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Tips for an eco-friendly lifestyle

As the negative effects of human impact on the environment become more evident, a strong push toward global conservation continues to grow and gather steam. Scores of corporations have committed to becoming more "green" in recent years and countless environment-focused initiatives and organizations have popped up around the world. But even on an individual level, some small changes to your lifestyle can make a big difference in preserving the Earth for future generations.

■ RECYCLE.

Though the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been encouraging Americans to recycle for decades, a recent study found that less than 34 percent of the nation's waste was recovered or recycled in 2009, while 12 percent was burned at combustion facilities and the remaining 54 percent went to landfills. Recycling and composting saved 82 million tons of material from being dumped or burned in 2009, preserving the country's air and land immensely.

■ FUME-FREE.

With vehicles constantly emitting harmful chemicals into the atmosphere, it is important to avoid products that put off hazardous components whenever possible. In some situations, this is simply a matter of choosing an environmentally responsible brand over



another. For instance, when painting your home, make sure to use a formula with little or no volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

■ BOYCOTT BOTTLES.

Although plastic bottles are recyclable, more than 80 percent are thrown out, creating more than 1.5 million tons of waste each year. Add this to the fact that tap water costs an estimated .002 cents per gallon while many Americans pay more than \$1 per bottle, and bottled water is taking a huge toll on the U.S. landfills and wallets. Purchase a water filter for your home and fill a reusable water bottle from the filtered tap; you'll be saving the environment as well as your bank account, and your taste buds won't know the difference.

■ UNPLUG.

People may think they're conserving electricity by turning off appliances when not in use, but televisions, stereos, microwaves and other home electronics are using electricity as long as they are plugged in, even if the power is off. Although it may not seem practical to unplug every appliance after every use, there are ways to avoid this standby power effect. Use "smart" power strips to block energy loss when appliances are off, or determine which devices use the most standby power and unplug those when they're not being used. (Televisions, video and DVD players and stereos are often at the top of the list.) (ARA)

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Easy ways to incorporate timeless style into your home

Think traditional styling is only for opulent mansions and stuffy country clubs? Well, think again. Traditional design is not only extremely accessible to incorporate into any home, but according to research by the National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA), it's the most popular, too. Learn how to take back traditional and customize your own space.

■ START OUT SMALL

If the idea of transforming a large room into a traditionally styled one seems overwhelming, start on a smaller scale, like in the master bathroom. Keep the cabinets and counters neutral and add some glamour with the wall and accent colors. Favored shades in traditional decorating are jewel tones, like topaz and golds; deep reds and rose quartz; marine blues and vibrant greens. Use accessories like embroidered towels, bronze or iron bath accessory ensembles and potpourri bowls as the perfect finishing touches.

Another great way to add traditional flair to your bath is with elegant and elaborate fixtures. Look for a faucet with unique and detailed design elements. And just because you're incorporating stylish, traditional items, doesn't mean



you have to skimp on modern functionality or features. You can reduce water usage by up to 32 percent, thanks to a water-saving aerator.

■ DIFFERENCE IN THE DETAILS

One of the best ways to add traditional style throughout your entire home is with architectural details, like moldings, chair rails or ceiling medallions. It's easier to add these elements than you may think - and at a reasonable price. Peel and stick crown molding from Easy Crown Molding allows you to add the luxurious look of custom molding to your home. In less than one hour - and without tools - you can complete an entire room. Simply pick your desired trim style and width and get started.

Lush fabrics are also key to achieving a traditional look and feel in these spaces. But, don't be afraid of the elegance found in traditional decor. Silks, satins, velvets and brocades are going to be your go-to fabrics for pillows and upholstered furniture. Be sure to stay away from solids - mixing coordinating patterns, like

florals, stripes and scrolling, add even more richness. Don't forget to make a statement with your windows, too - hang draperies that are full and heavy, and be sure to tie them back with ornate tassels for a look that is unmistakably traditional. From pillows to curtains, bedding and even furniture, your local department store is one of the best places to start your traditional search. (ARA)



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How roofing brings a custom look to fine homes

For some people, selecting roofing material is an afterthought, but savvy homeowners, remodelers and builders know a beautiful roof creates architectural appeal that can top any other residence in the neighborhood.

