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How to create a sunroom

As fall inches closer to winter, it's not uncommon for people to look to the coming cold with a degree of lament. Spring, summer and fall provide ample opportunities to enjoy the great outdoors, but such chances are few and far between once the winter freeze settles in. Though winter might compel the masses to huddle up inside, there's still a way to take in the great outdoors on cold winter days and nights.

It might not prove an exact substitute for summer nights around the firepit, but a sunroom affords homeowners a chance to marvel at snowy winter landscapes without venturing out into the cold. Sometimes referred to as "all-season rooms," sunrooms can make for a great retreat on quiet summer mornings or crisp autumn afternoons. Sunrooms can be treated as blank canvasses, which makes decorating them more fun. But a few tricks of the trade can help

homeowners turn their blank canvasses into welcoming spaces to take in all that nature has to offer throughout the year.



When the weather gets too chilly to dine outside, will the sunroom serve as an alternative dining space in the same way patios and decks do during the warm weather? Or do homeowners want to turn their sunrooms into reading rooms? Though it's possible to make sunrooms multipurpose spaces, it may be hard to create a relaxing vibe in rooms that are too crowded with furnishings or too busy. Defining how the space will be used also makes it easier when shopping for furnishings.

- Define the purpose. The experts at Better Homes & Gardens recommend homeowners decide how they want to use the sunroom before they begin decorating it.

- Define when the room will be used. In addition to defining how the room will be used, homeowners should give ample consideration to when the room will be used. A year-round sunroom will need to be heated, while a three-season sunroom likely won't require heating. Cooling might be a concern on hot summer afternoons, but many homeowners will likely spend such days outside anyway, so cooling the room may be as simple as installing a ceiling fan and ensuring windows can be opened to let fresh air in. Homeowners who want a

Did you know?

Perhaps due to changing weather patterns that have made Mother Nature as unpredictable as ever, Florida rooms are wildly popular. These rooms, sometimes referred to as "sunrooms," enable a home's inhabitants to take in the beauty of nature even on those days when the weather outside is less than welcoming. The cost of a sunroom addition varies greatly and is affected by a host of variables, including the existing structure and whether or not homeowners aspire to utilize the room year-round or during the three seasons when temperatures are at their most moderate. According to HomeGuide, the cost to install an 8 x 10 three-season Florida room averages between \$6,000 and \$18,500. The same size room built to be enjoyed year-round can cost between \$16,000 and \$28,000. Homeowners may choose to create larger Florida rooms, but the cost will increase with each square foot added to the project. Such costs are considerable, but homeowners should know that adding square footage to a home typically increases the home's resale value, meaning it's likely they can recoup a considerable percentage of their Florida room investment when selling their home.

year-round sunroom should install insulated glass to keep the room even warmer when the mercury dips.

- Opt for bright colors. Bright colors can make sunrooms feel all the more inviting and make for a perfect match with all the natural light already in the room. The renovation experts at HGTV note that white walls and ceilings can maximize the warm illumination of the natural light that will be pouring in from the floor-to-ceiling windows. Better Homes & Gardens adds that brightly colored cushions, pillows and area rugs with similarly hued colors and patterns can add visual interest

and texture to a sunroom.

- Make use of a view. Homeowners needn't direct too much of their focus on decor if their sunrooms come with a view. Art on the walls and other decorative items around the room are less important if a sunroom affords a view of the ocean or a lake or dense woods that attract local wildlife. In rooms with a view, arrange furniture so residents and guests can comfortably look outward and take in all the surround landscape has to offer. Sunrooms are a great place to take in nature no matter the weather.

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Terri and Mike 

What to know about installing a pool at home

Summer is a season of relaxation when school is not in session, vacation season is in full swing and people everywhere are getting outside and soaking up the summer sun. It's hard to imagine how that can get any better. But it can for people thinking of installing a pool in their backyard.

Pools definitely have a wow factor that's hard to replicate. Homeowners considering pool installation can take note of these factors as they try to decide if a pool is right for them.

