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feature: essentials in **home enhancements**





Landscaping &
Lighting:
Essentials in Interior
and Exterior Home
Enhancements

By Emily Foshee



photo provided by Murry Landscaping

AHH...SPRING! When Texans can once again venture outdoors in shorts, t-shirts and no shoes, drive with the top down and enjoy balmy days, their thoughts inevitably turn toward “feathering their nest,” just like Frisco’s founding fathers did in the early 1900’s.

The rapidly growing lawn needs mowing, new gardens need to be planted and sprucing up the inside of the home are on everyone’s “to do” list.

Join Frisco STYLE Magazine as we reflect on lazy spring days gone by, discover the newest trends in indoor and outdoor home décor and navigate through a myriad of choices available to experienced and novice gardeners as they create their own private paradise.

“I’ve lived in Frisco since 1949 when the population was about 780 and my, how things have changed,” said Frisco Garden Club member Pearl Morris. “I remember hearing stories about life in the turn-of-the-century Frisco,” she continued, “when remodeling meant putting a new coat of paint on the two

story wooden houses with gingerbread trim, adding a second story to the family homestead and building a feeding trough for the cows in the back yard. Everyone knew everyone else in town, or at least on their block,” Pearl remembered.

“I remember ... when remodeling meant building a feeding trough for the cows in the backyard.”

Today, lifestyles couldn’t be more different. Frisco, with a population of 70,000 plus, is one of the fastest growing cities in the country. As such, it reflects the customs and preferences of its diverse citizenry. Miles and miles of houses form subdivisions that singles, families with children, and multigenerational families call “home.”

Subdivisions such as Hunters Creek on Custer Road and State Highway 121 cater to families with young children and are highlighted by a swimming pool, picnic areas, playgrounds and biking trails. Other areas such as Starwood, are home to corporate executives and successful businessmen. Regardless, we in Collin County are passionate about keeping our lawns manicured and our homes attractive and up-to-date.

ELEGANT AND FUNCTIONAL OUTDOOR LIVING

“Since I have been in the architectural landscaping business,” said Kelley Murry, landscape designer at Murry Landscape, “there has been a common thread among all of my customers,” she said. “No matter what their lifestyle, whether they’re single or a high-ranking executive, everyone wants to create a space where they can escape the pressures of daily life and unwind,” she said. “It’s my job to help them discover how to do that through discussing their

preferences in flowers, grass, trees and water features.”

People really want an outdoor living space, more than in the past, Kelley noted. “During the past few years, I’ve gotten more and more requests to help clients design an area where they can actually spend time, entertain and enjoy,” she said. A patio, arbor, fireplace, outside kitchen and water feature are the most popular requests.

Clients want to extend their living rooms or family rooms outside and take great care in designing an additional area that reflects their particular lifestyle. “Many times,” Kelley continued, “I will consult with clients that have a 10 foot by 10 foot concrete backyard patio, absolutely no landscaping and a six foot privacy fence. These clients are the most enjoyable,” she said, “because I can be very creative and design a patio they’ll enjoy for years.”

Building arbors to provide shade for an existing patio, laying flagstone on top of an existing patio, designing an outside kitchen with fireplace and strategically placing outdoor lighting to enhance certain trees or shrubs are all key elements to creating a beautiful outdoor environment.

“The strongest trend I’ve noticed,” said Kelley, “is the increased request for water features. A backyard with virtually no landscaping can be transformed into

a beautiful oasis, with a waterfall, huge moss-covered boulders, a quiet, gurgling stream, or a peaceful pond filled with koi fish.”



photos provided by Murry Landscaping

Investing in your home’s exterior can come with a hefty price tag, however. Homeowners interested in creating a re-circulating waterfall and pond that is three feet wide and eight feet long should budget approximately \$5,500 for the project. Add an outdoor fireplace and plan on spending about \$7,000.

“The sky is the limit,” said Kelley, “when designing your outside living area.

If a homeowner is trying to create a Southwestern look, then I’ll incorporate plants that provide that ambiance, or if they’re trying to achieve a Mediterranean

atmosphere, we’ll pick plants that are similar to those found in a tropical locale.”

SELECTING THE PERFECT FOLIAGE FOR OUTDOOR LIVING AREAS

No matter what “look” the homeowners is striving for; low maintenance and practicality are always high on the agenda.

Frisco Garden Club member Cynthia Alexander has noticed the popularity of native Texas plants is on the rise. “There are so many beautiful trees, shrubs and flowers available to us,” she said, “and they thrive here, don’t require much water and are very low maintenance!”

Novice and experienced gardeners alike may plant a colorful garden of perennial flowers that will bloom for most of the year ... typically from February through November.

