



STYLISHLY SHADED



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Privacy and shade are in short supply at most properties on Long Beach Island. To counter these adverse conditions, the pergola provides a solution, and an alternative to traditional planting screens.

Pergolas are not only low-maintenance and highly functional, but also aesthetically unifying to the entire outdoor living area. A fixture of *al fresco* living for over 3000 years, the first pergola design was discovered in Egypt, dating back to 1400BCE. Originally used as a support for hanging vines and sustainable food crops, pergolas served both an aesthetic and functional purpose to beautify the landscape and provide shade from the harsh effects of the desert sun. Having stood the test of time, pergolas remain as useful today as they were in ancient times.

While seemingly straightforward, the look and styling of pergolas can vary tremendously based upon the architectural details of the residence and individual preferences of the client. Mark Reynolds, owner of Reynolds Landscaping, offers suggestions and advice to people considering the installation of a pergola.

Where should I locate a pergola on my property?

Pergolas can function as a dramatic entryway, transitioning residents and guests from the front to the back of the residence. They can also define an intimate, quiet backyard retreat or effectively segregate the yard into distinct functional areas

for recreating, dining, and private poolside lounging. Whatever their function, before moving forward with a pergola installation, Reynolds advises that the homeowner first become familiar with local zoning laws and setback restrictions governing the location of “accessory structures,” the official term used for these fea-

tures. Zoning regulations can vary by township, and will help determine the maximum size and legal locations for the pergola.

How do I determine the optimal size and shape of a pergola?

Once township zoning parameters have been determined, Mark Reynolds

recommends partnering with a landscape designer or architect to determine the best location for the pergola—a spot that will not only complement the unique physical and architectural details of the property, but also create a seamless and unifying property design. The pergola can be square or rectangular, curved or rec-

tilinear. It can be L-shaped and nestled into a corner niche to define the outer limits of a backyard patio, or attached to the facade of the residence to blur the boundaries between interior and exterior living.

Whatever its shape and location, the only limiting factor governing the pergola dimension is the

maximum length of the structural beams needed to supporting the pergola structure. This length is typically no greater than 28 feet.

What materials are used for building a pergola, and how much upkeep is needed?

While synthetic or natural

materials can be used in the construction of the pergola, Reynolds strongly recommends the use of red or white cedar wood, or a combination of both products. Cedar is not only durable, naturally beautiful, and virtually maintenance free, but also develops an attractive patina over time. No stain or finish needs to be applied to the wooden

structure; however, if the homeowner prefers the original patina of the newly constructed pergola, oil can be applied to achieve this consistent color effect. Even if a white-colored pergola is requested to blend with a house’s trim and accents, Reynolds still recommends a cedar wood construction finished with a white stain. Natural



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products, he advises, have a more aesthetic and high-quality appearance and always stand up better to the elements over the course of time than synthetic products. However, if any product is applied to the wood, reapplication will be necessary every few years.

What are the advantages of a pergola versus a retractable shade awning?

According to Reynolds, there is no comparison between a shade awning and a pergola—the two components are mutually exclusive and do not function on the same level. The goal of the retractable awning is to provide shade from sun, possibly offer color to the exterior styling of the home, and, perhaps, create shelter from rain storms—it has no particular architectural value. A pergola, on the other hand, is a hand-crafted architectural centerpiece that functions not only on a practical level—to provide shade and privacy—but also on an aesthetic level to enhance and enrich the value and appeal of the property on a holistic basis.

Finally, what is the typical price of a pergola installation?

Size, materials, and the complexity of design are the driving factors in determining the cost of a pergola. The larger the pergola, the greater the quantity of wood needed for the installation, resulting in a higher project cost. Pricing also fluctuates based upon the complexity of the design. An L-shaped pergola, constructed with more individual project components, requires more time to construct and hence will cost more than a simpler rectangular or square pergola. A curvilinear structure constructed with beams bent into a specific shape requires additional time to set and precise construction applications, with associated costs reflecting this advanced workmanship.

Regardless of the project parameters and final budget, Reynolds emphasizes that the end result and driving factor for all project installations should be the satisfaction of the client and achievement of the homeowners' wants and needs. A constant dialog and collaborative environment between client and contractor is essential to ensure that a truly personal, long-lasting, and functional outdoor living space is created.