

Consider adding misting system, fountain to yard

More than half of Americans are scaling back or scrapping their vacations this year. If you're one of them, take a look at your backyard.

If your family is spending more time at home lately to save money, consider a few upgrades that will make your backyard more comfortable, inviting and usable on the hottest summer days.

Start by cooling it off. A misting system can cool your patio, gazebo or sun deck by about 30 degrees. The system creates a curtain of cool air around your outdoor living space that keeps everyone comfortable, even on 100-plus-degree days. You'll pay around \$2,500 to have a new system installed, an investment that will last much longer than a weeklong, out-of-town vacation.

Next, nip the noise. If you live near a busy street, your yard won't be much of a respite if all you hear is traffic. A water feature like a fountain, waterfall or moving stream will blend the background noise into the flowing water's soothing sounds.

A tip: Don't overbuild. An oversized waterfall makes a lot of noise itself, especially if your neighborhood is already fairly quiet, and you won't be able to sit near it. Instead, make a more subtle statement with a waterfall that's just two feet or so tall.



Rosie Romero
Rosie on the House

A traditional, two-foot waterfall will start at around \$2,500, depending on how elaborate the design is. Fountain prices range from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars, depending on the size and whether they require a plumbing hookup.

The newest fountain designs are small and have simple catch basins planted in the ground along with the plumbing. They recirculate water through anything you choose: an urn, stones or a "spitter" like a frog statuary. Paul Connolly, president of the Association of Professional Landscape Designers' Arizona chapter and owner of Sundrea Design Studio in Tucson, says basalt crystals and stone cactus are among the most requested styles.

Some manufacturers sell do-it-yourself fountain kits for as little as \$500, which will cut your investment in half



Photo courtesy of Pond Gnome.

A modest fountain or waterfall with a trickle of water can help drown out traffic noise and add a spot of serenity in an otherwise dry backyard.

because you'll save on labor.

Stand-alone fountains are favorites because they're simple to set up and don't require any plumbing. They're usually small, so they fit right on the patio, and they range from simple to sophisticated. Just add water, plug them in and watch

the water flow.

If you prefer a more natural backyard design, choose one that invites nature in. A natural stream, for example, will attract birds and wildlife. Depending on the plants you choose for the stream, you could see more native and

migratory birds, frogs and other critters.

A caution: If you live on the edge of the desert, thirsty, large animals like puma could find their way to your peaceful stream. Look out the window before you venture outdoors.

And if you have children at

home, consider a stream that has no open pond to invite mishaps. You can opt for models that trickle as little as two inches of water – enough for fish, snails and frogs to thrive in, but not enough to pose a drowning danger.

You can install a 10-foot natural stream yourself for as little as \$2,000; you'll pay about twice that if you have it professionally installed.

Finally, look into buying a water feature that's attached to a rainwater collection system, which harvests the little rain we get and channels it through a filter for use in your fountain or waterfall.

Using water to create a backyard oasis can cool your space, quiet things down, help you relax and be kind to the environment, all summer long.

Rosie Romero has been in the Arizona home-building and remodeling industry for 35 years. He has a radio program from 10 a.m. to noon Saturdays on KNST-AM (790). For more do-it-yourself tips and for Arizona's most-trusted contractor referral network, go to rosieonthehouse.com or call (888) ROSIE-4-U during the show. The Rosie on the House column appears every Friday.

> More home improvement tips from Rosie Romero at tucsoncitizen.com/lifestyle.

