

Backyard bliss

Rest and relaxation could be only few steps away

By Regina Phillips
The KLBC Buzz Editor

As the country has become increasingly uncertain about what might lurk beyond the horizon, Americans are focusing more on the landscape.

Recent surveys have shown a lot of people are staying home. Many are noticing neglected areas needing attention. And others are thinking they might as well make it a pleasant place for respite. The whole situation has spread optimism for home-improvement stores as people find it cheaper to do their own projects.

DIY Network's Dean Hill spoke to *The Buzz* about easing the strain of setting up a stress-free haven just outside readers' doors.

"That's important, and you need to think about your backyard as an oasis or an outdoor living space, where you can actually go and play and relax or entertain," said the host of "Grounds for Improvement."

"You want to create your yard so it's a friendly and enjoyable environment for you to be able to enjoy all summer long. And don't forget — by doing those outdoor home improvements, it's also gonna add value to your house and it's gonna increase your home equity. And in today's housing market, I'm not sure I know of anybody who doesn't wanna increase their home equity."

And when the weather outside is delightful, most people don't want to be cramped or cooped up indoors. A big construction project might not be in the budget, but it's not required.

"You don't necessarily have to add on living space," Hill said. "You can add things like decks, you can add on patios, even just like a screened-in porch that's not completely closed in or something that just protects you from the sun. That can add a lot of



value. And it can give you another area or space that you can go and enjoy outside in the landscape."

So where can homeowners start?

"To help you get your backyard in shape, it's important to have the right tools, because, nowadays, it's more important to work smarter than it is harder," Hill said.

"One of those tools that I like is the new, specially designed wheelbarrow from Lifetime Products. And it's designed so that more of the weight is distributed over the wheels so you don't have to work as hard and you'll be more inclined to get your work done. The other thing that I love about this thing is that the tub is made from 100 percent recycled materials. I think that's very important because people are interested in going green in the landscape as well.

"Now, one thing that I really want you to look at is your deck. If it's worn, if it has splinters, if your tired of doing the maintenance on it, one thing that you might consider is replacing those worn deck boards with Trex. Trex is a special wood alternative that you can actually place on your existing deck framework.

This is very important because that means you don't have to rebuild the entire deck. It's also a project you can complete in a weekend. Now, I don't know about you, but completing a project in a weekend is right up my

alley. The other advantage is that it's actually gonna add value to your home and it's gonna last for a long, long time."

Hill recognized the Southern region is prone to "all those uninvited flying guests" who outstay their welcome.

"Well, it's very important to get rid of those annoying pests in your backyard. So I recommend that you try an EPA-registered and high-effective way in which to do that — to get rid of mosquitoes and biting flies and gnats, fleas and ticks. Like this new one from Mosquito 86. It operates simply as an attachment to a common hand-held leaf blower, which you may already own. It takes only 15 minutes to apply and lasts up to three weeks."

Hill tells homeowners they should take a critical look around their yards.

"Now, you might have gardening tools laying around, you might have some extra gardening supplies laying around, or you might have a hose laying out. And if you wanna put those somewhere, I strongly recommend that you look for a lockable, weather-resistant storage unit," Hill said, specifically mentioning an 8-foot by 7.5-foot storage shed from Lifetime Products. "It's gonna store all of the things that you have laying around, it's gonna protect them against bad weather, and it even has a natural-looking woodgrain finish that's

gonna look as good as your new, improved yard.

"Nobody wants to drive by or come to your house and see your stuff laying all over the place."

What are some things people can do that really make an impact without a whole lot of money?

"One of the things I always like to recommend is that you do annual maintenance. Annual maintenance can consist of a few things. No. 1 is proper pruning. No. 2 is curb appeal, like spreading mulch. And these products really help you get the most out of these little things you can do yourself. You can save an awful lot of money by doing it yourself instead of hiring somebody else to come over and do it."

A big bonus is the rejuvenated feeling from within the new retreat and the palpable results of the effort.

"Exactly," Hill said. "You have a house and you have a backyard, so why can't both of them be maximized?"

"The most important thing is to get out there and actually do something. I can't harp on that enough. Put the remote down and get out and enjoy the outdoors, do a little bit of home improvement. I think it goes a long way to making you feel better because you're actually outside, enjoying nature and working with nature. But it will give you some empowerment because you're actually doing something to improve your home."

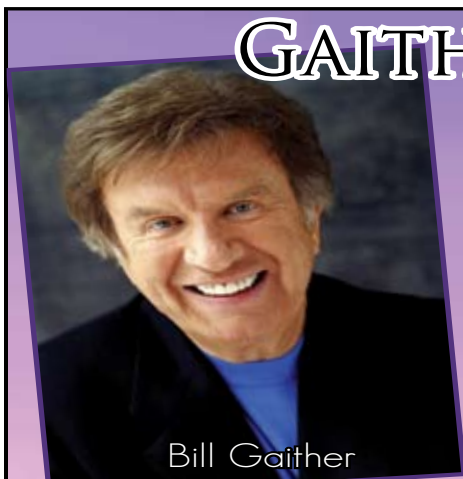
For homeowners looking to reaping the physical, emotional and economical rewards, Hill advised:

"Get out there and do something."

Find out more about the products online at lifetime.com (wheelbarrow and the shed), mosquito86.com and trex.com (decking). More landscape and green information and tips are available at greendean.com and tangiblegreen.com.

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