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Pictured at the launch are; Catherine McGourty, Head of PE/Sport (girls) at Our Lady and St Patrick's College Knock with year 8 pupils Phoebe Deazley and Torin Deeney and Fearghal McKinney, Head of BHF Northern Ireland.

SOUTH BELFAST'S ECO VOLUNTEERS CELEBRATED!

Live Here Love Here, a people-powered campaign dedicated to improving the local environment and fostering civic pride, has revealed the winners of its 2025 Community Awards.

The event, held at Belfast City Hall recently hosted by TV presenter Joe Mahon, brought together over 150 guests - including DAERA Minister Andrew Muir, local leaders, environmental advocates and volunteers - to honour the outstanding contributions of voluntary community groups across Northern Ireland working to improve the environment and promote civic pride.

The awards serve as a vital platform for recognising the power of collective action in tackling community environmental challenges such as dog fouling, littering, biodiversity loss, transformation of neglected spaces, and environmental education. On the night, 12 awards were presented to celebrate the achievements of local community groups, including the Regional Champions Awards, which honoured volunteers from Live Here Love Here's nine partner council areas. The Belfast YMCA Community Garden, based in South Belfast, received Belfast City Council's Regional Champions Award for transforming a neglected space into a vibrant community garden that promotes biodiversity, sustainability, environmental awareness, and offers therapeutic activities for individuals with complex needs. West Belfast's Three Sisters Gardening Community Group was also recognised in this category as runners-up for their efforts in transforming inner-city spaces into green havens that address mental health, food poverty, and environmental challenges. For more information on the Live Here Love Here campaign and the Community Awards, visit livehereandlovehere.org.

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SCHOOLCHILDREN ACROSS BELFAST AND BEYOND TO BECOME LIFESAVERS WITH FREE DIGITAL CPR TRAINING

A new interactive online learning tool has been launched by British Heart Foundation Northern Ireland (BHF NI) to equip thousands of schoolchildren with essential life-saving skills.

Classroom RevivR is a game-changing tool that makes teaching lifesaving skills to students aged 11 to 16 easy and fun. It meets Northern Ireland curriculum standards and can be taught in one easy lesson plan - minimising teachers' workload. Working together, young people will learn the difference between cardiac arrest and heart attack, how to respond to an unconscious person and make an emergency call, how to use a defibrillator and how to perform CPR safely. The local heart charity has launched the free digital tool during Heart Month in February, to encourage pupils to be prepared in the event of an emergency. Around fifty schools in Northern Ireland are already successfully using Classroom RevivR and BHF NI hopes the launch of this tool will help save many lives.

Continued on page 4

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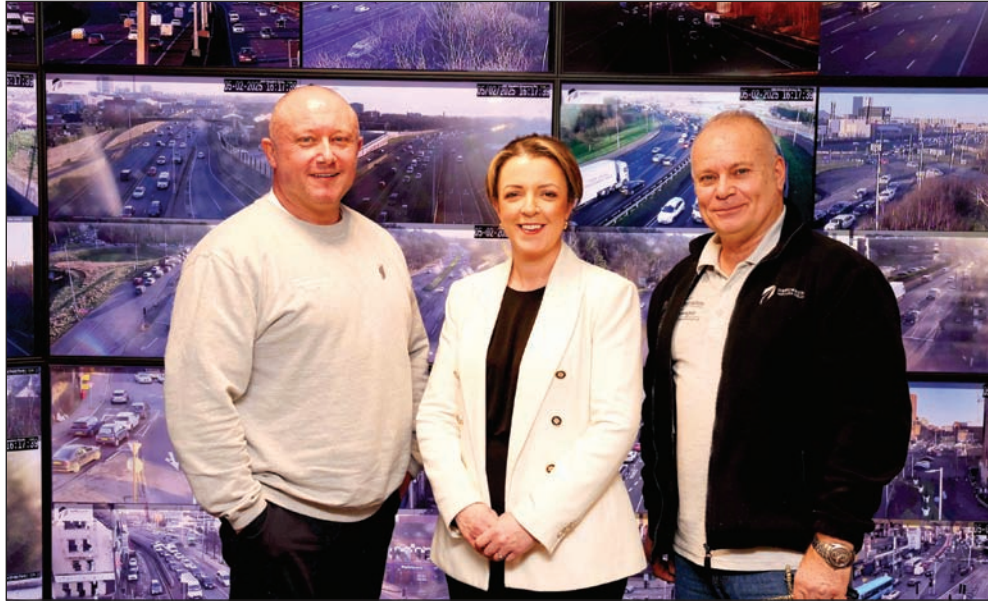
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Minister Kimmins pays tribute to front-line staff responding to Storm Éowyn

Infrastructure Minister Liz Kimmins has paid tribute to front-line staff in the Department who worked around the clock in the aftermath of Storm Éowyn.



Minister Kimmins was speaking at Traffic Information and Control Centre, as she met a range of Departmental staff who played key roles to clear roads and ensure access to critical infrastructure was achieved following the storm.

Minister Kimmins said: "I really wanted to meet

some of you personally to extend my thanks for your dedication and commitment to delivering public services, in all conditions throughout the year.

"Over 3,000 incidents of obstructions of trees and debris on roads were reported to the Department following Storm Éowyn. It took a

massive co-ordination effort to get those roads cleared and opened safely.

"In addition, teams from DfI assisted other agencies including NIE Networks, PSNI, NI Water, health and telecommunications services, to gain access to their critical infrastructure, enabling them to ensure that the

services we expect and take for granted were available as quickly as possible.

"The recent storm reminds us that staff from the Department for Infrastructure go out in all weathers, leaving behind their families, to make our roads and communities safe and for that I pay tribute to them."

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CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS

Brave Belfast Cailíní have created resources to help young women feel empowered and confident to speak out

A new youth-led campaign, to encourage healthy relationships and highlight the significance of boundaries and consent, was launched at Stormont recently.

The Brave Belfast Cailíní (Brave Belfast Girls) campaign also aims to

inspire young women to support one another and access services if they feel worried or uncomfortable in a relationship.

MLA Paula Bradshaw and NI Commissioner for Children and Young People, Chris Quinn, joined attendees in the Long Gallery to hear about the campaign which has been developed by young women and girls aged between 12 and 16 from West Belfast.

The first campaign of its kind in Northern Ireland, Brave Belfast Cailíní is a partnership between NSPCC Northern Ireland and Footprints Women's Centre, Poleglass.

Meeting bi-weekly since August, the group of 14 cailíní have been in charge of every aspect of the campaign, from the name and logo design, to creating inclusive, fun-with-a-message resources and a webpage designed to raise awareness of what a healthy

relationship looks and feels like.

The campaign name Brave Belfast Cailíní was chosen because the group want every girl to know that they can talk about their feelings and relationships and that it is brave to speak out if you have any concerns.

Building on their chosen theme, 'Be a Girl's Girl', the Cailíní want to reach as many young women as possible and encourage them to engage with the resources, support one another and raise awareness of places where they can get help and support.

Cailíní member Grace (14) said: 'I have loved being part of the Brave Belfast Cailíní. I've learned a lot about relationships, knowing what a healthy relationship is and what's not.'

"I feel comfortable in the group and know I always have someone to talk to if I need to."



Brave Belfast Cailíní with MLA Paula Bradshaw and NI Children's Commissioner Chris Quinn

Ayse (12) added: "The project has been fun and I've really enjoyed myself. I especially liked designing the logo because it was fun to see different girls come up with what would fit to display our courage and bravery."

"Brave Belfast Cailíní is really good, the topic is understandable and easy to grasp. It's important to actually understand what it means in easy ways rather than nonsense talk to us."

At the launch event on

Tuesday February 4, the young women told attendees about the campaign and demonstrated the resources that they have created including the webpage, information Z Cards, poster, flyers and a quiz.

Going forward, the Cailíní aim to continue to spread the Be a Girl's Girl message by sharing resources in their schools and clubs and participating in the Belfast Imagine Festival with a Brave Belfast Cailíní art exhibition in late March.

NI Commissioner for Children and Young People, Chris Quinn, said: "I'm grateful to speak at this event and meet the girls behind it. Every young person has the right to feel safe, respected, and heard in their relationships."

"This campaign, created by young people for young people, is a powerful example of peer-led change by providing practical tools like the Red Flag or Green Flag Quiz, guidance on boundaries, and tips on

being a Girl's Girl. It equips young women with the knowledge and confidence to advocate for safe and respectful relationships.

"It is fantastic to see Brave Belfast Cailíní encouraging girls to raise their voices and call out toxic behaviours and opinions."

To find out more about Brave Belfast Cailíní and to access the resources, go to: www.footprintswomenscentre.org/bravebelfastcailini

Continued from page 1

Fearghal McKinney, Head of BHF Northern Ireland, said: "The launch of Classroom RevivR today will set children up with an invaluable lifesaving skill at an early age. A cardiac arrest can affect anyone, at any time, so we want as many people to learn CPR as possible."

"Tragically, of the

1,400 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests that happen every year in Northern Ireland, less than one in ten people will survive. We are determined to change this by giving everyone the opportunity to learn CPR. By equipping our young people today with these lifesaving skills, more lives could be saved in the future."

