

# PRODUCTS TO ROCK THE BACKYARD

By Dana W. Todd



**If ever there was a perfect time,** this is it. This is the month where we pull out the gardening gloves and dust off the grill in the outdoor kitchen. Getting ready for summer in the backyard begins this month.

We refresh the landscape by planting a few new flowers and shrubs each year, but the overall backyard usually doesn't receive a routine sprucing. Homeowners are spending more time decorating the backyard, taking as much care as traditionally spent when adding curb appeal to the front entryway. With the interior design focus on accessorizing moving to outdoor rooms, 2014 is the year to update backyard spaces for the upcoming months of recreation and relaxation.

## Play Time

Multi-purpose sport courts are gaining popularity as part of the backyard experience. Randy Resley of Sport Court of the Rockies designs turnkey multi-purpose courts for homeowners, from 20' x 20' half courts to full-size regulation courts to custom sizes as small as 10' x 10'.

"The ideal space for a football, soccer, volleyball, hoops, tennis, pickleball, or multi-purpose court depends on an individual homeowner's landscape size and budget," Resley says. He has designed custom courts for unique lot shapes, even a triangular court in the corner of one homeowner's backyard.

"Kids are playing several sports at once, so a multi-purpose court provides options. It allows kids to play at home instead of going to the park. Adults also enjoy the courts as a form of entertainment during a party," he adds.

The fun doesn't stop there. Homeowners can choose to outfit their courts with in-ground trampolines.

Gold Leaf / Birdsall & Co.



Home and Hearth Outfitters

Joe Vandyke of Backyards Plus says another option is installing a putting green.

“More and more people are starting to put in putting greens in the hopes of improving their games,” he says.

### Garden Design

It’s all about adding transitional, not seasonal, elements to the landscape, which are colorful, comfortable, and multi-functional. Today’s products are made to last outside throughout the four seasons.

Accessories move to attention in the yard, according to Annie Huston, owner of Columbine Design and retail store Birdsall & Co. Vibrantly colored containers are this year’s choice to accessorize the garden, terrace, deck, and patio.

“Vibrant colors have been popular in Europe for the last four or five years,” Huston says. “Now they have moved to the U.S.”

No longer prized solely for their functionality in holding flowers, containers are becoming a focal point whether they are planted or empty. Not only are they brighter, but they’ve grown bigger.

“Homeowners are learning it takes less time to maintain larger containers because they hold moisture better,” Huston says. “They make a statement, are able to stay out all year long, and often have texture for added interest.”

Containers are lighter and longer lasting, made from the newest materials that look and feel authentic and are chip- and fade-resistant. They are being used as prevalently in suburban backyards as urban balconies.

Containers aren’t the only form of accessorizing the backyard this year. Lanterns, statuary, cushion fabric with sophisticated designs and bright colors, and wall art are expected to be big sellers.

“Art is a big surprise to us,” says Huston. “On wall surfaces, it adds interest in place of vines.”

Color is popping up on garden fountains, too, and homeowners are more interested in plug-and-play features. The newest fountains provide the beauty of a water garden without the maintenance, manufactured using materials that stand up to the elements 365 days a year.

“Fewer people want water gardens and more just want to turn on a self-contained fountain,” Huston says.



Birdsall & Co.

Homesteading is gaining popularity, and even urban dwellers are planting fruits, vegetables, and herbs alongside flowers in containers. If they invest the time and money, gardeners want double duty out of their raised containers. Homeowners are planting flowers for more practical reasons, too, such as attracting wildlife to the garden.

“We can’t keep bee houses and ladybug houses in the store,” Huston says. “As soon as they come in, they sell.”

Practicality reigns. With all this planting, homeowners are upgrading their gardening tools to quality, long-lasting versions. These are the tools they’ll sharpen in future seasons, not replacing them as in years past.

### Relaxation

As an entertainment spot, the backyard is unmatched. The focus of many get-togethers is the fire pit, which is getting a makeover. No longer limited to round styles, modern fire pits are linear.

“The rectangular shape is cleaner and a more modern look,” says Pete Dines of Home & Hearth. “This is one trend that started inside the house and is translating to the outside.”

No longer mimicking the look of a real fire with faux fire logs, linear fire pits have a sleek glass cover over gas burners with 20 different color choices of artistic crushed, beaded, or cubed glass



Sport Court of the Rockies

rocks. Covered with stucco or stone or any custom material, installers can design them to coordinate within the existing hardscape.

Turning to the outdoor kitchen, Vandyke says new options on the market allow homeowners to upgrade their grills with infrared burners, which provide three times the heat of a conventional burner.

“Infrared burners allow you to quickly sear meat in only three minutes per side, locking in the juices,” he says. “Then it can be moved over to a conventional burner.”

V-grates are available on almost all high-end grill models now, which provides another method to keep juices in the meat. Also for grills, Vandyke is multi-purposing natural gas lines installed for them, teeing off to also service fire pits and fireplaces.

In hardscaping news, he says homeowners are moving to pavers and away from stamped concrete. New choices in pavers are more attractive, and unlike concrete, they don’t quickly fade or need resealing.

Whether your interests run toward sports, gardening, entertaining, or interior design, there are new products and updated versions of hardy standbys on the market this year to make the backyard exactly what an individual wants it to be. ❖

## RESOURCES

- Backyards Plus ..... 303.635.0085 ..... [www.backyardsplus.com](http://www.backyardsplus.com)
- Birdsall & Co..... 303.722.2535 ..... [www.birdsallgarden.com](http://www.birdsallgarden.com)
- Cushion World..... 303.806.0130 ..... [www.cushionworld.com](http://www.cushionworld.com)
- Home & Hearth Outfitters..... 303.722.6698 ..... [www.homeandhearthoutfitters.com](http://www.homeandhearthoutfitters.com)
- Sport Court of the Rockies ..... 303.805.2090 ..... [www.sportcourtoftherockies.com](http://www.sportcourtoftherockies.com)

HOMEOWNERS ARE SPENDING  
MORE TIME DECORATING THE  
BACKYARD, TAKING AS MUCH CARE AS  
TRADITIONALLY SPENT WHEN ADDING  
CURB APPEAL TO THE FRONT ENTRYWAY.



Back Yards Plus