

Create Your Own Backyard Space

(NAPSA)—As our lives become busier, our need for rest and rejuvenation is increasingly important to our health and well-being. With rising gasoline prices and flight delays often defeating the purpose of vacationing altogether, homeowners are embracing the relaxation value of the “outdoor room.” Here’s how you can create an outdoor room to suit your lifestyle.

Pat Simpson, host of HGTV’s “Room to Improve,” “Before & After” and “Fix It Up!”, suggests starting with some basics, then adding elements that appeal to the senses. Some of Pat’s tips include:

Start With a Deck

A deck sets the stage for the outdoor room. It’s important to choose decking that is easily maintained and will provide years of enjoyment. Decks made of composite lumber protect against splinters, moisture and insect damage. Decking and railing manufacturers such as Trex Co. (www.trex.com) offer low-maintenance, splinter-free decking in a variety of textures, colors and railing designs. Choose from a smooth, new rain forest look or wood-grain surface, with the ability to curve the decking into unique shapes.

Or give your existing deck a lower-cost makeover by upgrading the deck planks and railings. A beautiful composite deck will set the tone for the entire outdoor room.

Add a Hot Tub

A hot tub provides a tranquil, relaxing and therapeutic environment for ultimate backyard enjoyment. A hot tub can be placed with ease on your deck or on a firm, level surface anywhere in your backyard. Ideal for conversation, relaxation and family time, the spa is an essential ingredient for the development of strong family bonds. A variety of features offered by com-



panies like Hot Spring Spas (www.hot.spring.com) complete the aesthetic and functional appeal of spas, such as waterfall features, lighting and music systems, and patented hydromassage jets. To assist with your design, the Hot Spring Spas Web site offers free 3-D backyard design tools.

Mix in an Herb Garden

Imagine relaxing in your hot tub when a sage-scented summer breeze floats past. Engage your sense of smell with an outdoor herb garden of lavender, oregano, sage, thyme, chives or savory. Herbs require a lot of sunlight and grow best in a breathable clay pot.

Barbeques and Outdoor Kitchens

Consider a barbeque or outdoor kitchen center with styles that suit your culinary and entertaining needs.

Creating a special backyard space is a cost-effective, low-maintenance way to enjoy a mini-vacation anytime. Enjoy the style and longevity of a beautiful deck, the tranquility of a soothing spa, and the savory flavor of outdoor cooking.

A word of warning, however: Once your friends and neighbors catch wind of your new backyard oasis, you may have to charge daily rates.