Fearghal added: "There is no need for an

external trainer or lots of specialist equipment and Classroom RevivR has been designed with busy teachers in mind. All pupils need is a digital device and something to perform compressions on, like a cushion. And the best part is - it's completely free to use.

"We are urging all teachers to sign up to our free Classroom RevivR training so that every child leaves school knowing how to save a life."

Education Minister, Paul Givan said: "I am delighted to support the official Northern Ireland launch of Classroom RevivR, developed by the British Heart Foundation. We know that providing CPR and training in how to use a defibrillator can have a clear and measurable impact on survival rates. This is a great addition to the life-

saving skills which have been mandatory elements of the school curriculum at Key Stage 3 since 2022."

Michael Allen, Community Resuscitation Team Manager at Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) said: "In the event of a cardiac arrest, every minute that passes without CPR and defibrillation reduces the chances of survival by 10%. Classroom RevivR can help equip young people with these life-saving skills in school and give their family, friends and wider community the chance to survive a sudden cardiac arrest."

Classroom RevivR has been supported by Royal Mail in partnership with British Heart Foundation. For further information search Classroom RevivR

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More people than ever participating in apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are a great way to earn while you learn and more people than ever are taking advantage of the opportunities available, Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald said recently.

The Minister was speaking as she visited a Disability Action event at Springvale Employment and Learning in Belfast as part of NI Apprenticeship Week.

Supported by the Department for the Economy, NI Apprenticeship Week seeks to raise the profile of apprenticeships and promote participation in apprenticeship provision across all levels and vocations. The event at Springvale was designed to promote the range of apprenticeships available to people with disabilities.

Speaking after her visit, the Minister said: "Apprenticeships are hugely important for our economy, giving opportunities for employers to upskill staff and for their employees to gain qualifications, earning while they learn. Take-up of apprenticeships at our further education colleges and training organisations has increased by almost 50% since 2022/23, thanks in large part to my Department introducing all-age apprenticeships.

"With almost 14,000 people now participating



Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald pictured at Springvale Employment and Learning in Belfast with Springvale hair model Ms Pauline Torney and apprentice hairdresser Grace McVeigh, who is placed at the Hair Lounge in west Belfast.

in apprenticeships, right across the north, it is clear that apprenticeships are more popular than ever. I am especially keen to see more women, people with disabilities and people from areas of disadvantage taking up apprenticeships. My Department's new £600,000 Apprenticeship Inclusion Challenge Fund will help

these groups overcome barriers to getting involved." Colin Downey from Disability Action said: "Having a disability should not be a barrier to people achieving their dreams. Disability Action works in partnership with a number of training providers and further education colleges across Northern Ireland to ensure that those with

a disability have the opportunity to avail of a range of apprenticeship opportunities." This year the theme of NI Apprenticeship Week was 'Getting it Right for You', to highlight that apprenticeship opportunities are varied, flexible and meet the needs of many different people as well as many sectors of our economy.

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-  It costs £2.5 Million annually to sustain and maintain this service. Air Ambulance NI is asking you to support the charity at the Moy Park Belfast City Marathon and fundraise or donate to keep the life-saving service operational while taking on this heart racing challenge!
-  Air Ambulance NI works in partnership with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service which continues to be a lifeline for communities across the province, offering critical Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS).
-  The HEMS team attend patients who are seriously ill or injured on average twice per day, bringing emergency pre-hospital care directly to the scene of an incident with the aim of saving lives, brains, and limbs.

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Air Ambulance calls for new volunteers across Greater Belfast to give an hour

Air Ambulance Northern Ireland is proud to have been re-accredited the prestigious Investing in Volunteers (iV) accreditation, the UK quality standard for involving volunteers.

The charity has a dedicated team of volunteers who help raise funds and awareness for the life-saving service, and is calling for more support in 2025.

Janice Crowe, Volunteer Co-ordinator at Air Ambulance NI charity said, "Our volunteers are the backbone of the charity, and the accreditation honours the contribution made by each of them who have shown such support.

We have a bigger events portfolio for 2025 and need volunteers to help at Moy Park Belfast City Marathon, North West 200, Shanes Castle May Day Steam Rally and many other collections and events. Some of our volunteers give an hour or two each year, some an hour or two a week, so please get in touch if you even have an hour to spare."

April McCartney, volunteer for Air Ambulance NI from Dundonald said, "I help out at fundraising events when I am free and enjoy being part of the volunteer team at Air Ambulance. I've been able to visit the airbase and see the helicopter that serves our community.

It's good to know that by giving my time as a volunteer I am playing my part in helping to save



lives."

The iV accreditation is the UK quality standard for good practise in volunteer management. It acts as a seal of approval for an organisation's ability to provide an outstanding volunteer experience by thoroughly assessing the quality of volunteer management and involvement, acknowledging areas where an organisation is performing well and identifying where there may be room for improvement.

Air Ambulance NI was first awarded the accreditation in 2021 when they had 128 volunteers. That family has now grown to 200 volunteers, people of all ages and backgrounds who lend their support across three volunteer

roles: event support volunteer; collection box co-ordinator and community ambassador. Feedback from volunteers is an essential part of the iV assessment process. In total, 30 volunteers were interviewed as part of Air Ambulance NI's accreditation, as well as 4 members of staff and one trustee.

Air Ambulance NI was assessed against a range of best practice standards and proved to excel in all aspects of working with its volunteers. Denise Hayward, Chief Executive Officer at Volunteer Now, said, "Volunteer Now is delighted to announce Air Ambulance NI's successful achievement of

this Award. They have demonstrated a real commitment to volunteering, and proven that their volunteer management policies and procedures meet nationally recognised standards."

The charity Air Ambulance Northern Ireland, in partnership with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, provides the HEMS for Northern Ireland. The service brings urgent medical assistance to anywhere in the province, operating seven days a week for 12 hours per day. It can get to anywhere in Northern Ireland in approximately twenty-five minutes.

If you would like to volunteer for Air Ambulance NI, please contact Air Ambulance NI by email at info@airambulancenireland.org or call 028 9262 2677

AWARE NI UNVEILS NEW SURVEY ON PEER SUPPORT'S IMPACT

In recognition of Time to Talk Day recently, an annual event highlighting the power of conversations for mental health, AWARE NI, Northern Ireland's leading charity for individuals with low mood, depression, anxiety, and bipolar, is unveiling new survey findings on the impact of peer support.

These findings reveal the effectiveness of the charity's peer-led mental health support groups, including the East Belfast Support Group.

Time to Talk Day encourages people to break the stigma around mental health, but it can still be difficult for many to open up. AWARE NI offers 24 peer-led mental health support groups across Northern Ireland, including in East Belfast, which provide a safe space for people to share experiences, reduce feelings of isolation, and find hope on their journey to better mental health.

Caroline McLoughlin, Support Services Manager at AWARE NI, shares: "One in five adults in Northern Ireland experience mental ill-health. Our peer-led groups, like the one in East Belfast, provide a welcoming and judgment-free environment where people can talk about their mental health challenges and learn positive coping strategies."

To mark Time to Talk Day, AWARE NI has published its second biennial Support Group Attendee Report, showing that 98% of participants felt their mental health



support group helped them manage anxiety, 96% felt supported in managing depression, and 95% felt less isolated after attending.

Testimonial feedback from the survey shared the individual transformative impact with one respondent saying, "Attending the group has really helped me feel more accepted by other people and helped motivate me to try and do better at working toward making my life more like how I want it to be."

"We were delighted to see

our latest report showcased that 97% of attendees would recommend an AWARE NI mental health support group to others," continues Caroline. "AWARE NI's East Belfast Support Group provides a lifeline to people who may feel isolated and overwhelmed by their mental health struggles. Our support groups are free to attend, have no waiting list, and are open to anyone 18 and over. We would encourage anyone feeling alone and struggling with their thoughts and feelings to

come to one of our support groups. It could change your life."

The East Belfast Support Group meets weekly on Monday at 7pm at Strand Studios NI STARS, providing vital support for individuals living with mental ill-health.

For more information on our mental health support groups, or to get involved with our fundraising efforts to help us continue providing vital mental health support to Belfast and beyond, please visit: aware-ni.org

Landmark study reveals widespread impact of childhood trauma in Northern Ireland

"For the first time, the true extent of childhood trauma and its impact on all people in Northern Ireland has been documented and measured for all to see."

This was the message from Justice Minister Naomi Long at the launch of a groundbreaking study that has developed the first comprehensive assessment of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) among Northern Ireland's adult population.

There are few other studies like this in post-conflict settings such as Northern Ireland. The research, commissioned by the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime, and led by a team from Queen's University Belfast, reveals significant levels of trauma that continue to impact all communities and

across generations.

Speaking at the research launch, Justice Minister Naomi Long said: "The findings from this research are both striking and sobering. We now have crucial evidence of how childhood trauma shapes life outcomes in Northern Ireland. The findings show clear correlations between higher exposure to trauma in childhood and many negative outcomes, including poorer educational achievement, chronic health conditions like rheumatoid arthritis and chronic pain, increased exposure to domestic violence, addiction, poor mental health and health-harming

behaviours. These are significant findings, which will impact and inform policy and delivery across the Executive.

