

Accessories for Outdoor Living

During Victorian times people took advantage of warm weather to relax, dine and socialize on large, wrap-around verandahs. As electric fans and air conditioning became available, they retreated to the cooler air indoors. Now they are again enjoying the delights of outdoor living by using patios, decks, gazebos and screened-in porches to extend their home's living and entertaining areas into a casual, natural environment.

Make outdoor living a treat whether you're alone, having a family dinner or entertaining friends. Comfortable, easy-care furniture and interesting, attractive accessories make everyday events seem special. Complete the picture by creating an ambiance that is not only visually attractive, but also stimulates the senses of smell, taste, touch and sound.

Accessories as Finishing Touches . . .

In many ways your outdoor area is like any other area— empty space waiting for finishing touches that transform it an area of personal comfort. Every outdoor space is unique since outdoor living means different things to each of us. All sites require careful planning for enjoyable family activities.

Give this space the same thought and planning as you would for an interior room. Consider the following questions:

- Where is this space located in relation to the interior rooms?**
- How large is the space?**
- What activities are to take place in this area?**
- How many people will the space need to accommodate?**
- What furniture and accessories are needed in relation to the activities and number of people using the space?**
- What special things do you need to consider? (Near swimming pool, eliminate steps for accessibility, excessive sun, etc.)**

Activities may range from a patio party for a group to a quiet meditation area for one or two in a Japanese garden setting. Some families need an area for potting plants while others relate more to swimming, croquet or tetherball. Place furnishings in convenient locations and select colors and textures that blend well. Then add finishing touches with functional and decorative accessories.

Select accessories and ornaments that focus on the beauty of your landscaping. For instance, stone, wood, and metals are natural additions to any garden and will develop in character as they weather.

If you prefer not to add extras to your landscaping plan, choose functional decorations instead. For example, when replacing a sprinkler, select one in bronze that is shaped like a fish or a frog. Use earthenware or wooden

Ideas for Outdoor Accessories

Functional....

- lighting fixtures
- privacy screens
- wind vanes
- heating elements
- grills
- items for entertaining

Decorative....

- planters
- statues
- metal or wood garden angels
- decorative stepping stones
- sundials
- gazing balls
- birdbaths
- wind chimes
- fountains and waterfalls
- fairies and gnomes
- whimsy-flamingos and more

planters instead of plastic ones. A wrought-iron or wooden trellis serves double duty by adding dimension to a plain area while giving clematis or roses a place to climb.

When you add accessories, take time to study the over-all effects and consider whether the ornament fits the surroundings or simply adds clutter.

Outdoor Grills . . .

Often the number one purpose for building an outdoor space is to create an area for casual entertaining. The first accessory many people consider is a good barbecue or grill. The different kinds of outdoor grills available today would fill a catalogue. Prices range from under \$100 to well over \$1000 for portable models. If you want a permanent outdoor barbecue, such as a counter-height brick hearth, be prepared to spend a lot more.

They must follow the same code requirements as apply to house chimneys, and the top must extend at least two feet above the highest flammable point. The location of the cooking area is important. Position the grill so that smoke will not enter the house through open windows and doors. Also, locate the grill where it won't obstruct traffic flow from the deck or obstruct a traffic path through a patio area.

If you're using a movable barbecue, provide a fireproof base. Brick and stone are both good choices. Avoid using any flammable materials in the immediate area of any grill, portable or permanent. Trim back branches of nearby trees or shrubs to reduce the chance of a misdirected ember or spark causing a fire. Treat the cooking facilities with the same respect for safety as you do your kitchen. Make sure there is a clear area nearby for setting down hot pots and pans as they come off the grill and keep a fire extinguisher handy for emergencies.

Heating Elements . . .

Extend use of your patio by planning for cool evenings. Light a fire in either a permanent brick or stone or a freestanding ceramic fireplace. Or purchase a table top or freestanding 90-inch portable propane heater. Before purchasing, ask about warranties, recommended use and safety cautions.

Lighting . . .

Indoor conveniences make outdoor entertaining more comfortable. Lighting is important to open-air living areas, providing both safety and beauty after dark. The two types of electrical lines used for outdoor applications are normal 110V (volt) lines and low-voltage lines. If you want to extend your 110V household current to an outdoor space, the job is best left to a professional electrician. On the other hand, installing low-voltage lines is an easy do-it-yourself project.

Scent-sational Ideas!

- cut grass
- flower blossoms
- suntan lotion
- centerpiece using combinations of flowers, fruits and vegetables
- aromatic garden herbs
- citronella candles (vanilla is a relaxing scent)
- play relaxing music
- rub onion across the grill before lighting
- serve colorful freshly assortments of fruits and vegetables such as yellow and red peppers served with marinated green beans and ginger-butter carrots

A low-voltage system routes your 110V house current through a transformer, where it is reduced to 12V. This allows the current to be transported through smaller, thinner wires that do not have to be buried or run through a protected conduit or raceway. The lower voltage ensures safety if a wire is accidentally cut or a grounding problem occurs. Low-voltage lines can be controlled by switches and lights can be put on dimmers to create different moods. Low-voltage lines cannot feed electrical outlets, however, since their power isn't sufficient to operate electrical appliances. To service appliances, you must have a branch circuit run off of one of the existing house circuits or install a new 15-amp circuit. These must meet specific safety guidelines with the feed line being installed underground and the conducting wires protected by a Ground Fault Interrupter (GFI).

