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GROUP

# CURB APPEAL

A GUIDE TO  
CREATING YOUR  
OUTDOOR OASIS  
+ ATTRACTING BUYERS





**[EDITOR'S NOTE]**

**MEET CARSON ARTHUR**

As a landscape designer, author, garden center owner and TV personality, I have my proverbial finger in a LOT of pots. The truth is, I just really want to help people have fantastic outdoor spaces. Supporting the BHGRE® team gives me the opportunity to partner with an organization that is honest and factual when helping homeowners realize their housing dreams. Whether it's to inspire, inform or illuminate, I want to continue to make BHGRE® into the first spot you turn to get the answers to your questions.

Early on in my career I was asked to define a backyard. I quickly realized that it is almost impossible because we

are so unique from one coast to another. For that reason, homeowners like you deserve to have a source of information that is tailored to your needs.

My job is to help develop content that represents all of you. I want you to look forward to being inspired because we've challenged your concept of what a backyard should be; or how curb appeal impacts your home's value. Your outdoor spaces have a huge potential, and most people don't even know where to start.

So whether you live on the east or west coast, or anywhere in between, trust that I am here to help you make the most of your home ... from property line to property line.

*Sources cited in this publication are notated and can be viewed in full on the back cover.*





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## TIPS FOR SELLERS

**T**he biggest mistake someone selling their home can make is spending the entire renovation budget on the inside of the house. Do they think future buyers will ignore the front of the house and not form an opinion until they get inside? Curb appeal has never meant so much in a housing market as it does today! Buyers begin to assess a home right from the picture on the listing page. Want to make the most for your home? Here are my simple tips to make the best first impression!

### **Choose Containers Over Plant Beds to Add Color to the Front Yard.**

I never want anyone to think that having plants is a bad idea. Homes with healthy plants and flowers are considered more welcoming to a buyer. However, you never want a buyer to think that the front yard is high maintenance. Plant sparingly because not everyone

has a green thumb. Instead, use containers to bring plants that are in bloom to the front door, maximizing the visual interest in the space.

### **Lights at Night are a Must.**

As most potential buyers will often drive by a listing after work, setting your house apart is important. Don't go crazy and install a complete new

outdoor system; moderation is very important. Lights that face downward and highlight the edge of the path allow your guests easy access and help make your front yard a safer space. Aim for welcoming and not airplane runway when installing them, especially if you have a long front walk. Use some of the new solar spotlights to highlight your favorite house features and don't forget to point one at the "For Sale" sign!

### **Consider a New Paint Job.**

Paint is great for freshening up your home and also for adding a new a color scheme that highlights the character of your

house. One of the easiest and least expensive ways to get instant curb appeal is through great house colors. But what colors should you choose? I've seen many different colors used successfully, even in combinations that would surprise you. The way that I choose paint colors is to take a bunch of the latest paint chips and stand outside and try to find the corresponding colors in things around; like the trees, or other houses, or even in the rocks. If you can find those colors close by, then you know that those choices will work best because they will complement your existing surroundings.

# 3

## STEPS TO BETTER CURB APPEAL

### 1 ADD SEATING TO THE FRONT YARD!

People visiting a home will describe it as being more welcoming and friendly. Even if no one ever sits on the bench, the concept that you created a seat just for anyone to use is well worth the money spent.

### 2 HIDE THE GARBAGE!

Too often, homeowners need to store their garbage cans, recycling and compost bins in the front of the house because they have nowhere to store them. Consider adding panels or even creating a space under the front porch to discretely store your bins when they are not on the curb.

### 3 MAKE A WALKWAY!

Having a big front walkway can provide huge returns. Buyers include accessibility into the home as part of their criteria when selecting a house. Having a clear access point into a home is so important because it draws the eye straight to the front door, which is always the very first thing a guest looks for when visiting a house for the very first time.



