

# HOME & GARDEN

## How to Host a Summer Garden Party

From wild to mild, no matter what kind of winter you've experienced, summer always arrives as a welcome relief. It's a time to spend outdoors enjoying the fresh air and the beauty of nature. Besides the vacations and family outings that accompany summer, an at-home garden party for relatives and friends can live up a quiet weekend. Start your own tradition with these tips from Lillian Vernon, founder of the Lillian Vernon catalogs and [www.lillianvernon.com](http://www.lillianvernon.com).

- Create handmade party invitations using a watering can stencil made from colorful construction paper. Use metallic-ink pens to compose a greeting.
- Set up tables and chairs in separate areas around the garden and in the backyard where guests can relax and converse while enjoying drinks and appetizers. Decorate shade umbrellas with lights and flowers. For appetizers, offer a selection of finger foods.
- Create a festive atmosphere with lighting. Place lanterns, votives and stake lights around the bushes and lit luminarias on the edge of the patio. Put citronella candles on the bistro and buffet tables to keep bugs away and add a romantic ambience. Set up a stereo system outside for mood music.

- Make a centerpiece for the buffet table that reflects the summer's bounty. Stack a pile of lemons in the shape of a pyramid. Secure them with toothpicks or bamboo barbecue skewers and accent the pyramid by tucking leaves, strawberries, and grapes in the gaps. Decorate tables with fresh flowers in clear vases with glass pebbles or colored glass stones to keep the stems in place. Always protect food with plastic or mesh food covers to keep insects away.

- Use two grills when cooking for a crowd. Set up a table next to the grills to hold utensils, food, sauces and spices. If your grills have heaters, cover cooked food and place it on the heaters so everything can be served warm at the same time.
- Keep salads and other foods in the refrigerator until you are ready to serve them and don't let them sit out too long. Line a wheelbarrow with plastic and fill it with ice to keep your beverages cool.
- If children are invited, have a variety of outdoor games available to keep them busy. Volleyball, horseshoes, table tennis and miniature golf are always fun.
- Give each guest a party favor to take home. Watering cans filled with seed packets, gloves and spades make perfect gifts.



**MAKE YOUR GARDEN PARTY** the highlight of the summer with tips from Lillian Vernon and [www.lillianvernon.com](http://www.lillianvernon.com).

## For Safety's Sake, Play It Smart In Pools

Most of the time, pools are an oasis of relief from the summer sun and sweltering temperatures. Swimming offers a way to cool off, relax and even exercise several muscle groups of the body.

While pools can add value to a home and serve as a great gathering spot, some people will actually pass up buying a home if it has a swimming pool, particularly one that is in-ground. Why? Drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related death in children ages 1 to 14, according to the National Safety Council. Children ages 1 to 4 account for more than half of the deaths.

However, pools do not have to be a danger if you take safety precautions, especially when it comes to youngsters. Here are some tips on pool safety from the experts at the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.



**SAFETY FIRST**  
1. Install barriers. A four-sided fence that is 4 feet (or higher) with slats that are less than 4 inches apart is one key barrier. The gates should be self-closing, self-latching and a child should not be able to reach the latch.

Above-ground pools are generally safer than in-ground ones, particularly because the height of the pool poses a barrier. Some even come with fences mounted on top. You should always secure and lock the steps or remove them completely when

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WATER WINGS, like these shown, are not considered appropriate personal flotation devices for children who do not swim well, according to the U.S. Coast Guard.

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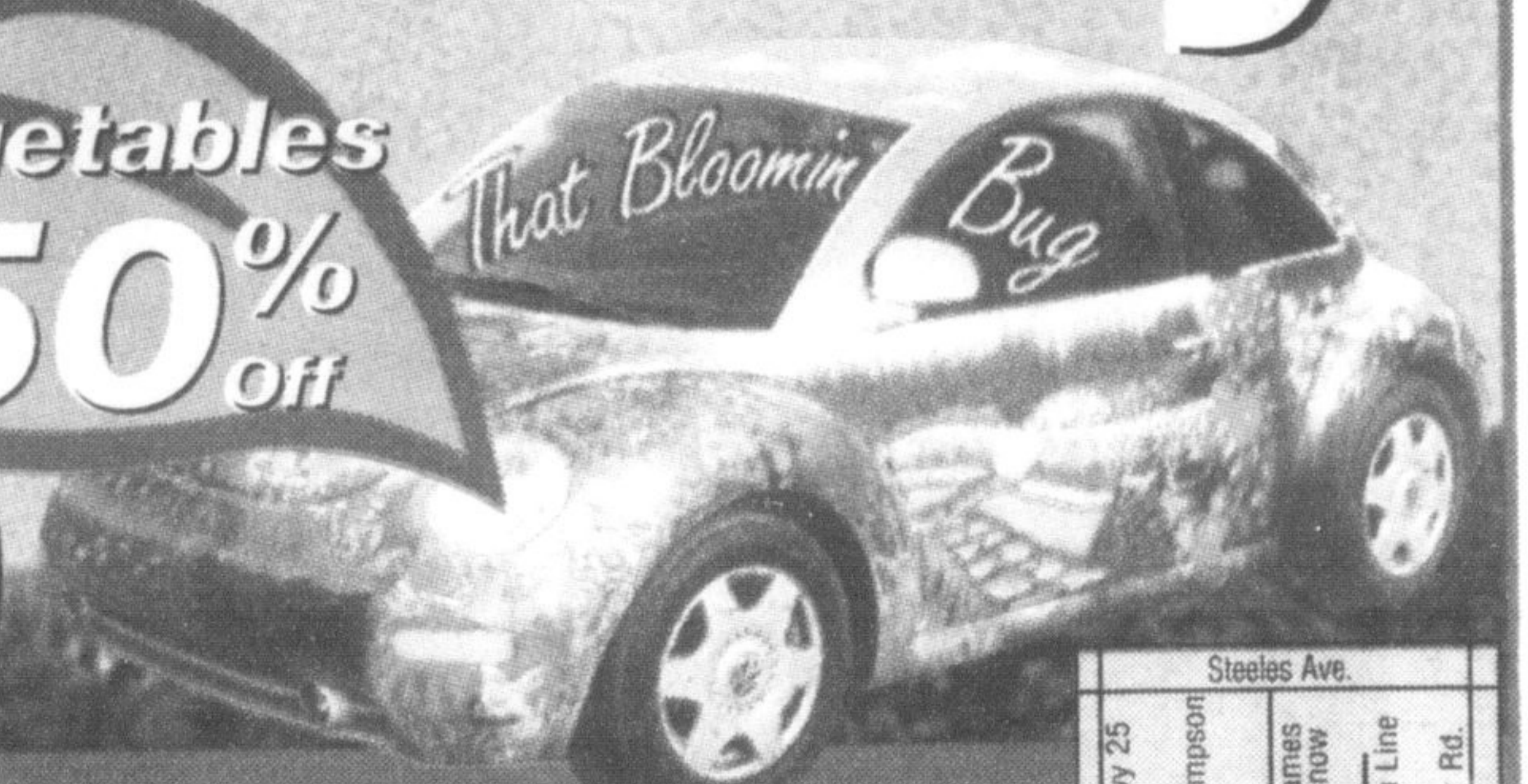
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