



A Room for Veggies

Essential to this tidy, productive garden are a formal design, gravel walkways, raised beds, and a fence to enclose it.



**A BACKYARD
FOR
THE AGES**

NO LONGER AN OVERGROWN
MESS TO AVOID, DOUG
SCOTT'S ATLANTA YARD NOW
BECKONS HIS FAMILY TO
EXPLORE, PLAY, AND ENJOY
THE OUTDOORS

WHEN MY THEN FIANCÉE Brittany and I first saw the 1963 ranch that we now call home, you could barely see it from the street. A huge magnolia plus a tangled mess of overgrown shrubs and ivy completely covered it. The “For Sale” sign probably should have read, “Please Help Me!”

However, what the house lacked on the surface was more than made up for in potential. It had great bones, sat on a good-size lot with mature trees, and was in an ideal location. As newlyweds, we decided to take on the challenge of making this house our first home.

by
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THE FIRE PIT



BEFORE This backyard swing set made sense when the children were small, but as soon as they got smart phones, the play set lost its purpose and was just taking up space.

AFTER The simplicity of this design is what's so appealing about it. A new gravel surface, bordered with stone, fills the space where the swing set once stood, and four comfortable Adirondack chairs surround a rustic metal fire pit. On cool evenings, everyone enjoys gathering around a roaring fire.

Embracing Outdoor Life

Eight years, two daughters, and one major home renovation later, our yard was starting to take shape. What was once just a whisper—my love for gardening and being outside with my family—transformed into a full-blown passion.

I couldn't get enough of it. I'd pore over gardening magazines, watch DIY shows, dream up plans, sketch designs, add new plants, and move others around. The spaces beyond the walls of our house were starting to become part of our actual home.

But our yard still lacked one thing: our personality. Yes, it looked nice, but it didn't really reflect how we desired to live. That was about to change.

Wanting our girls to have a greater appreciation for where real food comes from, my wife signed our oldest daughter and me up for a family vegetable-garden workshop at the Atlanta Botanical



ABOVE: Scott urges homeowners to consider how outdoor and indoor spaces interact—not only physically but also visually. Create views that focus on special features.



THE BASEMENT



BEFORE Does this scene look familiar? Many homes have a basement door, located near a corner in the back, that no one ever uses.

AFTER What an amazing transformation! The Scotts moved some large shrubs and then framed the lonely door with a deck and a vine-covered pergola. A daybed, hung from the pergola, is a pleasant place to relax on balmy days. An old nesting box stores garden supplies nearby. New windows tie together the inside and out.

Garden. I thought we'd come home with a lima bean in a cup. Instead, we returned with 70 soon-to-be seedlings!

I had nowhere to plant them. So, with the help of a sledgehammer and a friend with a Bobcat, we demolished one end of our driveway and converted it into a raised-bed vegetable garden.

Doing Real Yard Work

That vegetable garden was just the beginning. Over the next few years, we made a few necessary changes that turned a nice yard into *our* yard.

Just outside our basement door, we built a deck and pergola where evergreen clematis vines provide shade and a touch of drama. Then we converted a rusty old nesting box into storage for boots and tools and hung a daybed to create an idyllic spot for reading or taking a nap.

We transformed our underused side yard into what we now call "Scott Family

Farm"—complete with a combined chicken coop/bunny hutch/chicken run, a gathering space with a farm table and benches, a potting shed, and a potting bench made from old flooring. Then we added string lights, a rain barrel, flower boxes, more plants, and a custom-made sign introducing our feathered friends.

In the branches of our Southern magnolia, I built a tree house large and cool enough for our girls to enjoy now and into their teens. Its trapdoor, Juliet balcony, and reading loft make it a favorite hangout spot for our kids and their friends.

Where an out-of-the-box play set once stood now rests a primitive fire pit—the ultimate spot for gathering together and toasting marshmallows.

To unite the spaces, I added meandering paths and plants that complement those that were already there. New plantings included 'Mrs. G.G. Gerbing'



Scott Family Farm

This formerly neglected side yard now features a chicken coop, bunny hutch, and potting shed and bench.

white azaleas, hydrangeas, camellias, boxwoods, tea olives, viburnums, ferns, hostas, and Lenten roses. My design aesthetic leans toward plants in shades of green and white. It's a classic look and ultimately creates a more peaceful space. I save my pops of color for containers and the vegetable garden.

So, like we've done with our house, we've made our yard our home. I guess you could say that we've redeemed our ground. When friends and family took notice of our yard's transformation, they asked me to help them do the same with their outdoor spaces, and I have happily accepted.

We also wanted to make more of the time we had at home with our girls. Although our life had improved over the

past few years, it was still characterized by a lot of coming and going, not as much of the real living that we wanted. As Brittany says, "We longed to live a simpler yet fuller, richer, and more intentional life."

I also realized that my true passions were found outside my career and I didn't want to wait until retirement to enjoy them fully. So we took the leap of faith from corporate America to launch Redeem Your Ground (redeemyourground.com), an exterior-design studio where creating outdoor spaces is our work.

Taking Time To Grow

If you're like many people and are overwhelmed with all that *could* be done in your yard, start small. Imagine your

yard as a series of "rooms," and focus on one at a time. Begin with your favorite space—or the one you walk through the most. When you're done there, move on to the next "room."

If this still seems like too much, start even smaller. Add a container garden to a patio. Not only are these easy to create and relatively inexpensive, they're also a great way to add color and a bit of personal flair to outdoor areas. (For loads of great container ideas to suit any style, see page 104.)

Or if growing vegetables and herbs is more your thing, begin with a few pots of basil. Once you enjoy some fresh pesto and tasty bruschetta, it'll be easier to move on from there. It's all about taking it at your own pace. 🍷



ABOVE LEFT: If you want to know where your teens are, build them a tree house that creates just the right amount of privacy. **ABOVE RIGHT AND BELOW:** Seven hens and a rooster named Henry (pictured above) share this stylish coop on the family farm.

