



Budget-friendly outdoor renovation ideas

Homeowners are increasingly extending their living spaces outside the walls of their homes. Expansive and intricate stonework patios and decked-out outdoor kitchens are the kind of additions many homeowners dream of. Those with unlimited budgets can enjoy just about any look they desire, but many homeowners may not have the money to go all the way with their outdoor living spaces. But that doesn't mean it's impossible to create budget-friendly spaces that are functional, fun and eye catching.

Decks and patios are popular gathering spots outside a home, and homeowners have numerous inexpensive options at their disposal when choosing patio materials. And those who can do their own labor when installing a patio can save a substantial amount of money. Instead of higher-priced composite or resin decks, homeowners can go with standard wood, which will need to be stained periodically. Scaling back the size of the deck means less materials to buy and less labor involved.

The cost of patio blocks depends on the material and style. Poured concrete patios will cost less than placed blocks or stones because concrete is less labor-intensive. For those who desire the look of patio blocks without the cost, stamped concrete can mimic the look for less.

Homeowners may not need to replace patio furniture, even if chairs and tables have seen better days. A can of spray paint can cover up any rusted areas or spots where paint has peeled off due to exposure to the elements. Updating cushions and purchasing a coordinat-



A little spray paint or some new cushions can refresh older patio furniture and give the outdoor space a completely new look.

ing umbrella can revitalize the patio's entire look. Also, very often stores run sales to clear out merchandise for new displays.

Defining edges of planting borders and refreshing the landscape may be all that is needed to improve the yard. This is easily achieved with inexpensive mulch and some vinyl edging. While cleaning up the yard, use a pressure washer to clean stains off of siding and patios and create a like-new appearance.

End-of-season sales can also be the ideal opportunity to purchase big-ticket items like a pool, a hot tub or an outdoor fireplace/fire pit. Shoppers can learn when stores discount their merchandise to make room for new inventory and then use these sales as opportuni-

ties to save.

Sometimes saving means repurposing antiques or items found at garage sales. Thanks to the Internet, people can easily advertise items they no longer need or desire. A person can search for backyard items they need at a deep discount if they are fine with previously used materials. From patio furniture to masonry blocks to above-ground pools, patient homeowners can find just about any item they may need to upgrade their backyards.

Though not all homeowners can afford to create the backyard of their dreams, with a little ingenuity and some sweat hard work, homeowners can still create an outdoor oasis.

Inexpensive ways to boost a home's curb appeal

Curb appeal can go a long way toward making a home more attractive to its inhabitants as well as prospective buyers once the house is put on the market. Improving curb appeal is a goal for many homeowners, and while many projects aimed at making homes more aesthetically appealing can be costly, there are ways for cost-conscious homeowners to improve their properties without breaking the bank.

• Put your green thumb to use. A well-maintained landscape can dramatically improve a home's curb appeal. Pay attention to the plants, shrubs and trees throughout your property, watering them during periods of little rainfall and trimming them when necessary so your lawn does not look like an overgrown, neglected suburban jungle. Professional landscaping services can help you maintain your property, but even if your budget does not allow for such an expense, you can still make sure your landscape adds to your home's appeal by keeping a watchful eye on the property and addressing any issues that arise. Maintain your lawn through the colder months of the year as well, making sure no one walks on the grass when frost has settled, as doing so can produce dead spots throughout the lawn.

• Redo your front door. While their eyes may initially be drawn to a well-manicured lawn, prospective buyers will eventually find their way to the front door. If your door is especially old, consider replacing it. If your budget does not allow for such an expense, you can still give your home's front entrance an entirely new look by installing some inexpensive molding around the door before giving the



Maintaining plant life on a property won't cost homeowners a lot of money, but such an effort can add substantial curb appeal to a home.

door a fresh coat of paint. Molding around the front door can make an entrance more impressive, while a new coat of paint can make a home feel warmer and more vibrant.

• Plant flowers. Another inexpensive way to make a home more appealing is to plant some colorful flowers around the property. Line walkways with flowers native to your region, as such plants will last longer than exotic alternatives that may not be capable of adapting to the local climate. In addition to lining walkways, hang window boxes filled with colorful flowers or plants outside naked windows. Doing so can make windows seem larger and add some color to your home's exterior.

Another creative way to make use of colorful flowers is to place a few planters at the foot of your driveway and painting the numbers of your address on the planters. This can be both effortless and inexpensive, but it can instantly make a home more inviting to prospective buyers.

• Spotlight certain parts of your property. Many homeowners focus on improving the curb appeal of their property during the daytime hours, but you can

take steps to make a home more appealing at night as well. Solar spotlights placed around trees and other attractive features in your yard can shed light on those areas of your property you're most proud of, even after the sun has gone down. Solar spotlights won't add to your energy bill, as they are powered by the sun, and they can make certain accents on your property stand out at night.

Improving curb appeal may sound like a significant undertaking, but there are many ways budget-conscious homeowners can make their home's exterior more appealing without going broke.

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