Distinctive roofing completes the visual picture, accenting steep gables and supplying attractive color fields to hipped roofs. Existing homes can also benefit from the striking rejuvenation of a new roof, which adds instant attractiveness where roof appeal may not have been much of a consideration before.

Slate roofing has long been prized for its beauty, following its rise in popularity through America's early years. The picturesque look of slate is now available through the advanced technology of composite slate, created with molds cast from real slate. Unlike natural slate, it won't break or delaminate. InSpire Roofing delivers Old World elegance to both expansive and more intimate size homes, ranging in style from rustic to contemporary.

For homeowners who want to achieve a custom look, composite slate combines a perfect blend of high style and high technology to complement a multitude of architectural styles



and exteriors. "Coming in the industry's widest color palette, InSpire adds richness, deep texture and the authentic look of natural slate, without the high cost and heavy weight that comes with it," says Jonathan Wierengo, vice president of marketing for The Tapco Group.

Composite slate brings artistic flair to homes clad in stone, wood, fiber cement or other materials, and adds interest on dormers, multiple gables and cross gables. Its beauty draws the eyes upward to soaring ridges, and also complements features like chimneys and eyebrow windows. Renovated brick or stucco

homes can deliver a dramatic architectural statement with a new roof.

To achieve an historic look, homeowners can choose nuanced grey hues, even combining Dover Grey, Slate Grey, Pewter Grey and Charcoal Grey.

To visualize your home with the natural elegance of InSpire Roofing, visit www.inspireroofing.com to pick the right color or color combination for your roof or call (800) 971-4148 for more information. InSpire Roofing Products is a division of The Tapco Group and a U.S. Green Building Council Member. (ARA)

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Conserve water in the garden

As temperatures rise this summer, so do the risks of droughts. Water shortages can be a threat to your home and community. That's why it makes sense for Americans to conserve water as a matter of course. The best place to start is right in your own backyard.

What can you do to conserve water? Here are a few important tips:

Capture rainfall - Make the most of the rainwater that Mother Nature provides. Rain barrels are effective in capturing the rain that falls on your roof; reuse the water for your plants. Other rain capture techniques, such as rain gardens, can help capture rainfall and keep precious water on your property to replenish the ground water.

Water wisely - When rainfall is insufficient and supplemental watering is needed, do so effectively by:

- Aiming water at the base of the plant
- Watering in the morning to limit evaporation
- Using a moisture meter to ensure that roots have received enough moisture
- Allowing established grass to go dormant during periods of drought

Landscape by local climate - Choose drought-tolerant plants that are native to your area. These will require less water under normal circumstances and be able to survive during parched times.

Feed your grass and other plants

- Well-fed plants will grow deep roots that capture and store water. A 10,000-square foot healthy lawn, for example, can absorb 6,000 gallons of water from a single rainfall. That's a month's supply of water for a household of two.

Mulch is a must - A two- to three-inch layer of mulch around your plants will hold moisture in the soil and control storm water runoff. Mulching has other benefits, including preventing weeds and adding nutrients to the soil as it breaks down.

The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company recognizes the important need for nationwide water conservation and, through water management technologies, the company has developed grass seeds, lawn fertilizers, potting mixes, soils and mulches to help consumers use less water when gardening and caring for their lawns.

Making these water conservation practices



part of your backyard routine will help your area's water supply, particularly if everyone does their part. (ARA)



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Ultimate modern kitchen for entertaining

Want to "wow" guests with your culinary skills and the beauty of your kitchen? Enhanced kitchen designs aimed at allowing homeowners to show off their advanced cooking techniques are one of the hottest kitchen trends.

The Dwell on Design conference held this summer featured innovative design trends from industry professionals, including LG's Studio Series.

Dwell recommends trends you can incorporate into your kitchen remodel or build to give it sophisticated style, yet also make it operational:

- Incorporate bold colors in unexpected places. For example, pop your sink or cabinets out with a striking color against more neutral countertops, walls and floors.