Cost

The cost to install a pool depends on a host of factors, including which type of pool homeowners are considering and where they live. According to the online home improvement resource Angi (formerly Angie's list), the average cost to install an above ground pool in the United States in 2022 was \$3,322, while the average inground pool installation in the same year was \$55,000. That's quite a disparity in price, and homeowners

should know that the average cost of each project is higher in certain regions and under certain circumstances. Potential ancillary costs, such as excavation and plumbing relocation, will add to the final cost of the project. The erection of fencing around the pool if no fencing currently surrounds the area where the pool will be located also will add to the final cost.

Pool type

As noted, above ground pools, on average, require a considerably smaller financial investment than inground pools. This is an important consideration, but which option may ultimately prove the better investment is worth researching. Homeowners can speak with a local real estate professional to determine if an inground pool or above ground might yield a significantly higher return at resale. If an inground pool is likely to increase property value by a substantial amount, it could be well worth the extra up-front costs.



Maintenance

Pools are undeniably fun, but they still require maintenance. The experts at Better Homes & Gardens note that vinyl liners in pools last approximately six to 10 years, while painted concrete may require a fresh coat of paint every five years. Plaster finishes may last as long as 15 years, while cement-coated products can last a lifetime. Pools also need periodic cleaning, and chemicals to keep the pool operating safely and cleanly will require an additional, if somewhat minimal, financial investment. Homeown-

ers investing in a new pool should be aware of the maintenance required to keep the pool clean and be willing to do that maintenance. And though homeowners typically can open and close pools on their own, it's also possible to hire someone to do it for a relatively small fee each season.

Location

A survey of the land in a yard can reveal how smoothly a pool installation may or may not go. Though it's possible to install a pool in just about any yard, some

spaces might require greater preparation and pre-installation effort than others. Sloped backyards, for example, may require the services of a landscape architect to prepare the space, which can extend the time it takes to complete the project and add the overall cost.

These are just some of the factors that merit consideration when mulling a pool installation. A homeowners' best resource might be a local pool company who can visit a home, provide an estimate and point out any challenges that may arise during the install.

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Tips to avoid the buildup of clutter

Clutter has a way of taking over a home. As time goes by, items that are not stored or discarded when they've lost their utility can gradually take over a space, creating a claustrophobic, cluttered feeling that can affect how people feel in their homes.

Clutter is not something to be taken lightly. A 2010 study published in the journal *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* found that women who characterized their living spaces as cluttered or marked by unfinished projects were more likely to experience fatigue and depression than women who described their homes as restful and restorative. Though clutter is often discussed in terms of removing it, there's also many ways to prevent it in the first place.

- Schedule weekly cleaning sessions. Cleaning is a chore few look forward to, and that reluctance may be a byproduct of infrequent cleanings. The less a home is cleaned, the longer cleaning sessions take when individuals get around to it. Weekly cleaning sessions



Donating clothing that is no longer worn is a simple way to avoid the buildup of clutter at home.

- Discard items when they're no longer used. Holding on to items you no longer use will eventually contribute to the buildup of clutter. That's a lesson parents know well, as kids outgrow toys, which can then pile up and contribute to overcrowded toy chests

and play rooms. Adults also have a hard time discarding their own toys, including old devices. As kids outgrow toys, let them choose which ones to discard before they're replaced with new items. The same goes for adults, who can wipe old devices like tablets, smartphones and laptops clean and discard them once they've purchased replace-

- Make it easy to find stored items. Even the most well-organized person can fall victim to clutter if stored items prove difficult to find. When revamping storage systems, choose clear, stackable drawers so you won't make a mess as you look for stored items you can't find. Clear, stackable plastic bins and drawers

make it easier to find what you're looking for, reducing the likelihood that items will end up on the floor or strewn about. If you don't want to replace existing storage bins, label them if they're not clear to make it easier to identify what's inside.

- Donate clothing. Much like kids' toys and adults devices should be discarded when they're no longer used, old clothes can be donated to create more storage space and prevent the buildup of clutter. Clutter is often described as something visible to the naked eye, but clutter can also build up in dresser drawers and behind closet doors. Periodically go through closets and dressers and remove items you no longer wear, donating them if they're still in good shape and discarding them if they're not.