## THE COST OF LANDSCAPING

**The cost of landscaping always seems to shock homeowners. Somehow people relate the cost of landscaping to the cost of gardening and are surprised to find out that decks and wood cost more than plants, not to mention the labor involved to install them. In speaking to several industry professionals, the average backyard renovation starts at around \$20,000, with some projects crossing the million-dollar mark. With such a huge range, how do you know how much your outdoor renovations should cost and how much should you really be investing in your home?**

One of the biggest mistakes that a client makes is to envision what they want in the yard BEFORE they really set the budget. When I meet with a client, I start by asking what the approximate value of the home is. If you set your budgets based on percentages of your total home's worth, then you know that your plans will stay in line with property values in your neighborhood.

Front yards have been getting more attention by REALTORS® and housing experts because of first-impression numbers. Several online sources place the value of curb appeal and a home's first impression between 5.5-12.7%<sup>1</sup> of the home's worth. Items like shade trees and







front walkways contribute to higher returns, as do front porches and sitting areas. While plants and gardens are important to the overall appeal, too many flowers in the front yard intimidate buyers looking for low-maintenance homes. As my general rule, I try to keep the front yard landscaping at 7% of a homeowners renovation budget. That number does not include the driveway even though it may be at the front of your home.

Backyards tend to be more about function than a front yard renovation. Good design can offset the shortfalls from the inside of the home with outdoor elements that meet the same need. For example, if a home has a small kitchen, adding an

outdoor version with a barbecue or a smoker is a smart investment because it partially addresses buyers' concern when they see the inside space. Having a good deck or patio in your backyard that provides lots of living space can increase your home's value by up to 12.4%<sup>2</sup>.

As you plan your spring projects, budget your dollars accordingly. I always tell homeowners to set aside about 20% of their renovation budget for the outdoors. This may seem like a lot, but with all of the housing market numbers showing big returns in landscaping, you can renovate knowing that your money is being spent wisely.

▲  
HAVING A  
GOOD DECK  
OR PATIO  
IN YOUR  
BACKYARD  
CAN INCREASE  
YOUR HOME'S  
VALUE BY  
UP TO 12.4%





# FRONT YARD INVESTMENTS

**How much does landscaping really impact the value of your home? When it comes to the outdoors, spending money on renovations has never been so important or so confusing, with sellers getting large dollars for neglected or uninspired homes.**

To make it simple, think about your property like a 3-course meal. The front yard is the appetizer. It sets the stage for the dinner and hopefully leaves your guests anticipating more. The house is definitely the meat and potatoes of your property. It is the substance of the meal. The backyard, like the dessert

course, finishes the space.

Whether you're having guests over for dinner or trying to impress potential buyers, people naturally start forming an opinion of your home from the moment they see it. That said, you only get one chance to make a first impression. For years we were told that

first impressions were made at the front door or at the front hallway. This is definitely not the case. Your front yard is the very first thing people see when they come to your home.

You also need to consider the return-on-investment for your outdoor renovation. According to several online sources,





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landscaping in the front yard not only has an immediate ROI, it also increases in value over time as plants, trees and shrubs continue to grow!

Personally, I love to drive through neighborhoods and look at the landscaping and the houses. Some homeowners put a lot of detail into their front

yards with shrubs, flowers, trees and even seating areas. You can tell they care for their spaces and it's not a big leap to assume the inside of the house looks like the outside. I measure the success of a good front yard by how much I want to see the rest of the property. Other homeowners go with

the standard foundation plants, an evergreen and a large lawn. While there's nothing wrong with this default design, there's also nothing inspiring about these yards either. They don't leave me wanting more. Even in a booming real estate market, making the most of your front yard is the best way to get

guests (and potential buyers) smiling before they even walk through the front door.

So, what is your yard saying? Is it time to make a change? Landscaping the front of your house is not only a secure investment, it's the best way to make a fantastic first impression.





