

# HOMES

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ISLAND LIVING:

## Outdoor Oasis

TIPS FOR CREATING THE  
LANDSCAPE OF YOUR DREAMS.

## Waipio Valley to Maui...

THE VIEW FROM  
HALE KUKUI ORCHARD RETREAT

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# Outdoor Oasis

*Some tips from the experts  
on creating the landscape  
of your dreams.*

**W**ith Hawai'i's reliable tradewinds, abundant sunshine and cooling afternoon cloud cover, entertaining and relaxing outside here is a given. Such a perfect climate makes it easy—and comfortable—to enjoy outdoor living spaces year 'round.

Those with a less-than-ideal outdoor environment need not fret, however: a backyard makeover is one of the most cost-effective ways to increase your home's footprint, value and day-to-day pleasure provided by beautiful surroundings.

In fact, a nationwide trend is shattering the myth that a luxurious landscape is reserved for just a lucky few. Water features, fireplaces and firepits, pools and spas, entertainment patios, gazebos, outdoor kitchens—all have gone mainstream as outdoor enhancements have become the second most popular category of home improvement, according to a Better Homes and Gardens Magazine survey.

Many homeowners now see their decks and yards as an extension of their indoor living spaces, clearly illustrated by the sheer numbers of Americans who enjoy cooking outdoors. Gourmet magazine reports that 81 percent of U.S. households own a grill, and 47 percent actually fire it up 1 to 2 times each week during the summer, although it is this local writer's guess that Hawai'i barbecuing statistics would be even hotter than that.

## PLANNING, PLACEMENT AND PLANKING

So what does it take to create the backyard of your dreams? "We believe beautiful estates are a product of good planning," states Greg Boyer,



Greg Boyer, ASLA, and his wife Lynn, enjoy relaxing in the pavilion at their lushly landscaped home. Greg, who has been designing tropical landscapes in Hawai'i since 1975, incorporates design principles gleaned from his travels across the globe. (Above)

Master landscape architect Greg Boyer's own landscape offers a peaceful refuge complete with a pavilion, water feature and unique "floating" pathway. (Left, and far right)

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Landscape design can be used to beautifully frame art and panoramic views.

ASLA, owner of Hawaiian Landscapes. "A homeowner should sit down and do the same thing that we professionals do: take a fresh look at your site by doing a site analysis. Develop a program, which is the functional aspect of the project, and consider hiring a professional landscape architect to get design ideas."

While some homeowners make the mistake of focusing mainly on money issues, Boyer maintains that creativity doesn't have to be expensive. "Good ideas can actually be less expensive ways to do the same thing."



Color, sound and scent all contribute to this Big Island home's landscape.



For an instant backyard makeover, add a water bowl or garden art from Bali or Asia.

Taking digital photos of the existing landscape is a good starting point, Boyer says, so the homeowner and anyone else working on the project can coordinate design decisions easily. Consultants like Ray Ka'aihue, house package specialist for Trojan Lumber in Hilo, can make important suggestions on placement, with ways to maximize wind flow and sunlight. Brigitte Spry, home planning consultant for HPM Building Supply, says besides strategizing on how best to frame views and landscaping from inside the house, the planning process should also consider how the natural elements- wind, sun and rain- can cause future problems.

One popular solution to premature structural aging is to incorporate eco-friendly, termite-resistant composite materials that are attractive over the long-term and don't require a ton of maintenance. "That way, people can spend their time enjoying their outdoor space instead of working on it," notes Lee Wilson, HPM marketing manager. WeatherBest® by LP and TimberTech® are two examples of

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composite decking materials carried by HPM that suppliers say are mildew- and mold-resistant and are guaranteed not to rot, splinter, fade or warp.

"TimberTech® has been received really well by our local customers," says Sebastian Calaway, director of purchasing for HPM. "Earthwood, its line of tropical hardwood-looking composite decking, comes in teak, rosewood and walnut; each plank has color and grain variations that look like the natural variations in real hardwoods. It doesn't need to be painted or stained, and the grooved planks are a snap to install with a hidden, stainless steel fastener system that hides nails and screws."

