Hello, readers. Josh Salmon of Planter Decor here. Welcome to my spring landscape column.

Winter really loves us Canadians, and is taking its sweet time to say goodbye. This enhances our excitement for spring to show its beautiful face and for us looking to savour every second of its blissful sunshine.

This longing for spring is a perfect segue into the two biggest trends that I see developing for the 2019 season: extending the usability of your outdoor living space, and creating a carefree, near-zero maintenance outdoor environment.

People want very low maintenance, as much year-round usage as possible, an extended season and low water usage. It’s all about easy care gardening!

A prime example of this is implanting more softened hardscape surfaces – specifically, permanent green lawns (in other words, fake grass – but don’t use that term with me, or I’ll get mad).

I have to admit that I never really embraced the use of fake grass because it looked, well, fake. But it’s really evolved and I’ve come across some products that – even years later – still look great. It’s excellent for drainage, high-traffic areas and anything else you would use a hard surface for – like a table and chairs – or a soft surface, like under a swing set.

It comes with a comprehensive eight-year warranty on both the installation and the product itself.

Done properly, it’s an excellent investment, and working with a trained design professional like myself, helps create a realistic effect, in that I am able to blend the grass into the gardenscape to create a very natural environment.

It’s not cheap and not for everyone, but it does solve a lot of problems where lawns are otherwise unusable. It’s comparable in price to hard surfaces such as interlock and stone, while giving you a softer look esthetically.

The other area that we are seeing an upswing in is the installation of more patios and walkways as opposed to decks with a high platform.

I find that people are now gravitating to either very stark clean lines, such as boxwood hedges and ornamental grasses, or a softer, wilder look composed of perennials (plants that come back every year) and supplemented by annuals (plants that you have to replant each season).

To me, the most important factor in creating an excellent landscape is creating a space that works for you, and allows you to get the maximum usage out of that space.

At the end of the day the most rewarding part of being in this business is seeing my clients smile when the job is complete.

To see my latest creations, be sure to follow me on Instagram @planterdecor or check out my website at planterdecor.com.
Is your aging parent still safe living alone and independently?

A Care Call may be just what’s needed.

DAVID BERNSTEIN
PRESIDENT, CAREGIVER SERVICES LTD.

As our parents age, living independently in their own home is almost always the goal. But how do we ensure that is a smart and safe choice?

Do we really know what’s going on with their health and habits? Can we have the necessary conversations to find out what’s happening? There is often a huge gap between what our aging parents tell us and what is actually going on.

Our parents do not want to be a burden on us, nor do they want to argue with us about what we think they need. We may not be able to visit often and have limited exposure to their daily reality. Our love and concerns for their safety and well-being can lead to a feeling of a loss of dignity and independence – it is an imperfect trade-off we all have to make at some point.

Unfortunately, many of us don’t learn the details of our parents’ health until after a fall, illness or other incident. So what are the best ways to help our aging parents stay at home and reduce these risks?

If your parents are open to it, live-in care or frequent visits from a caregiver can meaningfully improve their quality of life and ensure their ability to live independently as long as possible. The downside of this approach is the high cost, as well as having someone else in their home, when what your parents really prefer is privacy.

Alternatively, you can arrange a specialized Care Call. These are weekly, semi-monthly or monthly visits by an experienced registered private nurse (RPN). They can assess a host of factors affecting your parents’ safety, quality of life and ability to continue living independently. People will often tell professionals, like nurses, much more about what is really going on than what they tell their family.

Items that can be assessed and impacted include: interior and exterior home safety, checking the fridge and pantry for expired food and a balanced diet, medication adherence, mobility, ability to perform daily tasks, cognitive functioning, quality of their personal care, the state of vulnerable parts of their body (such as their skin and feet), and their vitals (blood pressure, heart rate, etc.).

These Care Calls can provide much-needed peace of mind for family members.

Care Calls can provide much-needed peace of mind for family members.

To discuss if Care Calls are a good solution for your family, please contact Caregiver Services at 416-994-6096.
Losing the size, keeping the space

MARILYN LAZAR  
SPECIAL TO THE CJN

As the baby boomer demographic bulges its way toward and past retirement, “downsizing” is a verb that has crept slowly but surely into our daily lexicon. Cocktail conversation centres on bidding wars and bidding adieu to the old family home. The new digs usually represent a new lifestyle – possibly in a different neighbourhood – but just as importantly, offer a different kind of space. Say goodbye to car-obsessed suburbia and a far cry from the two- or three-storey family home with its many rooms, nooks and crannies, and say hello to condo world, where reduced square footage means making every inch count. Delusions of grandeur hopefully not, but illusions of larger space – bring it on!

