

## Smart Solution

This family proves you can save a tree without sacrificing style. BY REBECCA BULL REED

No one ever *wants* to cut down a beautiful, healthy tree. Face it: The guilt that ensues is akin to forgetting to pick up your child from carpool. More often than not, the argument to cut is centered on saving money, but what these homeowners saw in their own backyard was priceless: The stately American elm gave their home a sense of permanence.

**It's Ours, Now What?** Dan Melman and Ed Rogers needed to



**LEFT:** The higher front yard transitions down to the backyard by way of a curved flagstone path. The fern bed around the tree's base helps to keep foot traffic from compacting the soil.

### Prepare Your Trees for Construction

"The key is to start early," says arborist Shawn Siefers. "Often, we're called in too late, and it limits what can be done." Here's what the crew did at this home.

- Six months prior to breaking ground, they took soil samples and amended accordingly. "It's difficult to get pH and fertility right after construction is finished," says Shawn.
- Next, they root-pruned with an Air-Spade. Done prior to construction, this removes roots just outside the building zone, allowing for minimal cuts and maximum healing time.
- Limbs conflicting with the home's addition were then removed.
- Finally, they treated the tree with Cambistat, a growth regulator that encourages root growth while reducing canopy growth. "As a result, the tree's water requirements were decreased and so was drought stress," says Shawn.
- Every other year, this American elm is treated with Arbotect to protect it from Dutch elm disease, a fungus that spreads from one tree to another.



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Dan Melman, Homeowner

**LEFT:** It was crucial to the homeowners that this large tree, one of the oldest in the neighborhood, be protected. With careful planning, the American elm has made it through a home addition and a backyard redesign.

**RIGHT:** A root-protection mat, hidden under each terrace, spreads the weight of flagstones and reduces soil compaction around the trees, letting the roots take in oxygen.

Shawn Siefers. The home's addition was stairstepped so that the new breakfast room cleared the tree by a good 8 feet.

**Happiness All Around** With construction finished, everyone is pleased with the results. "Even our neighbors who requested we save the tree are delighted," says Dan.

Mark did a stellar job maximizing usable outdoor living area. "My goal was to create an upper terrace for dining and relaxing along with a lower space to allow for overflow during large gatherings," Mark says. "Best of all, the lower terrace also doubles as a recreation area for their twin boys." ●