Clutter can quickly take over a home. A proactive approach that emphasizes clutter prevention can make for a more relaxing and restful home.

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What to know about reseeding or replanting your lawn

Spring marks the return of flowering plants and warm weather. And homeowners know that spring also ushers in the return of home renovation season.

Homeowners undoubtedly have an extensive list of projects on their to-do list this spring,

tips before they begin the process of reseeding or replanting their lawns.

- Scarify the lawn. Scarifying a lawn can help to create a clean slate, but the timing must be right. Various lawn and garden experts, includ-

grass is once again actively growing. Scarifying can remove any lingering weeds from last season and also pull up any moss that might have taken hold over the winter. Without weeds and moss to contend with, freshly planted seeds are in better position to thrive.

- Work with a landscaping professional. Homeowners with manageable lawns can likely scarify their own lawns with a relatively inexpensive plug-in scarifier. However, scarifying can be a strenuous physical activity, particularly for homeowners with large lawns. In such instances, homeowners can benefit from working with a qualified landscaping professional. Such a professional can scarify the lawn and subsequently reseed or replant new grass. The latter task is not so simple, as the lawn care experts at Scotts® note that choosing the correct seed is a vital part of reseeding or replanting a lawn. Choosing seed may sound simple, but it's a potentially complex decision that requires knowledge of the existing grass, including when to plant it. Certain grasses are best planted in spring or early fall, while others are best planted in summer. A qualified landscaping professional can identify the existing grass and plan the seeding or planting around this important detail.
- Prepare to water the lawn. Watering is vital to the long-term success and health of

freshly planted grass seed. Scotts® urges homeowners to keep the top inch of soil consistently moist, but not soggy. That requires a daily commitment, and setting a multi-function hose nozzle or sprinkler to the mist setting once per day or more if it's hot outside can increase the chances grass will grow in thick and strong. Scotts® recommends keeping the top two inches of the soil moist until the new grass reaches a mowing height of roughly three inches. Once that benchmark

has been reached, watering frequency can be cut back to about twice per week, but now the soil should be deeply soaked instead of misted. The soaking will help roots grow deep into the soil.

Spring is a great time for homeowners in various regions to reseed or replant their lawns. With the right approach, homeowners can enjoy a full and lush lawn throughout summer.



and that may include helping their lawns and gardens recover after a long winter. Unpredictable weather, which can include drought and excessive rainfall and everything in between, can take its toll on a lawn. In certain instances, the best solution may be planting new grass. But homeowners can consider these

ing those at BBC Gardeners' World Magazine, recommend scarifying in spring or early autumn. But don't jump the gun when scarifying in spring by scarifying before the lawn has started to grow after a dormant winter. Scarify when the soil is a little wet and the

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How homeowners can turn attics into livable spaces

Houses typically feature various areas that are traditionally designed for storage, such as garages, basements and attics. However, with some renovation, these spaces can be transformed into livable areas.

Homeowners who would like to convert attics into livable spaces need to take certain things into consideration before starting an improvement project. While the attic may seem like it has plenty of room and is structurally

sound enough to walk in, that's not necessarily so. To be converted into usable living space, an attic must be brought up to the standards of modern building codes, according to the design experts at Board & Vellum.

Retrofitting beams and insulation can eat up available space in an attic. Thus, it is best to consult an expert to see if an attic can be converted.

Furthermore, an attic that was not initially designed as a room when the house was built can add extra "load" upstairs if it is converted. That could present certain structural problems. That

required to go forward. It is best to follow the rules. Lack of a permit for work can affect the ability to sell a home down the line.

Individuals also should plan for heating and cooling upgrades as the home will need to have ductwork installed in the attic, or at the least, a stand-alone heating and cooling unit. As heat rises, it can get quite warm in an attic,

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means a structural engineer also must be consulted to see if adding beams, flooring and drywall will necessitate other changes elsewhere in the home to accommodate the extra load.