The GFI is a safety device that's either included as a part of a receptacle outlet or installed at the panel. It detects slight variations in current flow and protects from most forms of electrocution by preventing a current from flowing between an electrical appliance and an external ground. It does this by measuring the current that flows through each of the two power wires separately and comparing them. If there is any difference, the flow of electricity is shut off instantly. You need to also protect the outlets with weather-tight covers.



Planters . . .

Plants and flowers improve the look of any outdoor living space. Even if you have permanent planters as part of the overall design, you'll want to have smaller, portable planter boxes or pots to give flexibility in changing flower arrangements and moving them indoors for colder weather. You can easily move larger planters on casters or wheel barrel planters from one area to another.

Planter boxes that sit directly on a wooden deck should rest on plates. Otherwise water seepage will stain the wood and leave rings. If you're using small clay pots, use a small plant stand to keep them off the deck. Whiskey barrel planters are usually available at garden centers. They are inexpensive yet large enough for most plants.

Before you do any planting, check with a local nursery to find out what kind of potted plants are best for your area. They can also help you plan where to place your plants for best results and help you choose the right size for pots and planter boxes.

Many people enjoy topiary planting that is shaped to resemble geometric outlines or animals. Japanese influences are also seen in plantings and accessories of various kinds, including planters.

Other Accessories . . .

Bring style and character to your outdoor space by adding a few decorative yard ornaments, such as statuary, sundials, fountains, bird baths, bridges and reflecting pools or ponds. Each can create a focal point, drawing the eye to a special view or defining a specific area. Select well-designed accessories that match the scale and trend of the landscaped area. If the decoration is out of scale, it will appear "lost" in the surrounding space. Also look for a quality and finish that will stand up under harsh weather conditions. There are many types of accessories to choose from.

Water elements are a soothing delight. Waterfalls, reflecting pools and fountains come in a variety of shapes and styles, depending upon your taste, budget and the design of your house and

Helpful Hints...

If using terra cotta pots, select those that flair out at the top. Moist soil expands when frozen. Inward curving designs cause pressure as the soil freezes. When temperatures repeatedly rise and fall, the pot will often crack or chip.

To protect against damage, move terra cotta and pottery pots into a garage, storage shed, or other sheltered area during the cold weather months.

garden. Some recirculating fountains attach to either a wall or fence or locate it centrally as the focus of attention. Choices range from simple designs of stone or resin to more ornate models made from wrought iron or hand-painted tiles.

- **Wind chimes** are available in a numerous sizes and materials. Check before purchasing to be sure the tones are pleasing. Hang them from deck rails will pick up even small breezes.
- **Sundials** are reappearing. They can either be purchased or are a good do-it-yourself project.
- **Gazing balls**, mounted on stands, are made of glass, chrome or shiny stainless steel to reflect clear images. They're available in many colors and are easily cleaned. When buying, check for true, round shapes, clarity of image, and freedom from defects.
- **Statues** and similar accessories have traditionally come in stone, concrete and other long-lasting natural materials. Resin items are also readily available. Resin has a shorter life expectancy than the natural materials, but is a popular choice because it is less expensive.
- **Rusted metal** items are popular and take very little care. You'll find a variety of creations, including garden angels, animal shapes, flowers, butterflies and whirly-ma-jigs. Add a clear acrylic coating if you are concerned about preservation.
- **Whimsy**...Keep in mind that people's likes and dislikes. Select well-designed items and use with discretion. Add a touch of whimsy if you like, but don't overdo. Consider the placement of lawn decorations, too. A life-like deer or dog near the road may be confusing for drivers, but a fairy garden populated with small stone fairies or gnomes can be a delight.

Entertaining Tips for Outside Living

- Create a centerpiece that looks good enough to eat! Fill a bowl with edible blooms from pansies, rose petals, nasturtium or chrysanthemums. Surround the bowl with small pots of herbs, such as sage, basil, parsley or marjoram and have guests select a garnish for their plate.
- Use citronella candles to keep insects away from your deck or patio.
- Try this stunning effect when entertaining with a glass-topped patio table. Place a lace tablecloth on the table and then add a spotlight under it shining upwards. The table springs to life and glass serving dishes will appear to glow!
- Use large sheets of drawing paper as an informal tablecloth. Outline the place settings, then write guests' names on the menu on the covering.
- Place comfortable cushions on the deck and patio chairs. Coordinate fabric floral designs with blooms in your garden.
- Add twinkling holiday lights, lanterns, outdoor garden lighting and an assortment of candles for a festive, inviting touch if entertaining after dark. Floodlights shining into trees and shrubbery give an elegant, soft effect.
- Play environmental CDs and tapes that include a chorus of frogs, the chirping of crickets or a gurgling stream or waterfall. Place speakers in various locations that will surround your guests with nature's music. Favorite dance music is always a hit, too.

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Linda Adler, M.A.
Extension Specialist for Home Furnishings

Outdoor Living.Accessories.FS3.wpd
1.2002

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