

Turn your yard into a vacation-worthy oasis

Warm weather means more time to relax outdoors. For those homeowners lucky enough to have entertaining spaces outside, spring and summer provides plenty of opportunities to enjoy fresh air under the sun or stars.

Over the last few years, families have become especially familiar with what works about their yards and where there is room for improvement. A backyard renovation can cost anywhere from \$5,000 to \$50,000. The American Society of Landscape Architects suggests homeowners budget the cost of a major landscaping project at between 5 and 10 percent of their home's value. Large or small, here are ways to make an out-

door oasis at home.

Create living privacy

Living in close proximity to neighbors may make privacy harder to come by. Wood or vinyl fences, however effective, may not provide the all-natural look many people desire. Vertical gardening, which trains easy-care vines like English ivy, Clematis or various climbing roses to grow on trellis or fencing adds greenery and privacy. Hedges and fast-growing shrubs also can be used for natural barriers.

Install a pool

Pools are the ultimate spots to

cool off on hot days. An elaborately shaped inground pool can blend in with the landscape and offer the ultimate hang-out zone. However, above-ground pools also serve the purpose and are more budget-friendly. Stock tank pools are popular among those who want minimal pool expenditure or have small spaces to work with. Stock tanks are metal vessels traditionally used as watering holes for livestock. They also can be "adult kiddie pools" when combined with some plumbing. Galvanized steel frames make them sturdy. With floats and other accessories, they can become the perfect oasis.

Provide outdoor atmosphere

Create a bespoke bistro vibe by using freestanding planters and posts along with hanging lights to make an intimate outdoor hang-out spot at night. For those with permanent structures, like a deck or a gazebo, lights can be strung across the area or on railings or edging.

Extend the living space

Decks and patios can help make outdoor entertaining areas more comfortable by eliminating the need to sit on the grass or gravel. Plus, they add another "room" to the home. When paired

with weatherproof patio furniture, such as sofas, loungers and tables, a private seating area can be crafted and utilized for any number of entertaining desires.

Hang a hammock

Few things evoke feelings of relaxation better than a hammock. Fitted between two trees (or two posts if trees are sparse), a hammock is an ideal place to grab a nap or read a book.

Additional oasis-inspired ideas include outdoor kitchens, letting up lanterns, cascading water features, and bird feeders to attract the sounds of nature.

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