In order to have a functional attic room, building codes will dictate that it needs to be accessible by a full-size staircase. Also, it will need to have another exit in case of an emergency so that will likely be an accessible window, according to the home information site The Fill. Homeowners' budgets and renovation plans will need to factor into these considerations. Homeowners also are advised to check local permits to determine what else may be re-

so ventilation and comfort should be considered. The attic will need to be wired for electricity for lighting and other needs. Air sealing and additional insulation can the attic space more comfortable as well. Consult with a qualified electrician and an HVAC technician and have an energy audit done to discuss needs.

Attic renovations can give homeowners more space in their homes, which can be used as offices, bedrooms or cozy corners. This is no small undertaking and all of the right steps need to be followed to ensure a legal, safe and successful renovation.

Keep groundhogs out of the garden

Groundhogs take center stage on February 2nd. Individuals across the country anxiously await the news of whether one of these furry fellows sees his shadow or not — the latter indicating that an early spring is on the horizon.

Once Groundhog Day has come and gone, the humble groundhog regains its status as unwanted intruder.

Groundhogs invade lawns and gardens in search of fruits, vegetables and ornamental plants. Groundhogs also can make extensive burrows under the soil ripping up the landscape and potentially threatening the foundation of a home. Keeping groundhogs at bay is a goal for many homeowners, and the following are some simple ways to do just that.

Make sure it's a groundhog

Before taking any steps to repel groundhogs, first make sure it's really these fuzzy critters who are wreaking havoc. Signs of a groundhog infestation include:

- Feathery tops of carrots have

been removed.

- A large hole, around 10 to 12 inches wide, under or near a storage shed or other structure with mounds of dirt outside of it.
- Tomatoes with large bites taken out of them.



- Newly damaged plants noticed in the afternoon (deer eat garden plants at night).
- Wide teeth marks on plants and bark.
- Tracks in the dirt that show four-clawed toes on the front paws and five on the back.

Once you've determined it's a groundhog that is causing damage, you can try these

strategies to keep them away.

- Harvest your garden frequently to remove opportunities for groundhogs to prey on produce. They're particularly attracted to cantaloupes, cabbage, green beans, cucumbers, zucchini, and corn. They also like the tender greens from lettuce. Consider using raised garden beds so groundhogs will not have easy access.
- Groundhogs prefer camouflage around their burrows. Mow the lawn, pull weeds and clean up brush piles to deter groundhogs.
- Keep groundhogs from burrowing under structures by burying chicken wire a foot underground and bending it at 90-degree angles away from structures or the garden.
- Apply safe repellents that use essential oils or flavors and scents that groundhogs do not like. Epsom salt is believed to repel groundhogs.
- Call animal control to have a

groundhog relocated. Animal trapping professionals can live trap and release a groundhog elsewhere. Don't try to trap a groundhog yourself, as they can be feisty and bite or scratch if scared.

Groundhogs may be heroes for a day in February, but they quickly take a heel turn when they start to damage yards. Getting groundhogs under control can help.

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What to know about landscape lighting

Home improvement trends come and go, and one trend that has become wildly popular in recent years is recognizable in yards every night. Landscape lighting has transformed how people see and enjoy their properties at night, making it one of the more sought-after upgrades among modern homeowners.

Curb appeal is often seen through the lens of how homes appear during daylight hours, but landscape lighting can make homes look better and more modern, and potentially safer, after the sun goes down. With such potential, landscape lighting is worth exploring for homeowners looking to upgrade their properties.

Are there different types of landscape lighting?

When considering landscape lighting, homeowners should know that there are various options to consider. According to the lighting experts at Lumens, spotlights project a concentrated and narrow beam of light that's usually around 45 degrees. Spotlights are often chosen to highlight specific features on a property, like a component of the landscaping. Individuals who want to cast light over wider, more general areas may consider floodlights, which Lumens notes spread light up to 120 degrees.

Inground lighting is among the more sophisticated landscape

lighting options. Lumens notes that inground lighting illuminates the whole of a tree or structure, often creating a dramatic look. These circle-shaped lights also are great at illuminating walkways and driveways.

