



OPEN AIR

OPEN DESIGN

WHEN professional landscape designer and horticultural consultant Lyndon Penner was a child in Saskatchewan, he asked for a playhouse to call his own. His grandmother responded by growing one for him.

Russian mammoth sunflowers which grow to a height of some 10 feet in a single season were planted in the shape of a square, leaving space for an entrance. Fast-growing scarlet runner beans were planted alongside to fill in the gaps. With the blue Prairie sky as his ceiling, Penner's grandmother had given him a garden room of his own like none other. The world outside could wait.

Longing for an outdoor space you can call your own, one that offers comfort, privacy and aesthetics that express your ideas? It isn't too much for anyone to ask, even if your personal abode happens to be squeezed smack dab in the centre of a congested suburban neighbourhood or in a high-rise condominium affording a surround-sound experience.

In his latest book, *Garden Design for the Short Season Yard* (Brush Education, 2015), Penner discusses the elements of good design and how to create an outdoor space that suits your needs. Privacy is an important component.

"We have less and less space in which to create a garden," says Penner, "and more and more issues with having other people 'in our space.'"

Plant breeders are introducing more and more skinny, medium-height trees for the urban landscape that are intriguing alternatives, indeed preferred, to the ubiquitous Swedish aspen. Northern arrow series TreasuRed is a new, hardy columnar apple tree developed at the University of Saskatchewan's fruit-breeding program.

Kevin Twomey at T&T Seeds says it grows to four metres tall with a width of roughly 1.2 metres. Plant a row of three and you will have a privacy barrier that fits into a small space and produces apples, too. Patience is needed, though, because the trees at time of purchase are only about knee-high.

An alternative, says Penner, is growing dense vines such as alpine and Clematis macropetala varieties or hardy climbing roses such as William Baffin. Tall annuals such as sunflowers, castor beans and Nicotiana sylvestris are also effective at creating a privacy screen.

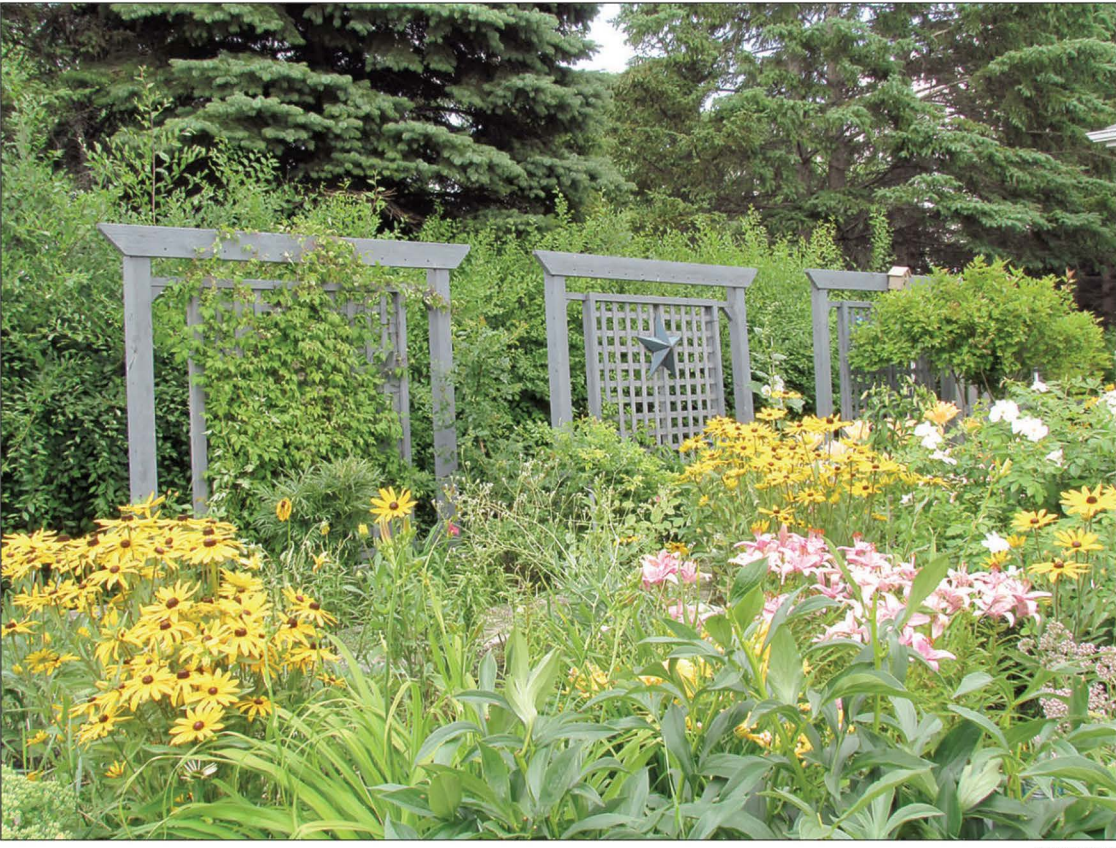
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Need instant privacy and can't wait for a tree to grow? Try planting giant sunflowers. Mammoth Russian grows to a height greater than 274 cm in a single season. Bonus: bees are attracted to the cherry flowers. At left, decorating on a budget? Vintage or industrial style accessories are all the rage. Shown: String lighting with Edison-style bulbs will light up your patio in style.



