

Backyard Project Planner

Work out what you are building, what it costs, and what has to happen first.

THE PROJECT

What are you building?

Where in the yard?

Target finish date

Total budget (\$)

Weekends available

MEASURE THE SPACE

Sketch the area below. Mark every dimension you measured, not the ones you assumed. Note the slope, the low spot where water sits, and anything fixed you have to build around: a downspout, an AC unit, a tree, a gas meter.

Length (ft)

Width (ft)

Area (sq ft)

Not a rectangle? Split it into rectangles, work out each one, and add them together.



Before you spend anything

The checks that stop a project going wrong, in the order they matter.

SAFETY AND PERMISSIONS

Call 811 before you dig. Every time.

Free, and required in most places. Allow a few business days. This covers post holes and patio excavation, not just trenches. Hitting a gas or electric line can kill you.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Called 811 and utilities marked | ☐ Checked whether a permit is needed |
| ☐ Checked HOA or deed restrictions | ☐ Checked property lines and setbacks |
| ☐ Checked height and size limits | ☐ Confirmed frost depth for footings |
| ☐ Checked where water drains now | ☐ Confirmed access for a delivery |

DOES ANY OF THIS NEED A PROFESSIONAL?

Tick anything your project involves. Each one is normally licensed work, and doing it yourself can void insurance as well as being dangerous.

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ New electrical circuit or panel work | ☐ Any gas line |
| ☐ Retaining wall above local limit | ☐ Anything attached to the house |
| ☐ Anything carrying a roof load | ☐ Tree work near lines or structures |

SKILLS AND TOOLS

What part of this have you not done before?

Who can help, and when are they free?

TOOL NEEDED	HAVE IT	BUY	RENT	COST (\$)



Materials and money

Price it properly before you buy anything. Add waste before you order.

MATERIALS LIST

Get quantities from a calculator at thebackyardvault.com/tools, then confirm with your supplier before ordering. Always add a waste allowance: roughly 5 percent on a simple rectangle, 10 percent with cuts or curves.

MATERIAL	QTY	UNIT	UNIT COST	LINE TOTAL

WHAT IT ADDS UP TO

Materials

Tools bought or rented

Delivery

Permit fees

Professional help

Total estimated cost

Over budget? Phase it, swap a material, rent instead of buying, or make it smaller. Do not thin the base.



The order of work

Break it into sessions you can actually finish. Unfinished is worse than not started.

WEEKEND BY WEEKEND

Most projects fail on sequencing, not skill. Excavation and base preparation take far longer than people expect, and the fun part is always last.

SESSION	WHAT GETS DONE	HOURS	DONE

ORDER THESE AHEAD

Bulk materials and anything special order need lead time. Note what has to arrive before which session.

ITEM	ORDER BY	ARRIVES	NEEDED FOR

NOTES

Stuck on a number?

Free calculators for pavers, gravel, soil, spans and lighting: thebackyardvault.com/tools