Post lights are another outdoor lighting option, and these are often used to light up long walkways and pathways so it's easier and safer to navigate dark areas at night.

Is landscape lighting a job a DIYer can handle?

Many homeowners consider a do-it-yourself approach when pondering a potential home renovation, and a landscape lighting



project is likely to inspire such curiosity as well. The home experts at HGTV note that the feasibility

of DIY in regard to a landscape lighting project depends on the type of lighting homeowners want to install and where they want to install it. Replacing an existing electrical fixture may be well within the skill of a seasoned DIYer, but installing a new fixture is a job best left to the professionals. Homeowners whose homes currently have no or very little landscape lighting are almost certainly better off working with a professional. Solar lighting that does not require any electrical work can be installed quickly and easily by anyone, but such options may not provide the look homeowners are aiming for.

How much lighting is necessary?

The amount of lighting homeowners want to install is up to them. If the home currently has little or no landscape lighting, a consultation with a professional can help to determine how much lighting to install and where to install it. When discussing landscape lighting, homeowners may want to inquire about dimmers. Dimmers can increase or decrease lighting depending on the situation. For example, homeowners may want a little extra light during a party, but less when relaxing alone outside at night. Dimmers allow homeowners to adjust as necessary.

Landscape lighting is a popular home renovation trend. Homeowners considering adding landscape lighting to their property are urged to work with a skilled professional to devise and install a set-up that makes their homes more appealing at night.

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How to create more privacy on your property

An inviting backyard can serve as a welcome retreat from the hustle and bustle of daily life. After a long day at the office or an exhausting day spent transporting kids to and fro, it's hard to resist the allure of a peaceful outdoor space in which to unwind.

Privacy is a key component of

to ensure tree roots can establish themselves.

But planting has its benefits as well. Planting for privacy is essentially creating a living fence that can grow over time and provide even more privacy as trees reach maturity. Plants also tend to be less costly than fencing. The home

plant for privacy will next have to decide which type of plants to add to their properties. Evergreens provide year-round privacy because they don't shed their leaves, so these are the ones most often chosen when creating a living fence. A number of varieties of evergreen trees can do the job, but it's important that homeowners consult with a landscape architect prior to choosing trees so they can ensure the trees will thrive when faced with the growing conditions on their properties. During such a consultation, homeowners may discuss the following popular privacy trees.



any backyard oasis. Some homes may be so remote that privacy isn't an issue. But many suburban homeowners recognize they might need to tweak their landscapes if they hope to create a private oasis outside.

Fencing or planting?

Most homeowners looking to create more privacy on their property will have to choose between fencing and planting. Fencing provides immediate privacy because, once it's installed, no one can see into the yard. Fencing also doesn't require watering or other immediate upkeep, which will be necessary when planting

renovation experts at BobVila.com estimate that fencing projects typically cost between \$1,667 and \$4,075. However, fencing projects can cost considerably more than \$4,000, especially for homeowners with large properties they want to enclose. Large, mature trees can be expensive, though it's unlikely they will cost as much as fencing. In addition, fencing requires more maintenance and will potentially need to be replaced, while native trees won't require much upkeep and can last for generations.

Planting

Homeowners who choose to

The Green Giant can spread as wide as 20 feet at maturity, which is another attribute that makes it so popular among homeowners desiring privacy.

- Eastern White Pine: The ADF notes that the eastern white pine, which can reach heights as high as 80 feet, is favored in spacious yards. That's likely due to its height and its potential spread, which can reach 40 feet. Homeowners who choose the eastern white

pine might like it for its resemblance to a Christmas tree, and in fact it is widely used for that purpose. The privacy provided by the eastern white pine is significant, but it might be best suited to especially large properties.

Whether it's fencing or planting, homeowners have many options to consider as they seek to create more privacy on their properties.

