

A Shade Better

WHEN THE HEAT'S ON, RUN FOR COVER

by Joetta Moulden
photography by Fran Brennan

With broiling summer weather just around the corner, now's the time to think about adding that patio cover or shade structure you've been talking about installing for the last three years. Whether you like to think about it or not, this summer's air-conditioning bills will be higher than last's, even if you use the same number of kilowatt hours.

Shading your windows, exterior walls and the ground adjacent to your house will definitely help. Whatever you choose to call it — arbor, overhead shelter, bower or patio cover — the purpose is to break the intensity of the sun for the comfort of the people below.

Other benefits include a feeling of partial enclosure, a decorative element to your home and garden, support for climbing vines and protection for shade-loving plants. (See page 128 for some vine ideas.)

In Houston, the shade structures we found are as varied as the climate itself — some are quite original. Many of these structures serve several purposes at one time: a sandbox and tricycle area for preschoolers by day can become a haven where adults can sit and relax in the evening. Adding a table makes a structure very flexible for hobbies, games or intimate meals. It can even be a place for additional "indoor" gardening, making it function as a type of greenhouse.

Shade structures are different from solid-roof additions in that they don't provide protection from rain and they permit free air circulation. Paving of some type provides maximum usability.

If you are considering building a shade structure, you will find these tips useful:

1. Always check local building codes to see if a permit is required and to learn about deed restrictions.

2. Any structure should be built strong enough to be safe. Use flammable coverings with caution; fire department regulations may govern materials and spacing.

3. A house wall usually gives excellent support, eliminating half the posts needed; and structures attached to the house are more convenient to build. Attached structures should be built strong enough to support at least the weight of a person.

4. For western exposures, the cantilevered eyebrow that extends the roof line to shade a window or wall that receives too much sun (similar to an awning), is a good idea. By using wood, the addition can be made to look as if it belongs to the house.

Bringing the outside in

Architect Howard Barnstone, FAIA, has an incredibly green arbor that was a windfall: it came with the house he bought. While Barnstone did restore the structure's wooden frame and add many hanging baskets, the basic design was already there. In his breakfast room, an 18th-century country Hepplewhite table of butternut wood surrounded by four 1815 Baltimore stenciled chairs offers a relaxing spot to take in the beauty of the wisteria-covered arbor and the numerous hanging baskets lining the garage wall (see cover).

Redwood raves

When engineer Ed Fox designs a shade structure, he likes to think big. By far the tallest and most spacious structure we saw, the clear-heart-redwood addition relates to the outside architecture, visually extending the 16-foot ceilings in the living room out to the pool in back of the house.

He wanted to sit close to the water, yet still be in the shade, and those were his prime design considerations. A 4-foot overhang is cantilevered over the pool, shading the water. The columns actually are treated pine "boxes" made of 2x6s sunk into concrete, with 1x8 redwood strips nailed over the pine. This hollow-core construction conceals wiring for the outdoor lighting. Redwood 1x1 strips form the intricate gridwork "ceiling" pattern.

Townhouses need shade, too

Architect Tom Stovall, AIA, did not start out with visions of shade structures dancing in his head, but settled for the idea out of desperation. The living room and breakfast room in his townhouse face west, and the burning rays not only killed his outside plants but sent his electric bill soaring. He first installed sun film on these windows, but was displeased with the effect and removed it.

So Stovall designed the shade structures and had a small carpentry shop build them. Attached directly to the side of the house on one side, each unit is supported by a continuous length of rough cedar supports on the other side, unifying the disparate structures. Far from looking "tacked on," the effect of the whole construction is one of great harmony with the house. Stovall says the following summer's utility bills indicated significant savings after the installation. (continued)

Right: Owner Ed Fox designed this stunning redwood structure to coordinate with the house's architecture (16-foot-high ceilings in the living room) and to shade the pool and dining areas. A large, potted ficus tree, philodendron selloum in hanging basket, fox-tail fern and areca palm provide tropical accents.





Above: Antique columns, a supporting frame, and a bamboo-reed overhang make up this original structure designed by co-owners Bill Boswell and Byron Franklin.



Above: Shading a west-facing exposure, this structure was designed by architect Tom Stovall for his own townhouse. The 2x4s are positioned perpendicular to the path of the sun, allowing dense shade by mid-afternoon. But the openness of the design allows for cooling air movement.



A shade better (continued)

Arbor ardor

When Dr. and Mrs. Ed Johnstone began remodeling their Montrose home, neighbors thought the framework being built alongside the house was another room addition.

"People laughed when we told them that by next year a thick carpet of wisteria would cover the arbor — it looked bare for so long," Beth Johnstone says. The inviting arbor was planted with both evergreen and deciduous varieties of wisteria, so it is green year-round. The only problem now is that the thick vines are twined around the support columns so tightly that the couple plans to add additional support to handle the weight.

In the summer, the household and guests tend to congregate be-

neath the arbor, which is especially inviting by candlelight.

He pitched two tents

Leave it to a talented designer like Herbert Wells, ASID, to come up with an exotic solution to shade his patio and provide a relaxing spot for entertaining. Two tents were designed and built (an upholsterer constructed the fabric tents), with a layer of plastic between the outer white canvas cover and the printed fabric inner lining. There is a light and ceiling fan in each tent, and Wells says an incredible amount of cool air can be circulated, even in muggy summer weather.

No need for a lawnmower

Mrs. L.E. Frazier Jr. knew she wanted shade covering for her

Below: Cool breezes are stirred by ceiling fans beneath these unusual twin structures with tentlike roofs at the residence of interior designer Herbert Wells.



Rob Muir

Left: Evergreen and deciduous wisteria provide a lush "roof" for Dr. and Mrs. Ed Johnstone's poolside arbor.

Right: A lush, wisteria-covered arbor provides a greenhouse effect off the breakfast room of architect Howard Barnstone's home. Variegated airplane plants, begonias, Impatiens and foxtail ferns in hanging baskets add color and texture.

