

# Landscaping a 'sound investment'

By Andy Lang  
special writer

(AP) — Whenever you do it yourself on the inside of your house, it's usually because it is something that has to be done.

A large part of the work you do on the outside of the house is because you want to do it, mostly to improve the appearance of your property. Included among these projects are such things as patios, decks, pathways, walls, barbecue areas, gardens and the like.

The wonderful effects that can be achieved in the yard with bricks, mortar, concrete, paving blocks and other building materials are detailed in "Backyard Brickwork," edited by Mike Lawrence. The reader is cautioned to think carefully before getting started, as all of the things mentioned are permanent and will not yield easily to later changes.

Questions that must be asked include: Must there be plenty of playing space for children or grandchildren? Do you hope to add a swimming pool at a later stage? Are you an enthusiastic gardener or do you

prefer a garden that requires a minimum of upkeep? If you aren't going to work in your garden, can you afford a regular gardener?

THE BOOK POINTS out that the days of huge houses with spacious rooms on cheap and equally spacious plots have gone forever. Building costs, land price and the presence of modern lifestyles demand that you make good use of every square foot of your property. Every dollar spent on a well-designed outdoor living space is a sound investment. You will get it back in hard cash when you go to sell your house.

There is some good advice for people who cannot handle the outside improvements by themselves but can afford to pay for them. The book tells about trying to find somebody who has had such work done and can make a recommendation, then adds:

"You must not, under any circumstances, simply ask the first builder you find to begin work of any sort on the basis of a verbal agreement, particularly if the quotation seems unusually low and you do not know

much about construction work. Also, under no circumstances should you pay in advance for work that is still to be done. If any problems do arise, you will lose either in terms of money or in a final result that may have to be demolished.

"Once you have a written quotation from two or more reputable builders, go see your local bank. Take your plan and your quotations with you and ask whether they are prepared to lend you the money. Once your loan has been approved, get the builder of your choice to sign a retention money clause (the amount held back until such time as the project is completed to your sat-

isfaction), the time in which the project is to be completed and at what stage of the work the first payment will be made.

"IN THIS WAY, you can minimize the risk that faces every homeowner wishing to have alterations done by unfamiliar builders, landscapers or designers. If you have any doubts about the idea of the whole thing, just ask any real estate agent how much an attractive outdoor living area adds to the price of a house."

"Backyard Brickwork" is published by Garden Way Publishing, Schoolhouse Road, Pownal, Vt. 05261.)



If you have doubts about making outdoor landscaping improvements, "just ask any real estate agent how much an attractive outdoor living area adds to the price of a house."



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