

HOME IMPROVEMENT GUIDE

SPRING SUMMER FALL ONE SPACE DOES IT ALL



A three-season space like this Southwest stunner can extend the joys of summer right into late fall, if done right.

BY CARLY REYNOLDS

It's summer and the Tait family is together in their secluded backyard porch, enjoying the evening breeze and a good book. When fall comes they can light a fire in the stone hearth.

The Tait's 250-square-foot three-season porch feels like a summer cabin, with exposed cedar beams and antlers set above the mantel. With the comforts of electricity, overhead lighting and a wood-burning fireplace, it's no wonder the family chooses to spend a majority of their summer in this room.

Two years ago, the Tait family met with Meriwether Felt, head architect at TreHus Builders, who designed the space to maximize outdoor exposure while remaining usable through fall and spring.

Originally the Tait's wanted access to their porch via the kitchen at the back of the house, but roof lines didn't match up and the children's play area sat in the middle of the plans. Felt reasoned the porch would flow better off of the den, and transformed the den windows into full-view French double doors.

The Tait's didn't have to compromise on backyard space, since the north side of the yard was already a stone patio. The stones were used to surround the porch and to create paths to the kitchen and garage. Felt chose to light the room with low-voltage monopoint lights to make it a comfortable space to read on late summer evenings. For convenience, exterior electrical outlets are hidden below the flooring with small trap doors and finger holes for electrical cords.

She chose durable materials, such as Ironwood flooring, Douglas fir, cedar and stone, and lightly stained them to pull it all together. She used copper gutters and siding, knowing it would age into a dark brown muddy color. "We wanted to pick materials that were high-quality materials, all wood and all relatively similar to give the porch a uniform appearance. It's a really calm space," Felt said.

She used low-maintenance materials to reduce upkeep. "If you build with durable materials, you will save money in the long run," said Felt.

Storm windows can replace the screen panels around the room on rainy and chilly days, making the porch comfortable three-quarters of the year, even though it's not insulated. The fireplace is both the family and Felt's favorite feature of the porch, and both agree they wouldn't do anything differently.