There are many tricks to help create the illusion of bigger space, from wall colour to furniture placement and paying careful attention to scale. Stick to lighter colours on both the floors and walls, and keep a consistent colour to make the space feel bigger.

It’s no surprise that using a neutral paint palette can make a room feel larger, but did you know that wallpaper on the ceiling is effective because it draws the eye upward? If you can’t resist bright colours, reserve it for the eye-popping accent in your accessories. To create varied moods in different rooms, while still maintaining a unified feel and flow, try several shades of the same colour.

Acclaimed designer Brian Gluckstein is renowned for creating luxurious, livable interiors. He is no stranger to downsizing, as many of his longtime clients have worked with him on different homes at different stages of their lives. He launched GlucksteinHome, a complete line of home furnishings, including furniture, tabletop, bedding, bath and décor, to bring his elegant esthetic to a wider public.

“I’m seeing an increase in purchasers of small condos, and they’re dealing with the challenges of furnishing and accessories in these spaces,” said Gluckstein. The challenge is to keep the feeling of airiness and lightness that will give the illusion of a larger space.

“A few techniques can really help. Try a smaller scale sofa or look for a sofa on tapered legs. Either option will give a more spacious effect. Layering art and mirrors adds personality to the room while it visually expands the space.”

As well, try to restrict purchases to multi-purpose pieces. For example, some ottomans double as coffee tables, while others even do extra duty by opening to provide storage for toys or magazines. Glass and Lucite desks, dining or console tables are a great option, as you can literally see through them, expanding the space visually.

Make small bedrooms more functional with pull-out storage bins underneath the bed. These can sometimes be custom-ordered from the manufacturer or found in specialty organization boutiques. Also consider installing hooks on the back of bedroom doors for towels, robes, hats and scarves.

Leave windows uncovered for less clutter, more light and depth. If you need privacy, opt for tailored shades or blinds instead of puddling drapes.

Mirrors are useful when it comes to small living quarters. When strategically placed, a mirror reflects light, thereby creating the illusion of more space. Hang a mirror by a tight entranceway or place one above your sofa to reflect light coming in through the windows.

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Some things in life are worth paying for

So you’ve found a great condo and you have to downsize. Your old furniture will not suit the new place, so it has to go. Your kids have told you they don’t want your Victorian couch and the vintage dining room set. And they’re definitely not interested in your Persian rugs and tchotchkes.

So how will you dispose of all these unwanted items? You call Mindy Applebaum, founder of Luxury Move Management, who will sell your unwanted furniture or deliver it to family, friends or a donation centre. The company actually specializes in packing up belongings in one house and unpacking them in the new one.

Applebaum says her packing and downsizing service is very much in demand because there is a design and lifestyle trend toward minimalism. “Adult children do not want to take their parents’ stuff,” she notes.

“I created this business to provide solutions for people who are moving,” she says. “We are a full-service move management company that offers a solution to every move-related problem. “If we don’t offer it, I’ll research it to see how we can offer it.”

Luxury Move Management oversees custom crating for artwork and glass furniture and items that need extra care. Other specialty services include dismantling and assembling exercise equipment, steam-cleaning carpets, handyman and electrical services, window cleaning, junk removal, fixture and television mounting, on-site document shredding and deep cleaning of your home.

Applebaum says her clients are very appreciative of the company’s various services. “When they hear about us, they say, ‘I didn’t know this type of help existed.’ ”

Applebaum’s team can also manage a complete move, from sourcing moving quotes and packing up the house to being on site to supervise the movers and then do the unpacking. “We can quarterback the entire operation.”

The company also does pre-listing preparation services for real estate agents, helping them get houses ready for the market. “Once a real estate agent hires us, they use the service again and again,” says Applebaum.

But you don’t have to be moving or downsizing to take advantage of Luxury Move Management’s decluttering service, she says. “We can work one-on-one with your family to sort through your wardrobe or any other trouble areas in your home to decide on what to keep and what to discard.”