# BACKYARD BASICS





## ◀ **RAISED PLANTERS** HAVE BENEFITS OVER PLOWING OUT A SECTION IN THE LAWN

**The most requested outdoor feature for the backyard is the raised vegetable planter. With so many homeowners growing their own vegetables at home now, the raised planter has become the must have item. Raised planters have some significant benefits over just plowing out a section in the lawn.**

### **WEED CONTROL**

A large portion of weeds that live in our yards travel under the soil via rhizomes (rootlets). With a raised bed, you can place a liner at the bottom of garden cloth to completely prevent new ones invading your soil. Even the weeds that spread via seeds, like dandelions, have a harder time getting over the walls of your garden, providing less competition for your veggies.

### **PEST CONTROL**

Vermin like gophers and groundhogs are limited in their ability to get into the beds because they don't jump. A planter that is 20" tall is even effective in stopping some rabbits, as they are reluctant to leave the safety of the ground. If you have a real pest problem, consider putting your planters on legs!

### **BETTER SOIL**

While the soil in your yard might be great for trees and perennials, vegetables like to get special treatment. Filling your beds with a high-grade triple mix (topsoil, peat, and compost or manure) ensures that your tomatoes are getting the best. Another benefit to adding your own soil is that you can better control compaction, making it easier for the roots of the plants to access more

nutrients and water, and producing better returns for you!

### **ACCESSIBILITY**

Gardening where you can reach without having to bend over! It's a dream for anyone who has strained their back digging on their knees in a vegetable bed. Higher definitely makes it easier but also consider that you can control the pathways in between the beds, making them level and more stable for walking. One caution, don't make your raised beds too wide! Keep them between 4 and 5' so that you can easily reach into the middle.

### **APPEARANCE**

No one can deny that a raised bed just looks good. They are neat and tidy with all of the soil contained in one space. Having multiple beds is perfect for those like me, who want organization even outdoors.

This year I built my own raised planters complete with trellises for beans and peas. My garden is probably a little big for most homeowners, as I installed over 25 raised beds that hold more than 45 yards of soil. Instead of using expensive cedar, I used a new treated product called MicroPro Sienna, which releases significantly less copper into the soil than the pressure-treated alternative, making it a better choice for around your edibles. Whether you go big like I did and make a 15-year investment, or just put in a single planter that can be relocated if trends change, building a raised bed is easy and definitely worthwhile! This summer, grow what you eat!



# THREE OUTDOOR PROJECTS YOU CAN TACKLE IN ONE WEEKEND

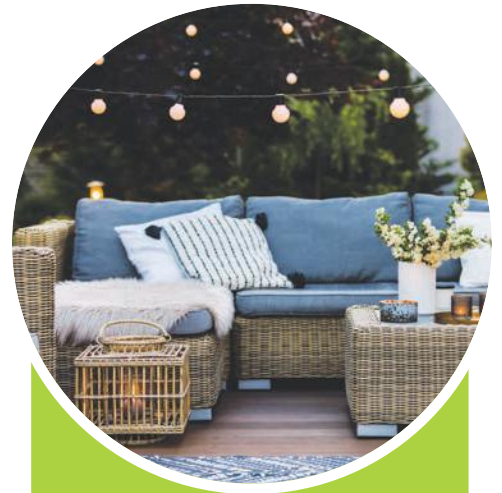


## GET GROWING

Still haven't got that veggie garden you've been dreaming of? The good news is it's not too late. This season's must-have, the raised planter box, is a perfect space to start up your edible garden. The key is choosing a custom design that makes sense for your space. With DIY here to stay, companies have gotten really good at helping novice builders get started. Check online sources for the best way to build a planter that works for you!

## CREATE SOME PRIVACY

Putting up a simple privacy screen between you and the neighbors has never looked so good or been so easy. With outdoor materials and fabrics, trifold privacy screens are a temporary decorative piece that adds color and character to any deck or balcony. The key to maximizing the benefits of a privacy screen is to put it close to where you need the most protection, but far enough away that it doesn't crowd your usable space. Learn from Goldilocks; there is a spot that's not too close and not too far away.