COLLEEN ZACHARIAS
GARDENING



TERESA LOPATA

Free-standing panels are multi-purpose: privacy, sculptural interest, wind barrier. Take your pick! For this project, the homeowner built wooden frames around heavy duty lattice and attached it to 4x4 wooden posts, adding an attractive dimension to the landscape.

Privacy

Continued from **G13**

If I want to cover something up in a hurry I plant *Cobaea scandens* (cup and saucer), an annual vine that glues its sticky tendrils with hooked tips as it clambers up an obelisk or trellis. The large, five-centimetre, purplish bell-shaped flowers are worth waiting for but even if they take their time in appearing, the vine serves its purpose.

Last year, when landscape designer Colleen Watson (Watson Designs in Landscaping) met with clients whose backyard was in direct view of a newly-built three-storey condominium, she recommended installing curved, free-standing privacy screens that would function as a structural feature as well as a wind barrier.

The unique project was created by Joel Ott, owner of Deckworks. Working with 20-foot cedar boards, Ott began by constructing special wood-bending jigs. The boards were soaked in water then placed in the jigs and bent to the desired shape slowly over a three-month period.

"It was quite the project," says Ott, who designed the beautiful curved screens with a rafter detail that stretches about six metres. The satisfied homeowners are adding lights this spring, as well as *Medora* junipers, ornamental grasses and perennials to beds designed by Watson. Adjacent to the screens, these will add colour and vertical interest as

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One Transcona gardener created a sculptural element in her backyard by building three attractive free-standing screens using heavy duty lattice and four-by-four wooden posts. Another option is to purchase a ready-made screen. St. Mary's Nursery, for example, offers a natural bamboo screen for attaching horizontally to a support and rigid screening panels which can be used as a division for creating garden rooms or enhancing the visual appeal of a landscape.

Cyndy Goulet, a designer at Oakridge Greenhouse and Garden Centre in Steinbach says homeowners are using tall pots with tall palms or grasses to create privacy on their decks. Goulet says it is important to not overwhelm a small space. Better to go with some bigger planters with larger impact plants than with 15 or so smaller containers that just get lost on the bottom.

"Anything low is lost because if you or your guests are sitting or standing, your eyes are not directed at what is



ROBINSON LIGHTING

This Kenroy pendant from Robinson Lighting is made of weather-resistant rattan.

down at your feet," says Goulet. She suggests a better use of space is to grow plants in containers that will be at waist level when you are standing or eye level when you are sitting so you can enjoy the display.

Wind is also an important aspect to consider, especially if your terrace is located on the third storey or higher of an apartment building. Plants that have large leaf surfaces, such as canna or Abyssinian banana, are more likely to tear when there is a high degree of wind. Grasses, on the other hand, have a finer texture and smaller surface better to take on high wind. Goulet also suggests placing a sturdy container display on a pedestal or, if an area is windy, adding branches or bamboo to a container which structurally gives it a taller look.

