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New Life for an Old Patio

A concrete slab offering little privacy and even less eye appeal receives an enchanting new look.

T

he small L-shape patio had loads of potential—it just wasn't readily apparent. Located on a corner lot in Des Moines, the neglected patio lacked privacy. Plus, the concrete base, cracked in several places, looked old and worn.


"It was a slab of concrete with a couple pieces of furniture. I used it occasionally," the homeowner says, "but it wasn't very inviting."

With the help of *Garden Ideas & Outdoor Living*®, that was about to change. To create a welcoming outdoor area, we first needed to fix the patio's unappealing concrete base. One option was to remove the concrete and start over. Another, much more economical option was to use a concrete resurfacer. A blend of portland cement, sand, polymer modifiers, and other additives, the product can be applied over patios, walkways, or driveways to renew dirty, stained, and cracked concrete surfaces.

We began by repairing damaged areas. Then we applied a thin layer of resurfacer to create a like-new

LEFT: From dreary to dreamy, this small backyard patio was made over with the help of plants, furniture, and accessories.





TRELLISES are attached to large self-watering containers. Morning glory and scarlet runner bean vines quickly cover the trellises to provide separation from neighbors.

CONCRETE RESURFACER

improves the look and condition of the patio. Cracks are cleaned out and filled, then the entire surface is treated for a uniform look (see page 95).

LARGE CONTAINERS are relatively lightweight because they're made of plastic and filled with soilless potting mix. Lavender impatiens and polka-dot plant (*Hypoestes*) require little care.

OUTDOOR FURNITURE and carpeting make the once cold space warm and inviting, as well as more comfortable. Pillows add a splash of color to the neutral furnishings.

PLANTER BOXES have reservoirs, so plants need watering just once a week. Potting mix includes slow-release fertilizer to save another chore. Petunias grow rapidly to soften the fence.



appearance. By running a push broom over the patio surface before the resurfacer was dry we were able to add a subtle texture. Although color can be added to the mix, we opted for a neutral hue that wouldn't be visually distracting.

Once the patio was repaired, we turned to designer Wade Scherer for help creating a welcoming outdoor entertaining area. He quickly realized that, to make the space more cozy and intimate, he needed to shield it from the street and neighboring homes.

"The space felt really exposed, so I wanted to give it some sense of privacy," Scherer says. "We added planter boxes on top of the fence all the way around to help give a sense of enclosure."

On the side overlooking a neighboring home, Scherer chose planter boxes with attached trellises. Morning glory and scarlet runner bean vines now grow up the trellises, providing color and privacy.

Because the homeowner travels often, Scherer selected self-watering planters. Outfitted with a large reservoir and a convenient water gauge, these planters cut watering chores to once a week.

Greenery and profuse blooms of easy-care annuals surround a comfortable conversation area. "The space wasn't very big, so I tried to pick furniture that would

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: This stairstep planter adds multiple layers of color. A gauge in the planter tells when it's time to refill the reservoir. Morning glory vines quickly filled the trellis, despite the high shade provided by a nearby maple tree.

BARBECUING is more convenient with a mobile grill that can be wheeled out of the way when not in use. Side trays provide a convenient place for plates and food.

make the space feel bigger," Scherer says. The simple, clean lines of the chairs and the light-color cushions keep the space feeling light and airy. An all-weather rug anchors the furniture grouping and makes the outdoor seating area feel more like an indoor room.

A grill sits off to one side of the seating area, allowing the space to double as a comfortable dining spot. On the other side, a fountain adds to the decor and the soothing quality of the outdoor space.

Scherer managed to squeeze plenty of other practical features into the 250-square-foot patio as well. In a corner nestled between two sides of the house, Scherer set up a potting table that not only provides a handy place for potting, but also serves as a bar. A storage box near the back door holds garden tools and mimics the style of surrounding planters.

Even with all these amenities, the patio retains a spacious feel that the homeowner and her guests savor. "I got married recently, and I hosted a family get-together the night before on the patio," she says. "It was so gorgeous out there, and the pictures from that night turned out just beautiful." □



OPPOSITE: This potting bench doubles as a wet bar and even has a spigot for the hose.

ABOVE: This classic urn-shape water feature provides the soothing sound of running water.

RIGHT: A wooden floor mat matches the color of the teak furniture.



FOR RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 118.

RESURFACE YOUR PATIO

Want to make your patio look like new? Follow these easy steps:

Step 1: Use a brick chisel to break away any cracked or loose mortar in areas that have been previously patched.

Step 2: Sweep any debris off the patio surface. Thoroughly clean the concrete with a high-strength pressure washer.

Step 3: Mix up a patching compound per the manufacturer's instructions and fill any holes or cracks. The mixture should set up about a quarter-inch. Allow the repaired areas to harden.

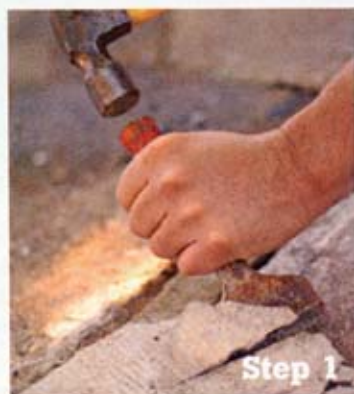
Step 4: Section off your patio into work areas

that are no larger than 144 square feet. Use control joints and expansion joints to help you define the work areas. Mask any areas that will not be covered with resurfacer.

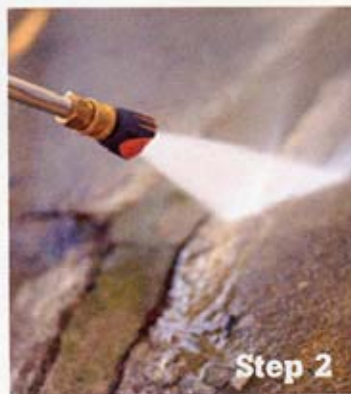
Step 5: Mix resurfacer powder and water (following manufacturer's instructions) in a 5-gallon bucket with a drill and paddle mixer. Saturate the patio surface with water, but remove any areas of standing water. Pour the resurfacing compound onto the patio and spread with a long-handled squeegee. The mixture should be $\frac{1}{16}$ to $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch thick.

Use a wallpaper brush (available at hardware stores) to cover corners or edges.

Step 6: Within five minutes of applying the resurfacer (the surface should be somewhat firm but still malleable), drag a push broom or a masonry brush over the work area. Pull the broom toward you, making sure that each stroke goes the full distance of the work area and all the broom strokes go in the same direction. Wait at least six hours before walking on the patio.



Step 1



Step 2



Step 3



Step 5