"That 60% of our adult population reports at least one traumatic childhood event, with nearly one in five experiencing four or more, represents a major public health challenge. More specifically, the finding that 30% of respondents reported conflict-specific adversities illuminates the unique context of trauma in Northern Ireland. Perhaps most concerning is the evidence that, despite being almost 27 years past the Good Friday Agreement,

our younger generation continues to experience trauma linked to paramilitary activity."

Dr Colm Walsh, an academic from Queen's University Belfast who led the study, commented: "What we see here is the long arm of early adversities, the impact of which extends beyond childhood, affecting a number of key outcomes, ranging from educational attainment, physical and mental health, substance use, and offending. Compared with those who reported four or more, were almost 9 times more likely to be excluded from school as a child, 8 times more likely to have been arrested and 3 times more likely to have used illicit drugs in the previous year as an adult."

The study also highlighted that both ACEs and Troubles-related trauma were disproportionately concentrated in socio-economically disadvantaged communities, creating further challenges for some areas.

The research was initiated following observations of high trauma levels among participants in the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime, highlighting the need for trauma-informed approaches across Northern Ireland.

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BELFAST SCHOOL FINALIST IN GREAT BREAD CHALLENGE

GAELSCOIL NA DARÓIGE PRIMARY SCHOOL in County Derry has been crowned the winner of the inaugural Brennans Dough It Yourself – The Great Bread Challenge, an exciting primary school initiative for Key Stage 2 (KS2) children, encouraging and championing food sustainability.

Tasked with turning leftover bread into delicious dishes and designing unique recipes to make the most of every slice, schools from across Northern Ireland submitted entries to the competition, which was organised by Brennans Bread, one of the province's best known bread brands.

Four schools were selected from more than 100 that took part to compete against each other in a live 'cook-off' final, hosted by sports journalist and radio presenter Denise Watson at W5 in Belfast.

The four finalists, each of whom received £500 for their school and £100 for their teacher, were Euston Street Primary School in Belfast (Banana Bread Cake Pops), St Anthony's Primary School in Larne (Apple Pie Toastie), Gaelscoil na Daróige in Derry (French Toast), and Bunscoil Cholmcille, also from Derry (Pizza Rolls).

Cheered on by their classmates and teachers, five pupils from each

school had 60 minutes to create their recipes in the live final, before Gaelscoil na Daróige were crowned champions and presented with the winner's trophy and a cheque for £1,000 by Ivan Hammond, Head of Marketing with Brennans Bakeries.

An important part of championing food sustainability is learning about food waste so, as well as supporting their classmates during the live final, all pupils enjoyed taking part in the Knead-To-Know Food Waste Quiz with spot prizes, while special guest Chef Brian Timon demonstrated his own sustainable cooking recipes using leftover bread.

Miss Darragh McCullough of Euston Street Primary School in Belfast said:

"The Dough It Yourself challenge was a great way to get our pupils to think creatively about ways to reduce waste and turn leftover bread into delicious recipes!



Our ESPS cookery club couldn't wait to take on the challenge and were able to work together to come up with the unique idea of 'Banana Bread Pops'. It was a great opportunity for the children to lead their own learning to create a recipe and cook it live on stage. The pupils have had a great day at W5, and it was extra special that the rest of the cookery club were able to come to support their school."

The Brennans Dough It Yourself – The Great Bread Challenge was created by Brennans Bread to educate

children about food waste and to encourage creativity and sustainable food choices in a fun and engaging way.

To support participating schools, teachers were provided with curriculum-linked lesson plans and PowerPoint presentations, with lots of fun activities and homework ideas, all designed to raise awareness about food waste.

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 - 5th March, 1pm at Belfast City Hall – Belfast's Remarkable Women
 - 20th March, 7pm – The Hidden History of the Women of Clifton Street Cemetery



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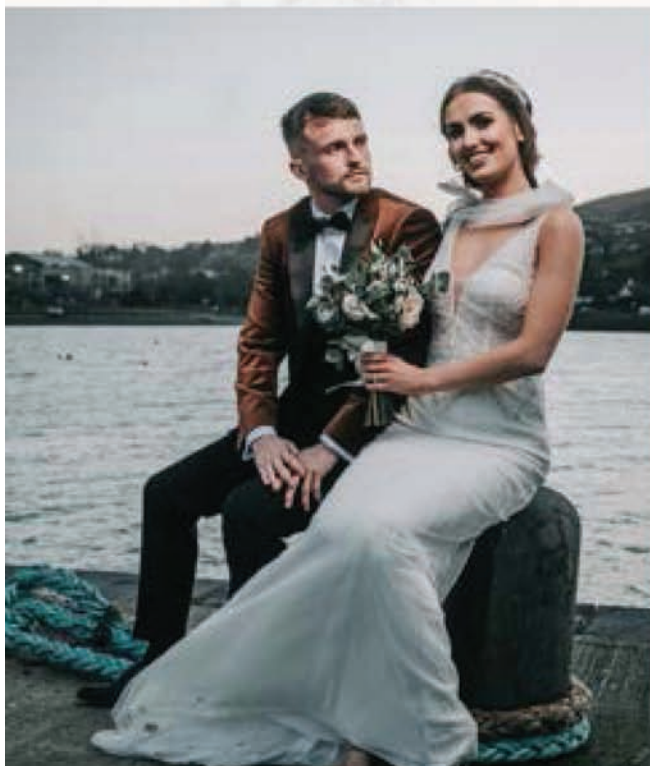
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Specsavers Connswater experts will help you get the right UV protection for your eyes

Specsavers Connswater is helping customers to protect their eyes from harmful UV rays thanks to the range of UV protection lenses available in store.

While we are aware of the importance of protecting our skin from UV rays, it's just as crucial to safeguard our eyes as prolonged exposure to UV radiation can lead to long-term damage.



Paula Cunningham, ophthalmic director at Specsavers says, 'UV protection is not just for sunny days. Even on cloudy or overcast days, UV rays can still cause harm to our eyes. That's why we offer a range of lenses for prescription glasses and sunglasses that can suit our customers' lifestyles.'

Tinted lenses is one option, and not only do they protect eyes against UV damage, but can also help enhance vision.

'Tinted lenses can relieve eye strain and soften harsh lights, which help you see

clearly in bright weather conditions', says Paula.

Reaction lenses offer UV protection whether you're inside or outside, changing to reflect the conditions, meaning you only need one pair of glasses and you're protected in all conditions.

Paula continues, 'Finally, we have our

polarising lenses which offer UV protection if you're affected by glare or driving during the day. These lenses reduce that harsh light glare reflected from flat surfaces, such as water on the road.'

In addition to these UV protection lenses options, Specsavers Connswater offers

a variety of stylish frames and lenses to suit every taste and budget. In store now are new ranges including Specsavers' winter sun frames.

To book an appointment at Specsavers Connswater, visit: <https://www.specsavers.co.uk/stores/belfastconnswater>

Four Seasons Hotel Carlingford Wins 'Hotel Wedding Venue of the Year - Leinster' at WeddingSuppliers.ie Awards

The Four Seasons Hotel Carlingford is proud to announce that it has been awarded 'Hotel Wedding Venue of the Year - Leinster' at the prestigious WeddingSuppliers.ie Awards, held on Tuesday, February 4th. With 28 exceptional venues listed in the category, the hotel is honoured to take home the top prize

Natalie Haake, Sales and Marketing Manager at the Four Seasons Hotel Carlingford, expressed heartfelt gratitude to the past wedding couples and guests who voted for the hotel and provided valuable reviews and testimonials for the judges. She also extended thanks to the dedicated hotel staff and incredible suppliers who work tirelessly to create magical dream weddings for couples.

'We are absolutely delighted with this award and cannot thank everyone enough for their support. This recognition is a testament to the passion and commitment of our team, who go above and beyond to create unforgettable wedding experiences,' said Haake.

The Four Seasons Hotel



From left to right: Cathal Molloy (WeddingSuppliers.ie), Alanna Murphy (FSHC Wedding Coordinator), Linda Scott (FSHC Wedding Manager), Sara Kennedy (The Aisle).

Carlingford continues to be a premier choice for couples seeking a breathtaking wedding venue, combining stunning surroundings

with exceptional service to craft the perfect wedding day.

If you are venue hunting or looking for your dream wedding,

book your appointment today:

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Set in the heart of the County Down countryside with views of the Mourne mountains and the rolling fields, this was once the bakery for the local area. An ideal tranquil location for exploring the Mourne Area of Outstanding Beauty but also with easy access to Belfast. Whether you want to relax and unwind in peace and soak in the 6 person hot tub or explore the numerous local attractions The Bakers Cottages is your perfect base.