Karen Anderson, greenhouse supervisor at RONA on Kenaston Boulevard, says tropical plants are ideal for defining an entertainment area and creating privacy. While ferns are experiencing a surge of interest, Anderson says the Kimberley fern grows to such a huge size that it needs



JAN REGEHR

This outdoor sectional from Lee Industries is made for the outdoors with fabric that won't fade or mildew. Water-resistant, too.

a fair bit of space. She recommends transplanting it into a larger pot and while the Kimberley and Boston ferns can take some sun, they will perform best in a shaded location.

In addition to enhancing privacy, Carla Hrycyna of St. Mary's Nursery says accessorizing the outdoor garden room with lighting helps to define it as an extension of your home and creates ambience. Hrycyna says string lighting with vintage-style Edison bulbs is a popular trend.

Alison Demare of Robinson Lighting says in addition to string lighting with an industrial look, homeowners can choose from sophisticated floor lamps or pendant lights for their patios and balconies. The Kenroy pendant light, for example, features an all-weather rattan encircling a glass shade.

Creating your garden room, no matter its size, involves selecting well-chosen pieces that will be both durable and comfortable.

Wood Anchor boss Jason Neufeld likes to use Manitoba oak for building projects because it has naturally water-resistant and rot-resistant properties. For the rooftop at the Ashdown Warehouse condominium Neufeld crafted wooden screens that serve as a textural backdrop to the architecturally stunning table and bench seating using a combination of cedar and salvaged urban elm which has beautiful colouring.

Wood Anchor also crafts stools from reclaimed elm, spruce, fir, oak and cottonwood in either a round or cube shape.

Looking for something softer perhaps? Pineridge Hollow will this year carry a line of outdoor sectionals from Lee Industries. Pineridge owner Jan Regehr has a Lee sofa from on her deck at home and a sectional at her cottage.

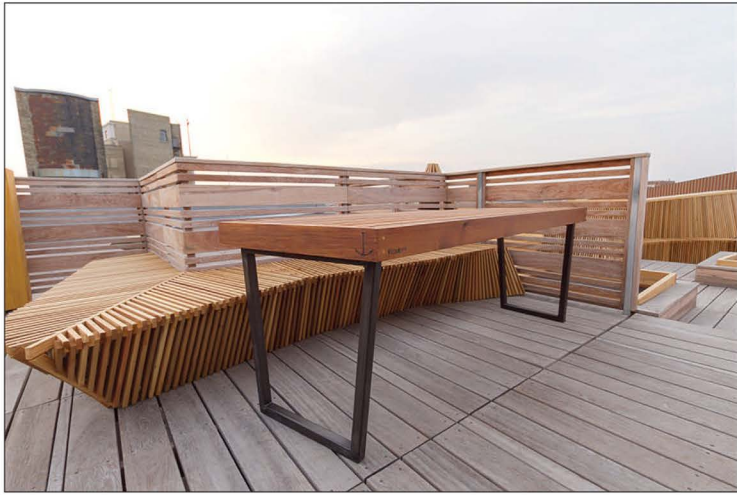
"The look is the same as what you might have in your living room," says Regehr, who chooses furnishings for their low-maintenance and wants fabric that is made for the outdoors. Fabric in the Lee Industries line will not fade from the sun and is mildew resistant and water resistant.

Pineridge Hollow will feature a large outdoor patio with furnishings and accessories to show the homeowner what they can create in their own backyard.

Regehr loves to entertain and has had a life-long interest in herbs. She is installing two large planter boxes on the patio. One will be filled with bartender herbs and the other with pizza herbs. Mojito mint, lemon verbena, lemon balm and anise hyssop will be muddled and steeped in a variety of beverages including hot and cold teas for a herbal layer.

There are many choices from screens to plants, lighting options and outdoor furnishings that will help make your open-air living room one you and your guests will enjoy.

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RAY CHAN

The rooftop patio at Ashdown Warehouse condominium was designed and created by J Neufeld, Wood Anchor. Handcrafted wooden screens serve as a wind barrier and an attractive backdrop to bench seating and an all-weather table made from a combination of cedar and salvaged urban elm.