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## Create a Memorable Outdoor Summer Gathering

by [homewarranty.com](http://homewarranty.com)

It's been a great summer so far, especially those summer nights. As fall approaches, why not gather some friends and food this month and make magic happen in your backyard with these summer outdoor entertainment tips.

**1. Create Comfortable Seating:** You want your guests to stick around, right? Provide them with plenty of comfortable seating - outdoor sofas, chairs, and cushions to help them relax and mingle. Provide blankets if you live in a climate with cool nights.

**2. Lighting is Key:** Set the stage with ambient lighting using string lights, lanterns, and battery-operated candles to create a warm and inviting gathering spot as the sun sets, and long after.

**3. Offer Plenty of Drinks:** It's been a hot day. Be sure to keep chilled beverages like lemonade, iced tea, cold sodas, seltzers, and fruity cocktails to keep your guests cool and refreshed throughout your gathering.

**4. Offer a Variety of Foods:** The great outdoors increases everyone's appetite, and your backyard is no exception. Provide a variety of nibbles such as grilled dishes, chips, dips, salads, and desserts to cater to different tastes and varied dietary preferences.

**5. Keep Bugs at Bay:** Nothing spoils a good time like unwanted guests - especially the six-legged variety. Keep bugs away from your outdoor gathering as much as possible with citronella candles, torches, or bug zappers.

**6. Provide Plenty of Shade:** If your backyard is full of trees, then lucky you. If not, get creative when it comes to providing shade for your guests. Open patio umbrellas, use canopies, or a pergola to provide shade and shelter from the sun. Your guests will appreciate it.

**7. Add Some Music:** Nothing keeps a party rocking like great music. Create a playlist of upbeat tunes to add to the atmosphere and keep the party lively. Keep the volume low enough to encourage conversation.

**8. Plan Fun Activities:** Most of us don't have a pool in our backyard, but you want to be able to entertain your guests. Get creative if your backyard has the space; set up lawn games like cornhole, horseshoes, badminton, or bocce ball to keep guests entertained. Horseshoes are great for a smaller yard.

**9. Create a Space to Dine:** We all know that feeling of trying to balance a paper plate with one hand and a cup with the other, when someone asks you to pass the salt. Ensure your guests have plenty of tabletop space to sit and eat. The idea is to keep your guests happily fed and entertained while they enjoy one of your favorite spots.

## August Calendar

August 7 - Purple Heart Day

August 14 - National Creamsicle Day

August 21-25 is National Safe at Home Week

## Homeowner Tips



### Trim Branches and Bushes

Branches, bushes, and vines can all be a beautiful addition to any landscape, just remember they carry water and pests. If they touch the siding of your house it gives water a chance to find its way beneath your siding and create mildew in your walls. Bushes next to your house also give pests easy access to your walls. Keep bushes and trees trimmed at least a foot from your house.

## Make Smart Home Upgrades on a Budget

You don't have to spend a fortune to upgrade your home's smart features. Here are three devices for less than \$100.

**Smart Speakers** - a perfect starting point to help you connect your home's tech throughout the entire house using simple voice commands. Check out products like The Amazon Echo Dot®.

**Smart Cameras** - It costs less than you think to buy your family a little peace of mind knowing your home is secure while you're away. Put the cameras in busy

areas like your front door, entry way and kitchen. Also, place smart camera's in your house's more vulnerable spots like back doors or patio doors.

**Smart plugs** - The unsung hero of the smart home, smart plugs let you control switches throughout your home with either voice command or by using your smart phone. Smart plugs can control anything that uses an on/off switch - this means devices like lamps, fans, coffee makers, TVs, etc. Keep in mind that smart plugs can't adjust a devices settings.



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## Old-fashioned Orange Creamsicles

August 14 is National Creamsicle Day. If you need an excuse to indulge in this perfect, simple summer dessert now is your chance. Bring back the taste of your childhood with these easy, creamy treats.

### INGREDIENTS

- 2/3 cup orange juice concentrate, thawed
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 1/2 cups plain whole milk yogurt
- 1/2 cup milk

### DIRECTIONS

Whisk ingredients:

Whisk the orange concentrate and

sugar in a large bowl (spouted, if you have one) that can hold 3 cups of liquid.

Whisk in yogurt and milk until smooth. The mixture will be thick like a bottled smoothie or thick pulp-filled juice.

### Assemble the popsicles:

If you don't have a spouted bowl, pour the ice pop mixture into a large glass measuring cup. Pour the yogurt mixture up to the fill line of your popsicle mold.

Add the sticks to the popsicle mold and move to the freezer.

Freeze: Transfer the popsicles to the freezer and freeze undisturbed for 8 hours.



*Recipe courtesy of: delish.com*