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QUEBEC'S LARGEST ENGLISH WEEKLY NEWSPAPER



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Urban oasis

By **Anna Bratulic, The Suburban**

When Joanne Cappadocia says she's heading south, often what she means by that is her backyard tropical haven tucked away in southern N.D.G.

A lifelong globe-trotter with a penchant for sunny destinations, Cappadocia, 48, began to tire of the exhausting rigmarole involved in travelling.

An increased fear of airplane hijackings, and other terrorist threats, also made staying in dull old' Montreal seem more and more appealing. So, rather than jet off to the islands all the time, Cappadocia and her husband elected to recreate a little equatorial warmth right in their backyard.

About four years ago, they remodelled the relatively small space with the addition of an outdoor pool and tropical vegetation.

The result is a free-form swimming pool almost completely surrounded by a lush collar of windmill palms imported from California, large-leafed banana trees, Mexican yuccas, and colourful hibiscus flowers.

There's even a Tiki bar, complete with rainbow-coloured stuffed macaw toys that sits in the corner.

"It's fabulous," says Cappadocia. "If you're here on Sunday mornings, you just turn on the music, the kids are playing. You close you eyes and then open them and you'd swear you were down south. If you've been to a resort, you know what I'm talking about."

The couple even added the appropriate sound effects. "We play a lot of calypso," says Cappadocia. "Our neighbours get to enjoy it, too."

A balcony view of the yard shows how it stands out from the other more typical Montreal gardens, where grassy lawns and asphalt-paved ground are the norm.

"You're in a whole other planet. I'm telling you, the planes when they pass by, the pilots must do triple takes. We actually wave to the helicopters and the planes sometimes," she says.

The garden was by no means a cheap venture. Cappadocia estimates the whole thing cost upwards of \$50,000. The windmill palms alone range in price from \$2,000 to \$3,500 each, and she owns five. Her husband's son, Mike Page, who runs a landscaping business, designed the yard and takes care of it.

You'd think that people who live in frigid northern climes would be clamouring to have their backyards landscaped to look like the Bahamas, but then, you'd be wrong.

"It's not super popular. We're trying to make it popular," says Page, noting that the cost



Photo by Andrew Soong, The Suburban

Joanne Cappadocia and her husband spent upwards of \$50,000 to transform their N.D.G. garden into a tropical getaway.



Cappadocia and her brother at the corner Tiki bar.

Poll

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and over-winter maintenance could be what's turning people off.

In fact, trees that you would expect wouldn't last in our humid continental climate, which covers south eastern portions of Canada and the north eastern U.S., actually do quite well – in the summer. Winter is an entirely different matter. The deep freezes are too much for some varieties to bear.

Page says he's experimenting with a few techniques to preserve them over the winter, such as covering them in plastic domes, or bringing them indoors all together.

Other than that, the plants are fairly simple to maintain.

"Basically, once it's planted, you just have to water and fertilize as usual. That's about it," he says.

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