

Designing an outdoor garden room

By CHARLIE NARDOZZI
Special to the NEWS

With the economy floundering, many Americans are spending less money and sticking closer to home. That means more time for home projects such as gardening and yard care.

One project that has become very popular over the last few years is building an outdoor garden room.

An outdoor garden room can be a natural extension of your home. It can be as elaborate or as simple as you like. Some people build a three-season porch, complete with furniture, dining tables, and lighting attached to their house. Others keep it simple by just decorating their existing deck or patio with favorite plants and pottery. Some gardeners create a special room in the yard away from the house and all its activity.

Whichever way you go, here are some basic ideas to create a beautiful and functional outdoor garden room to enjoy.

- Design to use— Think of how you'd like to use your outdoor space. Do you like entertaining and cooking for people? If so, you might want to incorporate an outdoor oven and sink in the room. Also, if you'll be serving food in the outdoor room, build the room close to the kitchen to reduce the amount of trips you'll have to make.

- If the room is mostly a quiet retreat or reading space, consider large plants and structures that create hidden resting areas with comfortable outdoor furniture and good lighting.

- Look at the space— Consider the location of your garden room. Look at the access points. How large are the paths and do they enter the room from the desired direction? How does the

traffic flow in the room? Is it disruptive to the intended peace and quiet of the room?

- Consider the views— There's nothing worse than creating a beautiful outdoor garden room complete with plants, furniture, and sculpture, only to have an unflattering view of your neighbor's yard. To change the view, plant evergreen hedges, such as cedars and hemlock, or building a wall that can be decorated with outdoor art, hanging baskets, or window boxes.

- Incorporate the senses— Your room is a unique place where the outdoors meets the indoors. Incorporate some of both with plants and products that soothe the senses. These would include fragrant potted plants, such as brugmansia, stocks, and heliotrope. Plant containers filled with edible plants, such as cherry tomatoes, herbs, and alpine strawberries, for snacking. Hang wind chimes to offer natural



Creating a garden room is a great way to enjoy the comforts of home.

sounds. Place beautiful ceramic containers, sculpture, and art on outdoor walls for viewing. Build a fire pit or fireplace for ambience and warmth, creating a cozy, romantic feel.

- Make it comfy— Outdoor furniture has come a long way. No longer are plastic chairs and tables the norm. Rot-proof wooden and metal-framed furniture have all-weather cushions that require little maintenance other than winter storage in cold areas. Use natural materials under-

foot, such as bamboo mats and all-purpose rugs, to provide comfort for your feet.

Ultimately, the scope of your outdoor room is only limited by your imagination.

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