

Software

Brings Makeover to Life



By Kelly Bienvenu, contributing writer
for Belgard Hardscapes

PHOTO: PENJIMBRA PHOTOS, INC.



Above: Pre-construction work on the patio and bar area included tying in to the utilities from the home's kitchen and stubbing out plumbing for the sink and electrical for the appliances. The installation required removal of a section of concrete from the existing patio so that the bar could be installed below grade. By adding the hardscapes, the homeowners were able to create a dining area that was an extension of the back patio. The addition of the bar tied everything together, divided the space into separate "rooms," and created the ultimate entertaining space.

Left: This is a photo of the Simoneaux residence back porch before renovation. The homeowners wanted to create a space that was more conducive to entertaining. There was a 220 square foot grassy area next to the patio that was basically wasted space. The homeowners tried putting a swing there to make the space usable, but were constantly having to move the swing to cut the grass. Plus, the drainage was terrible, and the area was often spongy and muddy due to rains.

Left, below: Design Studio software was used to generate this photorealistic rendering of the paver patio addition and a built-in wet bar that is comprised of three modular units. In addition to appliances and furniture, the rendering includes textured illustrations of the patio hardscapes.




 outdoor rooms are growing in popularity as homeowners look to expand their entertainment areas into open spaces. Belgard® Hardscapes is aiming to capitalize on this burgeoning market with its Design Studio software. The software includes a library of full-color 3-D renderings, fly-through animation, and materials lists at no cost, with custom designs that start at under \$100.

PHOTO: BELGARD

PHOTO: BELGARD

Outdoor Living



PHOTO: BELGARD



PHOTO: BELGARD



PHOTO: PENUMBRA PHOTOS, INC.

Left: Prior to renovation, the front walkway consisted of two separate paths, each with two distinct sections, one of exposed aggregate concrete and one of brick. This gave the front of the house a disjointed, unattractive look. Plus, the dual walkways had sunken below grade and were always muddy.

Left, middle: The rendering of the home and landscaping was made from a scanned photograph, as well as textured illustrations of the hardscapes. The design included a curved and scalloped walkway of Mega Lafitt® pavers, a double sailors course of the company's Old World pavers, and a four-foot deep landing with a Weston Stone riser.

Left, bottom: Demolition of the former walkway included the removal of two sections of clay brick and three concrete pads. The new walkway was outlined with a bullnose concrete border along the curved edges to create a smooth transition. Removal of the original walkways allowed for the creation of a singular 200 square foot elegant entrance to the home, resulting in an immediate upgrade to our curb appeal.

For homeowners Pierre and Christi Simoneaux of Covington, La., the software helped bring life to their outdoor makeover plans. After making some initial decisions on the landscape design, photos of the yard and basic sketches were submitted to the software to be converted to 3-D images.


"I was blown away by the quality of the graphics and detail, down to the color of my shutters and the shape of my pool," explained Christi Simoneaux. "We were able to see exactly how the pavers and design elements would look and even made a number of changes that we wouldn't have realized were needed if we hadn't had the 3-D renderings. Some of what we pictured in our heads would not have worked well in real life."

The initial plan included a makeover of the front walkway, two paver patio additions, and an outdoor kitchen and living room furnished with pre-built modular units, including an L-shaped bar, a grill station, and a fireplace. However, once the Simoneauxs saw the initial renderings, they realized the items would overwhelm and cramp the space.

"I love the openness of our backyard. Although the fireplace was gorgeous, it would have made the yard seem so much smaller because of where we needed to place it," explained Simoneaux. "Had we gone with the initial plan, I don't think we would have been truly satisfied with the end result."

In addition to eliminating the fireplace, the renderings spurred other changes to the design, including the curvature of one of the patios and the size and shape of the outdoor kitchen elements. From the contractor's viewpoint, using the software saved time, money, and headaches.

"The Simoneaux makeover was my first project using the software," said Rod Trahan, owner of La Pavers of New Orleans, La. "Pierre and Christi were already familiar with the company's product line and had a good idea of what they wanted to do, but there were definite issues with space and access. Being able to see exactly what they were dealing with helped them to avoid some critical mistakes regarding their choices."

Designers and contractors have four levels of service available in the program. The free service offers a number of existing design plans that already include 3-D animated fly-throughs, 2-D photorealistic screen shots, project dimensions, and Belgard product materials lists. Or, professionals may submit an existing custom plan and convert their designs into 3-D images with animation, as was done with the Simoneaux project. 

The software allows landscape architects to overcome one of the most difficult aspects of designing a backyard makeover: Illustrating for homeowners what the finished product will look like before any work has begun.

"Two-dimensional drawings really only show specs; they are flat and lifeless," explains company vice president of marketing Ken O'Neill. "The Design Studio's animation and 3-D renderings allow the homeowner to visually walk through the space and account for traffic flow, outdoor furnishings, landscaping, lighting, color, and a host of other factors."