## INCREASE YOUR HOURS OUTDOORS

With fewer bugs and beautiful breezes, summer evenings are always my favorite. Why not spend the weekend making your outdoor space after-hours friendly? Wood fireplaces, gel-flame fire bowls or even infrared heat lamps are a great way to instantly make your space cozier. Once you add a few extra pillows and blankets, you'll have a hard time ever heading back indoors!





## PLANTA TREE

This is a great time to add a tree to your space, and it's never been so important.

The global tree canopy continues to decline, with a loss of 73.4 million acres in 2016, according to the University of Maryland. This is roughly the size of New Zealand and a 51% increase over 2015. North America plays a big part in these numbers, as we have almost 15% of the world's forests.

As homeowners, planting trees in our space, or replacing dead or damaged trees make sense on so many levels, including reduced energy consumption due to the increased protection from the elements that a mature tree provides; the tree's ability to remove



[CONTINUED]

## “PLANT A TREE”

CO<sub>2</sub> from the air that we breathe; and even an increased property value, with online experts showing a mature tree increases your home's value by more than 3%<sup>3</sup>. So, with all of these motivators, this is the time to plant—we just have to do it properly. Lately I've been seeing eager homeowners out putting in trees and making some pretty big mistakes. Here are a few you need to avoid.

### Plant New Trees Flush to the Surface of the Ground.

When trees arrive in a pot or in a burlap-covered ball, they need to be planted at the same depth they have grown at. This means that that top of the soil in the pot needs to be flush to the surface of the ground. Even easier, the hole you are digging needs to be the exact depth to accommodate the roots. Somewhere along the way, homeowners started to plant deeper, thinking that more water would be channeled into the hole or higher because digging the hole got too hard with rocks below. Both of these options will shorten a tree's life because the roots grow horizontally 18-24 inches below the soil. Too deep or too shallow prevents them from being able to support the tree's needs.

### Never Pile Mulch Around the Crown of the Tree.

This is called “volcano mulching” and is a quick way to kill your tree. The pile of mulch going up the trunk of the tree holds moisture around the bark, which leads to disease and decay of the wood. We are also seeing increased insect and rodent activity as they are living in the piles and causing damage to the bark below the mulch levels. The other big downside is too much mulch limits the amount of oxygen to the roots, effectively smothering the tree.

### You Can Stake a Tree in a Windy Situation, But Only Temporarily.

At most, the stakes should help to support a tree for 2-3 years, otherwise the tree will not develop the thickening at its base to help it withstand high winds.

