



## **Don't Let Beautiful Spaces Stop at the Backdoor**

This time of year, we spend more time outdoors, getting as much fresh air and sunlight as possible. So, why let beautiful spaces stop at the back door?

In the past few years, outdoor living spaces have become extensions of our homes rather than separate patios and porches of yesteryear. But don't let your budget keep you from having an outdoor space you truly love. Define outdoor spaces with beautiful pavers or flagstone, protect pasty winter skin with canopies and umbrella, and mix up dining and conversation areas to create intimate outdoor rooms in which to laze away the short summer days. Add a playful touch with strings of lights to create soft ambient lighting, and complete the stage for your beautiful outdoor space with fresh flowers on tabletops and potted plants at the edges of your seating area.

Nature provides an abundance of interesting, textural and best of all, free design elements. Long, straight sticks can become trellises, fences and obelisks; stones make appealing objets d'art in the garden; shrubs and plantings provide beautiful backdrops for your perennials and annuals to shine. Additionally, items you already have can find new life – old clay pottery makes beautiful planters and old porch furniture gets a second chance with a can of \$6 spray paint.

Now is also a great time to improve your home's curb appeal (especially important if you plan to list your house for sale). Minor improvements like cleaning windows, painting doors, fixing any damaged areas on your siding or trim, re-staining and re-sealing decks and patios, and repairing concrete and paved walks go a long way to increase your home's beauty and won't cost you a bundle.

Don't forget to bring some of the short-lived, new-found bounty indoors to enjoy. Flowers and shrubs are finally blooming so grab your clippers and fill vases, pitchers and antique Ball jars with bunches of apple blossoms, forsythia and lilacs – get crazy and mix them all together! Place them around your kitchen, bathrooms, bedrooms and hallways for a touch of spring in every space.

Have an outdoor project planned for this summer? Check out my Facebook page for inexpensive decorating ideas or post your pictures and ask questions for free advice.

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