to an intimate evening of music and poetry on Feb. 22 with “Where the Light Begins.”

The concert fundraising event will feature the Allegra! Women’s Chorus performing Song of the Universal, a brilliant setting of the poem from Walt Whitman for choir, piano and string orchestra. Walt Whitman’s unabashed optimism, exuberance, and unwavering confidence in our deeper humanity Shore Home & Garden • February 2025

is beautifully portrayed through music in Ola Gjeilo’s setting of the text.

The program will also include additional music from Gjeilo along with Hildegard of Bingen, Edward Elgar, Michael John Trotta, Elaine Hagenburg and Susan LaBarr including the title piece, Where the Light Begins.

A variety of styles will be represented from a cappella chant, to violin duets, and percussion accompaniments.

Guests are asked to purchase tickets for the 5, 6:45, or 8 p.m. performance time, and are encouraged to enjoy the complimentary champagne, light fare, and student performances to take place throughout the evening.

Doors will open for attendees at 5 p.m., and a cash bar will remain open for the duration of the performances.

Find out about tickets and other information by visiting www.allegro-academyeaston.com.

www.shorehomeandgarden.com

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