- More modern kitchens are incorporating recycled content in the design and build.

- Built-in appliances are the rage because they add to the beauty of the room, rather than interrupting the design.

Some of the newest built-in products like the Studio Series contain professional grade



features on ovens, ranges and refrigerators that aren't traditionally found in private kitchens.

For example, LG's UltraHeat feature is one of the most powerful burners on a freestand-

ing range, making it easier to achieve great cooking results with gourmet meals. And LG's oven InfraGrill system utilizes infrared heating elements to keep food juicier than traditional thermal cooking does. (ARA)



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Five easy tricks to 'summerize' your home

Temperatures are rising, flowers are blooming and chirping birds greet us in the morning. It's official, summer is here. Are your yard and home ready? Here are five surefire tricks to help you prep them for sun and fun:

■ 1. Create sensational seating. With summer get-togethers, you're always looking for more seating for guests. But that doesn't mean you need to buy new. If you're like many homeowners, you probably have miscellaneous chairs throughout your home. It might be a desk chair, a decorative one in the corner of your living room or an old one buried in the attic. Now is the perfect time of the year to brighten it up with a vibrant, new color - such as lime green, poppy or lilac. All you need is a can of spray paint. And the best part is that you can always easily change the color again for fall with some additional paint.

■ 2. Embellish with accessories. Does your living area look as dreary as the past winter months? Before you say replace your sofa for a refresh, consider the power of accessorizing. Summer is the perfect excuse to hit your local home goods store or even thrift shop for a whole new cadre of vases, throw pillows,



framed pictures, baskets and more.

Go in with a game plan. Determine a couple of colors you would like to add and have a set budget in mind. This will help you stay focused and allow you to come home with a whole new look for your living room.

■ 3. Paint for patio perfection. With the summer months, your social calendar may already be bustling with a number of parties and get-togethers. Now is the perfect time to update your deck or patio. If you have a bench, table or planters that have seen better days, consider using a spray paint-primer, such as Krylon's Dual Paint and Primer, which allows you to prime and paint in one single step - even on weathered metal. To create a more

distinctive look, consider constructing a planter bench, which will provide added seating and a home for your stunning flowers.

■ 4. Create lush landscapes. For a truly manicured yard, it's the small details that make all the difference. For areas where you tend to walk, add large stepping stones to make the path more inviting and help ensure you don't damage your plants and mulch. If you have large trees in your backyard, consider adding a plant bed covered with mulch around the base to provide a cleaner look and make mowing easier.

■ 5. Find a fun and festive fire pit. Making s'mores over a campfire or creating ambiance for evening drinks is a great way to spend a summer evening. Depending on the layout of your backyard, there are a number of options for adding an evening fire to your summer plans. For a more casual feel, you can dig a pit in a dedicated area of your backyard and finish it with decorative stones and seating. Or, for a more formal fire, try a metal fire pit or chiminea. With the wide variety of styles and colors, you're guaranteed to find one that matches your backyard beautifully. (ARA)

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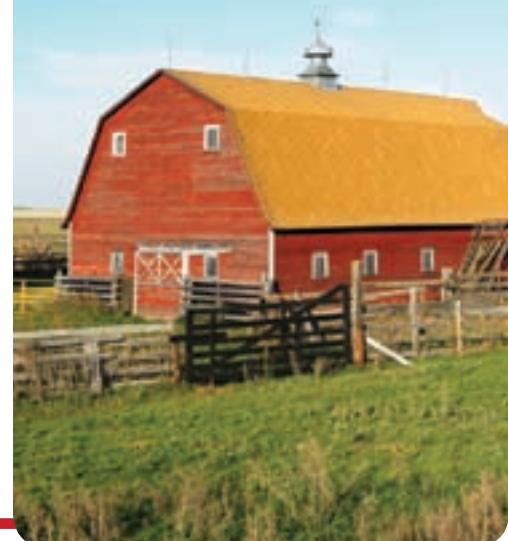
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Set the scene for easy outdoor entertaining

It's not hard to get people to come to an outdoor gathering on a warm summer's evening, and it should be just as easy to pull together a memorable affair. To make the most of your time and budget, look for low-maintenance solutions that you can use throughout the season - and in summers yet to come. From the dishes you serve to the way you decorate, the less work you have to do, the more you'll be able to enjoy the time with your guests.

