

# The Great OUTDOORS

LOCAL EXPERTS GIVE US THEIR TIPS ON HOW TO GET THE HOTTEST YARD ON THE BLOCK.

## How does the planning process work?

"We begin with an initial meeting where we first meet the client and discuss their hopes and desires. Budget is discussed at this time. Once an overall scope is agreed upon, the design process can start. The first step is to create a schematic design or concept where we work out spaces and overall layout.

As the design evolves with client input to a point where most decisions have been made, we then evolve into the pricing phase. Through this phase, final material selections are made as well as any additional changes to create the final design so that the project can now be built. This process can be as quick as a few weeks to several months depending, of course, on the size of the project."

—GLENN BONICK,  
BONICK LANDSCAPING

"We begin by conversing about how the space will be used, whether it be extremely functional, simply aesthetic, or somewhere in between. Then the conversation moves on to what style appeals to the client and how to incorporate it as part of the architecture of the home. Once these basics are determined, budgets and a realistic discussion on future maintenance can happen."

—DANIEL HOUGHARD,  
FROM THE GROUND UP

"We'll ask questions [about] what type of things you are looking for (trees, shrubs, color, patios, etc.), and then we narrow that down. If it's plants, we can help, and if it's building a patio or arbor, we have numerous landscapers we can suggest. In the case of plants, we'll need to know how much sun and how big the planting areas are. If you bring in pictures, it helps a ton since we can use those

pictures to get an idea of scale and look. Then we'll walk around the nursery and show you the actual plants."

—MARK RUIBAL,  
RUIBAL'S

Our typical project ranges between two and six months. When talking about average durations of projects, that include a landscape, pool, outdoor living, etc., there are many factors we must take into account. Planning is the key to this process and is the most essential first step to any project we undertake. Proper planning can save the homeowner both time and money. On average, we always like to outline the expectation that with any construction project, there are a series of unknowns that must be accounted for—the most important being the weather. After the past few months we have experienced, nothing could be truer. Weather is always the biggest wild card and something we

must always consider when undertaking a project. This is why timing and seasons are very important when you are considering a new project for your home."

—CHRIS PSENCIK,  
SOUTHERN BOTANICAL

## What are some pretty plants that work well here?

"This is very subjective and we could come up with thousands. Here are a few alternatives that are gaining popularity: As an alternative to crepe myrtle for a sun-loving ornamental, try vitex. For a screen hedge, rather than a traditional holly, try osmanthus fortunei. As an alternative to liriopse, try ornamental grasses. Though there are many adaptive species, but your safest bets are always materials that are native to our area."

—CHRIS PSENCIK

I think one of the most under utilized plants is vitex a large, deciduous flowering shrub that can also be limbed up and used as a small ornamental tree. They are extremely drought tolerant, grow quickly, and provide profuse blooms during the summer months.

—DANIEL HOUGHARD

"Impatiens offer the best color for shade. Profusion or zahara zinnia forms great balls of color. A few perennials I really like that come in summer are "Black and Blue" salvia, which attracts hummingbirds with its ne blue blooms, and most of the hardy hibiscus and the huge blooms."

—MARK RUIBAL

"We typically like to use plants that are flowering perennials with lots of color. Texas-native plants, depending on factors of sun/shade, water, etc. Ornamental grasses look really nice in landscape to add color a

