



Tribune photo by JIM REED

Vendors showcased products and provided ideas for projects. The creator of an HGTV show sketched landscape designs for free.

tell him they want to revamp their yards while they hold onto their homes and wait for the economy to bounce back.

“They’re dressing their yards and houses up now because they know they’re going to be in them for awhile,” he said.

Alan advises homeowners to consider using the money they

plan to spend on their next two or three vacations to instead invest in “yardening” — a combination of gardening and sprucing up other elements in outdoor landscaping. Such projects can bring double the original investment when a home is sold, he said.

“Make your home the fun place that you want to visit on a regular basis,” Alan said. “Think about how you could enjoy the outdoor aspect of your home more.”

Yardening is the biggest hobby in the world, he said, and outdoor kitchens and lavish patio furniture are at the crux of the craze.

“People are spending more time outdoors than indoors, especially here in Florida, where we can do it almost year-round,” he said, adding that he spends a lot of time on his patio at home in Jacksonville.

“When I sit on my deck and patio, I love it,” he said. “Give me some music, some birds to watch and a little gin and tonic, and I don’t need anything else. I’m happy.”

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PICK A PLANT

The Department of Agriculture identifies 11 plant-hardiness zones based on average low temperatures in each region. Landscaping expert and TV celebrity Gary Alan recommends plants according to zone ranges, including the following species for Central Florida, which is in Zone 9:

- ♦ azalea
- ♦ Aztec grass
- ♦ blue daze
- ♦ boxwood
- ♦ crape myrtle tree
- ♦ dogwood
- ♦ East Palatka holly
- ♦ gold lantana
- ♦ Mexican heather
- ♦ holly fern
- ♦ Schillings holly
- ♦ Indian hawthorn
- ♦ ligustrum
- ♦ live oak
- ♦ red tip
- ♦ sago palm