

# PRIME

*The Luxury of Choice*

LIVING

## *great* ESCAPES

PACK YOUR BAGS AND WHISK AWAY TO  
EXOTIC DESTINATIONS NEAR AND FAR

### *Take Flight*

JOURNEY TO NEW ZEALAND,  
WHERE NATURE'S WONDERS AWAIT

### *Get Lost*

FALL OFF THE GRID AT THE WORLD'S  
MOST REMOTE LUXURY DESTINATIONS

### *Girl Power*

WHEN INSPIRATION KNOCKED, FIVE  
HOUSTON WOMEN ANSWERED







# BACKYARD *beauty*

Story | ELIZABETH EXLINE

Once upon a time, the genteel white octagon was the sole possible incarnation of gazebos. Not so today. Now gazebos, or “garden structures,” are bigger, rectilinear and full of contemporary conveniences.

“Octagons and circles are cute for maybe two or three people to sit under,” explains A.J. Benys Jr., president of A.J.’s Landscaping and Design Inc. in Houston. “But we’re trying to create larger spaces.”

Such spaces must accommodate more people and more amenities. A gazebo or arbor, says Jim Jech, design director at McDugald-Steele, should comfortably welcome at least six to eight people along with a small outdoor kitchen and plenty of seating. Numerically speaking, that translates to approximately 14-by-22 square feet.

From there, homeowners can get as elaborate as they want. Some may set up an outdoor living room with a sofa, chairs and a chaise longue. Others may include a cooktop, under-counter refrigerator, barstools and a dining

table with chairs. A ceiling fan and lights, meanwhile, are essential. (Jech likes LEDs, while Benys appreciates the romance created by a gas-lit chandelier.) Other potential features include misters to stay cool and, just outside the perimeter of the structure, systems that emit chrysanthemum oil to shoo away mosquitoes for you.

But where should you set up your outdoor oasis? Placing it away from the house, preferably around active areas like pools and water features, helps to create a sense of destination. “It’s kind of a nucleus in the garden,” Jech notes.

Just as important as where, is how you construct your garden dwelling. Though roofs are feasible, both Benys and Jech prefer open-air structures that create shade while remaining firmly rooted in the outdoors. Traditional roofs also require more structural work and increase the cost substantially.

“If you layer beams and allow vines to grow on them, it gives you a really soft look,” Benys says. Wisteria and lavender trumpet







DESIGN



cocktails & conversation.

## “THE GARDEN STRUCTURE IS AN EXTENSION OF THE ARCHITECTURE.”

vines are both good choices, Jech adds, for the Houston climate.

The real key to design success is to mirror your home's architecture in your gazebo. “The garden structure is an extension of the architecture,” Jech says. “If it were a limestone house, I wouldn't do a New York bluestone arbor.”

Wood, stone and brick are all reliable options, although wood can become a “maintenance challenge,” Jech warns, since humidity and foliage require it to

be repainted or refinished as often as every two years.

Benys prefers cedar or cypress when timber is called for, but he likes to work with unorthodox materials as well, like wrought iron or even canvas, which he suspends over cables for a cabana-like riff on traditional gazebos. But the best industry “secret,” Jech says, is architectural aluminum, which can be obtained in sizes and finishes to mimic wood beams. Aluminum, Jech explains, doesn't rust and it

can look like a “refined wood” with the right treatment.

To create a sense of arrival, the gazebo should be set above grade with plantings on two to three sides. Pottery, vines and ornamental trees, Benys adds, help soften the transition from landscape to structure. All this makes for a siren call few can resist.

“People get attracted,” Benys explains, “and they'll want to walk out of your living room and experience that outdoor living space.” ♦



## GREAT OUTDOORS

A little sun, a little shade and plenty of style will have you sitting pretty in your outdoor oasis.

### UNDER THE SUN

Made from recycled teak and weatherproof Sunbrella fabrics, these tropically inspired structures by Sweetwater Cabana make outdoor living a breeze. [sweetwatercabana.com](http://sweetwatercabana.com)

### WOVEN WONDER

Crafted in Italy and designed to handle whatever Mother Nature dishes out, Mariaflora fabrics make versatility irresistible. [mariaflora.com](http://mariaflora.com)

### CUSHION CUT

Comfort and curves unite in Brown Jordan's Parkway Curvilinear Collection, which affords you the best seat out of the house. [brownjordan.com](http://brownjordan.com)

### SHOOT THE BREEZE

Palm-like blades and a neutral bronze finish make this Minka fan a must-have addition to any outdoor structure. [minkagroup.net](http://minkagroup.net)

