



Dawn & Garden time

**The Mendota Reporter
Wednesday, May 19, 2021**

Five reasons to refresh your outdoor living space for all seasons

(BPT) - Last year, many people took a fresh look at their outdoor living spaces, as life outdoors became of renewed importance as spaces to gather together. Backyards transformed into stay-cation retreats, and front entries were re-vamped into spaces for social distancing reminiscent of old-fashioned porches.

No matter where you live, your outdoor space

can be enjoyed all season with simple upgrades using hardscapes, such as adding a fire pit for warm gatherings or an outdoor kitchen for the taste of summer all year. Whether you do it yourself or hire a landscape professional, hardscaping materials—including natural stone, interlocking concrete pavers and retaining wall systems – can add value to your home and help set the

stage for a heated hot tub, cozy seating around a fire, wood-fired ovens for pizza parties and more.

1) Add a fire feature for chilly days and nights. A fireplace, fire table, fire pit, chiminea or patio heater will enhance any outdoor space with warmth and ambiance. “One of our most popular hardscape installations features a fire ring surrounded by a seat wall,” said Scott



Consider year-round seating, such as seat walls created with segmental retaining wall units.



A fireplace, fire table, fire pit, chiminea or patio heater will enhance any outdoor space with warmth and ambiance.

Arnold, manager of a landscape company in Minnesota. “A fire feature is a useful and beautiful addition to any outdoor space that you can enjoy all year.” Fire pits and fireplaces also are available in kits including all materials that are popular with do-it-yourselfers.

2) A dedicated outdoor cooking space lets you grill in any season. Along with multifunction grills, compact wood-fired outdoor ovens are popular choices, and hardscape designs can make the perfect countertop or grill island. “Cooking outside isn’t just for summer,” Arnold says. “Easily accessible grills, wood-fired ovens or outdoor kitchens built with hardscapes are essential in outdoor spaces.”

3) Create easy access from indoors to outdoors. A raised patio, built with retaining wall units and pavers, is a low-maintenance solution as compared to a

deck. Its surface absorbs heat and may help keep ice at bay. Pavers come in many styles, textures and colors, and require little to no maintenance if properly installed. “We often vary paver shapes, colors and textures to define space and create distinct outdoor rooms,” says Arnold.

4) Consider year-round seating, such as seat walls created with segmental retaining wall units. “VERSA-LOK is the one block I do 90% of my projects with; it can do it all,” says Stan Genadek, owner of an excavating and landscaping company in Minnesota, and creator and host of a YouTube channel on landscaping, “Dirt Monkey University.” Says Genadek: “Because of its versatility and ease of installation, VERSA-LOK is the gold standard in retaining wall systems.” Use it for retaining walls, freestanding

and seat walls, couches, tiers with bermed seating, planters, columns, curves and more.

5) Accessorize with functionality in mind. Lighting, pergolas, shades, awnings, screens and year-round furniture should be considered in an outdoor space all-season refresh. Low-voltage LED lighting can be installed between courses of retaining wall units, under capstones and along paving stone patios and paths. Look for furniture that’s durable against the elements and doesn’t need storage or maintenance other than cleaning.

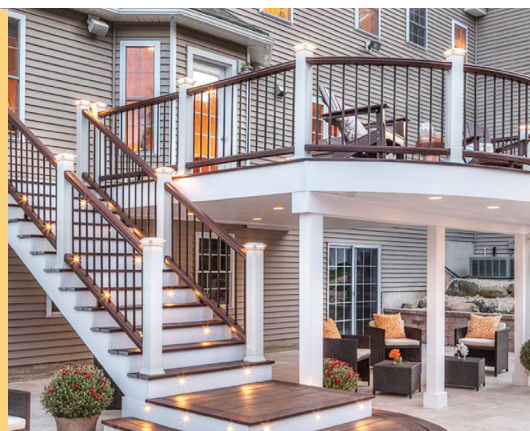
Outdoor living is an essential part of everyone’s health and well-being, and hardscaping materials help you create an outdoor space that adds value to your property and keeps you outside longer into the night, earlier in the spring and later into the season.

