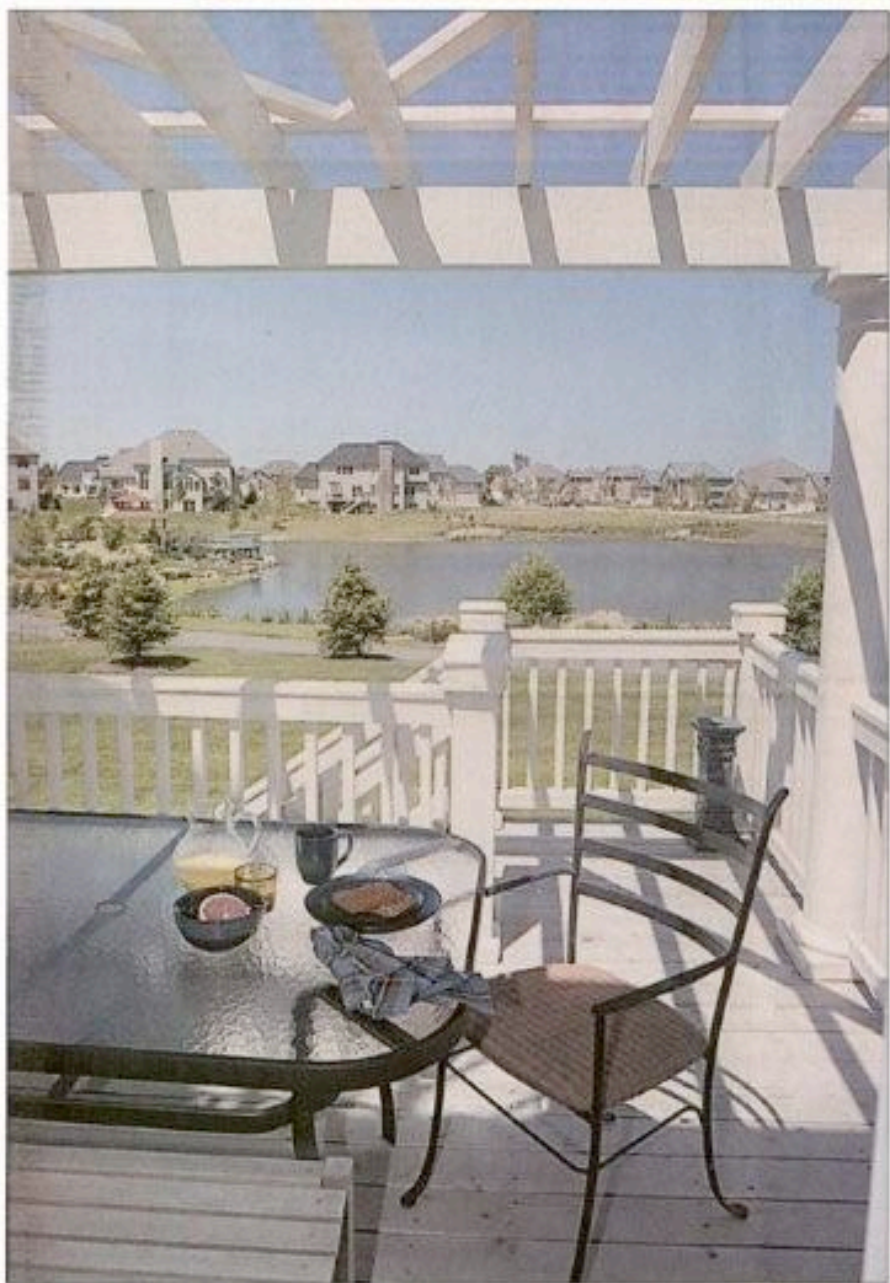


A series of backyards at West Point Gardens in Elgin feature the real estate's potential for "garden" parties



Backyard perches at Roycroft at Grande Park in Plainfield offer space for relaxing and enjoying the views of one of the lakes.



