

Premier Issue!

Deck, Patio & Pool

Create a **Backyard Paradise**

Deck Style
On a Budget

8 Tabletop Gardens You Can Plant

TOP 10
Patio Mater

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A woman in a blue t-shirt and white shorts is watering plants in a garden. She is standing on a wooden deck under a large, curved wooden archway. The garden is filled with various green plants and colorful flowers. In the background, there is a white house and a wooden fence. The scene is set in a lush, green outdoor environment.

A graceful arch distinguishes the pergola and echoes the contours of the land. Homeowner Bridget Byron tends container plantings, vines, and nodding grasses that contribute to the garden's beauty.

Natural Fit

A finely crafted free-form deck and naturalistic surroundings expand a Colorado family's outdoor living options. See how a well-wrought plan provides something for each member of the family.

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MAINTAINING MAHOGANY

To keep the deck and pergola looking pristine, homeowner Bridget Byron reapplies stain once a year, using Cabot's Australian Timber Oil in Mahogany Flame. Her fastidious care goes beyond the typical needs of mahogany, landscape designer Scott Deemer says; a fresh application every two to three years is sufficient in most cases.



above: Several boulders interrupt the curve of the free-form deck, which is cut to follow their shapes. **above right:** Scott Byron carries towels to Madison, McKenzie, and Brayden. The portable hot tub sits at grade with the deck wrapping around two sides and the remaining sides fully exposed, so it's easy to access mechanicals. **overcome:** The deck has become a centerpiece for entertaining as well as simple family gatherings.

The opposite end features a hot tub, open to the sky for stargazing.

Deemer chose mahogany for its beauty and density. "It's only a little less dense than ipe and other Brazilian hardwoods," he says, "but it receives stain better and it's much easier to work with." The latter was important, given the deck's complex cuts and curves. Large boulders are inset at the deck's edge. Not a nail or screw is visible in the diagonally laid deck boards; all hardware is recessed and covered with wood plugs.

Family togetherness

"This landscape is all about the Byrons; there's something for everyone," says Deemer, whose design won an award from

the Associated Landscape Contractors of Colorado. A rustic trail leads from the hot tub end of the deck to a play area at the side of the house, where a jungle gym sits in a cushioning sea of bark mulch. At the opposite side of the yard, a small gravel patio with a fire pit tucks into a woody corner.

The fire pit was originally created as an alfresco "man den" for Scott and his friends, but it has become a family haven, too. "The children love to toast marshmallows," Bridget says. A large hammock suspended under a nearby elm is her favorite hangout, especially on a languid summer's day. "There's a lovely dappled shade," she says. "My children and I like to smuggle there and read stories together."





Tips to Reduce Maintenance

Bridget and Scott Byron's landscape incorporates several work-saving ideas:

• **Fuss-free stream.** When landscape designer Scott Deemer suggested a water feature, Bridget insisted it be child-safe and low-maintenance. The resulting 20-foot-long cascading stream, above left, is never more than a half-inch deep. The spillway pairs a heavy-duty PVC liner with stonework that's firmly cemented in place. A concrete cistern buried at the base (near the deck) contains a pump and provides a clean collecting point for water, which recirculates through buried piping to a filter at the uppermost waterfall. (A heavy flagstone "lid" provides access to the pump.) With no fish or aquatic plants, and limited leaf-drop from trees, the water feature is as easy-care as most fountains. "All I do is add a spoonful of chlorine about once a month, just to keep it clear," Bridget says.

• **Limited lawn.** With its deep planting beds, spacious deck and patios, and a mulched play area at the side of the house, this yard has little lawn to mow. Tables and chairs rest on hard surfaces, so there's no need to wrestle furniture aside before mowing.

• **Easy-care plants.** Plant selection emphasizes drought-tolerant natives and other hardy perennials. Apart from occasional deadheading and trimming, the plants need little care once established. Among Bridget's favorites is lamb's-ears (*Stachys byzantina*). "It establishes itself quickly and it's worry-free." Other standouts include daylilies, ornamental grasses such as *Miscanthus sinensis* var. *pupurascens* and 'Karl Foerster' feather reedgrass, and groundcovers such as creeping thyme and barren strawberry (*Waldsteinia fragaroides*). ☺

ABOVE LEFT: The yard's gentle upward slope was perfect staging for this cascading stream near the deck. Its shallow depth ensures safety for kids. **ABOVE RIGHT:** An old bristlecone pine shelters the back lot line, where an existing slope was sculpted into a deep, curved border. Rock edging segues into a low stone wall that defines the adjacent gravel patio and fire pit.

BELOW: The Byron family gathers around the fire pit. **OPPOSITE:** A new fence gives the yard privacy. Stained to match the deck, it features several gates with curved tops that repeat the pergola's arch.



FOR RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 116.



CHOOSING STONES

To tie the Byrons' landscape to its Colorado setting, designer Scott Deemer brought in roughly 50 tons of granite boulders from a nearby quarry. "I hand-selected every one," Deemer says. His criteria? "Most of these boulders aren't just rocks—they're something you can comfortably sit on," he says. Size and shape are key. "I try to find stones with strong horizontal elements. Boulders by the deck continue the deck's plane instead of interrupting it. It creates a sense of balance."

