



## 10 Easy Ways To Spruce Up Your Backyard Without Starting From Scratch

*It might be July, but it's not too late to revamp to your backyard.*

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An inviting backyard with a perfectly manicured lawn is something all home owners want and are proud of when they have – especially during the summer months. But, transforming a boring landscape into something beautiful can be daunting. Luckily, you don't need to hire a landscaper or spend an entire month's pay to spruce up your yard. You can work with what you already have with these simple ideas that just take a quick weekend.

**Clean Up** The first step is to forgive yourself for not doing this during spring cleaning season, and to finally clean up the yard! This means getting rid of weeds and raking up leaves, twigs and any other unsightly debris. And don't forget to hose off decks, furniture and siding. You'll be surprised how much a quick clean-up will do for your yard and the back of your house.

**Define Your Spaces** The next step to making your yard more visual is deciding what spaces you need – a dining area, cooking area, play area, shady lounging area – and clearly defining each space. Having an intentional layout can make a huge visual impact on the backyard. This is as simple and inexpensive as repositioning the furniture and accessories you already have. If it's still feeling cluttered, you could also build or buy a storage shed to keep toys, furniture and tools out of sight when not in use.

**Create a Place to Play** When redefining your spaces, don't forget to create a play area! This can include swing sets or sandboxes for kids—recreation areas don't need to be limited to children's use or to costly, space hogging swimming pools! Croquet sets, horseshoe pits and cornhole are popping up into more yards as homeowners continue looking for ways to entertain outdoors.

**Paint Your Furniture** Painting the furniture you already have is a cost-effective way to add a pop of color and bring new life into old pieces. Metal furniture can easily be wire-brushed clean of flaky paint and prepped with rust removers. Then, several coats of primer and paint in a trendy color can give your entire patio set a new look. For different types of materials such as older wicker furniture, freshen it up with a turpentine and boiled linseed oil mix before re-staining with an oil-based varnish, shellac or lacquer.

**Lay Fresh Mulch** Simply laying fresh mulch on all of your existing flowerbeds and exposed soil in your backyard can give your space a finished, unified look. And as a bonus, mulch blocks weeds and holds nutrients for your plants. As if you need even more reasons to invest in some mulch, a few bags are relatively inexpensive and will take no time to lay down.

**Lay Stepping Stones or Create a Path** Creating a simple pathway with stepping stones is a functional way to give your yard a polished look and to draw your eyes away from any other unsightly parts of the yard. Laying them down in strategic spots will also add an element of style to spots in need of a quick fix.

## Prune Plants

Pruned plants are pretty plants. Take the time to prune down your bushes and shrubs, and not only will it give them shape and a clean look, but it will also encourage them to grow throughout the season.

**Concrete Cover-Up** If you have a plain concrete patio, there are a few easy ways to freshen it up. The first is to coat the surface with masonry stain, which will give you the flexibility to choose any color you'd like. The second option is to lay slate tiles over the concrete with a thin-set mortar such as VersaBond.

**Create Some Fun Lighting to Set the Mood** There are dozens of fun ways that people incorporate lighting into their backyards, from overhead lights to twinkling lights on a path. There's something about outdoor lights that creates a fabulous look that guests will want to share photos of, but they are also very functional from a safety perspective.

**Add a Water Element** The idea of a fountain or pond in the backyard can seem intimidating, but it really doesn't need to be. A simple water element is a relaxing focal point that adds much more visually than the work it takes to install. You can start with a store-bought birdbath or fountain. Or, according to HGTV's Chris Lambton, most water features have the same basic pieces—a liner, pump and electrical source—making them easier (and less expensive) than you'd think to install yourself.