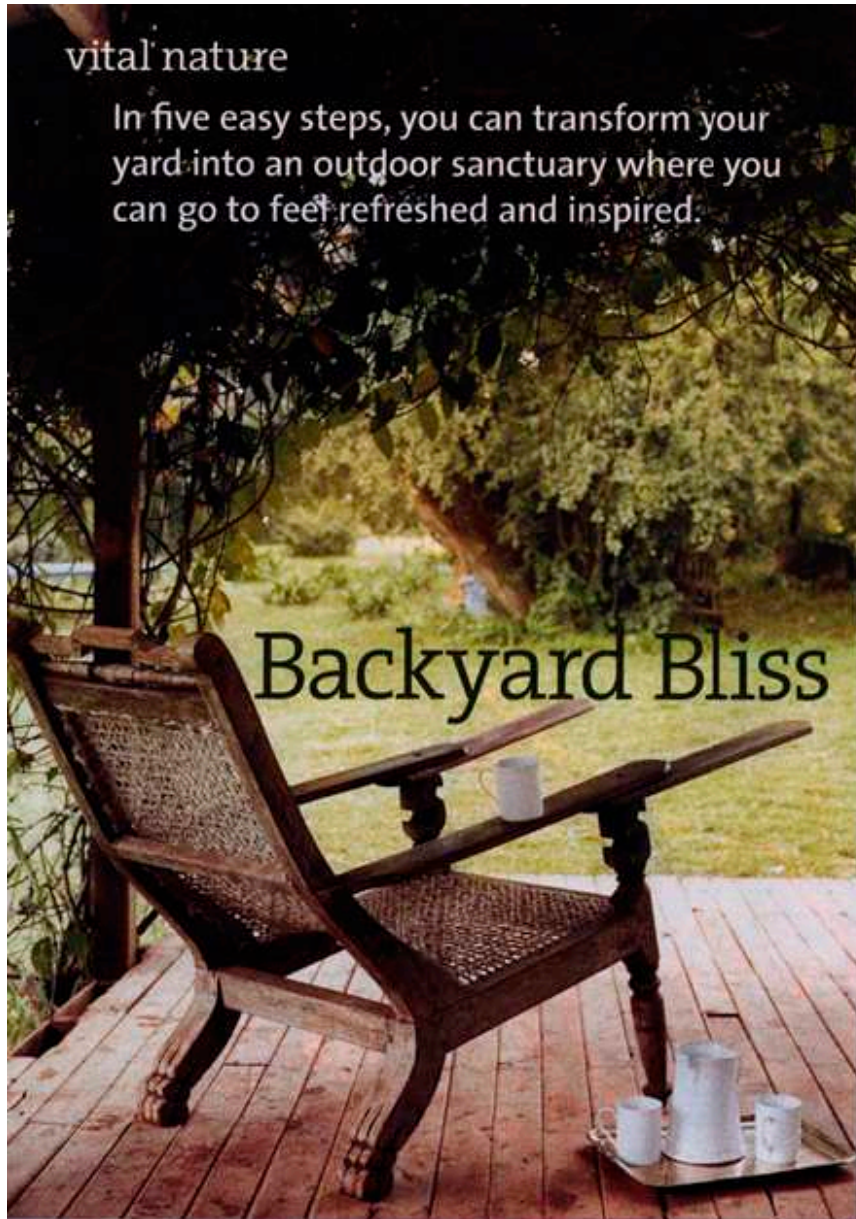


## vital nature

In five easy steps, you can transform your yard into an outdoor sanctuary where you can go to feel refreshed and inspired.

# Backyard Bliss



We asked Julie Moir Messervy, author of *Home Outside: Creating the Landscape You Love* (Taunton, 2009) for advice on creating a **PRIVATE OUTDOOR GETAWAY ZONE** where you can meditate, write, do yoga, or simply rest.



**Smart Solar Portsmouth Birdbath** (\$160; [target.com](http://target.com)) attracts feathered friends and provides the soothing sound of cascading water. Its solar-powered pump constantly recycles water.

**1 CHOOSE YOUR VIEW.** Think about what you'd like to see in your outdoor sanctuary—an unobstructed view of the sky? A close look at the birds visiting your flowers? "Your vantage point helps you feel connected to nature," says Messervy, who also suggests you consider the slope of your property and whether you prefer being perched up high or nestled down low.

**2 ENSURE PRIVACY.** Once you've picked your spot, build a simple "wall"—with potted plants, a vine-covered trellis, a landscape screen, or even just gauzy outdoor curtains—that shields you from the road or neighbors' yards. "When you feel safe and supported (not exposed), you're less tense," says Messervy. "This allows you to contemplate, daydream, or meditate freely."

**3 MAKE PATHS TO FOLLOW.** Design paths to get from your house to your sanctuary and from your sanctuary to other places. Use stepping stones and plantings so it's easy and comfortable to move from one place to another. You can even set up circular paths for walking meditations. No matter how you create your paths, establishing proper "flow" will help draw you outside, says Messervy.

**4 DELIGHT YOUR SENSES.** Fill your getaway space with the colors, sounds, and scents that make you feel relaxed and happy. For subtle natural fragrances choose plants like rosemary, native clematis (perfect for arbors), lavender, lilies, or native honeysuckle. Textured succulents and rocks provide visual interest while fountains, chimes, or bird feeders introduce relaxing sounds.

**5 ADD PERSONAL TOUCHES.** If you plan to use your space for meditation or relaxation, accent it with objects that comfort you, like pillows (covered in weather-resistant fabric), an outdoor rug, or a favorite piece of statuary. For more creative endeavors, arrange a worktable and shelves. If you're a yoga enthusiast, you could fashion an open-air studio with bamboo matting and a place to store your yoga props. —Judi Ketteler



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