

## BEATING THE HEAT

Heat and humidity are inescapable facts of life for most Southerners. The combination can make the prospect of sitting in the garden about as alluring as spreading hot tar on the highway. You can't change your climate, but with some careful planning, you can change how it makes you feel.

During summer, the sun's force is almost audible and escaping it is the prime task for both man and beast. For many people, the most pressing need for shade is on the south and west sides of the house, because this is where the hot afternoon sun strikes. If you have no existing shade trees, you can cool down the garden by planting trees or adding structures such as arbors or awnings.

Trees are a good choice, providing you can wait a few years for them to grow. For large areas, choose tall, fast-growing trees with ascending branches, such as Japanese zelkova, Chinese pistache, tulip poplar, and red maple. For smaller areas such as patios, choose shorter, less messy trees (see page 210).

But sometimes you just can't wait for relief. In that case, consider building an arbor over a seating area; the rafters will cast broken shade right away. Increase the shade by training vines up the structure.

You feel much more comfortable in a warm, sticky room when there's a fan blowing on you. The same principle of cooling your skin by using moving air to evaporate moisture applies outdoors. So determine the direction of prevailing summer breezes, then orient your garden or sitting area to take advantage of them.

Solid fences, walls, and hedges block air movement. But lattice fences and openwork brick walls allow breezes to pass through. You can also increase air movement by building an elevated deck instead of one at ground level, and installing fans in arbors and gazebos.

During summer hot spells, temperatures downtown often exceed those in the countryside by 5 or 6 degrees—all of that asphalt and concrete in the city radiates heat. The same principle applies in your garden. The more paving or bare soil it contains, the hotter it will be. The more lawn, ground cover, and planting beds it has, the cooler it will be. Light-colored paving doesn't feel as hot underfoot, but it often produces uncomfortable glare. One solution—tint concrete gray or choose gray- or tan-colored gravel and stone.



**A.** Spray misters mounted in the roof of this gazebo cool the air during hot summer days.

**B.** Splashing water from a fountain and water jets makes the pool area seem cooler. Surrounding vegetation also provides welcome shade for non-bathers.

**C.** Lattice fencing gives needed screening and separation without blocking cooling breezes.

**D.** Shaded paving, such as this driveway, parking area, and walk, cools the entire area by stopping concrete or asphalt from absorbing as much heat.



# DESIGNING WITH STRUCTURES

*Walls, walks, pools, and other structures give your garden shape and dimension. Like plants, they can enrich the outdoors with form, texture, and color.*

*Garden structures often play dual roles, satisfying both aesthetic and functional needs. For example, fences and trellises can create separate spaces, while supporting beautiful and fragrant roses and vines. Low, wide walls can enclose a terrace and provide extra seating too. Gazebos and arbors can serve as both focal points and shelters. And paths can establish formal sight lines, as well as guiding visitors on the way.*

*Structures are the costliest part of the garden. So plan them carefully, and check local building codes prior to construction. Make sure their design complements both the overall setting and the architecture of your house. Finally, select the most durable materials you can afford. This will ensure your structures pass the test of time.*

*Rosamund garden  
Columbus, Mississippi*