Get your backyard ready for summer gatherings with these easy tips:

Decking - Having a great space where guests can gather is the first, and perhaps most essential, task. A deck gives guests a place to relax and linger comfortably throughout your party. If you're concerned about the time you'll have to put into keeping your deck looking great, toss out your old ideas of decks requiring careful maintenance and attention year-round. Opt for the low maintenance decking materials now on the market and your deck will be ready to welcome guests when you are. TimberTech's Earthwood Evolutions line offers hardwood style deck materials that resist scratching, staining and fading, making them ideal for



those who want the look of wood without the extensive care it requires.

Plants - As much as you want your deck and gathering space to look good, you want guests to be impressed by the natural surroundings of your yard as well. Research perennial plants that thrive not just in your horticultural zone, but in the microclimate of your home (your particular soil type, sun exposure,

etc.) Choose hardy plants that don't require too much pruning or attention, but which provide a beautiful and varied backdrop. If you don't have a green thumb, talk to the experts at a local garden center to get tips on plant selection and care.

Decor - From serving ware to seating, you can assemble all the elements of entertaining without too much stress. If you want to freshen up the look of your deck, invest in weather-resistant outdoor furniture that can stand up to the elements and will look good in years to come. If new furniture isn't in your budget, look for new cushions and covers that will resist spills and tears. Instead of buying disposable serving ware, look for shatter-proof plates and glasses. You'll be doing the environment a favor and you'll always have it on hand - no more last-minute runs to the store when you run out of plastic cups.

Food - Don't stress yourself out with a multi-course menu. Since it's summer, let seasonal ingredients be the stars. Serve sliced or grilled fresh fruit for a sweet dessert and rely on tried-and-true party favorites, but with a different spin. (ARA)

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Designer tricks for the do-it-yourselfer

Ever watch those TV design shows and wonder how to replicate the look in your own home?

It's easy to incorporate designer tricks into your space, no matter the style or existing decor. Focus on adding layers of color and texture, and notice how hues flow from room to room to create a cohesive design.

Choosing coordinating colors is easy when you have the right guide. For example, the new HGTV (R) HOME by Sherwin-Williams line of interior paints and supplies features eight designer-inspired color collections - each with 20 colors that work well together, no matter how many or how few are selected - along with expert design tips to help do-it-yourselfers create harmonious room-to-room color transitions.

Pull together a well-designed home by taking cues from the overall color palette to add decorative accessories. For example, a spicy orange vase on the dining room table can play off a bold accent wall in the kitchen.

Another popular designer technique is to turn flooring into a flexible decorating element. Try layering a vibrant area rug from the HGTV



HOME Flooring by Shaw collection over a hard-surface floor or a neutral carpet - it's easy to change as design preferences evolve.

For more design inspiration and decorating advice, visit sherwin-williams.com/hgtvhome or shawfloors.com/HGTV.



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Deck and porch railings add decorative style and safety

For years, homeowners considered railing the icing on the cake when considering a deck—it was nice to have, but not essential.

Those same homeowners are now realizing that finishing their decks with a complementary railing system can provide the added safety and beauty needed to truly capitalize on their investment.

While the deck is the foundation of any outdoor living space, adding railing can dramatically change the look of that space. Style and placement of railing can make the space appear open or closed and polished or rustic. Railing can be installed in colors to match, offset or complement the existing deck or porch.

"Over time, consumers have seen the



more finished look that railing provides and responded accordingly," says Stephen McNally, vice president of sales and marketing for TAM-KO Building Products. "We've seen significant increases in our annual railing sales and had to step up production to meet the customer demand for these products."

Installing a railing system is a great option for homeowners who have already invested in a deck and want to continue adding to the value of their home with a small remodeling project.

Railing projects provide a big "bang for your buck" by carrying a smaller price tag than a full deck or other larger remodeling projects.

