

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 26, 2018

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New Smithsonian Exhibit at the Lake Wales Museum Featuring Retro Stories of the American Backyard



IMAGE: Lakewood Plaza, outdoor living space. Long Beach, California. 1950s. Maynard L. Parker, photographer. Courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

LAKE WALES, Florida - The Lake Wales Museum is hosting a new exhibit, "**Patios, Pools, & the Invention of the American Backyard**," now through November 24, 2018, which is presented by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) and the Smithsonian Gardens' Archive of American Gardens.

The suburban backyard is an American original—an invention so familiar it hardly seems invented at all. *Patios, Pools, & the Invention of the American Backyard* explores the mid-century backyard from the rise of the suburbs and tract houses, to the beauty of postwar garden design, and the birth of the environmental movement. Filled with vintage photographs, historic drawings, and fun period advertisements, the exhibition reveals how these spaces became such an integral part of American popular culture.

"Retro is fun, and what I love about this exhibit, is it makes history fun," states Jennifer D'hollander, director of the Lake Wales Museum. "Especially in Florida,

where outdoor living is a way of life, it's great to see where the evolution of the backyard pool party came from. It's a part of everyone's childhood."

In the 1950s, America was a nation emerging from the shadow of World War II, searching for ways to enjoy its newfound peace and prosperity. Postwar trends such as the baby boom, a growing middle class, the do-it-yourself concept and a dramatic rise in home ownership remade much of the U.S. and contributed to the development of the suburban backyard. The mid-century backyard became an extension of the house, a room designed for relaxing, recreation and entertaining. Private backyard pools were an affordable luxury for many, and the patio became the perfect place for a backyard grill and patio furniture made with new materials like plastic and aluminum.

The exhibit will be on display now through Saturday, November 24, 2018. The Lake Wales Museum is free and open to the public Tuesday - Saturday from 9 AM - 5 PM.

About SITES and Smithsonian Gardens

SITES has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for 65 years. SITES connects Americans to their cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science and history, which are shown wherever people live, work and play. Smithsonian Gardens care for living plant, artifact and archival collections. Its Archives of American Gardens collects and makes available for research use images of and documentation relating to a wide variety of cultivated gardens throughout the United States. In this way, AAG strives to preserve and highlight a meaningful compendium of significant aspects of gardening in the U.S. for the benefit of researchers and the public today and in the future.

About the Lake Wales Museum

The Lake Wales Museum features historical exhibits, train cars, educational programs and group tours, and is open Tuesday - Saturday from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Admission is free. Parking is free and the first floor is accessible for persons with disabilities, wheelchairs and strollers. [Click here](#) for more information about the museum.

LAKE WALES MUSEUM

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