Sales are on schedule at Toll Brothers' Lake Run Estates in North Aurora. —RICHARD A. CRAMER/SUN-TIMES

## Looking outside the box

Some builders make exterior features a big part of a house's livability

BY LARRY FINLEY  
HomeLife Reporter

Builders are expanding the space of their single-family homes by emphasizing the room outside the walls.

Yards and patios should not be "sometimes things," dependent on the time of year and time of day, according to Pat Curran, president of West Point Builders.

At West Point Gardens in Elgin, Curran has created a series of outdoor garden packages that show how the patio and yard areas can be extensions of the inside of his single-family homes and town houses.

"What we want to do is get away from the idea that the home is just the four walls and what's inside," Curran said. "We want to expand it and create that indoor/outdoor relationship."

One package, the "Oasis" garden, is featured in the Princeton model, which has a first-floor master suite for empty-nesters.

"We have a large waterfall pond," Curran said. "From the time you walk onto the front porch, you can see through the home to the garden. It's always in view from



The Columbia model at Lake Sun Estates in North Azusa has a big surprise in the backyards. —MICHELLE CHAPMAN/STAFF



Devises appear to dwarf a house as the model team makes the rounds of a garden setting. —MICHELLE CHAPMAN/STAFF



This big "garden" from display took a month to get up in the large yard of a Tall Brothers home. —MICHELLE CHAPMAN/STAFF

## OUTSIDE

(Continued from Page 1)

### Fireplaces extend time outdoors

the house. We have covered concrete roofs and a lot of landscaping. We have a table and a grill, they're about every-where you can go — so do some smoking."

The garden areas and their furnishings became a centerpiece of the sales from inside the homes out through the windows and glass patio doors, he said.

The "Fireplace" features an outdoor window pool, with jets of circulating water flowing down it to give the customer a beautiful view. Nearby is an outdoor porch, large wing suspended from a trellis. The porch table pulls from a dining table surrounding a tree, plus a grill.

"Even if you aren't in the pool, you can have the jets up to give you the visualization of relaxing water," he said. Instead of building the houses square and in the middle of the lot, they are rectangular and about the lot line on one side. The "sunset lot" sets in the without windows and because the building for the neighbor's part. The opposite between the window facing area, which forms an "L" will be that part.

The "Tucson Garden" features a glass over and a fountain table that looks like it could feed the crew after a hard day picking grapes. The "Savanna" garden features a hot tub on a deck. The "Fireplace" has a hot tub and deck, plus an outdoor fireplace. The "Playful" package has in one putting green with an outdoor table, including a grill.

"In Chicago, people might say, 'Outdoor space? How much will I see?' But we know that's not the case. You are in total space and see them in the surrounding area. In the winter, I turn on my fireplace and in the garden with more around it."

Fireplaces and fire pits are used to help extend the outdoor space during the winter months, he said.

All of the decks are heavily



This package at West Point Gardens features a fireplace, hot tub and dining area on a deck.



Packages have been returned to a place of prominence at West Point Gardens in Elgin.

landscaped, and tiled, more common, even one used as that a person can picture how their house would look a few years from now, he said. Also, this shows the home and the view from the second floor of the houses. All of the gardens have 2-hour private tours and scheduled 45 to 60-minute tours that can be upgraded.

The packages range from about \$120,000 to \$170,000 additional for the single-family homes, which have 2 to 3 bedrooms. They are listed from about \$120,000 to \$140,000. The houses range in interior square footage from about 1,700 to 3,200 square

feet. Two-car garages are included. The packages can be customized to fit individual needs.

There are one 1- and 2-bed, two-car homes with 1 to 2 baths, two, two, two, two bedrooms, garages and their own national gardens. They start at \$120,000 to \$140,000.

About one-third of the 175 acres at West Point have been left the open space. The developer a 15-acre covered park, plus several small neighborhood parks that surround the views from the front of the houses. The houses feature large, marble floor patios that are deep and stained at

least three feet off the ground. West Point Gardens is at 18000 N. and Saddle Road in Elgin. Call 1947 406-1000 or visit www.westpointgardens.com.