And many new railing systems are designed for do-it-yourselfers and contractors with prepackaged kits and pre-routed pieces.

Composite railings are gaining popularity because some products are strong enough on their own that they do not require metal reinforcements. Tam-Rail Composite Railing is an example of this type of material. The railing is made with a patented three-layer technology that encloses a blend of foamed wood composite material between two layers of PVC. The resulting system is so thick, stiff and rigid that it doesn't require metal reinforcement to meet building codes. Despite this three-layer strength, the product is still lightweight and low-maintenance.

"Composite railing, in particular, is now seen as an attractive building product that performs well at an appealing price," McNally says.

Some of the benefits of composite railing systems like Tam-Rail are hidden fasteners, a wide variety of railing lengths, fixed-angle bracket adapters, stair kits and the ability to install the post mounts in concrete, wood or composite decks.

Whether adding railing to a porch or a deck as a do-it-yourself weekend project or a professional contracting job, installing railing will add instant style and impact to your home at a reasonable price. (ARA)

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Taking odor out of painting projects

Homeowners can scratch off one more concern from their list when tackling a painting project: Nearly every paint manufacturer now offers no-odor or low-odor alternatives. Combined with sensible steps to reduce odors and speed drying, painting today doesn't have to be the stinky business your parents experienced.

Home improvement expert Gordon Bickle notes that painting is a growing trend in decorating. "In today's market, homeowners are staying in their homes longer and redecorating more," he says. When decorating, homeowners want simple, low cost, but dramatic home improvements to renew and personalize their space. As a result, Bickle notes, "changing and upgrading room colors has become one of the hottest decor trends."

But with all this decorating, exposure to



chemical fumes has opened the door for a new wave of smart paints, caulk and spackling that please the nose as well as the eye.

Many popular water-based paints and caulk emit these odors, produced by volatile organic compounds (VOCs), chemicals that are now limited and in some areas, virtually

eliminated. While not completely odorless, new zero-VOC water-based latex paints have extremely low odor. Coupled with Smart zero-VOC primers, caulk and spackling, painters and homeowners now have the ability to create a complete zero-VOC painting project.

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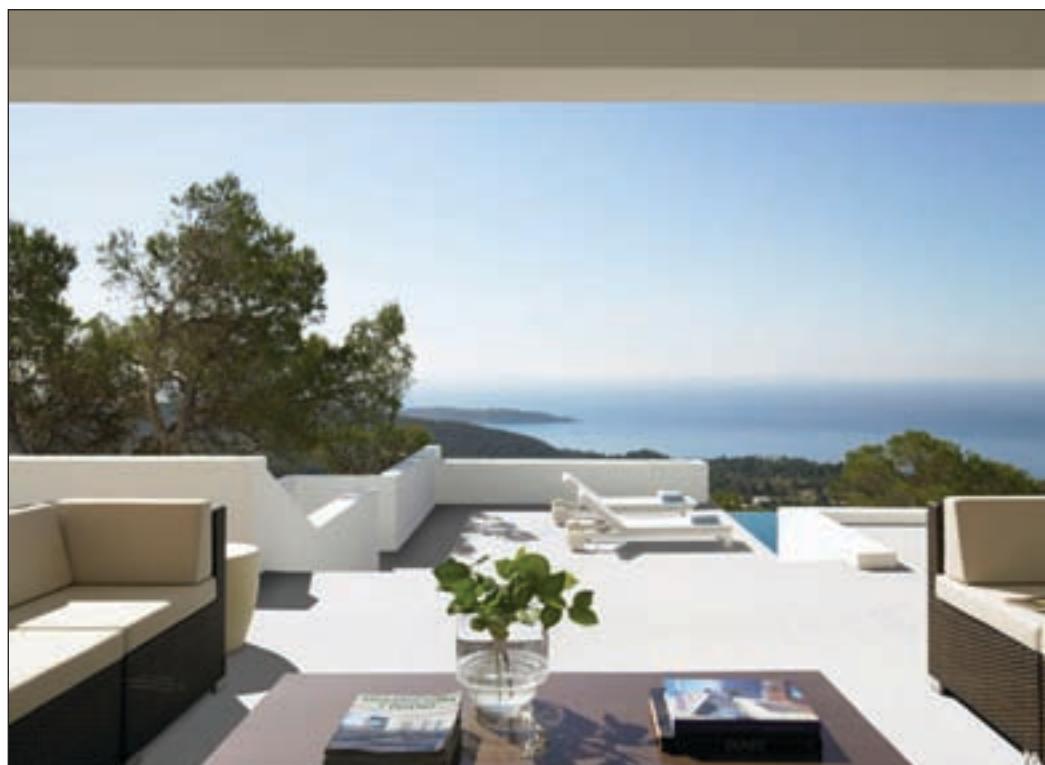
Outdoors: Homeowners embrace ceramic tile