In addition to the tried-and-true faithful perennial plants, there are many types of trees and shrubs that have been popular choices for Texas gardens through the years. Some of the most hardy, popular trees include the red oak, live oak, chinquapin oak and burr oak. The pistachio tree provides beautiful fall color, and the October Glory maple is gaining in popularity among North Texas gardeners.



photo provided by Murry Landscaping

Every garden requires shrubbery to provide structure and balance. Excellent choices include dwarf wax myrtle, fringe flower shrub and Indian Hawthorne.

“Many homeowners become overwhelmed when planning their garden,” said Kelley, “because of the vast amount of choices available to them. It is important to remember,” she added, “that having a variety of species of plants, including shrubs and perennials, will create a healthier ecosystem than limiting a garden to just a few types of plants.”

“Landscaping an entire yard is a huge project,” she concluded, “and should be done in stages.”

UPDATED FLOORING OPTIONS

Superior appearance and low maintenance, the two qualities homeowners strive for when planning their gardens, are also top on their list when redecorating the interior of their homes.

“People are getting back to basics, but with a little extra panache,” notes Salvano Salvatori of Sublime Concrete Solutions. “When redecorating, flooring is one of the first things to consider, and today’s families are looking for beautiful, durable and easy-to-maintain options.”



Installing colorfully designed overlays on top of an existing concrete floor fills the bill. There are dozens of coatings and stains available that create a variety of textures, colors and finishes. While ideal for interior use, the same treatments may also be used outside the home to improve the appearance of driveways, walkways, pool decks and patios.

Decorative, or stamped, overlays provide the most current concrete treatment for exterior use. This process involves stamping, or impressing, three-dimensional patterned tools into a polymer cement material with molds made from actual brick or stonework. Pattern choices include slate, brick, granite, cobblestone, tile, flagstone and more.

“The stamping process allows us to emulate any kind of stone,” said Salvatori, “and is very cost effective, costing approximately \$6.50 to \$7.50 per square foot.” Acid staining, which provides a variegated marble look, is another popular concrete treatment for



photo provided by Sublime Concrete

home exteriors, and costs from \$2.50 to \$3.50 per square foot.

“The knock down and splatter texture finishes are a traditional decorative resurfacing option that provides additional texture to a homeowner’s patio or deck,” said Salvatori, and are selected for the slip resistance and durability they provide.”

Concrete staining has also become a popular flooring option for the home’s interior. There are virtually limitless color and design combinations available, which are affordably priced from \$3.00 per square foot.

“Many homeowners are going for concrete flooring treatments in their family rooms and kitchens that resemble marble, tile, and even wood,” concluded Salvatori.

LIGHTING UP YOUR IMPROVEMENTS

After investing a great deal of time and money into remodeling and landscaping, Frisco residents want to enjoy the fruits of their labors. Effective interior and exterior lighting has become a priority, to enhance architectural features of the home, landscape details, unusual interior features of the home and distinctive artwork.

“I have seen an increased emphasis on lighting over the past several years,” said Karl Justin, vice president of Arizona-based Illumination Technologies International. “Homeowners are becoming much more sophisticated regarding their preferences in home décor, and lighting is playing an integral part of their interior design efforts.”

“There are few things a homeowner can incorporate into their overall interior décor scheme that will have as much impact as the correct lighting,” added Bob Melikian, president and CEO of Illumination Technologies International. “When done correctly,” he continued, “beautiful decorative lighting combines the most current home fashions with home illumination.”

There are basically three methods of lighting the interior of a home. Task lighting is incorporated into the home to provide lighting for daily tasks and is used primarily in the kitchen and other frequently used areas of the home. The second most frequently used type of lighting is art lighting, which enhances unique pieces of artwork or sculpture.

Ambiance lighting is the final lighting feature incorporated into a home, and typically spotlights areas of the home that the owner wants to emphasize.

Most popular choices of perennials include:

Gloriosa Daisy or black-eyed Susan, a cheerful yellow flower resembling a daisy with a brown center

Lamb’s Ear, which provides an excellent soft gray groundcover or bed edging, approximately eight inches high when mature

Autumn Sage, a low growing perennial shrub that blooms from late spring through frost, highlighted by bright red, crimson, pink, salmon or white flowers

Mexican Brush Sage, a tall plant that will reach four to five feet upon maturity, and blooms in the fall with large, showy spikes of lavender and white

Pincushion, a small, delicate plant with soft lavender blooms that thrive in bright sun

Lantana, an excellent source of color, most commonly yellow and orange. Depending on the variety, some lantana is a spreading plant, and others come in a short shrub

Calylophus, a delicate plant with pale yellow blooms and thin, spike-shaped leaves, a nice border accent

Coreopsis, which will grow from 12 to 30 inches tall depending on the variety, best displayed when planted in groups, to enhance their dramatic golden blooms

