

Designing for Privacy Reduces Stress: And It's Easier Than You Think

A quick online search will bear out what social scientists have been saying for decades: lack of privacy has a direct correlation to stress. As urban sprawl becomes a more common way of life and lot sizes dwindle, how can homeowners reclaim their space? No matter how friendly, no homeowner wants neighbors staring them down, especially in areas such as the bath or bedroom. Here are some home improvement privacy options that won't break the bank and offer style and beauty.

For the so-called zero lot lines where neighbors are just several feet away, there are options of low-maintenance fencing on the market, in materials of cellular pvc and a variety of composites. These weather proof fencing materials can provide complete privacy in the backyard without the constant care of wood. For example, Walpole Woodworkers of Walpole, MA, (www.walpolewoodworkers.com) use a material called AZEK which will not rot and is very low-maintenance. Make sure your privacy fencing extends taller than 6 feet and have pickets that are close or overlapped together. This can reduce sound and wind as well.

U S Block Windows, the acrylic block specialists, have easy to install privacy solutions that look like a decorative jewel from the outside. Replacement acrylic block windows fit into existing window openings without damage to exteriors, such as stucco. And, they allow natural light in but are impossible to see through. With fixed or operable styles, they can be cut to virtually any size, height or width, with round tops and arches for added style. For instant privacy, their Coronado Block Shutters can be installed over your existing window, which can still open to let in the fresh air. The company also features acrylic block window options that are Energy Star® qualified for all regions of the United States. www.usblockwindows.com

Noise from cars, barking dogs and people can be quite intrusive to your private moments. A new type of drywall called QuietRock® from Quiet Solution (www.quietsolution.com) installs like regular drywall, but one layer is acoustically equivalent to eight layers of the regular stuff. It's all due to a special polymer that dampens sound. Quiet Solution also makes sound proof wood, windows and commercial products, but when it comes to a snoring spouse, you are on your own!

Using these tips and products, you can increase privacy and reduce stress without prying eyes or noisy habits intruding on your lifestyle.