Fully refurbished in 2019, many of the original site features have been sympathetically restored, including the Bakers Hole well. Beautiful granite kerbing entices you along the drive leading up to the private accommodation and grounds. An idyllic location where tradition meets modern 5* awarded accommodation. The Bakers Cottages has it's own private wild flower gardens, sweeping towards the restored well. A covered BBQ area means you can grill outside whatever the Northern Irish weather may bring. Across the courtyard brings you to the hot tub house, with it's 6 seater tub. This building also offers a cosy sitting area with a wood burning stove that opens out through double glass sliding doors to an outdoor dining area overlooking the tranquil rolling hills, with the Mourne Mountains in the distant background. The perfect setting to relax and enjoy the sunset. An outdoor play area for the children is located within sight of this outdoor living space, and the dog building is also here, allowing your whole family to enjoy making memories at The Bakers Cottages.



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HANNON Coach & Sail is perfect for a city break in Glasgow!

Direct Belfast – Glasgow Express now departing from the new Belfast Grand Central Station.

An award-winning service offering hassle-free travel, HANNON Coach & Sail is ideal for a city break in Glasgow and the perfect antidote to flying and airport stress! Already hugely popular with those in the know, the Belfast – Glasgow Express Coach Service is rated 5-Star on TripAdvisor.

A shopper's paradise, Glasgow is recognised as having the best retail therapy in the UK outside of London. Consistently voted 'top of the shops', the city is Scotland's premier shopping destination.

Not just shopping, Glasgow is also famous for its fantastic nightlife, and great choice of restaurants and bars. Glasgow is the perfect choice for your next city break away.

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low-cost alternative to flying.

The service is operated by HANNON Coach and leaves twice a day from Belfast, Grand Central Station (Stand 18) and drops visitors right in the heart of Glasgow's 'Style Mile'. The simple flat fare allows passengers to pick and mix dates and times of travel to suit and with no luggage charges it makes a perfect

travel option for a shopping trip. There are also a great range of hotels just minutes from Glasgow Buchanan Bus Station.

Company director Aodh Hannon says people seem to really love the convenience of the service as we take you right into the heart of the city centre.

"People love the fact that it's so hassle-free compared to flying, no airport transfers

and with no extra charge for luggage it is a massive help with keeping the cost of a break down." said Mr Hannon.

The service can be booked online at www.hannoncoach.com up to 1 hour before departure or by phone using the very friendly telephone booking service.

Call 028 9265 0700 (Mon – Fri) or visit www.hannoncoach.com

Exciting Development of Leadhill Primary School

There has been a special buzz of excitement over the past few months in Leadhill Primary School.

Preparations have been underway for the opening of

the new specialist provision unit, offering 8 places to statemented Nursery to P2 children with a primary need of Severe Learning Difficulties. The specialist provision class has been going through a major transformation, with creation of a sensory room, counselling space and brand-new toilet facilities.

The new unit, called 'The Foundation Class', will provide a firm foundation and individualised approach to support learning and development for all its new pupils. The class have already become an important part of life in Leadhill as the children forge friendships with all the other children in the



Leadhill Family.

In Leadhill, this inclusive, nurturing, family approach is central to the ethos of the school. The school motto – 'Learning Together Moving Forwards' reflects the collaborative nature of the school and the desire to always progress and advance.

The new Foundation Class is an exciting part of this journey for Leadhill.

Leadhill aims to support families with provision of affordable and flexible childcare and a pre-school playgroup for children from 2 years and 10 months.

If you would like to

know more about Leadhill, the Pre-school Playgroup and Wrap-Around Care, please visit our website on www.leadhillps.com.

Leadhill would love to welcome you for a visit. Contact the school office on 028 90401101 or email Mrs Millis on amilis370@c2kni.net to arrange for a suitable date and time.

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ADRIAN RYAN
1.30AM

SATURDAY 12TH APRIL 2025



CONOR O'DONNELL
2.30PM - 4.30PM



JOHNNY BRADY
9.15PM - 11.15PM



MICHAEL ENGLISH
11.30PM - 1.30AM



STACEY BREEN
1.30AM

SUNDAY 13TH APRIL 2025



PATRICK FEENEY
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KIERAN MCAREE
9.00PM - 11.00PM

PACKAGE €239PPS

2 NIGHTS B&B INCLUDING ADMISSION TO ALL DANCES STAY SUNDAY NIGHT FOR AN EXTRA €40PPS



Looking for a Primary School?

We would love to welcome you to Leadhill Primary School. We have a range of ways to provide you with the information you need:

Visit our school website.

Arrange to take a tour of the school. Visits can be arranged by appointment throughout the year

Make an appointment to meet with the Principal.

Take part in our Toddle Time group each Wednesday from 9 -11am.

Find out about our Wrap-Around childcare solutions.

Find out about our Pre-School Playgroup for children from 2 years and 10 months.

Speak to the Principal about our SEN provision in our new unit for children with Severe Learning Difficulties.

'Children are offered a range of opportunities to shine, which highlights all children's gifts. Leadhill is a great family school.'
(Parent comment)

Limited spaces available P1-7 and Pre-School Playgroup
Now taking enrolments for Playgroup for September 2025

Visit our school website for further information.

Casaldona Park, Belfast, BT6 9RD Tel: 028 90401101 www.leadhillps.com






FINDING YOUR SPRING ESCAPE: WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A RELAXING RURAL HOTEL BREAK!

The winter months can often feel long and dreary.

But with the right escape, at just the right time, you can transform the season with a cosy and rejuvenating

experience. A relaxing hotel break can be the perfect antidote to the winter blues, offering a chance to unwind,

recharge, and enjoy some much-needed pampering. When choosing your spring escape, consider

the ambiance. A crackling fireplace is the epitome of winter cosiness. Look for hotels with inviting fireplaces in guest rooms, lobbies, or communal areas. Opt for hotels with warm and inviting interiors, featuring rich colours, plush textiles, and comfortable furnishings. While winter days may be short, ensure your chosen hotel maximizes natural light. Large windows and skylights can make a big difference.

Indulge in the hotel's wellness facilities. Enjoy luxurious spa treatments like massages, facials, and body wraps. Escape the cold with a relaxing swim in an indoor pool, perhaps with a jacuzzi or sauna for added relaxation. Maintain your

fitness routine with a well-equipped gym or take advantage of fitness classes like yoga or Pilates.

Savour delicious meals at the hotel's restaurant, perhaps enjoying a romantic dinner by candlelight. Look for cosy dining areas with warm lighting and inviting atmospheres. Treat yourself to a traditional afternoon tea, complete with delicate sandwiches, pastries, and a pot of steaming hot tea.

If you're looking for more than just relaxation, choose a hotel near sports destinations that appeal, in Northern Ireland we are fortunate enough to have a wealth of opportunities for activities such as mountain or hill hiking, horse-riding, cycling, surfing, boating, shopping and simply



walking. Explore the surrounding area with a scenic winter walk, enjoying the crisp air and picturesque landscapes. Alternatively, enjoy a cosy night in with a good book, a glass of wine, and a roaring fire.

personalized service, going the extra mile to ensure your stay is truly unforgettable. Many hotels offer special winter packages, including discounts, complimentary upgrades, and festive treats. If you're planning a romantic getaway, look

for hotels with intimate settings, such as boutique hotels or charming country inns.

By considering these factors, you can find the perfect hotel break to escape the winter blues and create lasting memories.

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What's on this Spring at Clifton House, Belfast

Spring at Clifton House isn't just about 'out with the old, in with the new.'

With over 270 years of rich history within the walls of this stunning Grade A listed building, we've got centuries of old stories, old artefacts and old archives just waiting to be shared.

From Friday 28th February our history tours commence, and will run every weekend with alternating themes. This includes house tours, cemetery tours and Mary Ann McCracken walk tours. Our 'Experience the Poor House' tour is getting

a spring clean, and will include many more of the stories of real people who once lived or worked in the house, bringing more of our history to life.

We also have a number of new tours, including 'Belfast's Heroines: Mary Ann McCracken and Martha McTier' walking tour; 'The Hidden Women of Clifton Street Cemetery' tour, and the 'Medical History of Belfast Charitable Society' tour. In April we will also host a

special house tour for the deaf community, with BSL Interpreters.

Clifton House also hosts a series of history talks throughout the year in order to share our past. This gives visitors an opportunity to see inside Belfast's most historic room, the Board Room of the former Poor House of Belfast. For the first time, you can also join us at Belfast City Hall for a special International Women's Day talk on 'Belfast's Remark-



able Women' on 5th March. For full listings and to book tickets, visit www.cliftonbelfast.com

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Escape to the Woods: A Relaxing Retreat at the Westport Woods Hotel

Looking for the perfect escape? Whether it's a family vacation, a friends' retreat, a romantic weekend, or a peaceful getaway, the 4-star Westport Woods Hotel & Spa is your ideal destination.

Nestled in a 300-year-old woodland, just minutes from vibrant Westport, our hotel offers the perfect blend of tranquility and luxury.

A Haven of Comfort and Relaxation

The hotel boasts a range of comfortable and well-appointed rooms, each designed with your relaxation in mind. Whether you're seeking a romantic getaway

or a family adventure, you'll find the perfect accommodation to suit your needs.

Indulge in Delicious Dining

The Westport Woods Hotel offers a variety of dining options to tantalize your taste buds. From hearty breakfasts to delectable dinners, the hotel's restaurants serve up a range of culinary delights, using locally

sourced ingredients whenever possible.