Lythrum, a tall plant with purple upright floral spikes in pink, rose and orchid. It grows up to 36 inches tall and should be planted toward the back of the flowerbed

Aster, a 24 to 30 inch tall plant with sky-blue blooms with bright yellow centers. Its dense branching structure makes it an outstanding sub-shrub perennial

Maiden Grass, a beautiful upright, graceful grass with slender dark green blades that grow up to eight feet tall

Louisiana Phlox, an elegant purple-flowered plant that provides striking color when planted in massed plantings of mixed or single colors

Candytuft, a delicate flowering plant with pure white, dainty flowers perched on small dark green foliage. This spreading plant is an ideal accent for flowerbed borders

Buddleia (Butterfly Bush), well known for its light lavender blooms and graceful, flowing shape

Echinacea, a favorite Texas native plant with a daisy-shaped purple flower that is also known as the purple coneflower because the center of the flower forms a cone



photo provided by Illumination Technologies International

Justin noted that in the construction of many custom homes, the architect and homeowner recognize the need for more than just standard lighting and strive to create a specific ambiance for certain rooms in the home. Accommodations are made for lighting that will enhance entertaining areas, furniture and unique architectural elements such as alcoves, crown molding or archways. In certain instances, lighting is placed beneath the floor to highlight stone columns or other unique features.

“There are few things a homeowner can incorporate ... that will have as much impact as the correct lighting.”

“In addition to using lighting to illuminate daily tasks, artwork or create

a desired ambiance, consumers have many more lighting options available to them than ever before,” said Justin. “There are some extraordinary chandeliers, sconces, Italian glass, and even an extensive range of light bulbs, including voltage as low as 12 volts and 24 volts, so each home can truly be customized to reflect the owner’s lifestyle.”

According to the American Lighting Association (ALA), three decorative lighting trends are emerging. Consumers are displaying a preference for:

- casual, elegant, lighting, which creates a warm, relaxed and cozy environment, with casual, yet upscale, lighting fixtures.
- soft contemporary lighting, created by clean, modern, simple light fixtures.
- simplified traditional lighting, which utilizes traditional lighting fixtures without the ornate embellishments.

The newest lighting styles available today offer more dramatic designs

that incorporate unique material combinations. Wrought iron with crystal and polished brass with colored glass are two combinations consumers can expect to see. Textures on lighting fixtures are moving away from highly polished brass to a rich, refined and even weathered look. Burnished, brushed and hand-painted finishes (including multi-tone finishes, hand-rubbed burnished metal and finishes flecked with gold or silver and rubbed so the original color shines through) are becoming more popular. Decorative lighting fixtures enhanced by a heavy iron appearance, a rust finish and an oil-rubbed bronze finish are also among the latest lighting trends.

Track lighting is another popular illumination option. It provides general, task, or accent lighting simultaneously in one flexible system. The lights can move, swivel, rotate, and aim individual fixtures in any direction along the track, providing versatility to change lighting schemes. Track fixtures are available in standard or low-voltage current.

The Internet provides many resources for track lighting. On some websites, homeowners can purchase hand-bendable track that can be curved to form any shape, while providing powerful and versatile illumination options.

Recessed lighting provides inconspicuous lighting and is used when a more subtle illumination effect is desired. Recessed lighting works well in low ceiling areas.

Fiber optic lighting is the up and coming trend in home illumination and is accomplished by running a fiber from the light source to where the light will be dispersed. Fiber optic lighting is available in Christmas trees, holiday decorations and novelty lamps. "Fiber optic lighting will become more commonly used after its application has been refined a bit more," said Justin.

LED lighting, comprised of a low emitting diode, gives off a lot of light but uses very little electrical power, and is primarily used for cove lighting. "LED lighting reduces power consumption," said Justin, "and has a very long lifespan, up to 100,000 hours of lamp light."

The American Lighting Association (ALA) offers numerous suggestions for illuminating a home, including:

Put lighting to work creating focal points. Add lights to direct the eye in a new direction by focusing on a piece of art, furniture or the mantel. Move It: simply moving portable lighting around to new areas can create dramatic differences. Adding or subtracting light from parts of a room creates drama.

Dimmers are another inexpensive trick-of-the-trade. They help set a special mood in the home by allowing you to manipulate the light. Install them at the wall for ceiling fixtures and even buy them for table lamps.

Dress up fixtures with accessories like candle sleeves, garland or cloth over the chandelier chain.

Add more drama to a space with accent lighting - illuminate the top of a bookcase, add under-cabinet lighting or hang a colored pendant over the



photos provided by Illumination Technologies International

kitchen island.

Move table lamps around the room. Put small ones on shelves to make a small room more interesting.

Enhancing the exterior lighting of the home is also an important element in each landscaping plan, significantly improving the home's appearance.