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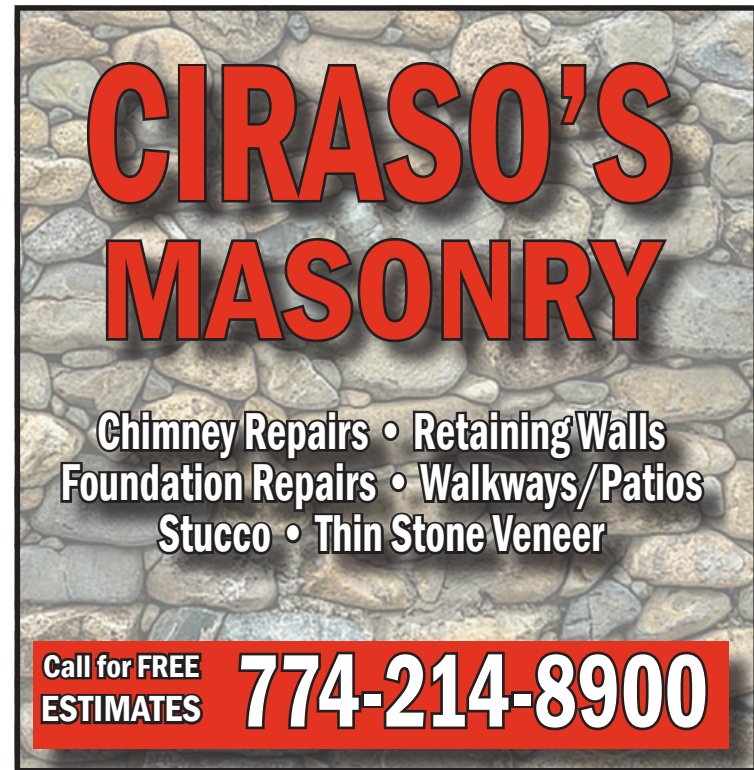
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Revitalize your landscape on a budget

Many homeowners think they have to spend tons of green to get green in their landscape, but that isn't necessarily so. Homeown-

ers can improve their landscapes without digging themselves into financial holes. These strategies can help anyone save some cash and still end up with attractive gardens and more.



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- Use stones or gravel for a walkway. If commercially installed pavers or cement walkways are not within your budget, there are some affordable alternatives. Flagstone or individually purchased and spaced pavers and pea gravel can be used to create pathways. Some construction sites even offer free stones when asked. Soften the look with moss or other plants on the perimeter.
- Remove some lawn. Lawns can require hours of upkeep that may involve the application of expensive fertilizers and weed-killing products that are not always so eco-friendly. Reduce the size of a lawn by putting in a mixed planting bed of perennials or ornamental grasses, or use landscape fabric and mulch.
- Look for free mulch. Municipal recycling centers may offer residents access to free mulch made from grinding up leaves, branches and other plant debris collected throughout the town. Simply bring a few containers to the recycling center and spread the mulch for an ornamental look or to insulate landscapes over winter and protect against weeds.
- Repurpose old items into plant-



ers. Old wheelbarrows, barrels, watering cans, and other items can be repurposed into container gardening vessels. Figure out if items marked for the garbage bin can be incorporated into garden features instead.

- Invest in plants that are easy to propagate. Perennials are the gardener's friend when it comes to saving money. These plants sprout anew each year, and many, such as sedum, catmint, ferns, hostas, and black-eyed Susans, can propagate by division. Figure out the best times of year to divide the plants and start growing them in individual containers before planting the sturdy new shoots in the ground. A single variety of plants grouped together in mass plantings is affordable and easy.
- Shop end-of season sales. Garden centers may begin to make

room for holiday items come the fall. Take advantage of reduced costs on remaining plants and landscape accessories during this time of year. Plants can be covered or allowed to thrive indoors until they can be planted in the spring.

• Pool your resources. Homeowners planning on a big landscaping or revitalization project may want to speak with neighbors to see if they're interested in doing the same. Contractors guaranteed business from a few homes in the same neighborhood may be willing to negotiate lower prices for the volume of work on things like driveway repaving, deck- or fence-building, or installation of paver patios. Some handy ideas can help homeowners transform landscapes without spending too much.



