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Triple the Entertaining

CarsonSpeer helped make the outdoor spaces the Fortsons envisioned a reality.

/ by Leigh Savage / photography by Kris Decker



[above] The carriage house-style detached garage has exposed beams, polished concrete floors, plentiful storage, a chandelier, and nine-foot mahogany outswing doors.

[right] The Reward recessed hot tub from Marquis Spas, accessible from the master bath, blends seamlessly into the landscape and can easily be transformed into a fountain or dipping pool.

[far right] The fireplace is a favorite gathering spot in cooler months, built using Woodrose Park brick that was a close match with the house.



TRAVIS AND HEATHER FORTSON wanted a garage that was capable of more than simply parking cars, and with the help of CarsonSpeer Builders they got it and much more. Today, the couple can open swinging doors and triple their entertaining space in an instant.

The new garage is detached and designed to resemble a carriage house, with exposed beams that mimic the previous old garage on the property. "We wanted to create a usable space as an extension of our living room," Travis says. "I also wanted a timeless space where I could work in the yard when I wanted to, but it would still look good a little neglected."

The garage is designed to look old but is lit with a chandelier and has stained and polished concrete floors, a large television, a heater and a refrigerator. Despite its frequent use as an entertaining space, it still serves as a standard garage on occasion. "When we aren't entertaining, we have stored a boat and a Jeep in the garage," Travis says.

In addition to the new detached building, the project includes a patio with a hot tub that is accessible via French doors from the master bath. "We designed the surround like a fountain to hide the hot tub," he says. A gathering spot with fireplace was a high priority for Heather and it not only provides a perfect spot to relax outside, but also is centered on the living room creating an attractive scene from inside.

Steve Carson, a partner at CarsonSpeer, says that in addition to building new homes, his company often does renovations and additions and is "seeing more of a focus on outdoor living space than ever before."

He appreciated that Travis, an old friend, knew exactly what he wanted. "We helped choose some materials, but he drove this," Carson says mentioning a folder of 200+ photos he received from Travis.

The team began by tearing down the old garage, which along with overgrown areas, made the back half of the yard unusable. Carson said the Fortsons expressed three key goals: one, they needed more space to park. Two, they wanted to capture the look of the gardens of old Charleston and three, it needed to all be accessible. Accessibility is paramount since Travis lost his right leg 12 years ago after he was hit by a tractor-trailer while helping a motorist on I-85.

They collaborated to choose products including the recessed hot tub from Marquis Spas, cut bluestone and flagstone for the hardscape and mahogany Carriage House outswing doors from Overhead Door. "We didn't want roll-ups because the garage has an open vault with exposed framing above that we wanted to be able to see," Carson says. "The exterior walls all have exposed framing to create the appearance of an older structure."

The brick, Woodrose Park from General Shale, was discontinued leading the team to search brickyards throughout the Southeast. "It was important to match the house and not look like an add-on," Carson says.

Travis has an affinity for gardening. He studied the designs of Loutrel Briggs, a Charleston garden designer, to create small garden rooms throughout the backyard plan incorporating fatsia, boxwoods, inkberry holly and confederate jasmine to pack in multiple shades of green. "I wanted the spaces to look full and almost overgrown," he says.

Travis loves "being able to look outside from the living room and see so many different shades of green, pops of color and architectural elements that force you outside to see more." The Fortsons are thrilled with their updated space and how much it draws them to enjoy outside living. **oh**