Unwind and Rejuvenate

After a day of exploring the surrounding area, take some time to unwind and rejuvenate at the hotel's leisure centre. Take a dip in the indoor pool, work up a sweat in the gym, or treat yourself to a pampering spa treatment.

Explore the Wild Atlantic Way

The Westport Woods Hotel is ideally located for exploring the many attractions of the Wild Atlantic Way. Take a scenic drive along the coast, hike to the summit of Croagh Patrick, or visit the historic Westport House.

Perfect for Families

Families will find plenty to keep them entertained at the Westport Woods Hotel. The hotel features a kids' club, a swimming pool playground, and a range of activities to ensure that children of all ages have a memorable stay.

Your Perfect Wedding Venue

If you're planning a wedding, the Westport Woods Hotel provides a stunning backdrop for your special day. The hotel's picturesque grounds and elegant function rooms can accommodate weddings of all sizes.

Westport Woods Hotel Quay Road, Westport, Co. Mayo, Ireland +353 98 25811 www.westportwoodshotel.com

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For those who thrive in a group setting, we offer over 70 dynamic classes per week, including the globally renowned Les Mills programs. From heart-pounding HIIT sessions to

mind-soothing yoga, our expert instructors will keep you motivated every step of the way.

After pushing your limits, unwind in our 20-meter heated swimming pool, then relax in the sauna and steam room, melting away tension and leaving you feeling refreshed. To take your wellness journey even further, indulge in a blissful escape at BodySpa, our luxury on-site spa, where we offer exquisite TEMPLESPA treatments to nourish your



body and mind. At Bodyscape Health Club, it's not just about fitness—it's about community.

With free parking and

an inviting, supportive atmosphere, we are more than a gym; we are your wellness sanctuary.

Ready to get your mojo back? Join us today and discover a new level of health, fitness, and relaxation.

Visit us at www.bodyscapebelfast.com

Blooming Beauties: A Guide to Traditional Spring Flowers and Their Meaning

Spring is a time of renewal, rebirth, and vibrant colours bursting forth from the earth.

Flowers, with their delicate beauty and sweet fragrances, are the perfect messengers of this joyous season. Each bloom carries a unique meaning, adding a layer of symbolism to their charm. Let's delve into the world of traditional spring flowers and uncover the secrets they hold.

Tulips, those elegant, cup-shaped flowers, are synonymous with spring. They symbolise perfect love, with different colours carrying nuanced meanings. Red tulips declare a deep, passionate love, while yellow tulips represent cheerful thoughts. Daffodils, with their sunny yellow trumpets,

are the heralds of spring. They symbolise new beginnings, rebirth, and hope. Giving daffodils to someone signifies that you see them as a source of joy and inspiration. Hyacinths, these fragrant, bell-shaped flowers, come in a variety of colours, each with its own meaning. Pink hyacinths represent playful joy, while blue hyacinths symbolise sincerity. White hyacinths convey purity and innocence.

Lilacs, those fragrant shrubs, boast clusters of tiny, delicate flowers in shades of purple, pink, and white. Lilacs symbolise first love, innocence, and purity. Their sweet scent evokes

a sense of nostalgia and romance.

Lily of the Valley, those dainty, bell-shaped flowers, are known for their sweet, delicate fragrance. They symbolise humility, sweetness, and a return to happiness. Lily of the Valley is often associated with weddings and new beginnings. Violets, these small, unassuming flowers, come in a variety of colours, most commonly purple and blue. Violets symbolise modesty, faithfulness, and humility. They are often associated with secret love and remembrance.

Flowers have been used to convey messages for centuries, with

each bloom carrying a specific meaning. This "language of flowers," known as floriography, was particularly popular during the Victorian era. Understanding the symbolism of flowers can add a deeper layer of meaning to your bouquets and gifts.

Whether you're creating a vibrant bouquet, planting a spring garden, or simply enjoying the beauty of nature, flowers are an essential part of the spring experience. Their colours, fragrances, and symbolic meanings evoke feelings of joy, hope, and renewal. So, embrace the season and celebrate the beauty of spring with these traditional blooms.



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We are in our early 70's, and until a few years ago I was playing golf regularly and still had my car. Then health problems came along, and I had to stop driving. We thought about downsizing and with all the hassle of moving we didn't want to do it all then have to do it again in a few years. Abbeyfield Belfast's newest facility, Harberton Hall seemed like the perfect solution, somewhere beautiful where we could live independently for many years.

I admit I was apprehensive. I suppose I just didn't like the idea of getting older and at first, I thought Harberton was a care home but as Kathy says it's no such thing, it's more like a 5-star Aparthotel and cheaper than a hotel too.

We were made to feel welcome right away by the other residents. The food is great, I enjoy the fresh fish which is on the menu



3 times a week, and the chef knows that I like small portions.

I take part in some of the activities and take a walk round the block every night and enjoy a chat with the night concierge when I come back in.

It pleases me to see Kathy looking so happy. She

doesn't need to worry any more about doing grocery shopping and preparing food. In fact, she says that moving to Harberton Hall was the best decision we've ever made.

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Bringing the Countryside Indoors: Achieving Country Living Chic

Country Living Chic is more than just a decorating style; it's a feeling. It evokes a sense of warmth, comfort, and a connection to nature, even if you live miles from the nearest farm.

To infuse your home with this timeless aesthetic, embrace natural materials. Incorporate wood, such as rustic beams, reclaimed wood furniture, and woven baskets. Add stone accents like a fireplace surround, flooring, or a stone-topped table. Opt for natural fabrics like cotton, linen, and wool. Use them for cosy throws, textured rugs, and embroidered curtains.

Bring the outdoors in by filling your home with plants, from leafy ferns to flowering blooms. Consider a small herb garden on your windowsill. Incorporate natural elements like branches, dried flowers, and seashells into your decor. Maximize natural light by keeping windows uncovered and framing beautiful views with curtains or blinds.

Create a cosy atmosphere with a fireplace, if you have



one. If not, consider a wood-burning stove or even an electric fireplace. Layer lighting with table lamps, floor lamps, and soft-glowing candles to create a warm and inviting ambiance. Mix and match textures to add depth and interest. Think of sheepskin rugs, chunky knit throws, and velvet cushions.

Incorporate vintage

and antique finds. Hunt for unique pieces at flea markets, antique shops, and estate sales. Add character with vintage china, antique mirrors, and old maps. Incorporate treasured family heirlooms to add a personal touch.

Keep it simple and uncluttered. Avoid overcrowding your space. Keep surfaces

clean and uncluttered for a relaxed and airy feel. Invest in high-quality pieces that will last for years to come. Embrace imperfections. A few scuffs and scratches can add character to your furniture.

Add personal touches. Display cherished family photos throughout your home. Incorporate souvenirs from your travels to remind you of special memories. Create a cosy reading nook with a comfortable armchair and a collection of your favourite books.

Country Living Chic is all about creating a home that feels both welcoming and stylish. By incorporating these tips, you can transform your space into a haven that reflects your love of nature and all things cosy!

FUN PLACES TO VISIT THIS SPRING

County Down is a beautiful region in Northern Ireland that offers a wide range of activities for families.

From exploring historic castles to hiking in the Mourne Mountains, there is something for everyone to enjoy. Here are a few ideas for fun family activities to do in County Down:

Mourne Mountains: The Mourne Mountains are a stunning mountain range that offers a variety of hiking trails for all levels of experience. Families can enjoy a leisurely stroll along the lower slopes or challenge themselves with a more strenuous hike to the summit of Slieve Donard, the highest peak in Northern Ireland.

Castlewellan Forest Park: This beautiful park offers a variety of activities for families, including walking and cycling trails, a lake for boating, and a play park for children. The park also has a visitor centre where you can learn about the local flora and fauna.

Tollymore Forest Park: Another great option for families is Tollymore Forest Park, which is known for its beautiful scenery and its



role as a filming location for the popular TV series "Game of Thrones". The park offers a variety of walking trails, a river walk, and a picnic area.

Strangford Lough: This large sea lough is a great place for families to enjoy a variety of water activities, such as kayaking, canoeing, and paddle-boarding. Families can also take a boat tour of the lough to see the seals and other wildlife that live there.

Exploris Aquarium: This popular aquarium is home to a variety of marine life, including sharks, rays, and seals. Families can learn about the different species that live in the Irish Sea and participate in interactive exhibits.

Down County Museum: This museum tells the story of County Down from prehistoric times to the present day. Families can learn about the history of the region and see artifacts from different periods.

Saint Patrick Centre: This centre tells the story of Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. Families can learn about his life and his impact on Irish culture.

No matter what your family enjoys, you are sure to find plenty of fun activities to do in County Down. With its beautiful scenery, rich history, and variety of attractions, County Down is the perfect place to create lasting memories with your loved ones.

A Guide to Wood Flooring Options

Wood flooring remains a popular choice for UK homeowners, adding warmth, character, and natural beauty to any space.

While the variety of options can seem overwhelming, this guide will help you navigate the key considerations.

