

## Creating a Backyard Oasis

**N**o matter the size, backyards are meant to be a source of enjoyment and refuge—a place in which to escape when you want to unwind, relax, and have fun. Read on for ways to create a private oasis in your own backyard.

Make your deck spectacular by defining different activity zones within its space. Multiple levels carve out separate spaces for dining and relaxing.

A pergola covered with luxurious vines and an abundance of plants bring the surrounding garden up onto the deck and help blend the structure into the landscape.

A patio can be just a hot slab of concrete or it can be a welcoming extension of your home, calling you outdoors to enjoy cool breezes and fresh air. With a little planning, you can make your patio a comfortable seasonal room. Patios are usually surfaced with brick or stone, but if you opt for concrete, add texture or colour to imitate stone for a more natural look. Use planting beds, container gardens, and weather-proof furniture to decorate the space.

If you grill from spring through fall and love eating outdoors, consider an outdoor kitchen. You don't need a fancy grill, but a countertop for food prep and conveniences such as closed storage and a separate side burner can greatly enhance your outdoor cooking experience. Add a refrigerator and sink to make preparation and clean-up easier. Your outdoor room will feel more like an oasis if it has a sense of enclosure. Fences and garden walls ensure privacy, but you

can also use lattice, pergolas, and landscaping to define outdoor spaces and screen views of neighbouring houses.

A gazebo can add another level of luxury to your outdoor oasis. Whether attached to the deck, set near a pool, or planted in

of porch lights that illuminate access to the house and provide ambience.

For outdoor kitchens, you'll need good task lighting over the grill and work areas. For dining and conversation areas, candlelight, or dimmable electric lamps create a relaxed mood. Steps and walkways should be illuminated for safety. You can also use solar-powered accent lights or low-voltage lights to add drama and interest and to highlight paths. Weatherproof floor lamps and table lamps that match their indoor cousins offer additional style.

Choices abound when it comes to furnishing outdoor rooms. Wrought or cast iron, wrought or cast aluminum, and traditional wood are classic options. Synthetic, weatherproof patio furniture and fabrics are also now available, offering the same style and comfort as anything you would have indoors.

Fountains, fireplaces, and fire pits enhance the beauty and usefulness of outdoor rooms. Fountains add the soothing sound of trickling water and can serve as the focal point of an outdoor space, while fireplaces can help define space. Fire pits also serve to draw people together and can extend the usefulness of an outdoor living room into cooler weather.



the landscape, a gazebo offers a protected spot for dining, cooking, or relaxing. Pergolas, trellises, and arbours are also useful for defining activity zones. Use them to create focal points, areas separated according to function, or provide transitions from one area to another.

Even sun worshippers welcome a little shade. You'll enjoy your deck or patio more if you can provide relief from the sun. Choices include mature trees, umbrellas, retractable awnings, or pergolas and arbours planted with vines. To enjoy your backyard getaway after the sun sets, include outdoor lighting. At its most basic, this consists



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# (Re)novations

If anything is a constant in home improvement, it's trash. Recycling your renovation materials keeps functional items out of landfill. Some organizations provide pickup services, and you may qualify for a tax receipt. Donating is a win-win situation! So, what can be donated?

**Sinks, Toilets and Bathtubs**  
If you're donating a bathtub or sink, make sure that it's not stained and is free from chips. If you are remodelling an older bathroom, your vintage fixtures could be surprisingly popular at the local salvage store.

**Cabinets**  
Remodelling a kitchen often means replacing kitchen cabinets. Luckily, someone else may want those kitchen cabinets you remove, and recycling them cuts down on construction waste. Kitchen cabinets should be in good working order; check to make sure that drawer pulls work, and keep doors and drawers together.

**Working Appliances**  
You can donate working appliances like stoves, refrigerators, dishwashers and washing machines. Many organizations will help these appliances find a new home if they are clean and in good working order.

**Doors and Windows**  
Both interior and exterior doors can be reused. The most useful doors are clean

and undamaged, so look for holes or other alterations before donating. Sliding windows and glass patio doors also can be donated. Check for cracks or holes in the glass that might make the glass unstable and likely to break while in transit.



**Lumber**  
Wood from framing or home improvement projects can easily be recycled. Check for exposed nails or screws as these can pose a safety hazard. Other concerns include ripped or sharp edges and some types of treated wood. Salvage shops usually accept larger pieces of wood, including two-by-fours and plywood. A local woodworking class might appreciate smaller pieces of wood.

**Tiles and Wood Flooring**  
Many salvage yards will recycle wood flooring that is in good condition. Look

for clean, undamaged wood flooring with no visible nails or screws. Extra tiles can also be recycled/donated.

**Lighting**  
Salvage shops often have a high demand for working light fixtures, and many community organizations use donated light fixtures when rehabilitating low-income homes. You can also donate light switches, switch covers and wiring.

**Door Handles/Cabinet Knobs**  
Many people replace door handles and cabinet knobs to update a room's appearance. Door handles in good condition are most useful when all the parts are kept together, so put all of the pieces in a bag before donating.

## Some Resources Include

Habitat for Humanity ReStores  
416-644-0988  
Canadian Diabetes Association  
1-800-505-5525  
Furniture Bank  
416-934-1229  
Woodgreen Red Door Family Shelter  
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