## LESSONS FROM A MASTER LANDSCAPER

While decks and patios are important structural elements, the main attraction is often the living landscape. "Gardens are a place to relax, rest, and often, just to *be*," says Boyer, whose globe trekking has taken him to outdoor oases in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and all points in-between. "Color and scent are very important parts of the overall atmosphere, whether teasing the senses or calming one's spirit. Treating outdoor spaces in the same way as interior spaces leads to good design; I often think of lawns and lawn paths as connecting parts of the garden that modulate people's experiences as they move through the garden."

Boyer, who taught for eight years at the University of Hawai'i and has designed landscapes for exclusive homes within Mauna Lani Resort, Kuki'o and The Bluffs at Mauna Kea, has created his own signature style he calls "PolynAsian." But his approach goes far beyond flair. "I do incorporate many design ideas from far-away places, but more importantly, visiting Buddhist and Hindu countries has taught me to accept life and to treasure it—that life is a gift. Living life to its fullest is something that is certainly expressed in my work."

## Want to get the biggest 'bang for your buck'?

Here are some cost-efficient backyard upgrades to consider:

- Water features in large pots or bowls are a refreshing addition to the landscape
- Water lilies add color and often scent to the garden
- Artistic garden elements from Bali or Asia create instant pizzazz
- Opening up bathrooms to a small, enclosed outdoor garden with an outdoor shower is very popular
- Pay attention to the entry—it's probably the most important part of any landscape so be sure to budget for it accordingly.

—Greg Boyer, ASLA

One project he is especially proud of is his own home's landscaping. "My favorite element of our own landscaping is my total overall commitment to the project," Boyer says enthusiastically. "When friends and visitors experience our garden, they 'get it.' When I experience our garden I get that it was worth every penny and all those weekends for five and a half years. After a near-fatal accident, I decided to use some of my best plants in my own garden, maybe things I was saving for that mythical client. I finally took the opportunity to view myself as important, and to design with abandon. I can truly say I did my very best."

Besides designing, Boyer operates a 9-acre nursery on the windward side of O'ahu. Here he experiments with plants not commonly used in the landscape to gain a thorough understanding of the plants' growing habits and water, sun and soil requirements, so he can make knowledgeable choices in a client's garden design. Palms, trees, colorful tropical shrubs and hardy ground covers are all part of this living laboratory that Boyer has been collecting for 27 years. Now, with the help of his nursery staff, he can see "which plants not

only survive, but thrive."

Boyer himself is on a similar path. "I feel blessed—first to still be alive—and to be able to use Hawai'i as a base to take what I've learned here out to my projects in other places, such as in Mexico, as I did last year. Hawai'i is unique in its fundamental spirit, and in its willingness to embrace outside influences. And while my wife and I know there are many beautiful places in the world—I want to see as many possible—I truly believe Hawai'i is one the most beautiful places one earth."

Yet another reason to start planning your own outdoor oasis!



## Save time, money and water with these eco-friendly ideas:

- Use native plants- they require less human intervention (watering, fertilizer and pesticides). Plants that thrive, not just survive, in the climate are a better investment—they'll live longer.
- Planting native trees and shrubs also helps restore the natural diversity of your region.
- If you do have to water, install drip irrigation, which saves water. The best system combines drip with spray heads.
- Smaller trees can significantly reduce in-home cooling costs when they're planted in strategic locations to shade outside walls and windows. Trees planted in groups provide maximum shade, but remember to consider the trees' mature height in relation to house sides and corners and overhead utility lines. Look up before you plant!
- Solar lighting can accent your night-time landscape without adding to your utility bill. Choose down-lights to minimize light pollution that detracts from star viewing and can confuse young native seabirds (and nesting turtles, if you live near the beach).