First Impressions

By DJ Drury & Cheri Willett

With all the home improvement and do-it-yourself shows these days, it’s not uncommon to be dreaming of a project for your home. But with these uncertain economic times, you may wonder what you should do to improve the value of your home. Furthermore, you wonder how to make it happen.

Well put down the remote and get off the couch because Summer is FINALLY here, and it’s time to get outside!

You’ve heard the common phrase “first impressions are the most important.” And the same is true for your home. Like the inside of your home, the outside is also a reflection of who you are.

Today homeowners are staying in their homes longer due to the slowdown in the real estate market. But, no need to fret – there’s so much to enjoy and gain in your current home’s value with simple improvements.

One of the easiest ways to gain real value in your home is to enhance your outdoor space. While not nearly as costly as adding square footage to your home, adding outdoor square footage is one way homeowners are adding value and gaining new spaces to enjoy.

As with any major project, planning is the key to success. Follow these basic steps to help you through your project:

1. Function: What is the function or purpose of the project? What will you use this space for? Entertaining, cooking, relaxing, privacy, etc. Planning how you will use this space will help you determine what elements are needed to accomplish this goal. For example, if you want to entertain, the space will need to be large enough for guests, have ample seating, and be accessible.

2. Size: How many people will this space need to accommodate?

3. Features: What features do you want to incorporate? Grill, fireplace or pit, seating, water feature, etc.

4. Materials: What materials will you use to complement your home? Concrete, pavers, etc. While concrete is often the least expensive, it also has maintenance issues such as cracking and staining. Pavers are growing rapidly in popularity because they are affordable, durable, versatile, attractive, low maintenance, and easy to install.

5. Budget: How much do you have to spend? How much money is needed to actually do the project?

One of the most important factors in adding an outdoor space is to consult with a professional even during the early stages of planning! You could risk the integrity of your entire project if it is not done correctly.

Professionals with credentials will not only offer ideas and suggestions, but they can save you valuable time and money with the right information at the right time. Whether you plan to do the project yourself or hire it done, the right professional is key to your success.

So, for all you home improvement television addicts, get the biggest “bang for your buck” by adding “curb appeal” to your home. And with a little “sweat equity,” you could end up with “10 grand in your hand.” Whether you have a “desperate landscape” or just want a “bodacious backyard,” follow these steps so your project doesn’t become a “renovation reality” and you get “over your head.” In the end, you’ll have the “dream home” you deserve!