



EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
with Tim Goom

The Staycation Silver Lining.

Like many of you recently, I have had to cancel an upcoming overseas family holiday. It was a trip that had been meticulously planned and which I was extremely excited about but with international travel not being a safe option right now, I'm looking for the silver lining.

In the face of the worsening global pandemic, New Zealand's geographical isolation is suddenly more of a positive than a negative. We have plenty of stunning holiday spots right here as alternatives, but with the 'flattening the curve' advice focussing on social distancing, many will choose to limit movement and interactions and opt for holidaying at home - the Staycation! No packing, no long trips trying to entertain increasingly cranky kids, no worrying about tickets, passports or visas, no jet lag, no post-holiday credit card bills. It's not all bad!

It is predicted that as the race for a viable vaccine continues, there could be continuing waves of outbreaks after cases peak, so it is unclear how long it will be before we are advised international travel can safely resume.

So, if you're staying put, what can you do to feel like you're not missing out on much needed R&R? The changes you can make to create an outdoor environment which you want to spend more time in will depend on age and stage, but these changes don't necessarily have to break the bank.

If like me you have a young family, activity is the key to keeping cabin fever at bay! Options include surrendering flower beds for increased lawn area for backyard cricket and rugby, introducing a play house or fort, building raised beds for the kids to grow their own veggies or the gold-plated option - installing a swimming pool or spa.



Any of these changes will provide endless entertainment for the kids (and sanity for you!).

For those with teenagers, reconfiguring your outdoors into separate entertainment areas may limit them fleeing to their rooms when guests arrive. Creating a space in which your teens and their friends feel at ease (whilst unwittingly being supervised from a distance) is the key to making staying home an attractive option. A concreted area for basketball or skateboarding? A pool table or dart board in an outdoor room? Again, a pool is a fantastic way to keep your teen outdoors, off screens and active if the budget allows.

If you're at a stage where your focus is on creating an inviting space where you (and guests) can unwind, the key is to have features to allow your outdoor space to be used all year round. Shelter from the sun (ie umbrellas, louvres, a permanent shade structure), shelter from the heat robbing wind (ie strategic planting, timber or block walling) and heat (ie gas or wood fire, electric panel heating) will ensure you maximise use of the space. Alternatively, an outdoor room can contain all of these elements. Add in comfortable seating, cooking facilities, a sound system, ambient lighting- and you may well find your outdoor room trumps your indoor living area!

We are undoubtedly facing challenging times ahead, but the 'can do' attitude we as a nation are renowned for will help us make the best of it. We've adapted quickly, our teams are set up in their homes and remain available to help you with any landscaping ideas you've contemplated but not had time to progress. The priority now is to keep our loved ones safe and well but if you want to discuss any landscaping needs, Goom Landscapes is here to help.

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