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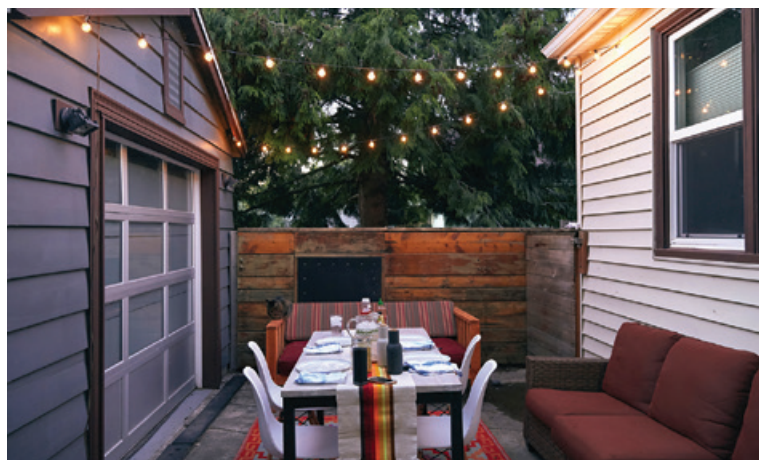
NO JOB TOO SMALL

5 patio projects to enhance outdoor living

Warm weather paves the way to more opportunities to enjoy fresh air. For homeowners who have the luxury of outdoor spaces, including private patios, now is the time to start thinking about projects to enhance these gathering spots.

A patio can be considered a transitional area that links the outdoors to the inside of a home. According to the home and lifestyle resource The Spruce,

the best way to extend the living room of the inside by putting up walls around three sides of the patio if it connects to the home. Leave the last open to the yard, or consider installing screens to mimic the look of popular lanais. The walls will offer more weather protection, meaning you can invest in high-quality patio furniture to make this a fully functioning outdoor living room. Hang a television that is rated for outdoor use for movie-watching



a patio is often an oasis for lounging and entertaining. And depending on homeowners' budgets and preferences, a patio can be just as comfortable and stylish as interior spaces. The following are five patio projects that can transform these valuable spaces.

1. Pretty pergola

A pergola is an open-air (traditionally wood) structure that adds a measure of shade and privacy without completely blocking views of Mother Nature. Installing a pergola over the patio helps define the seating area. Hanging plants can add to the ambiance and string lights can make this a great spot to gather when the sun sets.

2. Patio fire pit

Build a fire pit right into the design with the same materials used to create the patio. For example, if the patio is brick or flagstone, build up to create an eye-catching fire pit. Fire pits not only look good, they also expand the time frame that the patio can be enjoyed, offering cozy spots to sit even when the weather chills.

3. Frame it in

Make the patio a true exten-

sion of the inside by putting up walls around three sides of the patio if it connects to the home.

4. Ooh la la

Vintage bistro tables and chairs can turn a drab patio into one that calls to mind a Parisian courtyard. Whimsical lighting and accents that you would normally think to see indoors, like a gilded mirror, can add extra appeal. Soften wrought iron and other metals on the furniture by including plenty of flowers and greenery. Don't forget the candles and a place to stash a bottle of chilling wine.

5. Farmhouse chic

Transform a patio into an entertaining space that caters to guests. A large farmhouse style table flanked by benches and some upholstered chairs sets the scene for a dinner amid the fresh air. Watering cans filled with wildflowers and mismatched flatware establish a casual feel for gatherings in the space. For those who plan to cook and serve outside with frequency, invest in outdoor appliances so you'll never have to miss a beat with guests.

The options for transforming patios into stylish gathering spots is only limited by the imagination.



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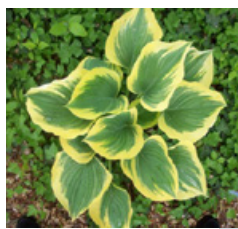
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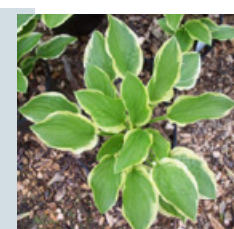
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