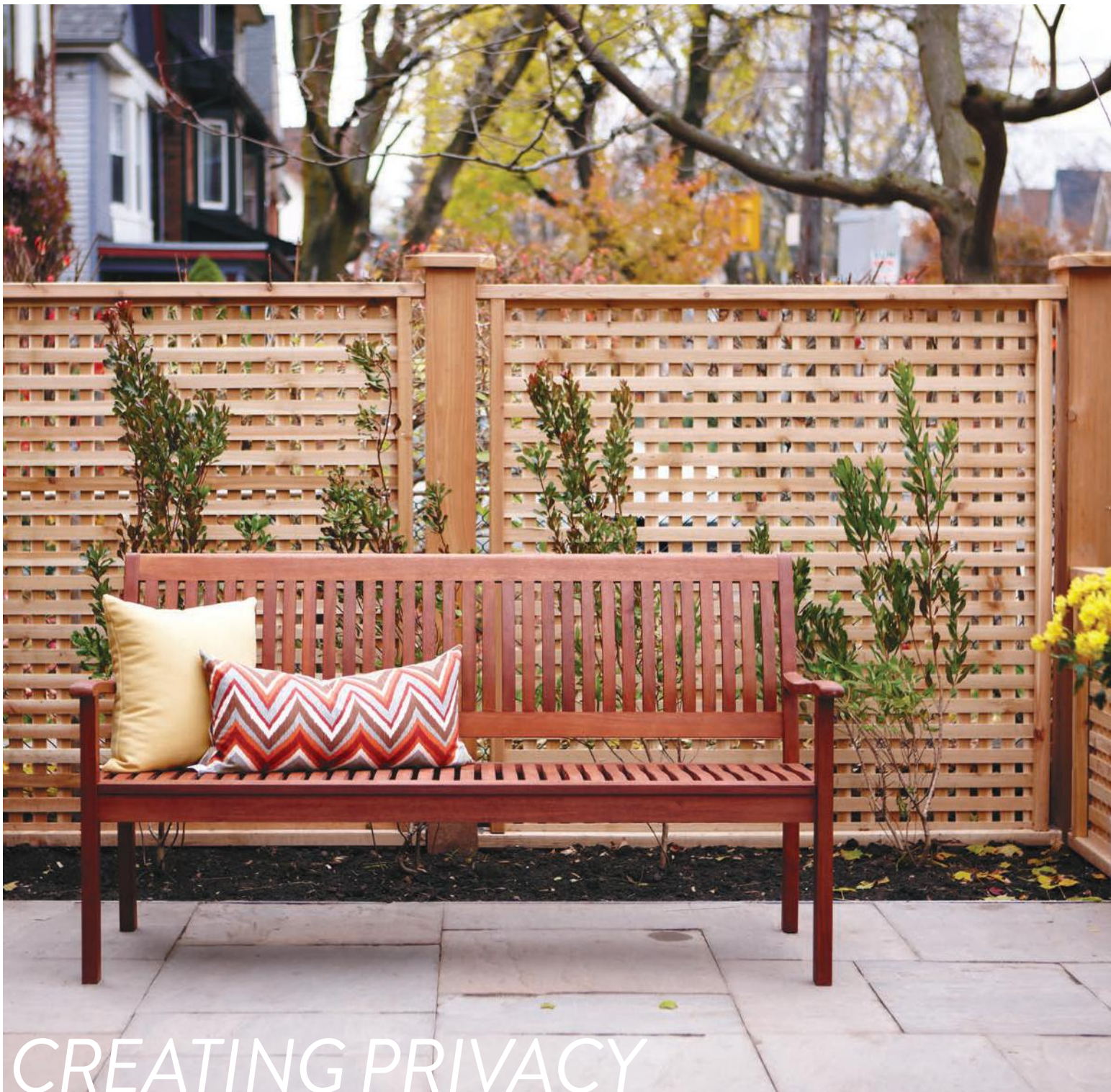


## THE VALUE OF A TREE

Trees on your property can be worth more than \$19,000 and save you more than \$175 on your energy bills.

- Research shows homebuyers prefer houses on streets that have trees. Properties with healthy mature trees show an increased value between 5 and 12%<sup>4</sup> over homes that have none.
- A well-placed tree that shades your home in the hot summer months can save you up to \$55<sup>5</sup> each year, and an additional \$120 in winter heating costs.
- Evergreens and conifers should be placed on the north side of your property to help block the cold winds in the wintertime. To maximize their effectiveness, don't plant your evergreens in a straight line. Instead, stagger them in a zigzag pattern.
- Plant your shade trees on the south side of the property to create the most protection from the summer sun.
- Make sure you follow the individual planting guidelines for the each type of tree that you plant. Don't assume that all trees grow the same, even if they come from the same family.





When I think about getting back to my roots, I envision an escape from urban/suburban living. Unfortunately, having a private moment in our own backyard is getting harder and harder these days. With larger homes on smaller lots and developers trying to maximize the building space in urban centers, having neighbors visually sharing your backyard is becoming an accepted way of life.

So how do we take back our privacy and create a home oasis? First, let's discuss what isn't working. Unfortunately, the average size of homes continues to go up. Fences down the property line and trees in the back corners just aren't going to cut it any more.

Instead, here are my favorite ways to get a little privacy in the backyard...









## [CONTINUED] “CREATING PRIVACY”

### **Build Closer to the Home!**

If you are adding a new deck or patio, stay tight to the house. Use your home to add some privacy on one side and then consider extending the roofline out over the patio. The further away from the house you are, the less privacy you are going to have.