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Exploring different backyard structures

Designing an ideal backyard space requires forethought and an eye for style. Knowing which features to include in a yard often boils down to what homeowners want to achieve in the space. Will it be a relaxing oasis or a central entertaining focal point?

People often look to various structures to add height and visual interest to outdoor spaces. Homeowners will likely come across structures like arbors, gazebos, pergolas, and even trellises as they wade through the variety of features they can incorporate into backyard plans. Each of these structures can add appeal, but they also can offer shelter from the sun and privacy when enjoying

Incorporating structures into backyard designs can provide functionality and appeal.

the yard. There are significant differences between each structure, so here's an in-depth look at what sets them apart.

• Arbor: An arbor is one of the more simple garden structures. It is usually a frame that is arched or square-cornered. Most homeowners use it as an entryway to a garden or even the front of the home. Those with green thumbs may cover the arbor with climbing and trailing plants. The Spruce says arbors date back to early Egyptian and Roman gardens and were used throughout Europe by the late 16th century.

• Pergola: The words arbor and pergola are often used interchangeably, but to suggest the two structures are the same would not be accurate. Pergola comes from the Italian word "pergula," which means "projection." Pergolas were once projected from exterior walls and supported on one side by pillars or columns. Today, arbors are usually freestanding units with two or four posts. Pergolas may be connected on one side to a home or another structure. Some are freestanding units supported by four posts. Pergolas tend to be larger and offer more privacy and

shade than arbors.

• Gazebo: Gazebos are more defined garden buildings, states the contractor referral site Network. Gazebos are freestanding units that can be built in various shapes. Some are octagonal, others are square. Like a pergola, a gazebo is supported by columns and may have low railings or built-in benches. Gazebos also may have a more solid roof than arbors or pergolas, providing sun and other weather protection. The roof may have added architectural appeal, like a cupola.

• Trellis: A trellis is a simple, geometrically-shaped structure that provides a surface for climbing plants. A trellis also may support fruit-bearing trees. Trellis



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work may be used in conjunction with an arbor or pergola, or be installed on fencing.

Incorporating structures into backyard designs can provide functionality and appeal.



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How to address moss in the lawn

Lawn care can be a labor of love. Maintaining a pristine lawn is no small task, but it's one that many homeowners proudly take on, knowing that all the hard work and time spent outside on sunny summer afternoons is well worth the sweat equity.

After putting in so much effort to create a lush, green lawn, it's understandable if homeowners react with disbelief when something threatens the health of their turf. Moss is one such threat. Recognizing the threat moss poses is the first step to corraling it before it overtakes a lawn.

Explaining moss

Moss can be especially menacing because its green appearance allows it to blend in with grass rather easily. As moss spreads, it becomes more noticeable. According to the turf care experts at Scotts®, moss is a plant with shallow roots that spreads by spores and root-like structures called rhizoids. Moss is opportunistic, and it will grow where turfgrass is thin and weak. However, moss does not kill the grass. Rather, the conditions that promote the growth of moss can kill the grass. Such conditions may include compacted soil or excessive thatch, acidic



Certain conditions, such as compacted soil or moisture, can allow moss to grow where turfgrass is struggling.

or infertile soil, excessive shade, and insufficient or excessive watering.

How can moss be controlled?

Penn State Extension notes that the first step to controlling moss is to test the soil. Soil test kits are inexpensive and available at most home renovation stores. Test results will reveal if the soil is lacking nutrients or if lime needs to be applied and when to apply it. Such a report also will indicate when to fertilize the lawn, which can help restore the turfgrass so it's more capable of competing with the moss.

If the underlying cause of moss is shade and/or moisture in the yard,

homeowners can speak with landscaping professionals to discuss their options. Replacing existing turf with one that is well-suited to shade and/or moisture may prevent mold from overtaking the lawn in the future. Penn State Extension notes that some turfgrasses may be best-adapted to shaded, well-drained soils, while others may be more likely to thrive in shaded, moist soils. A local landscaping professional can help homeowners find a turf that will not only thrive in the conditions in their yards, but also in their local climates.

