



An Outdoor **CAT** **HAVEN**

by **AMANDA BELL**



Lorraine Houser has a passion for two things: her cats and her garden. So when she learned about “catios” — or outdoor cat enclosures — she knew she wanted to construct one on her property in Indian Trail, N.C. Not sure where to start, she consulted Waxhaw, N.C.-based remodeling firm **Asa Stanford**, eventually hiring the company to build an enclosed pergola in her backyard. Lorraine spent \$4,300 on the project, but says the ability to enjoy the scenery with her four felines — Sanjy, Miele, Hadley and Riser — made it worth the cost. She talks about how her catio came together below.



THE BACKSTORY

Picturing the purr-fect pet patio

I learned about catios a few years ago when I had seven cats in the house. I didn't let them out for their safety, so constructing a catio seemed like a great idea. I came up with several designs, and at one point even thought about building it myself with a pre-made kit I found online. I'm a master gardener and spend a lot of time in the yard, so I thought why not put in a custom catio-pergola structure that I can grow around without obstructing the view of the great outdoors?

I kept putting off the expense, knowing I'd likely have to hire out the work due to the complexity of my design. But helping a good friend diagnosed with cancer recently made me think: Life is short — do what gives you pleasure. I knew this would give me great pleasure.

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— LORRAINE HOUSER



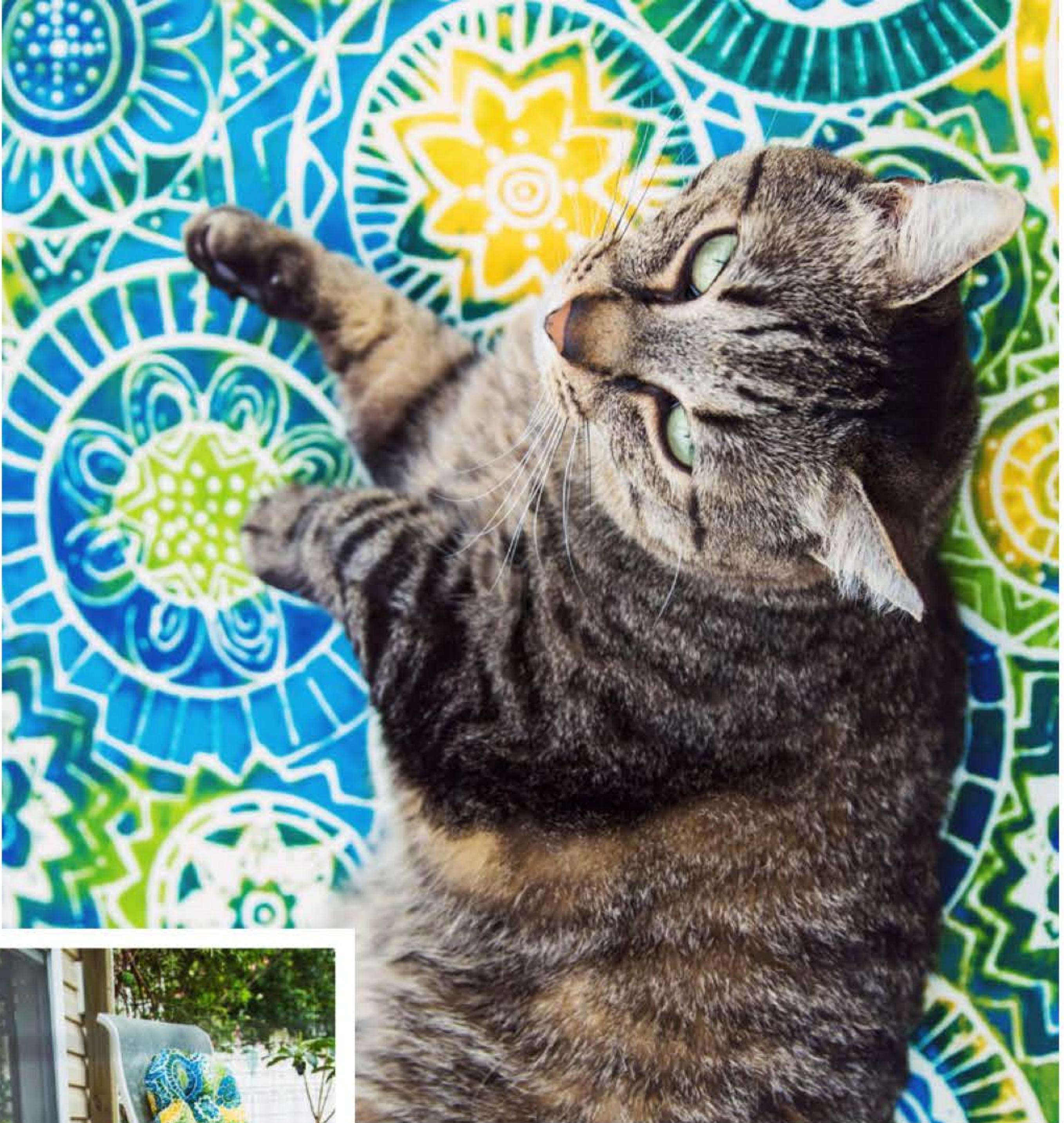
THE EXPERIENCE

Consulting on the right materials

The fates were with me because one of the builders, Mark, had seven cats and understood my vision. He helped in picking out the materials and placing the benches. For example, he advised on an appropriate netting to enclose the structure. Regular porch screening wouldn't be cost effective because the cats would scratch it. I wanted to make it safe from both sides but also look good in the yard, so he suggested using a thinner, lighter chain-link fencing material.

For the flooring, the crew helped me rule out grass, which would have been a lot cheaper. Continuing the brickwork from my patio in case I ever decide to move would make it easier for any new owner to update the area however they'd like. I was thrilled with that idea!

Mark and Ruston also helped me pick out a convenient and safe pet door for the cats to come and go from the sunroom to the catio. It was hard to find one, but we did and it was well worthwhile.





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LESSONS LEARNED

Research and planning pays off

I'm glad I did so much research. I'd recommend looking at catio pictures online and putting together a list of features you like and don't like. Some I found with grass looked so pretty, but having to mow and fertilize this 10-by-6 enclosed space would be impractical.

You could buy a cat a \$100 toy and he'll sit in the box it came from. So when I put this up, I held my breath. But it's paid off — the cats love it, and it does make me smile. I leave it open for them most of the time and they're out there most of the day. I do spend some time in the catio with them, too. They're on their perches and benches looking at the birds and chasing squirrels and I'm sitting out there on my patio chair enjoying it.

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ONLINE

Treat your feline friend with these DIY cat toys.