

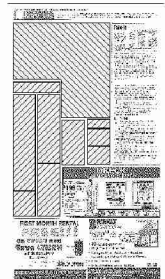
A Room with a VIEW



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Inside out: Cushion and fabric details that have come to be expected in family rooms are making their way outside. Embroidery, tufts and piping are finding new places to shine in the backyard.



Interior accents and fabrics shape the new family room. Part living space, part luxury resort — all your backyard.

By Dawn Klingensmith

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For years, the trend in outdoor living has been to integrate the interior with the exterior to get the best of both worlds. This means bringing comfy furniture and high-performance appliances outside, and developing materials and technologies to help them withstand the weather.

The recession may have dampened spending overall, but it drives the "inside-out" movement as people forgo vacations to make the most of their outdoor living space. Homeowners want to step into their backyards without leaving the comforts of home. That means bringing indoor practicalities like task lighting into the great outdoors. And then there are those who want to feel as though they're worlds away.

"The style in outdoor living this year can be summed up in two words: luxury resort," said Elaine Williamson, owner of her self-named Frisco, Texas-based design firm. Her clients want amenities like decked-out cabanas that give the impression that an umbrella drink is soon to come. "We're truly turning yards into places you'd visit on vacation."

Both groups, the nesters and escapers, are fueling a "design revolution" in outdoor furniture and furnishings, said Rob Pressman, principal of TGP Inc. Landscape Architecture, Encino, Calif. "Exteriors used to be more raw in the sense we didn't have all these sophisticated materials. Now, all the interior elements are available for the outdoors."

Manufacturers are offering outdoor furnishings that would look right at home in a living

room or even a four-star hotel suite, including deep, comfy sofas with silky upholstery, accent pillows with elegant piping, and fringed throws.

"Think tufted, rounded and luxurious, with not a bit of wrought iron," Williamson said. "Think damask. Nautical stripes and big tropical florals on vinyl are a thing of the past."

Companies like Patio Heaven and Kanna offer outdoor sectionals, sofas, loveseats and ottomans that seem as if they would be out of their element outside, due to the richness of their materials and their detailed construction, but they're designed to withstand full exposure to wind, rain and sun.

"You can leave them unprotected. You can spray them off with a hose," Williamson said. "Some manufacturers are so bold as to offer them in white."

White is "popping up everywhere," agreed Gina Wicker, creative and design director for Glen Raven, N.C.-based fabric design firm Glen Raven Inc., maker of Sunbrella outdoor and indoor fabrics. "It makes the perfect canvas for seasonal updates with pillows, throws and rugs."

This season, "Neutrals are transitioning to cooler hues like a gray-cast taupe rather than warmer tones, and charcoal gray rather than chocolate brown," Wicker added. "We're seeing cooler neutrals partnering with anything from fun yellow, orange and pink to calmer wheat, brass or vellum hues."

Whatever the purpose of an inside-out exterior, the same interior design principles should guide the selection and placement of furnishings.

Start by finding or creating a focal point, such as a cabana, fireplace or water feature, she

suggested. This visual anchor, along with landscape features and the home's architecture, will help determine the color palette, materials and lighting that will be used throughout the outdoor living space.

Balance, repetition, contrast and variety are important design principles to take into consideration. Contrast and texture can be introduced underfoot, as flooring has come a long way. "It's a lot richer — not just your brick patio," Pressman said. "You have woods, tiles, stones. You can use just about anything as long as it's slip-resistant."

Wood decking, fencing and furnishings can enliven and add dimension with deep, vibrant colors that go far beyond the basic browns, like Olympic Exterior Stains' Harvest Gold, Avocado and a lipstick-like shade called Rosewood.

When applying design principles to wide-open spaces, the areas where people tend to fall down are scale and proportion. Where intimacy is desired, a pergola "scales everything down to create the feeling of an outdoor room," said Jeff Hutton, author of *Inside Out: The Art and Craft of Home Landscaping* (Breakaway Books, 2007).

Finishing touches also have an indoor sensibility.

"I have seen more and more interest in outdoor sculpture and art used in the landscape," Hutton said.

Specially treated oil paintings resistant to sun, rain and snow are cropping up on fences and above outdoor sofas. CB2 offers versatile furnishings conveniently designed for outdoor and indoor use, including the Garcon Rolling Bar Cart that collapses for storage.

"People want flexibility," Pressman said. "Things used to be more defined, and spaces were zoned according to use, so you'd have your grill in one place like a little outdoor kitchen. But as families and kids grow, people like to be able to move things around."

Williamson also has noticed a preference for what she calls "free-range fires." She especially likes the portable line of chic fire vessels by Planika Fires that burn smokeless, nontoxic bio-fuels, safe for small or enclosed spaces.

With all the furnishings available for outside, it's im-

portant not to lose sight of two things: Plantings still make the best backyard decorations, and less is more, even outdoors.

"Each defined space should make one statement," Pressman said. "It shouldn't try to do too many things functionally or aesthetically."

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