Moss can quickly take advantage of conditions that make it difficult for turfgrass to grow. Homeowners who recognize that moss is overtaking their lawn can address it in various ways.

Garden smarter, not harder: Free online Four Seasons Gardening series open

URBANA – The growing season is in full swing and University of Illinois Extension's Four Seasons Gardening summer series starting in June is here to help home gardeners be successful.

Four Seasons Gardening is one of Illinois Extension's most popular gardening series that has been offered since 2014. Each season, horticulture experts cover a variety of environmental stewardship, home gardening, and backyard food production topics in free one-hour webinars.

"We choose topics based on what home gardeners are calling and emailing us about," says Extension Horticulture Educator Gemini Bhal-sod. "We want to give them the skills and tools they need to be successful whether they're new or experienced gardeners."

The summer 2021 sessions will cover the top vegetable garden insects, themed gardens for kids, and end of summer planted fall vegetables.

The webinars are free, but registration is required one week before the session. Sign up for one or all three sessions online at go.illinois.edu/FourSeasons. After registering, participants will receive an email with access information. Participants who are unable to attend the live session can still register for access to the recorded program.

Top 9 Vegetable Garden Insects at 1:30 p.m. on June 15 will cover nine of the most common and destructive insect pests in your vegetable garden and how to control them. Join Horticulture Educator Kelly Allsup as she shares tips on identification, scouting, prevention and organic methods of eradication. Whether you are new to gardening or a master you will walk away with tips to make the gardening season a greater success.

Themed Gardens: Design with Kids in Mind at 1:30 p.m. on July 20 will explore how to foster the love of gardening with the youth in your life by creating theme gardens.

Horticulture Educator Brittney Haag will share ideas and tips for creating a special place for your young, hands-on learner to grow, explore and be creative. Whether it's at a school, a community garden, or your backyard, theme gardens use plants and design



elements inspired by a specific topic, such as favorite books, colors, foods, animals, or even places to visit—the possibilities are endless.

End of Summer Planted Fall Vegetables at 1:30 p.m. on August 17. Fall harvested vegetables tend to be sweeter as they finish growing as the temperatures are cooling and fall approaches. Horticulture Educator Bruce J. Black will share tips for planting fall vegetables, which vegetables are better suited for a late summer planting, and some information about how to store fall harvested vegetables for their longest shelf or storage life.

University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment. If you need reasonable accommodation to participate in any of these programs, please contact the educator leading the session. Their contact information is available at go.illinois.edu/FourSeasons. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time for meeting your access needs.

Extension horticulture educators help home gardeners across Illinois find and apply sound management practices on topics from lawn care to growing backyard produce and everything in between.

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How to create a moonlight garden

URBANA – Gardeners who look forward to enjoying their landscapes during warm summer nights should consider creating a moonlight garden that extends the experience late into the evening.

“Moonlight gardens have been around for centuries,” said Mary Fischer, horticulture educator at University of Illinois Extension, who serves Clay, Effingham, Fayette and Jasper counties. “There’s something about a beautiful garden illuminated by moonlight that engages the senses in a different way.”

It’s not difficult to create a moonlight garden, provided the designer takes care to focus on specific elements, says Fischer.

First, determine where moonlight typically falls, and consider existing objects or plantings that occupy the space. These could block out moonlight through the shadows they cast. Consider views from within the home, and how views can be accessed from inside.

Install low-output artificial night lighting. Hardware stores and home centers offer inexpensive lighting kits, and solar lights can offer subtle illumination to specific garden areas. Reflective items such as mirrors add ambiance and a perception that the space is larger.

Consider a water feature, which provides relaxing sounds and can also be illuminated. Fragrant plants add charm and romance, something gardeners have recognized for centuries. Archeologists discovered ruins of a lost garden at the Taj Mahal that contained night-blooming white flow-

“There’s something about a beautiful garden illuminated by moonlight that engages the senses in a different way.”

—Mary Fischer,
U of I Extension

ers that perfumed the evening air.