"Most homes still utilize the high-voltage fixtures originally installed by the homebuilder," said Julie Fleming of Silver Moon Lighting in Frisco. "These lights are typically installed about 12 inches off the ground and are not well designed for the home. "Many times, the lights are placed directly under a windowpane, which sends glaring light back into the viewer's face. Fortunately," she continued, "there are so many options available to homeowners today that are really very convenient and affordable."

A well-lit home should include fixtures that are hidden from sight (unless specifically designed for display). The focus of the illumination should always be the home; the source of the light should be difficult to find and provide as little glare as possible.

"The formal entry is usually the focal point of every home's exterior," said Fleming. "The front door should be given proper attention...a well designed lighting system should direct your guests to your front door and foyer."

There are many lighting techniques that can illuminate the home's entrance and other distinctive features.

Shadow lighting is a favorite technique used to dramatically enhance a specific feature of the home or landscape. The light source is positioned in front of a large, intricately leafed plant, for example, and projects the enhanced image on a solid surface such as a fence or exterior wall of the home.

"We recommend three distinctive ways to illuminate trees on the property," Fleming continued.

Uplighting is the technique used most frequently because it portrays the tree to its best advantage. This lighting treatment adds height and dimension to the tree by spreading the illumination across approximately 40 degrees of the tree's canopy. The viewer's eyes are drawn to the top of the tree.

Moonlighting; places the lights in the tree, casting the light downward toward the ground.

Silhouette lighting is lighting placed between the tree and a fence, and is

aimed at the wall or fence. The viewer sees a dramatic black outline of the tree but not much plant detail. This technique adds depth to small yards.

“In addition to these traditional lighting techniques,” said Fleming, “there are some new trends emerging that are really quite distinctive and elegant. For example,” she said, when installing accent lighting in a yard, the homeowner will select specific trees or flower beds they want to highlight and we will create a lighting pattern in which the illumination transitions from dark to light, then back to dark again. This is a very dramatic, unusual treatment,” she added.

“A favorite treatment used to illuminate water features,” she concluded, “is really very simple but elegant. A small light is attached to the house that casts a very thin beam of light over a cascading waterfall, pond, or swimming pool, providing a very calming, beautiful atmosphere.”

Not all area lights give off the same radius of light, so it is important to see the fixture lit up at night before making a purchasing decision, Fleming added. “Low voltage systems are the most economical, and save about 40 percent on the electric bill, which is much more economical than the floodlights installed by many homebuilders.”

Homebuyers can expect to pay an average of \$1,200 to \$3,000 to illuminate their home and yard. “Of course,” concluded Fleming, “many homes require a much larger budget, depending on the extent of the lighting the homeowner desires.”

Times have definitely changed over the years. Homebuyers have become much more sophisticated in the way they decorate their homes and have dozens of decisions and choices to make regarding landscaping and lighting. But there is one choice they won't have to make: where to put the trough for the cow in the back yard.

Emily Foshee is a freelance writer living in Frisco.



Frisco Residents Reap Benefits of Composting

The City of Frisco picks up yard trimmings weekly as a separate collection and delivers this material to the North Texas Municipal Water District (NTMWD) Regional Composting Facility.

NTMWD is the regional authority responsible for providing solid waste disposal services to its member cities (Allen, Frisco, McKinney, Plano and Richardson) and currently handles an average of approximately 1,800 tons of municipal solid waste daily from about 500,000 member city residents.

The member cities worked with NTMWD to develop a long-term solid waste management plan designed to minimize the amount of municipal solid waste being disposed in the landfill.

NTWMD contracted with the City of Plano to operate the regional composting program. Plano has been operating a composting program for over ten years and has been successful in producing and marketing the finished product.

It is estimated that 58,039 tons of yard trimmings can be diverted from the residential waste stream in 2005 by these five cities, more than doubling last years diversion figures.

To ensure yard trimmings are diverted from the landfill and turned into a beneficial compost product, Frisco residents must adhere to the following collection set-out criteria:

- Place grass clippings, leaves and plant material in city-approved paper lawn bags. Bags should weigh no more than 50 lbs. Bags may be purchased at the Custer Transfer Facility (9901 Custer Road) or at local retail stores.
- Tie and bundle tree and brush trimmings with string or twine that is compostable. Each bundle may not exceed 3 feet in length and 30 lbs. in weight.
- Place yard trimmings out on your normal collection day at least three feet from your cart.
- Sod, dirt, gravel, rocks or concrete will not be accepted.

Residents are also encouraged to use finished compost and mulch for all their gardening and landscaping needs. Compost breaks up the heavy clay found in our local soils, allows good aeration, helps retain proper moisture levels, provides nutrients, and helps prevent excess water runoff. More information about the benefits and uses of compost and mulch and application rates can be found at the informational kiosk located at the Custer Transfer Facility or at www.planopure.com.