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PRODUCT SHOWCASE: HOME INSPIRATION

Transform your backyard into a functional and stylish space



REDEFINE The great outdoors

by KATE DAVIDSON • photos MIKE CHAJECKI

Making the most of outdoor spaces is a focus for many homeowners, particularly here in Canada, where the outdoor season isn't quite as long as we'd like it to be. It makes sense then that we try to squeeze every drop out of those sweet but short-lived spring and summer months.

After a long winter, outdoor living is coming back into focus for many of my clients who want to elevate their backyards, patios and balconies into functional and stylish spaces that redefine the great outdoors.

Laying the groundwork

You may be "blue skying" your outdoor space at the moment or perhaps you have a clear vision for your alfresco wants and needs. Either way, working with a professional designer and landscape architect, among other experts, can help you make the most of your space and your budget.

Plans for a pool or water feature, built structures and even certain landscaping require proper prep to ensure the base is suitable for whatever will sit on top of it. Consider your local climate, topography, soil

type, orientation, trees, sunny versus shady areas, access, and who will be using the space – including pets.

There's lots to consider, but thankfully, there are plenty of professional resources to determine what you need.

Get in the zone

Let's get to the good part – your wish-list. Similar to interior design, exterior design should be guided by your lifestyle. Do you entertain often, what kind of parties do you host, and who's on the guest list? The size of the gathering will define the parameters of



each entertaining area. Depending on the size of your outdoor space, typical zones may include a sitting area, a dining area, a cooking/barbecue area, a bar, a pool-side lounging area and gardens.

Creating separation is important, while maintaining overall continuity. In the backyard space pictured here, each zone was defined with a unique intended purpose and function, with

dedicated furniture, accessories and lighting to fulfill that purpose and a distinct vibe that differentiates it from the other areas.

Some ways to divide and conquer include strategic lighting and landscaping; built structures, such as a cabana; and complementary toned and varying flooring, such as tile, concrete and wood.

With that said, a cohesive esthetic is the key to creating harmonious areas that flow.

Styles for miles

Let's continue with the concept of continuity. Outdoor living areas have evolved and are revealing themselves as extensions of our interiors. Not only are decks and patios elevated in terms of their own style, but the boundary between indoors and out is also becoming more blurred.

A kitchen or living room ushers residents and guests into an outdoor version of itself through a set of sliding glass doors, complete with an area rug underfoot, a chandelier overhead, a fireplace, luxurious seating, and comfort and style that will give its indoor counterparts a run for its money. So, take a cue from the indoors, and choose a palette of outdoor materials, colours and textiles that carry a similar vibe. Then, use

them to create layers to add softness and depth and create a mood.

Natural gas, propane, electricity or wood?

Good question! When it comes to heat sources for your cooking and entertaining areas, it's worth doing some research to ensure you're making the right investment for your outdoor application. Consider all the pros and cons – the plug-and-go convenience, safety and ease of electricity versus the efficiency and output of natural gas, versus the flexibility of propane. Of course, the smell and crackle of a wood-burning fireplace is hard to replicate.

Just as you would indoors, use furniture, accessories, landscaping and lighting to highlight your outdoor focal points. I often begin with laying out the functional zones planned, then introduce focal points, ensuring added elements such as seating and lighting, complement those focal points from a visual perspective.

Great outdoor setting

This outdoor season is shaping up to be an exciting one, with lots of innovative new materials and products hitting the market and promising to make your great outdoors the best yet.



Kate Davidson, is the founder and principal designer of Kate + Co Design. For more than a decade, the multidisciplinary interior design firm has been providing complete residential and commercial design services throughout North America. Kate + Co is known for creating luxurious livable interiors. kateandcocodeign.com @kateandcocodeign



Photo: Mike Chajeki

Outdoor *oasis*

by SARA DUCK

Transform your backyard into a serene sanctuary with a design that blends nature, comfort and style. From cosy seating areas to privacy fences and ambient lighting, elevate your outdoor living space and let the relaxation ensue all summer long



"Adding a pool of any size to your outdoor space is a luxury that is well worth the investment. A shallow entertainment pool is a great option for those who want to cool off in the summer months, yet if you are an avid swimmer, a lap pool deep enough for diving may be well used."

– Designer Kate Davidson,
Kate +Co Design Inc