

Triangle

JUNE / JULY 2017

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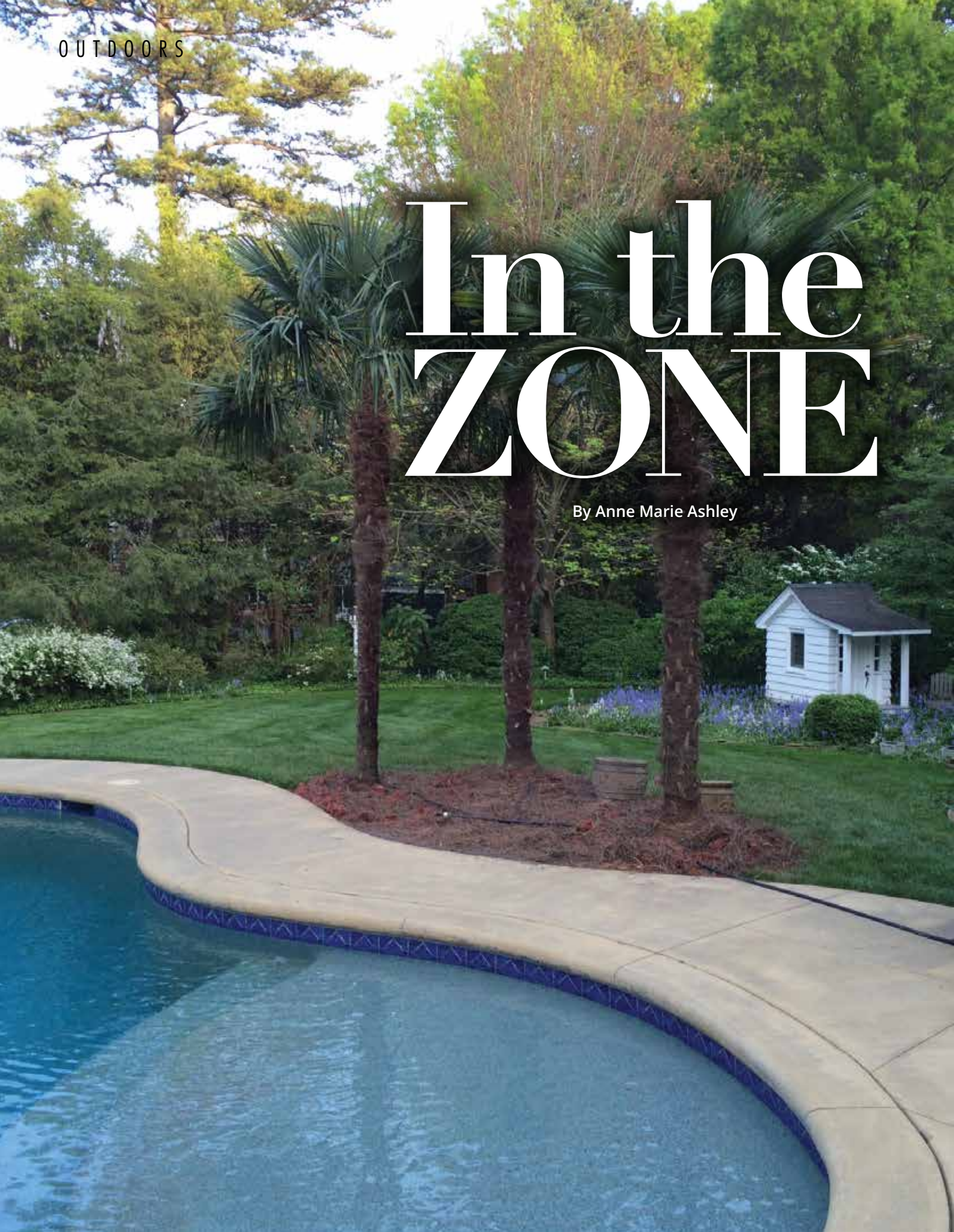
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OUTDOORS

In the ZONE

By Anne Marie Ashley



The Triangle draws new residents every day with its temperate climate, affordable cost of living, and fun but easygoing lifestyle. Being a transplant means many new residents aren't familiar with the nuances of our climate nor the conditions of our soil, which makes choosing trees and shrubs for their yard a hit or miss at best. The plants and landscape that are found in the Northeast, Midwest, or warmer Florida or California climates aren't always compatible with North Carolina weather.

"One of the first things I tell newcomers is the challenge in the Triangle is it's too hot *and* it's too cold," David Payne of Home & Garden Landscapes explains. "But it's more hot than it is cold." For landscaping, that means heat is more of a limiting factor than the cold. However, Payne continues to say that the warmer weather has its advantages. "The good thing for gardeners is that you can have your choice of more northern landscaping with evergreens typically found in Pennsylvania or Illinois, or you can grow warmer climate trees and shrubs like cold hardy palms or gardenias."

Payne suggests the key to planting for the proper climate is three-fold — plant selection, placement, and attention to climate zones. "The USDA has divided the country into climatic zones based on the average lowest temperatures," he explains. "The Triangle is a 7b-8a zone, which means the average lowest winter temperatures are somewhere around five to ten degrees above zero. It doesn't happen often, but it can burn tender plants accustomed to hotter climates."

To mitigate any damage, it's best to plant cold hardy plants like gardenias, windmill palms, or osmanthus in sunnier spots where you might get the benefit of reflective heat and protection from cold winter winds, which typically come from the West. For instance, a south facing wall in full sun.

On the other hand, evergreens need to be planted with northern exposure that provides more afternoon shade. "By choosing more heat tolerant varieties of northern evergreens like



Norway spruce, Oriental spruce, or Serbian spruce, your plants will thrive," Payne suggests.

Another problem area is the clay-based soils found in much of the Triangle. Most newcomers are befuddled, particularly if they come from rich soil areas like the Midwest. "I have found the best way to work with our clay-based soils is to amend them with composts and to plant your plants a bit higher with some

mounding," Payne suggests. "The mounding will provide better drainage and keep the plant growing when we have extended periods of heavy rains. It's basically an insurance policy of sorts." Planting too deep in these soils will kill plants. Planting higher will give them a better shot at surviving, as long as you provide adequate watering — especially in the first couple of years after transplant.

Planting and gardening in the Triangle may take some getting used to for newcomers, but in the end, with a little extra know-how and some patience, you can create a gorgeous landscape that will thrive in the wonderful climate. ♦



Do you have a landscaping challenge that needs a solution? Home & Garden Landscapes can help. For more information, or to make an appointment for a consultation, visit www.homeandgardenlandscapes.com or call 919-801-0211.