

# Your Private Eden

THREE BACKYARD SPACES TO INSPIRE YOU THIS SEASON

BY MALLORY EVANS JACOBSON



In the novel “Candide” by the French philosopher Voltaire, the characters go through numerous and mostly terrible adventures before ending up on a farm with a walled garden. Here they forget about the world outside, and instead follow the book’s conclusion that to be happy “we must cultivate our own garden.”

Disconnecting from the world is more difficult today, with everyone interconnected more than ever. But for anyone who lives in a single-family home, the backyard is a place where you can escape from the clamor outside, especially if it provides a secluded, landscaped setting. If every person’s home is their castle, then the backyard is their cloister, a safe and protected place where they can relax and enjoy life without intrusion. When I imagine my ideal backyard,

it’s a tranquil setting. It’s the scene of the ultimate staycation; a place to unwind and rejuvenate, to spend an afternoon reading and resting, or to gather with my family for a home-cooked meal and cocktails at sunset.

These days, many of us are reimagining the design of this critical private space. Your project may entail just the addition of a few new items – a grill, an outdoor shower, or some comfortable lounge chairs – or it might go large, with the addition of a swimming pool, or a lushly enhanced garden. No matter the range of your goals, we believe it’s best to think big. So, to help spark some inspiration, we spoke with three local landscape architects who have worked on several Coral Gables residences that boast exceptional outdoor areas. ■





## Tidy Tropical Paradise

LEWIS AQÜI LANDSCAPE  
+ ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Tasked with envisioning the landscape design for a British Colonial-style home, Lewis Aqüi focused on the local vernacular, in terms of both foliage and hardscape materials. “We decided on a controlled tropical design,” says Aqüi. “Therefore, the landscaping is very lush and incorporates an array of plant materials, but it’s not a jungle.” Instead, the home is enveloped by an orderly array of mature thatch palms and pigeon plum trees, with a carpet of soft zoysia grass. “I tried to use every single inch of the property,” says Aqüi, “sometimes by expanding it to the most remote corner.” On the edge of the backyard, for example, is an additional sitting area surrounding a fire pit. In creating such an intimate but separate space, Aqüi was ahead of his time in terms of preparing his client for social distancing. [lewisaquui.com](http://lewisaquui.com)



PHOTOS COURTESY OF FRANCISCO GONZALEZ