

Real MONEY-SAVERS Small WONDERS Low-water OPTIONS

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COUNTRY  
ALMANAC  
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# BACKYARD SOLUTIONS

DREAM BACKYARDS FROM PROBLEM SPACES

MAGICAL  
makeovers +

135  
amazing  
spaces

**BEST  
PLANTS &  
MATERIALS  
FOR EVERY  
REGION**

low cost,  
**HUGE IMPACT**

transform patios • shade • bare spots  
paths • slopes • side yards • walls





# MAKE every inch count

▶ MAXIMIZING FRONT,  
SIDE AND BACK YARDS  
by Susan W. Capparelle

▶ Often neglected, side yards can quickly be transformed into one-of-a-kind areas with ornamental plantings, and accessories such as birdhouses or water features. They make great play areas for kids.



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Today's home plays so many roles: retreat, vacation destination, kids' playground, social hot spot. To fulfill these diverse functions and showcase it in its best light, Hoffman Landscapes designer Marc Schwartz believes a home and its property should be aligned in design, detail and look. "A home needs to harmonize with the front and back of its property and reflect what will follow—from the approach into the house, inside and out to the back," says Schwartz.

**Front: Increase curb appeal and maximize usage** It's best to set a welcoming tone by introducing visitors to the inside

of your home from the top of your driveway. "Often, I'll design a faux orchard or a row of flowering trees, so that's the first thing anyone sees as they drive up," says Schwartz. Columns, a change in driveway materials or a small grove of 5 to 7 trees can all provide a sense of entry. A front garden with a sitting area makes a perfect link from the driveway to the front door. It should reflect the colors, style and scale of the home's interior. It's also a great vantage point to keep an eye on any children playing, without adults being intrusive.

▶ Pergolas are great for outside dining and entertaining. Here, Japanese wisteria will eventually create a natural green roof.



**Back: Enhance your lifestyle with outdoor living rooms and elements**

If the front of a property sets the tone for what's inside the house, a backyard should complete the feeling by complementing the space from which you just came. Look to bring some of the inside elements outside to the back. Schwartz likes to do this

◀ This grand entrance is enhanced by cryptomeria trees and boxwood hedges. Colorful pansies add welcoming charm.

with sculpture and lighting. "Take that piece just sitting in the living room outside (as long as the material can withstand the weather). Light it and you've got a beautiful view from a study or kitchen. It brings the inside out and vice versa," Schwartz says.

"For a client who wants a multilevel deck but has a sloping yard, they can consider adding an arbor or fireplace at the end of the deck for more visual interest," says Brian Cossari, a landscape architect at

Hoffman Landscapes. The elements used to enhance it can be as simple as outdoor furniture that's upholstered to reflect the style and color of the home's interior, and create a cozier, more functional outdoor environment.

There are other ways to kick up the back end as well. Pergolas give the feeling of a room without walls and are great for shading dining areas by a pool or as cozy, protected sitting areas. Full-blown outdoor rooms with entertainment elements like

USB outlets and Wi-Fi, movie screens and flat-screen TVs draw more users outside to linger. Fire pits or fireplaces add warmth; fountains add pleasant sounds.

And don't forget comfort. Just as you do indoors, adding fabric accessories like cushions and curtains will really make you and your guests feel at home. Weather-resistant fabric accents are easy to find at big-box stores; just keep a trunk nearby where you can stash them during heavy rain and wind.

**Sides: Make the most of these forgotten spaces**

Too often the sides of a home are afterthoughts—neglected and forgotten. In reality, they make the perfect spaces for pocket gardens, potting sheds or play areas. Giving these small areas just a little attention can create fun, beautiful and—best of all—functional spaces.

Today's busy family can also use a place to soothe the senses and calm the mind. Take a shady area and create a meditation spot for contemplation or quiet conversation, away from all other outdoor areas. If the

area is sunny, you also can transform it into a vegetable garden. And that ugly, hilly, rocky pocket can become a rock garden full of interesting textures and plantings. A bird feeder or a butterfly house adds another dimension. A potting shed tucked on the side of the house is perfect for a compact area—while hiding unsightly garden equipment.

Today's home is more than just a place to hang your hat. Landscape designs that reflect, harmonize and maximize the square footage can help a home fulfill all its many contemporary roles and functions.

## Choosing Materials

### DO FRONT, SIDES & BACK HAVE TO MATCH?

Landscape architect Brian Cossari with Hoffman Landscapes suggests that if outdoor spaces are very close to the house, they should all be the same for consistency. But to avoid monotony, he likes to use a variety of plant materials and different architectural shapes—straight, curved, oval. In this home, the straight front walk, for example, offers contrast to the curved path leading to the rear. In other cases, says Cossari, materials don't have to be the same in the front versus the back because they're not viewed at the same time. "If it's a traditional home, you might like flagstone or brick for the front, but in a back with a glass façade, you could vary the design and go with a wood deck with a glass handrail," he says. Take your pick!

