

# The Electronic Garden

## EQUIPPING YOUR CLIENTS' BACKYARD FOR SUMMER ENJOYMENT



With new wireless technologies, working at home has never been more comfortable.

With summer in full swing it's time to think about your client's electronic entertainment and communications needs in their backyard. With all the new electronic hardware you've installed inside their home it's logical to ask how you can leverage your client's indoor entertainment investment to enhance their backyard enjoyment. The challenge, of course, is that inside of the home we've wired together most of their electronic equipment—outside of the home we need to turn to wireless solutions for entertainment and communications. Let's review some products that I have used for my clients that have extended their indoor electronics lifestyle to the great outdoors.

### MUSIC ON THE BACK DECK

It's a beautiful summer evening and your clients are hosting a barbecue on their backyard deck. Wouldn't it be great to add some gentle background music to their entertainment experience? The challenge is that its audio sound system is in the family room—nowhere near the back deck. That's where Sonos' whole-house audio system provides a solution. Sonos allows you to install one of its amplifier/players outside and wirelessly connect it to another player inside the home that is attached to the home network. You simply plug in the Sonos amplifier in an outlet at the deck and connect the

amp to a couple of stereo speakers that you can place around the perimeter of the deck. Once you turn on the Sonos it will look for music to play from a hard drive on a computer (or iPod) in the home or from any number of thousands of online Internet stations. With the wireless Sonos controller in your hand you can easily scroll through and select the music you want to play while you are on the deck. If someone stands up to make a speech you simply hit the mute button during the talk and then un-mute the music when the toast is completed.

This is an ideal solution that leverages the audio electronic investment your clients have already made in their home. If they have music ripped to a hard drive and/or have a high-speed Internet connection they can easily extend their personal digital music library or their Internet music subscription to the backyard with the Sonos whole house audio system.

### EMAIL BY THE POOL

Why should your client's remain bound in their home office when it's 80 degrees outside and a beautiful sunny day? If their dilemma is that they still have too much work to do then they should think about taking it outside. With the new wireless technologies offered by companies such as Linksys, Belkin, and dLink you can extend the range of their

laptop's wireless connection by three to four times what previous wireless access points could provide. Thanks to a new standard called 802.11n (which is backward compatible with the older b and g standards) you can now cover distances away from the home far greater than with the older wireless standards. If they now have a wireless access point based on the older b and/or g standards you can add or replace this access point with one of the newer 802.11n access points to let your client's enjoy this extended range and data throughput. And don't forget, if they have added a printer to their home network they can wirelessly print the email they receive in the backyard to the office printer—all from the convenience of their pool lounge chair. Working at home has never been more comfortable.

### CALLING FROM THE MAILBOX

If your clients have one of the standard wireless phone systems they've probably noticed that as soon as they get more than 50 to 100 feet away from the base station the sound quality quickly diminishes. To rectify this situation requires a phone system that has multiple cell stations that can repeat and amplify the phone signal. Panasonic has a Model 848 phone system that is one of the few residential systems that allows you to install cell station repeaters. We install these phone systems in almost all of our clients' homes that are greater than 5,000 feet with large backyards. These systems ensure that wherever you walk around your home—inside or out—you will always get a strong signal.

With these wireless electronics enhancements to your clients homes they can enjoy audio entertainment and communication experiences that extend their home electronics to the great outdoors. And by this time next year, we may be able to reliably connect a wireless television to their home's cable or satellite services. The wireless outdoor home theater maybe just around the corner.

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