Many homeowners are finding new ways to embrace ceramic tile in their outdoor living spaces, choosing the time-proven material for uses that traditionally have called for wood, stone or even concrete.

Numerous advantages draw homeowners and designers to choose ceramic tile. You may already know that ceramic tile is beautiful and durable, but it also inhibits mold, mildew and fungus - problems that can arise in a damp environment. It withstands pool chemicals and direct sunlight without fading. It's also slip-resistant, making walking safer in areas where swimmers will be leaving a pool.

While ceramic tile's appeal for pool areas may be obvious, it's also useful in other outdoor settings such as sunshades and outdoor enclosures.

Ceramic tile has long been a material of choice for indoor living spaces. Now, thanks to design innovations by manufacturers, homeowners can embrace tile's beauty and durability in a variety of outdoor applications as well. For more about tile produced in Spain call (305) 446-4387 or visit [www.spaintiles.info](http://spaintiles.info). (ARA)



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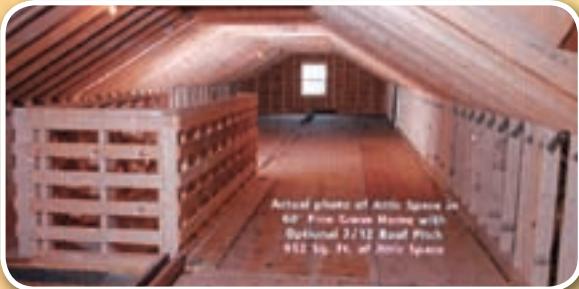
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478-3687

Where you are #1!

Red Coat Realty



246 W. Main St., Hillsboro 464-3053



LEE: Lovely 3-4 Br Home In Low-Taxed Lee. Sets Back From The Road. 5 Mins. To Whittemore Center And Train To Boston/Portland, 20 Mins. From The Ocean. Over 2000 Sq Ft, Barn With Loft And Shed On Over 1.5 Acres. #1721 **\$299,900**



BENNINGTON. Shades of Newhart - stately 1900's New Englander with 8 acres. Three outbuildings plus a garage. Shining hardwood floors, amazing built-ins, heated wrap-around porch and separate screen porch, 2 fireplaces, 4 bedrooms, front and back stairways, over 5000 square feet....too much to mention. #1643 **\$399,000**



ANTRIM: Large 5BR home with great master, spacious LR and DR. Large barn currently home to 2 horses. Rural setting with easy commute to Concord or Keene. #1723. **\$269,900**



DEERING: Just look at the 50 mile view--WOW! Not to mention the perennial garden, a 4 stall barn with electricity, water and phone lines. The open concept "Great-room" has kitchen, liv. rm and din. rm with cathedral ceilings overlooking these spectacular views. Three bdrms, 3 baths, fam. rm, 2 car gar., stream, pond on 15.5 acres. #1726 **\$349,000.**



HILLSBORO: Cute 2 BR cottage on over 3/4 acres. Outbuilding for workshop/storage. On a dead-end, public road. Access to 3 beaches, swimming, fishing, and near to other recreation including hiking, golf in the summer. #1715 **\$69,900**



SALISBURY: Not many of these left, a camp on one acre with a fireplace, front porch and a brook on two sides. Nature abounds in the private setting with hunting, fishing or swimming just outside your door. #1722 **\$57,000**