



Nothing beats a good nap in the backyard

String up a hammock, get a cold beverage and catch some blissful z's

By Nsong Xiong McClatchy Newspapers

FRESNO, Calif. — Consider a hammock for someone special. Tom Boehm of Madera, Calif., received his first hammock as a gift. His wife, Tammie, gave it to him almost a decade ago for his 40th birthday.

"It kind of surprised me, but it's a pretty cool idea," says Boehm, 49, co-owner of a lumber company. "I never really thought about having one, but I really like it and use it quite a bit."

Once you've experienced the weightless, rocking sensation that comes with resting in a hammock, you might not be able to do without this leisure activity again. The question then is which kind of hammock to buy.

Hammocks are generally 13 feet long with an additional foot of chain or rope on each end. They may come with spreader bars, which help keep the hammock spread-out and open.

Hammocks can be made of many materials, such as cotton, nylon or polyester. When they're used outdoors, they're often installed on trees, posts or stands, and are about 4 to 5 feet off the ground.

The more traditional Mayan or Brazilian hammocks are mainly imported from South America. They're often hand-woven with cotton or polycotton-blended fibers.

Robbie Cranch, 56, has a rope hammock that "is soft, almost silky," she says. Her worsted, artificial rope hammock fits two people and has an open weave that allows air to flow through, she says.

Nancy Cheng of Fresno bought a quilted hammock about three years ago.

"We wanted a nice, comfortable place to relax by the pool and watch the sun go down," says Cheng, an administrative assistant. The hammock hangs on a wooden stand in the backyard underneath some palm trees.

An alternative is a chair hammock. For years, Jan Phillips of Prather, Calif., longed for one.

"They're just so comfortable," says Phillips, 58, who works for a Fresno garden store. "Every time I'd go to a home and garden show, I'd sit in them and say I'd buy one."

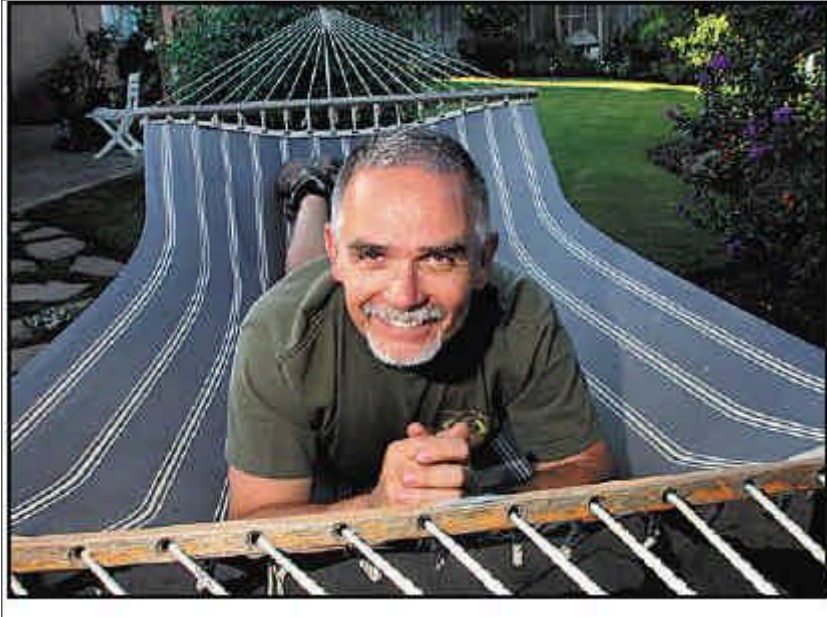
In March, she did. She placed the chair hammock on her deck, overlooking a swimming pool.

"I just like to go out there and sit in the evening," she says.

Phillips paid about \$235 for her chair hammock and stand. Costs can vary. Mayan or Brazilian hammocks can cost between \$35 and \$130, while rope ones can cost \$90-\$170. Quilted types can be

\$175-\$210.

Some hammocks come with stands, but they also can be purchased separately, starting at \$100.



DARRELL WONG/FRESNO BEE/MCT Tom Boehm relaxes in a hammock in his Madera, Calif., backyard. His wife gave him his first hammock.