Types of Wood Flooring

- **Solid Wood:** Crafted from a single piece of timber, solid wood is durable and refinishable, making it a long-term investment. However, it's sensitive to moisture and temperature changes.
- **Engineered Wood:** Composed of multiple layers, engineered wood is more dimensionally stable than solid wood, making it suitable for areas with varying conditions. It's also generally more affordable.
- **Reclaimed Wood:** Offering a unique character and rustic charm, reclaimed wood is an eco-friendly option sourced



from old structures. Wood Species Popular options include:

- **Oak:** Durable, strong, and available in various colours, from light to dark.
- **Ash:** Light and airy, with smooth grain and subtle colour variations, ideal for contemporary interiors.
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THE ENDURING APPEAL OF ANTIQUE AND VINTAGE FURNITURE

In a world of mass-produced, disposable goods, antique and vintage furniture offer a refreshing alternative.

These pieces, with their rich history and unique character, bring a sense of warmth, authenticity, and sustainability to any home. But their appeal goes beyond mere aesthetics. Let's delve into the numerous benefits of incorporating these timeless treasures into your living space.

Unlike much of today's mass-produced furniture, antique and vintage pieces were often handcrafted with meticulous attention to detail.

They were built to last, using high-quality materials and time-honoured techniques. This translates to exceptional durability and longevity, ensuring your investment will stand the test of time.

In a world where everyone seems to have

the same furniture from big-box stores, antique and vintage pieces offer a chance to express your individuality. Each piece has its own story and history, making it a unique addition to your home. You're unlikely to find the exact same piece anywhere else, adding a touch of exclusivity to your décor.

Choosing antique and vintage furniture is a sustainable choice that benefits the environment. By repurposing existing pieces, you're reducing the demand for new production, which in turn conserves resources and reduces waste. It's a conscious way to furnish your home while minimizing your environmental footprint.

Antique and vintage furniture encompasses a wide range of styles,



from classic to mid-century modern, ensuring there's something to suit every taste. These pieces have a timeless quality that transcends

fleeting trends, adding a touch of elegance and sophistication to any space. They can be seamlessly integrated into various décor styles, from traditional to

contemporary, creating a unique and eclectic look. Antique and vintage furniture carries with it a sense of history and heritage. Each piece has a story to tell,

connecting you to the past and adding depth and character to your home. Owning a piece of history can be a truly enriching experience, sparking conversations and adding a unique dimension to your living space.

While not the primary reason to buy antique and vintage furniture, some pieces can appreciate in value

over time. As they become rarer and more sought-after, their value can increase, making them a potentially sound investment. However, it's essential to do your research and consult with experts before making any investment decisions.

Contrary to popular belief, antique and vintage furniture can

be quite affordable, especially if you're willing to hunt for it. Flea markets, antique shops, and online marketplaces offer a treasure trove of unique finds at reasonable prices. With a little patience and perseverance, you can furnish your home with beautiful, high-quality pieces without breaking the bank.

Get your Stunning New Greenhouse at Woodstoc

Calling all green thumbs! Woodstoc, Bangor's premier outdoor living destination, is thrilled to announce the arrival of their absolutely stunning new range of greenhouses.

Developed and meticulously improved over the last 60 years, Juliana Danish greenhouses represent the pinnacle of quality greenhouse construction.

These exceptional greenhouses boast a sleek design and an impressive 12-year warranty, giving you complete peace of mind. Imagine nurturing your seedlings in a light-filled haven, cultivating exotic fruits and vegetables, or simply creating a tranquil haven for your favourite plants. With Juliana greenhouses, the possibilities are endless.

But Woodstoc isn't just about greenhouses! They offer a comprehensive range of products and services to transform your outdoor space into a haven you'll

love. Here's just a taste of what awaits you:

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products/buildings-sheds-greenhouses-logstores Visit the Woodstoc showroom at 2A Balloo Park, Bangor, County Down, Northern Ireland, BT19 7PP. Give them a call at 028 9147 7133 to speak with a friendly and knowledgeable member of staff. With Woodstoc, your dream outdoor space is just a step away!

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SALE OF MARGEY ORIGINALS AT TITANIC HOTEL BELFAST

Artist Adrian Margey will be returning to Titanic Hotel Belfast with his latest exhibition and sale of work from Friday 28th February – Sunday 2nd March.

Margey shot to notoriety as a result of his bold and colourful contemporary depictions of Irish landscape and landmarks. He is now also winning a great deal of praise for his more subtle, impressionistic works that embrace a naturalistic palette. Visitors should therefore expect an eclectic exhibition filled with vibrant landscapes, dramatic cityscapes and dreamy beach scenes. From large-scale canvases to smaller pieces, collectors and art lovers will enjoy depictions of Belfast City, Donegal, the

North Coast, Glens of Antrim and the Mourne alongside representations of traditional Irish musicians and dancers. Margey exhibits regularly across Northern Ireland and was selected by Tourism Ireland to live paint at Ireland Week in Milan in the spring. He also exhibited at Art Source in Dublin's RDS this autumn. The light filled setting of Drawing Office One at the Titanic Hotel will make for a spectacular backdrop to this stunning new body of work. With original



pieces and limited edition prints going on show, there will be artwork to suit a range of budgets. Admission is free and everyone is

welcome. Opening times as follows: Friday 28th February: 6pm – 9pm | Saturday 1st March: 11am – 9pm & Sunday 2nd March:

11am – 6pm. For more information telephone Margey's Portrush studio on 07841593762 or visit www.adrianmargey.com.

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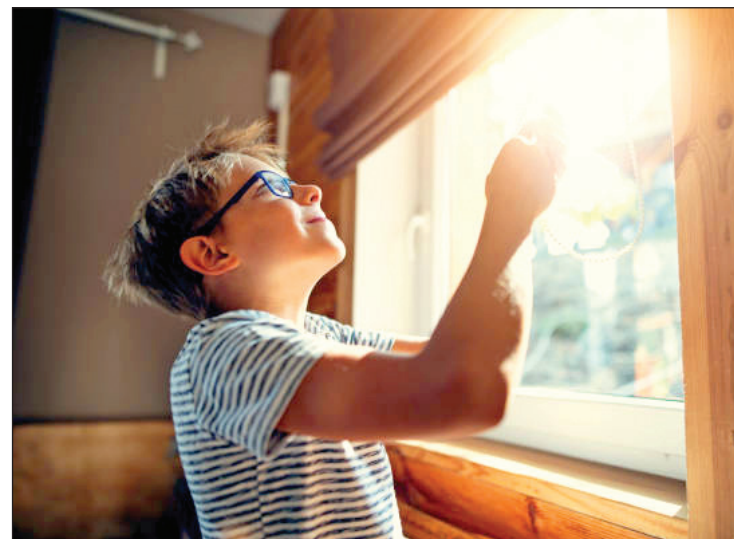
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Choosing the Right Window Blinds: Essential Questions to Ask Your Supplier & Installer

Investing in new window blinds is a significant decision that impacts both the aesthetics and functionality of your home.

To ensure you make an informed choice and have a smooth installation experience, it's crucial to ask the right questions to your supplier and installer. Before you even start browsing, it's helpful to determine your budget and prioritise your needs. Consider factors like light control, privacy, insulation, child safety, and style. Accurate window measurements are also essential. When interacting with the supplier, inquire about the types of blinds they offer, such as Venetian, roller, Roman, vertical,

pleated, wooden, or bamboo. Ask about the available materials and finishes, including wood, fabric, aluminum, and PVC. Inquire about child safety options like cordless mechanisms, clutch mechanisms, and wand controls. It's crucial to understand the warranty on the blinds and request samples of fabrics and finishes. Ask if they offer a free consultation or in-home measurement service and inquire about the typical lead time for orders. When discussing installation with the



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installer, ask about their experience with the specific types of blinds you're interested in. Inquire about their guarantee on installation work, the typical timeframe for installation, and whether they remove and dispose of old blinds. Ask if they offer any after-sales support or maintenance advice and inquire about their preferred method of payment. Don't forget to ask about motorization options if you're considering motorized blinds. Inquire about compatibility, costs, and remote control options. Determine if the blinds can be

customized to fit unusual window shapes or sizes. If you have pets, allergies, or specific needs (e.g., blackout blinds for bedrooms), be sure to discuss these considerations with the supplier. Finance options may be available if you are ordering multiple blinds or window treatments. By asking these questions, you can make an informed decision, ensure a smooth installation, and get the most value for your money. Remember to compare quotes from multiple suppliers and installers to find the best deal.

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PREPARE YOUR OUTDOOR SPACE FOR SPRING

The cold weather may have you dreaming of warmer days ahead, and now is the perfect time to start planning for the spring season.

The warmer months are just around the corner, and it's a great opportunity to tackle home improvement projects that will refresh your space, boost functionality.

Revitalise Your Lawn and Garden

Spring is the ideal time to give your lawn the attention it deserves. After months of cold weather, your lawn and garden will need a little TLC to ensure they're vibrant and healthy when the warmer weather arrives.

Once your lawn and garden are refreshed, it's time to turn your attention to your outdoor living spaces.

Patio furniture is essential for making your outdoor space both functional and inviting. Whether you're hosting a BBQ with friends or relaxing with a good book, the right patio setup

can create a cosy, stylish retreat.

