

YARDS OF ROOMS:

Plan now for a new outdoors next summer



Mark Cooper

Whether it's a new deck or porch, or a major change in your yard's landscaping, it's important to start early. You have a month or two to decide on your dreams before you'll have to start arranging the details for any substantial work you want done by barbecue season.

It's also good to plan these new spaces for outdoor living by thinking of them as you would when building new rooms on the inside. What activities will you do there? How do you want the space to feel? Where is the lighting going to be? Will the rooms work together?

I do a lot of work designing and building decks and porches, usually as part of major renovations but sometimes as stand-alone projects. When we go beyond that work - either to make sure the house and deck are complemented by the landscape or to start using the yard as a whole other outdoor living room - I make sure to get Tonis Tutti of 2T Construction involved in both the design and the build.

I will have more information about decks and porches in the next issue of North Shore Magazine, but this time we'll talk with Tonis about what's important to consider about landscaping. The main thing, he says, is to fully use your property for living.

"Most peoples' backyards are stagnant," he notes. "They're something they look at out the window, but they're not developed for use."

Tonis was raised in Deep Cove and is quite influenced by time spent exploring the parks and trails around the North Shore. "It's important here to use the natural environment, to make your home look like it belongs here." He shudders when he talks about homeowners who use concrete when they could have natural rock, and he begs his customers to consider the landscape before they design a new home or major renovation. "For example, if there's a nice tree where you want your front entrance, build around it. incorporate it into the design. If you need a retaining wall, make it natural stone and make it feel like it's there naturally."

Every lot is different, and one size never fits all. Tonis has worked on quite a few properties on the North Shore, first helping in his dad's construction work and then over the past two decades in his own business.

"If the land is fairly flat, you can do just about anything, but most places on the North Shore require you to consider drainage and sometimes very steep slopes."

Water is a key element. "It's always moving and that brings natural texture and sound," he notes. A simple pond can be created with several hundred dollars for



a prefab liner, pump and filter. But Tonis really enjoys the bigger projects he's done - like creating a stream that turns a backyard into a park - for upwards of \$30,000.

"However big you're building, you always get more with good up-front planning," Tonis says. "If you're ripping up the yard anyway, it's relatively easy to put in the low-voltage wiring you need to have great lighting. And that's also the time to install irrigation



lines for automatic sprinklers."

At Shakespeare Homes, we usually try to get a specialist like West Van Irrigation and Lighting involved when we're doing that work, and that's another reason to start planning early - so the best people aren't already booked with other projects.

"When you're designing your new yard, you have the opportunity to create whole new living spaces,"

Tonis says. "By planning ahead, you can figure out how, say, a barbecue area and your deck will work together, or how to create separate areas linked by pathways, how ground lighting will tie it all together and show off specific trees, how it will all look from inside the house or from the street. and how you can, for relatively little, get a huge expansion of lush living space."

Please let me know if you have any specific



questions about decks and porches that I can answer as part of my next North Shore Magazine article.

Or let me know if there are other home construction topics I should be writing about. E-mail me at mark.cooper@shakespearehomes.com

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