### **Stay Low!**

When in doubt, try to get as close to the ground as possible for your useable space. Make the most of the privacy fence if you have one and add some decorative details to it so that it becomes part of the space. I like cedar shingles or even panels of decorative lattice inset into the fence.

### **Add Small Trees Instead of Big Ones!**

Small trees are great for creating privacy because you can plant them closer to where you actually need it. Think about trees that stay in the 15-20' range. You can plant these closer to the deck and really take advantage of all that privacy without fear that the tree is taking over the entire space. I love using Serviceberry and Redbuds.

### **Add a Trellis, Arbor or Pergola.**

Traditionally, these structures were a way to hold plants but today's versions are definitely bigger and more permanent. My favorite trellis or arbor will include 6x6 posts and decorative braces across the top. Plant a pair of complementary vines on this and you'll have a stunning privacy panel. Try clematis with a climbing rose. They bloom at different times and play well together on the same home. For even more privacy, try combining the vertical panel with a pergola. A pergola is really an open roof over a deck or patio. I use them for so much more, though. By adding hanging baskets or even lattice walls, you can effectively create privacy exactly where you need it. One small tip; use a wood that is pre-stained. Having your pergola look great for many seasons without putting any effort in makes life easy.

### **Use Objects As Hanging Art Pieces.**

Recently, I built a frame on a deck to hold an old painted door. We hung the door on its side and got instant privacy!







[CONTINUED]

## “CREATING PRIVACY”

Now the door has become a conversation piece. You can also try this with an old fence panel. As long as the eye has something to focus on, you won't notice the neighbors!

### **Umbrellas Aren't Just for Shade Anymore!**

By adding a pair of bright umbrellas to the corners of your patio and tilting them on a slight angle, you can

effectively frame your space and at the same time, hide those neighboring second-story windows. Try adding a chair and a coffee table under the umbrella and you've created a perfect spot to sit and escape!

The key to creating privacy is to really understand exactly where you need it. Sit in your patio furniture and look around. Try sitting in

different chairs to really understand what your guests are experiencing. If you can see your neighbors, then they can see you! Even if it's a window that you're sure nobody uses, your guests will subconsciously check it to make sure. No one wants to feel like they are on display. Make the most of your own backyard this summer and try a few of my privacy solutions!



### [FINAL THOUGHT] WINDS OF CHANGE

I've been saying it for a while, "the definition of a backyard is in transition" and I couldn't be more excited or worried for the future of landscaping. The largest population group we've seen is about to flood the housing market, and with that comes a new wish list for what they want in their outdoor spaces. The smart companies are already tracking this migration from dorms and rental spaces to first-time homes and paying close attention to what the millennials are doing, and more importantly, spending their money on. This generation will reshape our industry just through sheer volume. Their wants and needs will be the motivating factor for retailers, automotive companies and even grocers. Everyone wants to make sure they capture the next generation early, and keep them for as long as possible.

## ▼ A PAIR OF **BRIGHT UMBRELLAS** FRAMES YOUR SPACE AND HIDES NEIGHBORING SECOND-STORY WINDOWS







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#### SOURCES

1 | [realtor.com/advice/sell/what-is-curb-appeal](https://www.realtor.com/advice/sell/what-is-curb-appeal); 2 | [today.com/news/best-backyard-improvements-add-most-value-wbna24013450](https://www.today.com/news/best-backyard-improvements-add-most-value-wbna24013450); 3 | [arborday.org/trees/benefits.cfm](https://www.arborday.org/trees/benefits.cfm); 4 | [homesandgardens.com/news/trees-that-increase-property-value](https://www.homesandgardens.com/news/trees-that-increase-property-value); 5 | [blog.constellation.com/2016/04/01/home-energy-conservation-shade-tree-landscaping](https://www.blog.constellation.com/2016/04/01/home-energy-conservation-shade-tree-landscaping)