• Patio Sets:

• Outdoor Pillows: Add a pop of colour and comfort to your outdoor space with vibrant throws and pillows.

• Outdoor Heating: While the days may be getting warmer, here in Northern Ireland it can still be a bit chilly. Keep your outdoor space comfortable with outdoor heaters or firepits.

Create the Perfect Outdoor Entertaining Space

Spring is the perfect time to start thinking about outdoor gatherings with friends and family. Whether it's a BBQ, hosting a small party, or enjoying a quiet evening by the outdoor fire, creating a cosy and functional space will elevate your outdoor entertaining.

Products for Outdoor Fun:



• BBQs: There is such a choice now from gas, charcoal, electric and smokers, perfect for grilling up delicious meals on your Patio.

• Fire Pits: As evenings cool off, a fire pit is a must-have to keep you and your guests warm while enjoying the outdoors.

• Outdoor Lighting: Make sure your outdoor space is inviting, even after the sun sets, with stylish outdoor lighting.

• Relax and Recharge with a Hot Tub After a long winter, there is nothing better than unwinding in a hot tub on a cool spring evening. Hot

tubs will transform your backyard into a personal oasis of relaxation. Don't forget the essentials, like covers, steps, and maintenance kits.

Don't wait for the season to catch you off guard—get your home prepped for a fun, relaxing, and beautiful season!

Double Glazing: A Modern Necessity for Home Efficiency and Comfort

The demand for energy-efficient solutions in our homes has never been greater.

Double glazing, a popular choice among homeowners, offers a myriad of benefits, from enhanced thermal insulation to noise reduction. As we delve into the advantages and maintenance of double glazing, it becomes evident why this innovation has become a modern necessity.

Double glazing comprises two layers of glass separated by a spacer, typically filled with an inert gas like argon. This design significantly reduces heat transfer, ensuring homes remain warm in winter and cool in summer. The thermal insulation provided by double glazing can lead to substantial energy savings. Homeowners can expect a noticeable reduction in their heating bills, contributing to a more sustainable and eco-friendly lifestyle.

Beyond energy efficiency, double glazing excels in noise reduction. Urban dwellers and those living near busy roads will appreciate the tranquility it brings. The additional layer of glass acts as a sound barrier, minimizing external noise and creating a peaceful indoor



environment. This feature is particularly beneficial for those working from home or seeking a serene living space.

The security aspect of double glazing cannot be overlooked. The robust construction of double-glazed windows makes them more challenging to break compared to single-pane windows. This added security layer provides homeowners with peace of mind, knowing their property is better protected against potential intruders.

Maintaining double glazing is relatively straightforward, ensuring its longevity and continued performance. Regular cleaning of the glass surfaces with a non-abrasive cleaner helps maintain clarity and

appearance. Checking the seals around the windows periodically is crucial. Any signs of wear or damage should be addressed promptly to prevent drafts and maintain thermal efficiency. Additionally, ensuring that the drainage holes are clear of debris will prevent water buildup and potential damage.

Double glazing offers a host of benefits that make it a worthwhile investment for homeowners. From energy savings and noise reduction to enhanced security and ease of maintenance, its advantages are clear. As more people recognize the value of double glazing, it continues to be a top choice for those seeking efficiency and comfort in their homes.

Create a Cottage Garden

The cottage garden, with its informal and romantic character, evokes a sense of peace and tranquility.



It's a style that embraces the natural world, celebrating a riot of colours, textures, and scents.

To design your own enchanting cottage garden, embrace the natural by avoiding perfectly manicured lawns and straight lines. Opt for curving paths, irregular borders, and flowing planting areas. Let your borders blend into the surrounding landscape, allowing plantings to spill over paths and create a sense of informality. Utilise natural materials like stone, brick, and wood for paths, edging, and garden features.

Fill your garden with a profusion of flowers in a variety of colours and

heights. Think cottage classics like roses, peonies, delphiniums, and poppies. Include annuals like nasturtiums, petunias, and sunflowers to add bursts of vibrant colour throughout the season. Intersperse herbs and vegetables amongst the flowers for a truly productive and picturesque garden.

Create a sense of depth by planting a mix of tall, medium, and low-growing plants to create layers and visual interest. Utilize climbing roses, clematis, and honeysuckle to adorn fences, walls, and arches. Plant low-growing groundcovers like ivy or sweet woodruff beneath taller plants to add texture and suppress weeds. Incorporate unique

features such as a small pond, a bubbling fountain, or even a simple birdbath to add a touch of magic to your cottage garden. Create shady seating areas and support climbing plants with charming arches and pergolas. Add rustic touches with antique garden tools, birdhouses, and decorative pots.

Finally, embrace imperfection. Allow some weeds to flourish, and let nature take its course. Regularly deadhead spent blooms to encourage continuous flowering and prevent self-seeding. Most importantly, enjoy the process. The cottage garden is all about enjoying the journey. Relax, observe

your plants, and let your garden evolve over time.

By following these tips, you can create a charming cottage garden that is both beautiful and inviting. Remember to let your personality shine through and enjoy the process of creating your own unique piece of horticultural heaven.

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FRONT FACING: THE PERFECT ENTRANCE

Front porches don't only look great, they're also a fantastic way to gain extra storage and increase your home's energy efficiency!

These entrances frame our doors and offer clues about the kind of people we are, so it's important that they look just right. If you play your cards right, you can ensure your front porch comes with other benefits too – from reduced energy bills to much-needed extra storage.

Front porches in the UK are typically small in comparison to the home. Open porches, built without solid fronts or sides usually feature a triangular or lean-to roof, pillars, open beams and balustrades. They're very practical as they shield your front door from the elements. Plus, they're full of character – a classic example of a UK front porch is the timber frame, which puts beautiful timber beams on

display.

A covered or enclosed porch, incorporates walls, front doors and sometimes even windows. Similar in structure to open porches, they're used as initial indoor entrances and offer an extra storage solution. They're also a place people can take off their shoes before coming into the main house.

An overhang porch features a porch roof without any of the surrounding structure that you'd find on open or enclosed porches. The overhang is the part of the roof that juts out over the edge of a house – so, an overhang porch occurs where the front door is nestled beneath its own section of roof. Although overhang porches don't provide

the same protection as enclosed porches, the overhang does help to shield your entrance from the elements, as well as serving to provide shade during sunny periods.

Unless you live in a detached house in the countryside (in which case, lucky you!), you don't see many wraparound porches in the UK. These elaborate designs are true to their namesake and wrap around a large portion of your house, if not all of it. Also known as verandas or colonnades, these striking and versatile porches often double up as a seating area that overlooks the front of the house. They can also be used for decorative effect, a safety feature, or structural support.

Cladding options to



keep in mind for your front porch include render, stone, timber, flint and metal – just be sure to consider maintenance when picking the right one for you. The Georgians certainly

knew how to design a porch! We can learn a lot from their soft lines and symmetrical designs that would be perfect for any city or townhouse. We recommend matching your front porch to your

house and the area you live in, for obvious reasons. However, there's no harm in bearing in mind the latest trends – contemporary front porches are all about modern living, space-

saving solutions, and attractive features.

Looking for a low-cost way to give your front porch a spruce, as opposed to a complete design overhaul? Then the chances are you're looking for some decorating inspo.

Here are some fabulous porch decorating ideas to get you started.

Neutral colours for porches. A neutral and soothing scheme will contrast nicely with the rich colours of the surrounding natural landscape.

Seasonal porch decorating ideas. Picking out seasonal decorations is a fantastic way to make sure that your front porch looks the part throughout the year. Autumn hanging

lanterns, Pumpkins, seasonal flowers, from xmas lighting to elegant terracotta pots – remember that this space is much more 'on show' than the inner sanctum of the house, so you can use it to set the tone for your décor. It's also ideally placed as a sheltered light-filled home for plants and vegetation and as a serene seating space for you to relax and watch the world go by!

While our porches are the welcome centres of our homes, the front door is the threshold and acts as the main focal point. Reserving all the colour for the front door can really make it pop!

For more information see <https://www.checkatrade.com/blog/ideas/front-porch-ideas/>



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For homeowners, MC Upholstery understands that furniture is more than just functional; it holds sentimental value and contributes to the overall character of a home. Whether it's a beloved armchair showing its age or a sofa suite needing a modern update, MC Upholstery can recover complete cloth suites or execute all types of repairs! Businesses also benefit significantly from MC Upholstery's services. They understand the wear and tear that commercial furniture endures and offer solutions that are both aesthetically pleasing and built to last!

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ROAD SAFETY CAMPAIGN NETS GIANT WINTER SIGN-UP

The Stena Line Belfast Giants have backed a road safety community engagement campaign to reduce road deaths.

The Giants are the latest high profile sporting organisation to sign up to the Share the Road to Zero campaign, led by their Captain Mark Cooper.

Ulster Rugby, the Irish Football Association, the Northern Ireland Football League and Ulster GAA also backed the campaign this year.

Sadly, so far in 2024, 60 people have died due to road traffic collisions.

Mark Cooper has now registered more than 180 appearances for the Giants since arriving in Belfast from Canada for the 2021/22 season.

