

# A HOME'S OUTDOOR SPACE

By Beverly Smirnis **house savvy**

## DETERMINES ITS ENTERTAINMENT POTENTIAL AND VALUE

With the coronavirus quarantining people to their homes and dampening travel plans, the value of private outdoor living options has never been more significant as people yearn for spaces that improve wellness, reduce stress, and boost mood. Opportunities for relaxation, gardening, walking, enjoying nature, and gathering with family and friends are high on the priority lists of both new and existing home buyers.

Whether you're designing a rooftop terrace, balcony, courtyard, or spacious backyard area, carefully blending indoor and outdoor living space is the goal. Building products specifically made to stand up to the outdoor elements while matching the looks and quality of your indoor décor are plentiful.

**Literally extend living space to the outside** with retractable wall systems. Use motorized retractable screens to keep insects, rain, and wind out, and more easily keep temperatures consistent.

**Add fire and water.** Fireplaces and firepits become the central gathering spot in your outdoor spaces. The visual drama of a water feature can also be a focal point while adding soothing sound. And nothing is more dramatic than water and fire combined. Practically anything is possible; choice will depend on where these important elements are being placed and the aesthetics and proportion you're after.

**Explore higher-quality deck, fence, and stair railing products.** You'll find a wide choice of decking materials made to look just like your interior hardwoods or tile. The latest in composite or PVC decking products can mimic the look of natural hardwoods with non-repeating grain patterns while surpassing wood with UV-, slip- and splinter-resistance. Quality manmade boards are usually lighter and easier to handle, yet stronger, straighter, and more rigid (meaning no bounce or sagging between joists). Some are specifically designed to improve ventilation or heat dissipation. As far as railings for decks, patios, or fencing around pools are concerned, wire and glass are popular options for an unobstructed view.

**Build an outdoor kitchen that'll leave them talking.** Manufacturers of outdoor kitchen equipment are gearing up for a huge uptick in demand for

everything from grills, pizza ovens, and smokers to refrigerators, dishwashers, beverage centers, and more. Kitchen islands outfitted with sinks and providing plenty of prep space are as prized outside as they are inside.

**Add the finishing touches.** Paving and landscaping are essential to completing the desired atmosphere as is sound and light. Nowadays, the ability to automatically program scenes or change them from your phone is an expectation. Pools, putting greens made from synthetic turf, and outdoor TV viewing areas extend outdoor entertainment value. Products are continually introduced to make it easier and more affordable to add just about anything you want to your outdoor living room.

*The bottom line:* Particularly in climates like we enjoy in Texas, where we are fortunate to enjoy outdoor spaces for all but a few weeks of the year, investing in your outdoor spaces is a wise choice that can have significant payback. On the flip side, not presenting the outdoors as an oasis waiting to be enjoyed by the next owner may hurt you on the sale. Truly, an inspiring view that entices home occupants to the outside, and delivers beyond their expectations once they venture out, increases quality of life and home value.

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