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TV host has tips for comeback of front yard - 'Curb Appeal's' John Gidding says even in summer, South Florida homeowners can make good use of what's outside their front door.

Miami Herald, The (FL) - Sunday, March 18, 2012

**Author:** Miami Herald, **By:** Rebecca Burton

As the front yard makes a comeback, John Gidding has advice for South Florida homeowners: Protect part of the yard from the sun in order to make it liveable even during the heat of summer.

Gidding, one of the hosts of HGTV's Curb Appeal, will be one of the featured speakers at the Miami Home Design and Remodeling show March 23-26. Residents will be able to speak one on one with professionals such as Gidding and get exclusive advice on practical ways to redecorate and improve their home.

Gidding, an architect and interior designer who is also the designer on Designed to Sell, says he has experience designing for all types of climates — including muggy South Florida.

"I like talking about the projects I've done on the show," Gidding said. "I show how I approach design and help people use my experience to do their own home projects."

Gidding said there are very different approaches to designing interiors and exteriors.

"I try to coordinate the interior and exterior to some extent," Gidding said. "I feel interiors are more personality and trend based, but exteriors are about the architecture and context of the neighborhood."

Gidding said he has also been emphasizing the comeback of the front yard.

From the scorching sun that makes white buildings impractical in South Florida to the pesky mosquito problem, Gidding has tips on how to make a yard livable, enjoyable and still pleasing to the eye.

The first step is to protect the yard from the sun. "For South Florida I would try to create a corner of the yard with natural protection from the sun," Gidding said.

He suggested large plants and high grasses, but he also said to stay away from concrete as it only makes things hotter. Using limestone or granite for stepping stones to the corner haven attracts less heat and is more pleasing to the eye, Gidding said. He also said that the new concept of the front yard is not focused on privacy as much as it emphasizes making it comfortable for regular use.

"Also, load up on solar lights," Gidding said. "This way they take in energy from the sun, and

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the lights automatically come on as the sun starts to go down. These are perfect for pathways to the front door.”

Screened-in porches are not Gidding’s favorite aesthetic feature. “I don’t like that they hide the front door, because that is what makes the home feel welcoming,” Gidding said.

If a screened-in porch is a necessity, he suggests focusing on the framing. “If you get a decorative frame, it turns it more into an architectural design,” he said. He also recommends that homeowners keep the screens clean and buy higher quality metal so the screens won’t become loose.

When it comes to mosquitoes, he believes tiki torches are too reminiscent of a tiki bar. “I would choose planters, or flickering candles that serve the same purpose,” Gidding said.

On the show, he encourages viewers of Curb Appeal to lead the discussion. He said he will start with a brief introduction but will be ready to answer any questions.

“Viewers should watch with a critical eye and come with specific questions they want answered. We don’t always talk about prices on the show so people should watch the show and let me know what they think,” Gidding said.

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**Provided By:** The McClatchy Company

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