He was appointed captain ahead of the 2023/24 season, during which he led the

club to its successful Champions Hockey League campaign and the Elite League Playoff Final.

Speaking ahead of their game against Coventry Blaze on Wednesday evening, Mark said: "The SSE Arena sits between six and 8,000 people so we will have a bunch of families and people driving to the game.

"Leaving extra early and making sure you give yourself enough time is ideal to keep you and your family safe.

"Without question, road safety is of the utmost importance for everyone, so I'm pleased that we can lend our support to such a vital cause and the Belfast Giants are proud to be supporting



Infrastructure Minister John O'Dowd welcomes The Belfast Giants signing up to the Department's Share the Road to Zero campaign at the SSE Arena as the winter gets under way. Included with the Minister (from left) are Robert Fitzpatrick, Chief Executive Officer, The Odyssey Trust; Mark Cooper, Captain, Belfast Giants; Paul McMahon, Chief Operating Officer, The Odyssey Trust; and Steve Thornton, Group Head of Hockey and Commercial, The Odyssey Trust.

the all-important Share the Road to Zero initiative."

Minister John O'Dowd said: "We are delighted to have The

Belfast Giants sign up to our Share the Road to Zero Campaign and to encourage their fans who travel to games to take care and

responsibility on the roads.

"The winter is on top of us and the roads can be treacherous with snow, frost and heavy

rainfall and every action you take as a road user ensures you arrive home safely and your loved ones arrive home safely.

"One of the best ways to ensure safety on our roads and fulfil our long-term goal of eliminating death and serious injury by 2050, is by changing road user behaviour.

"We all have a personal responsibility to behave in a way that keeps ourselves and others safe and my Department's Share the Road to Zero campaign reminds us of that. The sad reality is that if we do not change our own attitudes when we are using the roads, our death toll will continue to increase.

"We can all potentially save a life if we RoadWise Up. Pay attention, slow down, wear your seat belt, don't use your mobile phone while driving and never, ever

drink or take drugs and drive."

Steve Thornton, Group Head of Commercial and Hockey at The Odyssey Trust, commented: "Undoubtedly, it's incredibly sad to hear that the number of people who have lost their lives on Northern Ireland's roads has risen.

"By signing up to the Share the Road to Zero campaign, we hope that the Belfast Giants can play a role in reminding people to be responsible on the roads at all times."

Pledging to 'Share the Road to Zero' can be done online via www.sharetheroadtozero.com as an individual or as an organisation.

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Garolla stands out not just for craftsmanship



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LEAKING ROOF – WHAT TO DO AND HOW TO FIX IT

Think you may have a leaking roof? You're probably worried about the damage it could be doing.

A leaking roof can be caused by age and general wear and tear, as tiles come loose, or roofing felt gets damaged. Sometimes the worst happens, and your roof can leak due to damage from bad weather such as storm damage or a falling tree.

First steps: If you find yourself facing a leaking roof, what are the important things to action first? Move anything you can out of the way of the leak. A leaking roof is bad enough, so move any possessions or furniture out of the way of the leak.

Contain the water. If you can, try to collect the water in buckets to reduce the damage to the surrounding area of your home.

Take photos in case you need them for an insurance claim.

If your roof has been damaged severely and it makes your home uninhabitable, or the structure is exposed to the elements, this is classed as an emergency situation. You should contact a roofing expert immediately.

If you spot a leak in your roof, the best course of action is always to call a professional roofer.

They'll be able to identify the cause of the leak, carry out the necessary repairs, and ensure that the leak doesn't reappear in the future (which could lead to bigger and more expensive damage further down the line).

The first step in resolving a leaking roof is knowing how to find the source of the roof leak. The main things to look out for are whether you can see signs of a leak internally. Roof leak detection is like being a detective – check your ceilings and walls for signs of water or watermarks and stains,



as well as checking for damp patches on the floor. Look at the loft space whether or not you find any clues in the rooms of your home, if you're trying to detect a roof leak it's also important to get up in your loft or roof space. Signs of a leaking roof include damp timbers and a strong, musty smell. Mark and measure any damage. Don't forget to take a torch with you and a pencil or

piece of chalk. If you do detect the signs of a leaking roof, circle the area and take measurements from key marker points such as chimney stacks or vents so you can pinpoint the leak from the outside. A good time for detecting a roof leak is after some consistent rainfall, as it will be easier to see the signs of whether your roof leaks in heavy rain.

On a rainy day or

after heavy rainfall you may see water coming in or dripping, which will help you to pinpoint the leak.

Other ways to detect a roof leak are to conduct a water test with a hosepipe. This is best done after a dry weather spell. By directing water onto your roof with a hosepipe and then checking inside your roof space, you should be able to locate any roof leaks.

Also, head outside to see if tiles are missing from the outside (top of your roof tiles), if the roof surface is torn or damaged, or covered in moss. Do not attempt to climb onto your roof to inspect it. This should only be done by a professional with the right safety equipment.

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PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR SALE: A SELLER'S GUIDE

Selling your home can be stressful, but proper preparation can significantly increase its appeal to potential buyers and ultimately fetch a higher price.

To begin, de-clutter and depersonalise. Remove excess furniture, knick-knacks, and any items that make rooms feel cramped. Put away family photos, collections, and religious items, as you want buyers to envision themselves living in the space. Consider repainting walls in neutral colours like white, beige, or light gray to make rooms appear larger and brighter. Next, deep clean and stage your home. Thoroughly clean every room, including floors, windows, and

appliances. Eliminate any lingering odours with air fresheners or by baking something delicious. Arrange furniture to maximize space and create a welcoming atmosphere. Consider adding tasteful décor like fresh flowers or plants. Curb appeal matters significantly. Keep the lawn neatly trimmed and edged. Add colourful flowers to your garden or planters. Pressure wash the exterior of your home, including the driveway and walkways. Repair any broken fences, loose



shingles, or peeling paint. Highlight key features by opening blinds and curtains to let in natural light.

If you've recently renovated, showcase those features, such as new kitchen countertops or updated bathrooms. Ensure

easy movement throughout the house by de-cluttering hallways and entryways. Consider professional help from home staging professionals who can help you arrange furniture and décor to maximize appeal, and real estate photographers who can capture high-quality photos and videos that showcase your home's best features. Small touches can make a big difference. A fresh coat of paint can do wonders for the overall appearance of

your home. Replace old doorknobs and cabinet hardware for a modern look. Enhance curb appeal with well-maintained landscaping. Be patient and flexible. Be prepared to accommodate showings on short notice and be receptive to feedback from potential buyers and your real estate agent. By following these tips, you can increase your home's marketability and increase the chances of a quick and successful sale. Remember, presentation is key!

Tasks to Do Around the Home for Spring 2025

With the arrival of spring, it's time to start thinking about freshening up your home. After a long winter, your home may be in need of some TLC

Here are some essential tasks to do around the home for spring 2025:

Deep clean your home. This is a great time to do a deep clean of your entire home. Pay special attention to areas that may have been neglected during the winter, such as windows, carpets, and bathrooms.

Declutter your home. Get rid of any unwanted items that are cluttering up your home. This will help you to feel more organized and less stressed.

Freshen up your décor. Add some new spring-themed décor to your home. This could include things like fresh flowers, new throw pillows, or a new tablecloth.

Get your garden ready for spring. Start preparing your garden for the warmer months by cleaning up any debris and planting new



flowers and plants. Inspect your home for any damage. Check your home for any damage that may have occurred during the winter, such as leaky roofs or cracked windows. Make sure your home is

energy efficient. Take steps to make sure your home is energy efficient, such as sealing any drafts and replacing old light bulbs with energy-efficient ones. Schedule any necessary repairs. If you find any

damage to your home, schedule any necessary repairs as soon as possible. Get your home ready for summer. Start thinking about how you can prepare your home for the summer months.

Hiring a Professional Gardener

Maintaining a pristine garden can be challenging amid the hustle and bustle of modern life.

As homeowners increasingly recognize the value of their outdoor spaces, the demand for professional gardeners is on the rise. Hiring a professional gardener offers numerous benefits that extend beyond aesthetics. One of the key advantages is the expertise that professional gardeners bring. Their deep understanding of plant care, soil management, and landscaping design can transform even neglected gardens into vibrant sanctuaries. Seasonal planting and maintenance ensure year-round beauty and health. Time-saving is another significant benefit.

Gardening requires considerable time and effort, which busy homeowners may lack. Outsourcing this task to a professional frees up valuable time for other priorities while ensuring efficient garden management. Professional gardeners also inject creativity into garden design. From tranquil water features to vibrant flower beds, their innovative ideas can turn your garden into a true work of art. Additionally, a well-maintained garden boosts property value, making a lasting impression on potential buyers. Beyond practical benefits, a professionally maintained

garden enhances mental well-being. Spending time in nature reduces stress, improves mood, and promotes overall mental health. A beautiful garden provides a sanctuary for relaxation and rejuvenation. In conclusion, hiring a

professional gardener offers a range of benefits, from expert care and time-saving convenience to creativity and mental well-being. Their expertise and passion cultivate beauty and tranquility, enriching our lives.

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