“Consider plants that sparkle or glimmer in moonlight or in subtle lighting,” says Fischer. “Make sure to include plants that have light colored or white blossoms and light or silver-gray foliage. Add evergreen plants, since these provide the garden with structure in winter, and vividly contrast with white flowers and light-colored foliage.”

White-blooming annual varieties include ageratum, begonias, cosmos, daisies, dianthus, impatiens, marigolds, pansies, spider flower, violas, and zinnias. White-scented annuals include alyssum, petunias, night phlox, stock and flowering tobacco.

White or light-colored perennial varieties include asters, bellflowers, bugbane, candytuft, dahlias, Shasta daisies, daylilies, foamflower, foxglove, irises, mums, peonies, creeping phlox, and violets. White-scented perennials may include peonies and roses.

“Designers should also look for trees and shrubs that have white flowers, and include bulbs such as crocus, daffodils, hyacinths, lily-of-the-valley, snowdrops, and tulips,” says Fischer. “And remember vines, which can add vertical interest, as well as light and depth to the space.”



Plants with white or light-colored flowers or foliage like daylilies will reflect moonlight and “glow” at night. (Photo credit: Unsplash)

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Get your patio ready for summer living

(StatePoint) It's time to extend your home's living spaces to the outdoors. To get your patio prepped for a summer of relaxation and fun, consider the following décor ideas and inspiration:

The Entryway

Your patio will be more enticing if you have beautiful sliding glass patio doors leading to it. If you do go in for this upgrade, it's important to know that patio doors can be customized in a number of ways that affect their look and function. To help you make sense of your options, shop with

manufacturers that offer visualizer tools. This can help you see what colors and hardware look best in your home and find the combination you like best.

Wood and vinyl sliding doors, for example, offer many customization opportunities, including wood stain finishes, interior and exterior colors; options for internal grids and internal blinds; and a wide array of decorative glass, privacy glass and tinted glass options.

Beyond beauty, be sure to prioritize high performance, particularly when it

comes to energy efficiency, storm protection, and of course, smooth, easy and quiet operation. After all, it's hard to feel relaxed if simply getting outdoors is a struggle.

Exterior Decorating

Boost comfort and ambience by applying the same attention to detail when decorating your patio as you would indoors. Beyond furniture that's comfortable enough to lounge on all day or evening, incorporate throws, pillows and even rugs. Add splashes of color and vibrancy by hanging outdoor wall art, or, if you're feeling extra creative, painting a mural.

Paper lanterns hung above your patio dining area can bring a touch of romance to meals enjoyed outdoors. And get inspired by the nature around you by ensuring your patio features greenery. Potted and hanging plants or even ivy, jasmine or roses grown against a wall or all good choices.

Beauty Inspired by Nature

These days, manufactured stone is not just for the side of your home. The possibilities for using it in and around the patio are endless. Add drama to a boundary wall between the patio and yard; beautify your outdoor kitchen's grill unit, pizza oven, table or island; and enhance seating around the fire pit or fireplace and the bases of pergolas or columns.

Just be sure to select products that look like authentic stone even upon careful inspection, and are designed to withstand the elements.

With a few stylish upgrades, you can get your patio in tip top shape for summer.



Houseplants are grounding, keep you connected to the Earth and even help reduce stress.

Plant parenting: What you need to know

(StatePoint) Plant parenthood among Millennials and Gen Z has been on the rise in recent years, and time spent at home throughout the pandemic has inspired even more people to start houseplant collections. In fact, over the past year, searches including “indoor plants,” “buy plants” and “plant delivery” spiked, as many set out to create beautiful, calming sanctuaries at home and spruce up their Zoom backgrounds.

Why the sudden interest? Houseplants are grounding, keep you connected to the Earth and even help reduce stress. Their care also provides an excuse to take a much-needed break in the day. Plants make your world a happier place and add immeasurable value to everyday life. Whether you're preparing to purchase your first-ever houseplant or you're expanding an ever-growing collection, learn how you can return the favor by being the best possible plant parent.

Understand Your Plant's Needs

While plant purchases tend to be spur-of-the-moment, there are plenty of steps you can take once you get home to ensure a great life for your plants. Explore the wealth of care instructions and guides online outlining recommended watering schedules and other necessary considerations. For busy plant parents or those looking to build collections in their office spaces, low-maintenance plants are the way to go. If your space is short on windows, seek out adaptable low-light plants that thrive outside of direct sunlight, such as ivy or spider plants.

