



LET'S PLAY!

Incorporating sports and gaming into your outdoor living area

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Swimming pools and hot tubs, firepits, wet bars and lounging spaces—the primary function of most outdoor living spaces on LBI focuses, deservedly so, on entertaining, relaxing and recreating in the water. Under-utilized, though nevertheless equally engaging, sport and gaming activities—like bocce ball, putting greens and basketball courts—are beginning to find their rightful place in the backyard environment. Often thought too large for the typical LBI property, multi-purposed spaces and innovative designs focused on space-saving options allow centers of sports and gaming to function alongside traditional backyard pursuits—providing fun, healthy competition and physical activity for all to enjoy.

At 60 feet long by 12 feet wide, a standard backyard bocce ball court can effectively be designed to fit into a larger property lot on the Island. Nevertheless, depending upon how seriously you take your bocce, an entertaining game can still be had by cutting the standard court size in half—all that is needed are pre-defined foul lines and boundaries. Common court surfaces range from artificial turf to gravel dust and sand, allowing balls to roll fast and straight. Drainage, too, is an important factor that must be incorporated into the court installation to prevent ponding and allow for water infiltration. For improved aesthetics, consider nestling your bocce ball court into a landscape setting to soften its appearance or creating a separate “gaming space” in a multi-level patio setting.

While a portable basketball hoop can fit into just about any size property, given the nature of the game and unpredictability of the shooter’s abilities, it is best to locate the hoop in the driveway to avoid damage to plants, architecture and furniture. A typical basketball setup should have a foul line set 15ft away from the hoop, another 4ft behind the glass to allow for mishaps and ample space on each side of the foul line, allowing for longer perimeter shots. In-ground, permanent hoops are more stable and simulate a real-game experience while portable hoops can be easily relocated. Whichever options is selected, for safety, always install a basketball hoop on a level, hard surface, free of cracks to minimize errant dribbles and tripping.

If golf is your sport, consider incorporating a putting green into the backyard to practice your game and engage your guests in a friendly competition. The putting green should be designed to not only challenge your skills but also provide for multiple shot opportunities. It should have undulating contours and be expansive enough to allow for longer and mid-range putting opportunities. A sand trap and perimeter rough should be included to promote the use of multiple club selections, like sand and pitching wedges. Drainage considerations and allowances for rainwater runoff are mandatory while landscaping and water features will add aesthetic appeal and create a smooth transition to other functional areas of the backyard.

All fresco patio space under a raised deck creates a backdrop for even greater possibilities for backyard gaming activities. Outdoor pool and billiard tables made of durable stainless-steel framing and exterior grade rough felt provide an opportunity for gaming even during inclement weather. Be forewarned, however, that the space must be large enough to accommodate all shot opportunities, without structural pilings to impede progress. Sunbrella exterior cloth is a suitable alternative to felt due to its resistance to fading and warping. While protective covering and specialized accessories create protection and improve functionality in an exposed environment, it is best to have some degree of overhead protection for maximum enjoyment and equipment longevity.



Most outdoor sports and gaming stations do require a reasonable amount of space to maximize the gaming experience, however, many can be re-purposed to serve multiple gaming venues or to extend patio space for social gatherings. A bocce ball court can easily be transformed into a corn hole or horseshoe pit by substituting heavy duty rubber and wood accessories for bocce trimmings. An outdoor pool table can be transformed into a ping pong table with the simple addition of a plywood or plastic table-top set-up. If babies and small children contribute to the family dynamic, consider repurposing an artificially turfed bocce ball court or putting green into a soft cushioned play station for teetering toddlers.

Promoting light-hearted competition and physical activity while at the same time enhancing congregation with friends and family, consider allocating a section of your property for fun and gaming when developing your outdoor living design. A bocce ball court, putting green or multi-purposed sporting venue can add a new dimension to summer recreating on LBI, creating a seamless and safe transition from lounging and dining to swimming and recreating.



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