



backyard paradise



A space to relax and renew the soul. A space where blue sky is your ceiling and plush grass is the most comforting carpet. Trees and trellises enclose around you, and an old wicker chair welcomes your tired body. Birds sing and a quiet breeze soothes your mind. A private haven to get away from it all and experience peace and tranquility. And this space is right outside your back door.



Rest

comfortably with all the amenities of a vacation resort – in your own backyard. Many homeowners are following this trend of transforming their yards into outdoor rooms, making these spaces as important to family life as their kitchens and living rooms are to them.

With people working long, hard days, time and space to relax is key. And with people tending to stay home more, it is especially convenient to have a place of their own to turn to; a peaceful sanctuary that will allow you to live as well outdoors as you do inside.

“Outdoor rooms are really a reflection of your space indoors,” says Susan Palm Lynch, the landscape architect of Land Concepts Landscape Architecture in Rockford, Illinois. With it being an extension of the inside, there needs to be an ideal transition incorporating styles of each space.

A continuation of the color scheme is one way to obtain this, Lynch says. “Using plants that bloom to pick up the colors indoors works well. Seat cushions and other fabrics also tie colors together.”

Lynch explains that using similar materials inside and out create a nice flow from one area to the other. For example, using a slate or stone floor for a sunroom, then using the same material for the patio.

These spaces are perfect to renew your tired body but also are ideal for family fun and entertaining. Many outdoor rooms include kitchens with sophisticated sinks and grills. Also, one “hot” trend with backyard rooms is the rise of outdoor fireplaces to increase the outdoor season, Lynch says.

Plant materials provide enclosure and help to act as walls for your “room.” Decorative fencing, climbing vines and tightly planted hedges all create a secluded environment, Lynch says. “And, texture can be added throughout the design using varying greens with subtle differences in shades to create an eye-catching effect even with nothing blooming.”

“There can be no very black melancholy to him who lives in the midst of nature and has his senses still.”

Walden, Henry David Thoreau

For big functions, many chairs and seating arrangements are useful. But, homeowners also enjoy having “a hidden spot tucked away with just a lounge chair for reading a book,” Lynch says. A charming foot-path is a way to link the two different “rooms” together.

Lynch says she has seen a rise in the use of pergolas. Topped with climbing roses for filtered shade and using decorative wood with the same stain used throughout the house, these structures can provide enclosure while still allowing light to shine through.

The use of lighting is a nice finishing touch to create an alluring atmosphere at night. From lamp posts and pathways or in the trees, any use of light is sure to add to the romantic ambiance of the space.

Cost is definitely a factor when designing an outdoor room. A good rule of thumb is to budget for 10% of your home’s value, Lynch advises. Of course, a landscape architect can work within any means to create a backyard retreat. And, any good landscaping will increase the value of your home.

Large scale or small, many people are looking to create their own private place to relax. In today’s rushed world, it is truly refreshing to be able to take time to just enjoy the great outdoors peacefully or to share your space with family and friends.

