



2880 International Circle Colorado Springs, CO 80910

Building a Better Community
Thru Education and Enforcement



“CAN WE TALK?”

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Regional Building Department

It seems many homeowners, especially yours truly, don’t have very good memories. Each year during the cold winter months we forget all about the aching backs, the blisters on top of blisters, the painful wood splinters and countless trips to the local hardware supplier we endured just six months earlier. We are always happy to see spring arrive and, as sure as the weeds will return, we will once again embark on our quest to make our property look like the ones featured in magazines. Most of us also forget that our climate is more akin to high mountain desert while the properties on the cover of the magazines are typically located at lower elevations in the more humid parts of the country. “Why can’t I grow oranges and grapefruit in Colorado Springs?”

Being one of those homeowners with the “I can do that myself” attitude, it has taken me many years and a lot of wasted water to realize I should have sought advice from a professional landscaper years ago. A professional can help you select and plant the type of drought resistant plants and grasses that work well in our climate and, therefore, won’t deplete your kid’s college fund from trying to buy enough water to keep those new plants alive. Another good investment would be a sprinkler system to keep your new landscaping looking good. An in-ground sprinkler system, however, requires a backflow preventer (and a permit *is* required for this device). The function of a backflow prevention device is to prevent water in the

sprinkler lines from siphoning back into the domestic water supply and into your house. This necessary protection is why the backflow preventer is both required and needs to be inspected to make sure the installation meets the plumbing code. A cautionary word on installing a backflow preventer: be aware, backflow preventers have become the newest target of the copper thieves roaming the streets. They are stealing the devices and selling the parts to one of the recycle companies. You may want to consider locating the device out of sight on the side or at the back of the house. Having it hidden behind a fence or shrub might also help.

I've considered enlarging the size of my patio, thus cutting back on the amount of grass I have to maintain. A permit is *not* required for a concrete or paver type of patio. But I, a woodworker at heart, prefer the look of those fancy wood decks I've seen in the magazines with the curved decking and fancy lighted guardrails. Building a deck, unlike installing a patio, *does* require a permit. You will also need zoning approval for a deck. The Zoning Department will review the size and location of your proposed deck. You can find sample plans for decks and several other projects by accessing our website www.pprbd.org (see 'Codes, Forms, Drawings' in the drop down menu under 'Permits'). These samples will give you an idea as to what you will need to include in your drawings.

Whatever improvements you decide to do this summer, have fun with it and try to remember you'll never get it all done as fast as you might think you will. Or, more than likely, within your original budget. And don't forget to call us if you are not sure whether or not a permit is required. Further; if you intend to use a contractor you can call us to see if they are licensed. 719-327-2880

If you have any specific question you would like me to answer please send to terryb@pprbd.org

All of my previous columns are available on our website www.pprbd.org
Submit your questions to: terryb@pprbd.org or mail to: Pikes Peak
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