Applebaum says she works with a team of mature and capable women who do the packing. “It’s an all-female packing team because our clients have told us they appreciate the feminine touch.”

The company has been running for three years and has significantly grown through word of mouth and in its scope of services, Applebaum says.

“The first service I offered was to help people sell their unwanted furniture when they were downsizing or moving or just getting rid of stuff. I quickly added packing and unpacking.”

Applebaum also runs a Facebook group called Buy & Sell From Mindy @ Luxury Move Management to help her clients re-sell their furniture and housewares.

Applebaum says some of her clients try to downsize on their own, but when they realize the magnitude of the tasks necessary for a move, they turn to Luxury Move Management. “At that point, they decide that some things in life are worth paying for.”

To contact Luxury Move Management, call 416-937-0499, or visit luxurymovemanagement.com.
When entering a house, especially for the first time, one may only notice the overall interior without focusing on specific features or objects. However, another glance may reveal hidden treasures that hold sentimental value to their owners. After all, homes are so much more than physical structures. Ideally, they represent and embody their owners, reflecting their values, habits and memories. Stepping into someone’s house can often gives guests a glimpse into the owner’s life, both past and present. Sometimes an object represents nothing more than it does at face value, but other times, it represents much more. Below are four stories of unique items that hold personal meaning for their owners.

When art imitates life
On their wedding day, Noah Schachter and his wife had a photo taken at a park of the two of them sitting on a swing. They later selected the photo as the front cover image for their wedding album. In the weeks following the occasion, they took a trip to Quebec City and explored the collection at a small art shop. One sculpture instantly caught their attention. The piece of art shows two characters, a male and female, sitting on a swing set. It reminded them of their favourite wedding photo. They purchased it and placed it by the front door of their home when they returned to Toronto.

“The two of us love it, and smile every time we walk by,” said Schachter. “Our house wouldn’t be the same without it and we’re really glad we bought it.”

A connection with Israel
Visiting Israel was on Rachel Abitan’s to-do list from a young age. When the Torontonian turned 18, she participated in Birthright Israel, which she described as “a life-changing trip.” The experience connected her with her roots and inspired her to return to Israel.

On a trip in the winter of 2016-17, Abitan visited the Dead Sea and collected salt as a memento. For her, the item recalls fond memories of close friends and the times they shared together.

“It makes me feel like home because of my connection to the Jewish homeland, and is a reminder of the reconnection I will have with my friends and family when I go back to Israel,” said Abitan. “When friends come over, it’s one of the pieces that I showcase to educate them on the history and uniqueness of Israel.”

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE
A traditional item with personal flair

After their wedding, Jay and Deena Goldberg had an important item on their shopping list. They had not yet purchased or received a challah board, and sought to find one that was both practical and one-of-a-kind. During a long weekend, they visited the shops in Toronto’s Distillery District and came across wooden cutting boards with laser-printed designs.

One of the boards, which featured the periodic table of elements, stood out to Jay, who is an engineer. He covered it with glass and created a traditional item with a personal connection.

“Whenever we have guests over, the challah board is definitely a conversation starter,” he said. “It was an interesting find that we were able to make for ourselves, and we think it’s really unique.”

Family memories

In 1972, Gary Woodrow and his late wife Esther bought their first house in Edmonton. When they set out to furnish it, Esther found a dining room set made of beautiful burl wood. They both thought it would be perfect for their home. However, the price of the set was far beyond what they could afford. They decided that they would save up for it, and put down a deposit. It took them over 18 months, but they saved enough and the set was finally theirs.

“As a couple, we made this purchase one of our goals. Throughout our marriage, we always looked upon it as an accomplishment,” recalled Woodrow. “Esther mentioned many times to our children how much she loved the appearance of the dining room suite. To this day, the children often mention how their mother had good taste and loved fine things. They point out the dining suite as an example. Because of all the good memories that my grown children and I have about the dining suite, it truly makes our house a home.”

Meet Lorraine, one of Thornhill’s finest. A former interior decorator with a love for theatre and travel, she left work to raise her family, and volunteer at the Variety Club and National Council of Jewish Women. Today, she is proudly “Bubie Lolo” to five grandchildren and two great grandchildren. Lorraine continues to enjoy spending time with her family, and is actively engaged in VIVA Thornhill Woods’ vibrant community.

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