

Made in the SHADE

With advice from Tucson's top shade experts, and a host of fabulous outdoor structures and products, you can create an inviting outdoor oasis that adds beauty, living space and value to your home.

BY KAREN BARBERA

“It doesn't matter whether you have a quarter acre or 144 acres,” says Dan Mezich, owner of Arizona Shade Sails. “If you don't have an inviting, shaded outdoor area, you'll find yourself confined to the air conditioned interior of your home during the summer.”

The intensity of the sun's heat may not have changed much over the years, but homeowners' options for creating functional and attractive shaded areas have. Pergola materials are maintenance-free, awnings are automated, and ramadas have gone high tech. Fabrics are as colorfast as they are colorful, and the only tension you'll experience in your backyard this summer will be from the cables supporting your sculptural shade sails.

“I counsel people first to consider how they want to utilize their shaded area,” relates Rob Weaver, owner of Equinox Louvered Roof. “Use dictates size.” For example, 10 feet by 10 feet is the minimum space that will accommodate a patio table and four chairs, and pool shade must be structurally able to span the width of the pool. What is the sun exposure of the area you want to shade, and what is the angle of the sun at various times of the day when you'll be using it?

Aesthetics are important, too. Do you want the shade area to be an extension of your home's existing architecture? Do you want it attached or free standing? Do you want a solid roof, a light-filtering roof or a combination of both? Your budget will determine the overall scope of the project as well as the materials and/or products that reasonably can be considered.

RIGHT Open wooden lattice grid pattern structure created for existing patio posts. Designed by Margaret Joplin, Pure Beauty Landscape. Photo by Tim Fuller.





Here Are Some Options

Patio Shades – Vinyl coated polyester screens mounted over windows or patio openings that can be raised or lowered to help reduce the sun’s UV rays, transferrable heat and glare. “Patio shades are a terrific option for angled sun issues in open patio areas,” states Billie Meuschke, owner of Southwest Sun Control. “This is important because patios are most frequently used in the mornings and late afternoon when the sun is no longer overhead.”

When lowered, patio shades block 95-97 percent of the UV rays, reduce the transferrable heat from the sun by 35-45 percent and cut glare by 40-50 percent. They can be operated manually, motorized by switch or remote control . . . even integrated with sun-sensing home automation systems. And when they’re retracted, they’re out of sight.

Pergolas – Frame structures consisting of colonnades or posts with a latticework roof. Today’s pergolas are made of maintenance free, powder-coated aluminum tubing. The two-inch-by-two-inch square tubes are spaced every two inches, creating 60 percent shade, natural ambient light and good airflow. ▶



TOP Custom metal canopy designed by Craig Haskins, Artistic Metals; Interior Designer: Robin Motzer, ASID. Photo by Reddie Henderson.

BOTTOM Durable weather-resistant lattice shade patio covering by Westerner Products of Tucson. Photo courtesy of Westerner Products.



“The latticed roof shades and cools without trapping the sun’s heat,” relates Troy Barlous of Westerner Products, builders of pergolas, lattice and solid shade structures. “They upgrade the exterior of your home and can be constructed horizontally, gabled or angled. The ends also can be cut to radius shapes for added visual interest.”

Awnings – Canvas porches or shades supported by a frame which is often foldable. “Retractable awnings are a great shade solution for overhead and angled sun exposure,” notes Meuschke. “They can extend your existing patio areas by 6-14 feet and block 100 percent of damaging UV rays. They can be motorized and outfitted with wind sensors to eliminate flapping noise. Fabrics come with a five-year warranty and a traditional life expectancy of 7-15 years. And in the winter, you simply retract the awning to welcome the light and heat of the sun into your home.”

Ramada – A Southwestern open porch or trellis. One of the more interesting developments in ramadas is the use of louvered roof systems. Open the louvered slats, and you have the ambience, airflow and light of a pergola. Close the louvered roof slats, and you have the waterproof weather, sun and UV protection of a solid roof.

“It’s a newer concept in the United States,” says Weaver, “but it’s been used overseas for more than 30 years. It’s a proven product that can be installed flat, angled, gabled, and even vertically for angled sun and wind protection. All our louvered systems are motorized with solar power and operated by a simple switch or remote control. They also can be integrated into home automation systems.”

Shade Sails – Colorful sails of all shapes and sizes woven out of polyethylene fibers and suspended by stainless steel cables mounted under tension to vertical steel poles, creating shaded areas below. Shade sails have been used in commercial applications for a number of years, and are now gaining popularity in

TOP Raised seam copper roof ramada.

Designed and photographed by Jason Isenberg, Urban Organics Landscaping.

MIDDLE Custom fabric awning by Air and Sun Shade Products. Designed and photographed by Air and Sun Shade Products.

BOTTOM Custom metal 20-foot-diameter umbrella, cantilevered from a single post. Designed and photographed by GFG Metalworks.

residential settings as homeowners seek out creative/artistic ways to enhance their outdoor living rooms.

“These shade sails are so sculptural and beautiful that we tend to overlook how much of a workhorse they are,” adds Mezich.

The fabrics come in 25 colors with a 10-year warranty and a documented life expectancy of 15-16 years. They are stretched so taught that a person could literally walk across them. They block 80-95 percent of harmful UV rays while filtering out only 20 percent of the ambient light. They can be free standing or partially attached to your home, or even mounted vertically as a wind break or upscale privacy screen.

Custom Options – For most of the aforementioned shade structures you’ll get the biggest bang for your buck by staying with standard shapes, sizes, colors and materials. But there’s always that special application or dream shade structure that calls for a one-of-a-kind approach.

“We created a 20-foot-diameter cantilevered umbrella for one client,” states Marla Ruane, owner/designer for GFG Metalworks and Greening Fine Gardens landscaping. “It was a stunning sculptural piece that created a beautiful shadow on the ground and just made you feel great sitting underneath it. Most of our clients prefer a natural oxidized copper finish (think old penny) with a clear coat, but all our steel structures can be finished or painted any color you can dream up.”

As you plan your shaded outdoor oasis, remember to ask yourself how the structure will look and function in the winter months when the warmth of the sun is often most welcome. Take advantage of the wonderful new products, as well as the experts’ helpful design skills and insights; they usually come at no additional charge. Find the solution that best fits your style, your functional needs and your budget, then sit back and let the experts work their magic. **HG**

TOP Colorful suspended fabric shade sails by Arizona Sun and Shade Sails. Photo by Kris Hanning Photography. **MIDDLE** Retractable motorized roller patio shades. Photo courtesy of SW Sun Control. **BOTTOM** Louvered roof transforms from solid to open trellis. Photo courtesy of Equinox Louvered Roof.

