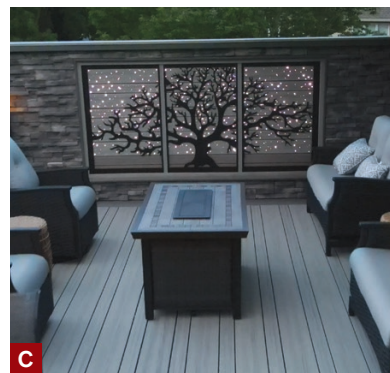


# DAY'S END

Focus on good design and clever construction



## Tree of Life Privacy Wall

by Dan Pettit

Though only one of many unique elements in a multilevel outdoor living space that my company recently completed, the innovative “tree of life” privacy wall shown here plays a big role in bringing the project itself to life (A). During the day, the 6-foot-high framed wall with stone-veneer cladding and a three-panel, plasma-cut-aluminum insert visually separates my clients from their nearby neighbors. At night, twinkling stars—created with the help of motorized fiber-optic lighting—ebb and flow from color to color against the tree of life backdrop to create a relaxing environment for my clients and their family members and guests (C).

We used double 2x4 studs to frame the wall for strength and to pro-

vide a cavity between the inner and outer walls for running the wiring without having to drill through the studs. To reinforce the wall against wind pressure, we sheathed both sides and fabricated an engineered 3-foot-by-3-foot-by-1/4-inch stainless steel L-bracket to connect the free-standing end of the wall to the deck framing.

The aluminum insert is backed with Deckorators Voyage deck boards that match the color and alternating widths of the decking. We also clad the back of the wall with deck boards and trimmed it with matching Deckorators mineral-based-composite trim boards, which are more stable and less prone to thermal expansion and contraction than PVC trim.

The lighting system that illuminates the privacy wall during the darker hours is my secret sauce, consisting of commercial-grade, off-the-shelf components that I sourced online. While my design is proprietary, it basically consists of a fiber-optic generator that produces the colored illumination and controls effects such as color changes, dimming, and twinkling. Flexible fiber-optic light strands bundled into harnesses—which I routed through holes drilled through the privacy wall’s deck-board cladding in a carefully designed pattern—deliver these lighting effects to my clients (B). ❖

Dan Pettit owns Northern Outdoor Living in Hastings, Minn.

PHOTOS: A. ZACH PLUMB/COURTESY DECKORATORS; B, C. DAN PETTIT