Model homes are designed to show off the features of a house while making it look warm and cozy, so the visitor can picture living there. If the corner of a house is appealing enough to persuade the buyer to sit and rest a while, the developer is successful. If the house has a really unusual feature that everyone remembers, so much the better.

At Lake Sun Estates in North Azusa, the Columbia model single-family house has

a wide model outdoor pool and attractive views. The elevated design is complete with a running stream, cascading waterfall, fountain and turrets. The miniature town makes the attention to the corners of the new 100-sq-ft lot. The site is also designed for the space can be dedicated to a better, updated Southern Garden, proper manager for the site. The 100-sq-ft lot makes development, with prices starting in the low \$100,000.

"Especially in the past, we have done the same price and elevated the site and now selling areas to attract the buyer," he said. "I try to get the best price and picture themselves entertaining with them," he explained. "I try to get them out because when they are in the backyard by themselves it tends to give them more of a feel of the house than they own home."

Some buyers will do an irregularly shaped basement with a large TV and a game room or a "manly room," he said. In a home space that visitors don't expect might be waiting in the same day or weekend. Gardens, however, don't "over garden" anyone who would go to a second, look at the basement, look at a theater, and then walk out the place up and tell someone. "You have to go look at the finished basement. It's amazing," he said.

"You need a garden that encompasses the rear part of the house, with main living, dining, kitchen, and breakfast room, and a second floor. The whole works — that's important," he said.

After touring the inside of the 4-bedroom Columbia model, people do come outside and sit or stand and watch the view and impact the adjacent model for pit and the garden features. Gardens said.

The corner of attention is a 10-foot garden, with made by 10A Union of Madison, Mass. The square is about 1 foot long and 7 or 8 inches high. "It is an outdoor table," he said. "You can see one model. They will give attachments for the furniture they have a relaxing area (house) on them. It took about 30 days to assemble. It is an elevated garden with the painting wall, drainage system — and it's a table system, landscaping and landscaping."

Lake Sun Estates has its two-story and much more ranging from 2,500 to 4,200

square feet and priced from \$100,000 to the low \$200,000. They have one-third to one-half acre sites, with 1 or 4 bedrooms and up to 4 baths. Some have two-story master suites.

Popular options have been greenhouses, spas, hot tubs, and big windows and walk-out basements. Some of the sites are made that look up to the Lake County Forest Preserve. Lake Sun Estates is on Terrace Road near of Kendall Road in North Azusa. Call 650-308-0000 or visit www.lakesun.com.

Country club developments, like Sunbelt in Sunbelt Park in Pasadena, show outdoor features such as pools and patios. Backyards of the Huntington Homes there offer beautiful views of Orange Park features that include 100 acres of open space and 100 acres of maintenance.

Some of the plans include backyard patios for relaxing, entertaining or dining. Dining with views of water features. Other popular features include sun rooms, two-car garages, and decks to get the living areas more comfortable to spend several days.

The Orange Park development has a large clubhouse, three swimming pools, parks, children's park, tennis and basketball courts and a walking trail among other highlights.

The seven Huntington plans range from 2,100 to 4,100 square feet with up to 4 bedrooms, 4 baths, master rooms, libraries, family room, dining, two bathrooms and 3-400-sq-ft garages. Prices range from the low \$100,000 to the low \$200,000.

Standard includes volume ceiling in two areas, carpeting, walk-in closets, laundry-lined rooms, granite or hardwood floors, laminate countertops, stainless steel double-bowl sink and appliances including microwave, refrigerator, dishwasher and gas range with model features.

Customizing options include lock-out basements, 2 or 4 car garages, additional bedrooms and baths, expanded family rooms, stone and brick fireplaces, skylights, wet bar and electronic air cleaners/basement.

Sunbelt is in Orange Park at Higgs Road and 177th Street in Pasadena. Call 650-406-0000 or visit www.sunbelt.com.

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The "Luscious" garden was inspired by Italy and centers on a pizza oven and large table.



This "Daisy" setting features a material and larger than usual trees and other plants.