

Backyard Bones By Julie Silva

Good bones is a term frequently applied to anything that has a strong foundation. In starting to think about your yard, the first concern is what your family needs and second is what good bones exist already. Good bones may be a shady spot to sit, to a perfect place for viewing the sunset, to shady mature trees. Good bones may be what you admire or appreciate in your yard that exists right now.

The easiest way to start a yard remodel is to just strip everything out. Unfortunately, you would be throwing money and time away. Once everything is pulled out the task becomes herculean. A better way to do a remodel is by breaking down the job into rooms - rooms that intertwine and share the goal and the experience.

In a front yard, the first room may be a sitting area under the front porch. That is an easy room to start with, making a larger sitting area with seating in the sun and the shade. Add colorful pots with fragrant plants and comfortable chairs.

For the next room, look for a natural divider such as terracing, retaining walls, or the line of the start of the lawn. Create the illusion of a border or barricade to provide privacy. The next room becomes the area on the other side of the roses which is the lawn. Is the lawn used by your children or would it be better as a pleasant view filled with flowers, art, or a water feature?

Rooms in the backyard will follow the same pattern. What exists now that you love and would not want to live without? A walkway to a quiet shady area is a good bone to keep. Make that room complete, then search for the next good bones room. An existing full-sun vegetable garden is a keeper. Children require a play area that could encompass a pool, a slide, and seating for enjoying snacks. Pets could use a chicken coop, room for the dog to play ball, or a bunny hutch with attached bunny run. Each area could have a room designation with a pathway leading from one room to the next.

The first step of planning well is a list of needs, diagram with measurements and a supply list. Know the assets and liabilities of your yard and be prepared to remove things that just do not work. Know your microclimates, which could be blazing hot sun in the west, blowing winter winds between houses and cool shady spots in the summer. Build rooms to fit those microclimates.

After you have your planning list it is time to shop! Armed with your planting list, head to a quality nursery known for a good selection of healthy plants. Buying your plants from one place may help you negotiate a discount. Set your delivery a day or two prior to planting. When the plants arrive set them out in their designated spots while still in their pots. Look at those plants from all angles including from inside your home. Taking a couple of days to confirm your plan

will save you the labor of having to move a plant or the money lost if it dies. Plan well and smart shopping will ease the pain of your pocket book and give you the picture you want.

The next step is an old adage that is true even today, work smarter not harder. Landscaping is physical, hard labor. A few steps will make the job smoother and easier. The room you are working in should be free of debris, bad bones plants, and any item you would have to continually move to complete that room. Put all your tools in one place for easy access. Complete one task at a time. If the job is above your skill set or time allowance, hire a licensed contractor. If you are doing the work yourself, renting power equipment like an auger will speed things along.

The last but most important rule is safety first. Remember you are working around saws, nails, shovels, power tools, baking sun, dehydration, and sore muscles. Steer clear of flip-flops, wear your safety glasses, use gloves, lift with your legs, and know your limitations.

Good bones give a leg up in the reconstruction of your yard. By using the good bones ideas for your foundation your yard transformation will be cost effective and faster. In the end you will have a yard that your family will enjoy and love for years.

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