

Expanding Outward

Enjoy the beautiful spring and summer weather with outdoor living spaces your whole family will love. *By Erica Thoits*



1. This bench has been out front for 17 years. Cathy Kert says she's spent "gazillions" of hours sitting there watching her kids play when they were young, talking with neighbors or just enjoying the weather.

2. Both vegetable and flower gardens surround the pool and sitting areas.

3. The pool — large enough for laps and four kids — is a relatively recent addition to the back yard.

4. The Kerts entertain and enjoy meals at their various tables in the back yard. In the summer, says Kert, they are hardly ever indoors.

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Adornments like the trellis pictured here were added over the years. The Kerts have been working on a master plan for how they want their back yard to look for more than 20 years.

Kert. Beyond the beautiful flowers and large perennial gardens, Kert also tends an organic vegetable garden, blueberries, herbs and edible flowers. The various gardens also created a way for her to spend time with the family — Kert often gardens with her kids.

All of their outdoor spaces — while lovely — are a great way for the Kert family to enjoy the seasons together.

The pool, a relatively recent addition, is “without bells and whistles” but is large enough to swim laps in and can accommodate their four children.

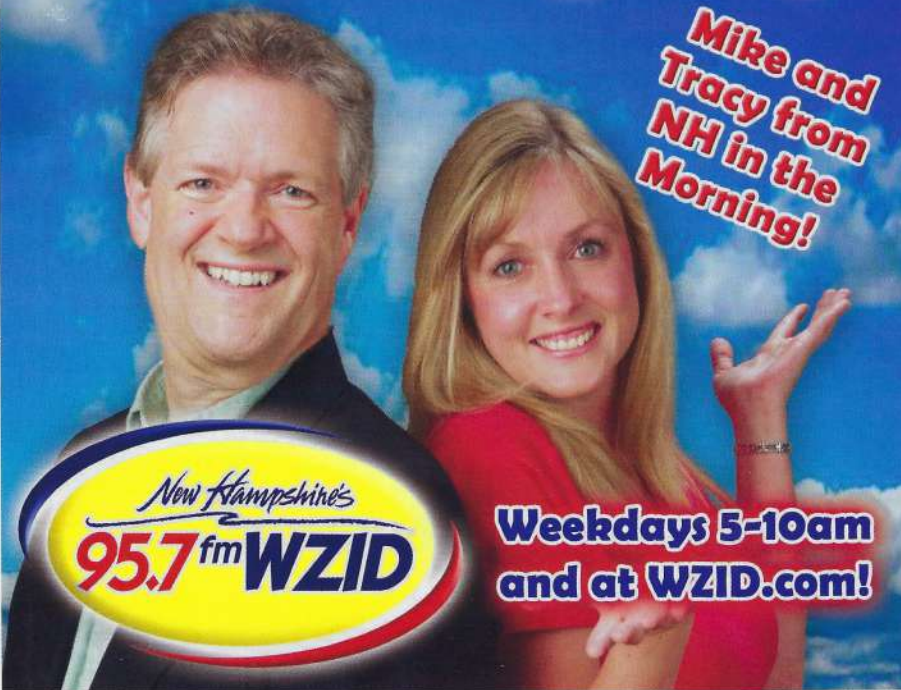
The pool, adds Kert, is opened on May 1 and closed on October 1. In the cooler months they’ll sit outside with blankets near the recently added fire pit and just enjoy the look of the water and being outside.

There’s also outdoor seating where the Kerts and guests often enjoy meals. Though there is a grill, Kert is not interested in building a full outdoor kitchen. As she says, “there’s already enough to clean inside.”

The back yard isn’t the only area where the Kerts spend time. Out in the front yard is a bench that’s sat there for 17 years (see photo on page 34). When their children were smaller the Kerts would sit on the bench and watch them ride bikes, play games or draw with chalk. It’s close enough to the street that neighbors could see them and stop by to chat — this is a bench with memories. “We sit there all the time,” says Kert. “I’ve spent a gazillion hours on that bench.”

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As the days grow longer and warmer people all over the Granite State are itching to get out of the house. Though we've spent these long winter months dreaming of all the things we'll do when the weather turns nice — hike in the White Mountains, visit Hampton Beach or simply take more walks around the neighborhood — in our busy reality it can be hard to actually find the time to accomplish all our grand summer plans.

But when life gets busy, what if you had a place all of your own where you could enjoy the changing of the seasons? Imagine coming home, ignoring the television or computer, and stepping out into your own backyard sanctuary.

This is exactly what Cathy Kert does. With a pool, flower and organic vegetable gardens, a grill, sitting areas, tables and lounge chairs adorning her yard, she and her family can enjoy the outdoors without leaving home.

"We use these as outdoor living spaces," says Kert. "We're not in the house that much when the weather is nice."

Both the look of the front and back yards were a long work in progress.

Years ago, Kert designed and built the home with her father. For the past two decades or so the outdoor spaces have been built, improved and enlarged. At first there was just grass, but Kert and her husband had a grand plan in mind for how they wanted everything to look.

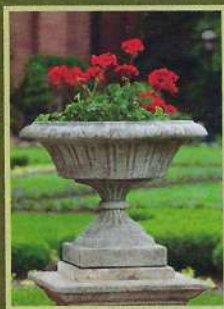
"Over the 20 years I came up with a plan that I wanted, and then we hired landscapers to tweak it and do the heavy lifting," explains Kert.

First they saved and worked on the front yard. Then they saved some more and turned their attention to the backyard. Then came the pool, and over time she's enlarged the gardens and added smaller touches like the trellises.

Kert, who grew up in Hudson on a self-sustaining farm, has always loved gardening and just generally being outdoors.

"Gardening is really my passion" says

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