

Sunrooms, gazebos for style and comfort

With curtains and windows thrown wide open, you beseech the rays of old El Sol. Not blinding glare, but gentle, lazy streams of light that warm both soul and soil.

What's more, you're willing to sacrifice plaster and lawn space for a breath of fresh air. Or for tree-like shade that offers shelter amid the elements.

Welcome to the 1990s, a decade in which you can sun-worship from your sofa and garden high and dry in a downpour. Or swing in the shade on a scorching afternoon.

Solariums, porches, gazebos and greenhouses all but erase the dividing line that separates what's inside and what's out. Through architecture, they allow homeowners to commune with Mother Nature, while steering clear of her stormier side.

Acquiring such an addition doesn't mean you have to buy a new home, take on a night job or suffer through months of painful renovation.

Commission from an architect the simplest porch, and leave the construction to a contractor. Or hammer and nail your way to the perfect solarium, gazebo or greenhouse with detailed plans, pre-bricated materials or do-it-yourself kits — some so simple that no tools are required.

All are available through building supply emporiums or by mail order and in a variety of price ranges.

Following is a rundown on what's hot in rooms and spaces built for prime exposure or shelter from the Earth's largest star.

SOLARIUMS AND GREENHOUSES
The quintessential sun space — or solarium — combines the greenhouse effect with the charms of Grandmother's sun porch.

Yesterday's homeowner wanted it so he could grow his tomatoes and his tulips indoors. And chances were he was the only one on the block with such an addition.

Nowadays, sunshine is spilling through a lot of solarium windows — some \$50,000 to be exact — and into family living areas, kitchens, dining areas and pool rooms — the four top areas most likely to include a sun space, according to a manufacturer's study.

That's not to say that a sun space wouldn't work equally as well in a library, bathroom, home entertainment center or spa, all cited as other popular areas for sun-space additions.

Sun spaces boast both beauty and brains. Besides adding valuable square footage and cutting down on a home's heating bill, a solarium's unique curves, lines and materials make it a reflection of its owners' personal style. Thus it's no surprise that these sunniest of home improvements have home improvers investing \$400 million annually.

Many green thumbs, meanwhile, are moving their plants from house to greenhouse, be it a simple lean-to, easy-to-install window box or full-blown structure complete with built-in cooling and irrigation systems.

Plans abound in gardening magazines, how-to manuals, books or by mail order and offer the gardener hundreds of ways to create

his personal, year-round Garden of Eden — right in his own back yard.

GAZEBOS
With their lacy latticework and fragile form, gazebos rank not only as the largest and most elaborate of garden ornaments, but also as the most functional. And they're almost as popular now as they were in Victorian times.

While its charm elevates it to a fragrant and lookout, all in the course of the same day.

By Alison Ashton
Copley News Service

HOMIEFACTS
■ Many homeowners tackle do-it-yourself remodeling projects.

(percent who would do the tasks themselves)
■ Most popular do-it-yourself projects

Painting 82.2%
General cleanup 77.3%
Plumbing 10%
Concrete/masonry 2.8%

SOURCE: Professional Builder magazine
Copley News Service

About the cover

The pen and ink cover drawing for this section was done by Barbara Campbell, a ninth grade student at Lake-Lehman High School. Barbara, who is 15 years old, takes art at school with Richard Derby and has studied with Sue Hand since she was in fifth grade.

Barbara works on both the newspaper and yearbook at school. She plans a career in art or art education. Her work has won awards at art shows and fairs throughout the region.

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THE BIG SPLASH - Today's new spas can be put in the most luxurious settings.

A spa, hot tub or pool has advantages beyond offering a place to relax and get in shape. In this ever-faster world, leisure time is at an ever-greater premium. Having your preferred method of relaxation at your disposal simply adds a degree of control and convenience to your life.

While there's no doubt that spas, tubs and/or pools demand a great deal of care and cost, they can pay off in the long run by significantly adding value to your property.

Any of these facilities has the advantage of becoming a total family activity. The next time you ask yourself where those kids are, all you'll have to do is look in the back yard.

SPECIAL SPAS

Getting yourself into hot water may be the ideal elixir for the stresses and strains of modern life — just jump into a hot tub or spa. It's an ancient tradition, going back to Roman history and Japanese emperors.

It was a more modern group, however — the Californians —

who came up with combining the conviviality of the Roman bath with the tranquility of the Japanese spa to create the contemporary spa or hot tub experience.

If you should choose to dip into the warm waters for your health, choosing between a spa or tub is the first decision you face.

Soft and rustic, hot tubs are known for their smooth wood finishes, which heighten the entire back-to-nature experience.

Hot tubs tend to be larger than spas and offer both a deep soak and the option to share the space with a number of people. The depth of these tubs, not uncommonly 4 to 5 feet, also allows for the placement of jets to suit personal needs, such as achy backs.

The other choice is a spa. A wicker paradise in plastic. Unlike tubs that basically come in the classic barrel shape, spas have been molded into just about as many shapes as there are human body types. Spas also are easier to clean and maintain than tubs, though they lack that natural feeling.

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