

# Wide OPEN SPACES

WHEN IT COMES TO DESIGNING LARGER YARDS, THE REWARD CAN BE AS BIG AS THE CHALLENGE.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY MELANIE JOHNSON

**Whether your design challenge comes in** the form of a compact garden or a huge yard with seemingly endless lawn, the size of the project will absolutely impact your plans. When interior designer Abbe Fenimore took on this large backyard space in Dallas, Texas, she knew what she was up against. Most of her clients tend to look for stylish, updated designs inside their homes and Abbe was able to make this outdoor project simpler by treating it like any other.

“We actually approached it like we would an interior,” says Abbe. By including décor you might find inside the house on the patio and in the yard, Abbe ensured that the quality of a great entertaining space would flow from the house to the backyard, which was perfect for the homeowners, who wanted a place to host family and friends.

## GOING BIG, STAYING COZY

With a huge yard—roughly 4,500 square feet—surrounding a large pool and a long, 1,000-square-foot covered patio outside the home, Abbe had to find a way to create different zones for guests to enjoy without overwhelming them or making things feel crowded. “It’s really important to be able to use [all] your spaces at the same time,” she says.

Between a table big enough for 12 dinner guests on a raised concrete pad in the center of the yard, three separate comfortable patio areas, and a handful of casual loungers and ottomans on either side of the pool, Abbe was able to include enough seating to entertain plenty of visitors at once—and that’s not including any indoor space.

*“Implementing indoor-only pieces can create a more comfortable feel.*

*I like to incorporate indoor-outdoor accent tables and accessories in wood and metal to mix up the plastic feel that often comes with outdoor pieces.”*

## Half of the challenge

was finding enough places to seat guests without blocking the house from the rest of the yard. Being able to utilize indoor and outdoor spaces is very helpful when hosting large parties.





**The colorful mobile** hanging over one of the patio spaces works wonders combined with the bright floral pillows. The mobile was another piece the homeowners brought to the design.

## EASY-CARE PLANTINGS

As for the landscaping, the homeowners already had low-growing plants and succulents that could withstand the Texas heat. The front and back yards are sprinkled with horsetail, heartleaf ice plant and English stonecrop—all plants that keep their vibrant greens throughout the season.

The checkered boxes of river rock and low-growing groundcover plants were already in the front yard when Abbe began the redesign. “We just basically replicated that design from the front of the house and strategically placed it in the back.” The geometric shape and contrast between stone and soft leaves makes a wonderful addition to the center of the yard.

This impressive entertaining space combines so many important elements without overwhelming the eye. With plenty of seating throughout the yard and the expansive patio, colorful décor in a wide variety of materials and a fresh mixture of indoor and outdoor design styles, it almost sounds too complex to all work together. But with a keen eye for design and a balanced use of the available space, Abbe was able to make this outdoor room a fantastic spot for friendly gatherings. *OR*

The fluid design that spans the entire yard also encourages guests to move freely from one area to the next and relish each rather than stick to a single spots for the entire event.

## FUN, MODERN STYLE

Much of the furniture and décor came from local stores that Abbe frequents for her design projects. “Dallas has a great design district,” Abbe says. “We do a lot of resourcing here.”

Recycling and salvaging furniture can be a great way to save money on large-scale endeavors. Some aspects of the design were already part of the home. The tall red sculpture in the center of the yard and the colorful mobile hanging over the patio were helpful starting pieces that Abbe was able to work with.

“I love color,” Abbe says. “It doesn’t always have to be gaudy or over the top.” The bright floral pillows and accent pieces on the patio brighten up the simple whites and browns of the house and the other furniture.

Textures can work wonders for a strong, industrial-looking home too. Abbe installed short, stationary rods along the patio with decorative draperies to soften the architecture. The grassy shag-style rugs under the patio furniture have the same effect.



**The loungers** by the pool have the same floral accent pillows as the seating areas on the patio, bringing the same bright colors out into the yard.





**Red sculpture** Incorporating interesting pieces you already own can be a great way to get started on a unique design. This bright-red towering sculpture makes a bold visual statement in the center of the yard and really draws attention to the rock garden.

## TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR YARD!

TRY THESE TIPS AT HOME IF YOU'RE FEELING OVERWHELMED BY YOUR OUTDOOR REDESIGN PLANS.

- **DON'T PANIC.** Design projects should be fun, and big spaces mean more options.
- **PLAN AHEAD.** Think about the elements you want to include and where they should go. Sketch out ideas so you can visualize possible outcomes before you begin making permanent changes.
- **BALANCE COUNTS.** Having a huge yard doesn't necessarily mean you need to fill it with more elements. Space things out evenly so your guests can move freely and enjoy everything without being overwhelmed.
- **USE CREATIVE COMBINATIONS.** Feel free to mix things up. Use indoor décor in outdoor spaces like Abbe did with this Dallas yard. Breaking rules and pushing boundaries is half the fun of designing your own outdoor spaces.
- **WHEN IN DOUBT, BRING IN THE PROFESSIONALS.** "Landscape architects, designers and contractors are worth the investment and will save you many hours of frustration," says Abbe. Even if you're into DIY, a second opinion or just some sound advice can be worth asking for.