Don't Forget Furry Friends

If you're already a pet parent too, don't worry! Many houseplants won't pose any threats to the fur babies in your home. Top pet-friendly houseplants include Curly Spiders, Baby Rubber Plants, Echeveria, Gasteria, Haworthia, Peperomia, Nerve Plants, Fluffy Ruffles Ferns, Rabbit's Foot Ferns and Staghorn Ferns. When in doubt, foliage and succulents brand Wild Interiors helps potential plant and current pet parents by offering a handy online guide and paw print icons indicating pet-friendly options.

Not-So-Green Thumb

Finally, as you embark on your plant parenthood journey, avoid common houseplant mistakes. When it comes to indoor plant care, many problems stem from loving and caring for your plants too much! Overwatering, over fertilizing and over adjusting the plant's location or pot situation can all do more harm than good, despite your best intentions. Also keep in mind that many plants require less care and attention during fall and winter months.

Ready to test your green thumb and take the leap into plant parenthood? Visit wildinteriors.com to explore more plant care tips and keep an eye out for its collection of succulent and foliage plants at a retailer near you.

And if you ever find yourself wondering if you need another plant, just remember: plants are self-care!

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The future of gardening

(BPT) - Gardening saw record growth in 2020 and experts expect many more people will be digging in the dirt again this spring. From “Victory” vegetable gardens to balcony containers, outdoor gathering spaces and mood-lifting landscapes, gardening is providing an outlet during the pandemic. Research conducted late last year found that 86% of homeowners plan to continue gardening in 2021. Nearly half of respondents say they’ll be planting more and expanding their garden spaces this spring. With all that expansion and enthusiasm comes the need for inspiration and advice.

Help for beginners

One source provides both inspiration and advice, with a goal of helping people feel more successful in their gardening endeavors. The National Garden Bureau was founded in 1920 in the wake of World War I, when an increasing number of suburbanites needed basic backyard gardening instruction. The nonprofit organization’s mission is to provide education to motivate people to enjoy plants, from indoor houseplants to outdoor gardens.

Try something new

How do they do it? One way is with their ‘Year of’ program. Each year the National Garden Bureau selects one annual, one perennial, one bulb crop, one edible and one shrub as their ‘Year of the’ crops. “Our ‘Year of’ program puts a spotlight on timely, interesting va-



rieties,” says Diane Blazek, executive director of NGB. “Plants are chosen because they are popular, easy to grow, widely adaptable and versatile.”

One of the more popular picks for 2021 is The Year of the Sunflower. “If there was ever a time where we needed to add some sunshine to the world, it’s now,” adds Blazek. “Sunflowers add bright, cheery color to the garden, and they’re extremely easy to grow. They’re simple to start from seed, or you can purchase new potted varieties that promise multiple blooms throughout the season.” 2021 is also the Year of the Green Bean, Hardy Hibiscus, Hyacinth and Monarda.

A look into the future

“A big trend we’ve seen in our Future of Gardening survey is all about creating beautiful spaces,” says Blazek. “Planting sunflowers, hibiscus, hyacinth, monarda and other easy-to-grow flowers can help add color and curb appeal, but they also add natural beauty to outdoor gathering spaces, another COVID-19 world trend.” Food gardens are also hot, especially with newer gardeners. “History shows that when there’s a national crisis, there is an increased interest in edible gardening,” she says. “That’s why we’re including more info on growing vegetables.”

Learn from the experts

NGB’s members are horticulture experts who know gardening. The curated information the organization provides comes directly from those sources, offering new and experienced home gardeners advice they can count on to create great garden spaces. “The increased interest in gardening is great news,” adds Blazek. “Our goal as an industry is to keep people engaged in gardening even beyond this season. We feel an even greater need to provide quality information for new gardeners and exciting ideas for gardeners who want to take their experience to the next level. NGB is a great resource for everyone.”

