



STAGE 2 • VISION & PLANNING

# Backyard Transformation Checklist

Plan the pool, patio, kitchen, fire, shade, lighting, and landscape together.

# Start With the Whole Vision

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You are not just planning a pool. You are planning the place your family will gather, the space your friends will remember, and the backyard you have probably been imagining for years.

The pool matters, but so does the patio around it, the shade in the afternoon, the kitchen when everyone is hungry, the fire feature after sunset, the lighting at night, and the way it all feels when you step outside.

At Scott Payne Custom Pools, we help homeowners across PA, NJ, and DE bring complete backyard environments to life. Scott is IWI Certified, BBB Accredited A+, and brings more than 25 years of personal industry experience to every project.

## 1. Your Outdoor Lifestyle

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Before choosing features, get clear on how you want the backyard to feel and function. The best outdoor spaces start with how your family actually lives.

- Who will use the backyard most often?**  
*Adults, children, teens, guests, grandparents, or pets?*
- Primary purpose**  
*Family time, entertaining, relaxation, fitness, or all of the above?*
- Ideal feeling**  
*Quiet evenings, big gatherings, casual weekends, or resort-style daily living?*
- Seasonal use**  
*Mostly summer, or as many months of the year as possible?*
- What is missing now?**  
*Shade, space, privacy, seating, water, fire, or a reason to stay outside?*
- Stay-home factor**  
*What would make your family want to stay home more often?*

## 2. Your Core Features

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This is the fun part. Do not filter yourself yet. List what you want, what you might want, and what could be planned for later. A good builder can help you decide what belongs in phase one and what should simply be prepared for now.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Pool</b><br/><i>Custom shape, rectangle, freeform, tanning ledge, bench seating, heating, automatic cover.</i></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Spa</b><br/><i>Attached spa, raised spa, spillover spa, separate hot tub, or no spa.</i></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Water features</b><br/><i>Waterfall, sheer descent, bubblers, deck jets, spillover, or natural stone feature.</i></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Outdoor kitchen</b><br/><i>Built-in grill, refrigerator, sink, storage, bar seating, prep space, pizza oven.</i></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Shade &amp; shelter</b><br/><i>Covered patio, pavilion, pergola, cabana, roof extension, or privacy screens.</i></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Fire features</b><br/><i>Fire pit, outdoor fireplace, fire bowls, linear fire feature, or seating wall integration.</i></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Lighting</b><br/><i>Pool lighting, patio lighting, path lights, step lights, accent lighting, and task lighting.</i></li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Landscape &amp; privacy</b><br/><i>Plantings, privacy screening, lawn areas, drainage, boulders, or existing tree integration.</i></li> </ul> |
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## Priority Notes

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- Must-have features**  
*Which features would make the project feel incomplete without them?*
- Nice-to-have features**  
*Which features would be great if budget and layout allow?*
- Future-phase features**  
*Which features should be planned for now even if they are built later?*

## 3. Your Layout & Flow

A backyard can have beautiful features and still feel awkward if the layout is wrong. Think about how people will move, gather, eat, swim, and relax. The pool should relate to the house. The kitchen should be convenient. The fire feature should feel placed with purpose.

**House connection**

*Where do you naturally walk out of the house, and where should the outdoor living area begin?*

**Main focal point**

*Should the pool be the main view from inside the home?*

**Furniture zones**

*Where should lounge chairs, dining furniture, and casual seating go?*

**Kitchen placement**

*Should the outdoor kitchen sit near the house, near the pool, or under a covered area?*

**Shade**

*Where does afternoon sun hit hardest, and where will shade matter most?*

**Views**

*What views should be framed, hidden, or softened?*

**Fire placement**

*Where would people naturally gather after sunset?*

**Lighting**

*How should lighting help people move safely and make the yard feel finished after dark?*

### Pro Tip: Design the Whole Backyard Before You Build the First Piece

Even if you build in phases, plan the entire backyard first. Utilities, drainage, elevations, patio sizes, shade structures, lighting, and future kitchen or fire features can all affect phase one.

## 4. Your Budget & Phasing Plan

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A full backyard transformation is not one number. It includes the pool, patio, utilities, structures, lighting, landscaping, drainage, and finishing details. You do not need a final budget before the first conversation, but you should know the range you are comfortable discussing.

- Total project range**  
*What range are you comfortable exploring?*
- Phase one priorities**  
*Which features are non-negotiable now?*
- Scope of budget**  
*Pool only, or pool plus outdoor living?*
- Future prep**  
*What could be prepared now and added later?*
- Payment plan**  
*Cash, financing, or a combination?*
- Phasing preference**  
*Build everything together or over time?*

## 5. Site Details That Affect the Plan

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This is the part homeowners rarely think about first, but it affects what is possible, what it costs, and how the project should be built.

- Property address**  
*Lot layout, municipality, setbacks, and zoning.*
- Slope & drainage**  
*Low spots, retaining walls, grading, and water movement.*
- HOA status**  
*Rules for pools, fencing, structures, materials, or work hours.*
- Obstructions**  
*Existing fence, trees, sheds, patios, or playsets.*
- Access points**  
*Gates, fences, trees, slopes, and equipment entry.*
- Utilities**  
*Gas, electric, water, septic, sewer, equipment location, and utility run lengths.*

## 6. What to Ask Your Builder

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A complete backyard transformation needs more than separate contractors doing separate pieces. One builder managing the whole vision can help prevent gaps, rework, and a space that feels pieced together.

- Outdoor living experience**  
*Have you built complete outdoor living spaces, not just pools?*
- Coordination**  
*Who manages the pool, patio, structures, utilities, lighting, and landscaping?*
- Future phases**  
*Will the design account for what we may add later?*
- Scope clarity**  
*What is included, and what is excluded?*
- Site planning**  
*How are elevations, drainage, access, and equipment handled?*
- Communication**  
*How will updates, decisions, changes, and questions be handled during the project?*
- Timeline**  
*Can you include design, permits, construction, and finishing details?*

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## Bring My Outdoor Vision to Life

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Your backyard does not have to stay a collection of saved photos and someday conversations. With the right plan and the right builder, it can become the place your family naturally gathers, the place friends remember, and the place that makes home feel even more like home.

*We have built custom pools and outdoor spaces for families across PA, NJ, and DE.*

Ready for your next step?

[scottpaynecustompools.com/start-your-journey](https://scottpaynecustompools.com/start-your-journey)