New plants for 2021

A popular area of NGB’s website is the New Plants section. In addition to searching by name, visitors to NGB.com can search by plant category, type and height to find the perfect variety for their garden. NGB.com also provides inspiration for plant combinations, delicious new vegetable varieties and tips to keep plants thriving throughout the season.

4 easy ideas to enhance your 2021 garden

(BPT) - Gardening enthusiasm is surging thanks to our increased time at home – whether on a small-space patio or in a larger backyard. In fact, people spent 42% more time gardening in 2020 than the year before, according to Axiom Marketing’s 2021 Gardening Insight Survey, and it is estimated the pandemic contributed to creating nearly 20 million new “gardeners.” Many experts agree the trend toward nurturing flowers, plants and vegetables will continue into 2021 and beyond.

If you’re looking to test your new green thumb or bring this year’s garden to the next level, consider these top trends and simple ideas from the experts at Ball Horticultural Company:

The year-round fresh and healthy garden: Gardening can provide fresh access to produce that can help encourage healthy eating. You can feel confident knowing exactly where your food comes from and enjoy the satisfaction of growing it yourself. Plus, it doesn’t get fresher than picking something from your own garden just minutes before preparing a dish.

You don’t need an expansive garden to enjoy the many benefits of fresh, healthy vegetables and herbs. In fact, you don’t need a garden at all! Check out Kitchen Minis from PanAmerican Seed® and enjoy a variety of peppers and tomatoes that can be grown inside on a sunny windowsill, countertop or outside as patio tabletop plants. You can grow and harvest your own Kitchen Minis flavors most of the year.

The multi-purpose flower and herb garden: Don’t be afraid to mix your flowers and herbs. Trending in 2021 is bundling your plants



together to save space and make a multi-functional showcase. Start with a tiered fruit stand, line it with coco liner cut to fit inside each bowl space, and then add soil and plants of your choice. The handle and lightness of the stand make it easy to hang as a basket or decorate a patio or table for a beautiful and functional addition wherever you garden.

Be sure to select plants that have a lot to offer in a compact space. For example, herbs from Burpee Plants are ideal for small gardens, so you can enjoy fresh flavors like mint, rosemary and parsley at a moment’s notice. If you’d prefer a centerpiece or accent decor for entertaining, petunias from Wave® Petunias are low-maintenance and stunning, easily adding a punch of color to your container.

The beautiful garden for a bold and colorful outdoor living space: As people spend more time enjoying the outdoors from the safety and comforts of home, they are taking a new look at their exterior spaces. Colorful blooms brighten the outdoors and elevate the mood, which is why flower gardening is flourishing. However, people want this outdoor beauty without extensive maintenance, so ease is essential when planning your flower garden.

When it comes to pairing beauty and simplicity, Beacon® Impatiens are a great choice, especially for those whose outdoor spaces don’t

get a lot of sun. Available in bright, bold colors, you can fill baskets, window boxes, patio containers and shade landscapes with Beacon to add vivid, dramatic color to your spaces and have confidence in their performance. These impatiens are low-maintenance and have high resistance to Impatiens downy mildew, a disease that has caused plant loss in recent years.

The fun family-friendly garden: Having a family garden comes with many benefits. Whether it’s you and your partner at home or the entire family, gardening has proven to be a fun and safe hobby that people of all ages can do together. Enjoy spending quality time while breathing fresh air and learning important lessons from nature and the environment.

Gather everyone’s input on a plan for your family garden and work together as a team to make it a success. One plant that’s particularly fun for families to include is Lavender Primavera from Darwin Perennials. The rich purple color is visually stunning, plus lavender attracts pollinators like bees, butterflies and hummingbirds, so you’re enhancing the natural world around you. Additionally, you’re sure to enjoy the relaxing scent wafting in the breeze, and you can harvest your lavender to use in DIY craft projects around the house or as gifts to loved ones.

Start growing today: The ability to explore interests like gardening and plant care is a silver lining of spending more time at home. Gardening is a healthy activity for anyone, and there are many resources – from your local gardening store to online blogs and videos – to help you be successful. 2021 is your chance to dig in and grow!

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