

# OUTDOOR OASIS

A well-designed outdoor living area lets you enjoy your home year-round

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Photo: Danny Kildare



**1.** This luxury outdoor pavilion, with its distinctive cantilevered roofs and elevated poolside position, is something we can all aspire to have. The social hub of a resort-style landscape created by multiple award-winning designer Dean Herald of Rolling Stone Landscapes, it has a comfy all-weather lounge, a wood-burning heater and a modern kitchen complete with refrigerator, teppanyaki grill and sink.

your homework and go for something that will stand the test of time. And if you choose colours that complement the rest of your house, you'll already be halfway there.

Your outdoor living space is also going to be an extension of your home, so carrying those materials out into the garden makes a lot of sense. It's also your foreground, and often middle ground, view for the rest of the garden, so it makes sense to design it to enhance, not detract, from your views. You can use the design layout to frame a view of the garden or direct the eye to something really interesting.

Ground the entire design with planting. Screen planting to your boundary, texture and colour in from that and a few well-placed trees to frame or screen taller and distant views is a good recipe. If you don't have a green thumb, then stick to a few plant selections and repeat them in groupings throughout the garden to create a kind of flow in the planting design.

Shade should never be underestimated in your outdoor living space. It is the difference between using it often and using it only when the angle of the sun is just right. You have two paths to follow: one is to build a structure over you; the other is to use trees to create a welcoming canopy of shade. A mixture of both is quite common and there are pros and cons to both approaches.

The main aim, however, is to have good ventilation, protection from the sun and, in the case of a built structure, to make sure it doesn't look like an unfortunate add-on to your home.

Done successfully, the link between indoors and out should be seamless. Great flow, great layout and great materials can be combined to make your outdoor living space another living room for your home — and the one you will probably use the most.

Enhance your own oasis with some soft furnishings, like cushions, throw rugs and candles in colours and tones from the adjoining room. Styling your outdoor living space is what sets it apart from the rest; the right combination of homewares, furniture and accessories brings it to life. All you need to do is sit back, relax and enjoy entertaining in the great outdoors.

• Dean Boone is a landscape designer and a Sydney presenter for the Channel 9 program, *The Garden Gurus*. ■

**D**esigning an outdoor living space is a very individual experience; everyone has certain needs to fulfil and wants to be included. One thing, however, is consistent: all Australians love entertaining outside. We have a wonderful climate that allows us to spend most of the year out in our gardens, enjoying clear, blue-skyed sunny days.

Outdoor living has always been a focus in Australia but now we are taking it to new levels. No longer are we satisfied with a hammock between two trees. We want fully

equipped outdoor kitchens. And we want to recline in decadent day beds and watch our favourite show on a flat-screen television by the pool — and please don't forget the surround sound!

Now I'm sure that living in your own resort is desirable, but it is not achievable for everyone. Instead, you can take elements of any great garden design and use it for inspiration in your own outdoor entertaining space. A simple key for any design layout is flow. A good design must interconnect and be

user-friendly. Form and function must come together to create something that is effortless to live in and a pleasure to enjoy. After all, it is supposed to be your own little oasis in the world, whatever size it is. So how do you achieve this? Let me show you how.

First you need to understand how you really want to use your outdoor living space. Most of us want to be able enjoy our outdoor entertaining space comfortably on our own. At the same time, we want to be able to accommodate 40 people — in the same

area — when the family gets together. So your outdoor living area needs to be able to accommodate both and be flexible enough in its layout that it looks great either way.

The other major consideration is safety. We all want peace of mind and the ability to look out over the garden or pool and know our kids aren't about to do something that results in a trip to the hospital. So how you take in your views and what you can see from your outdoor living space is of vital importance.

Essentially, a great design looks good

but is also very functional. It doesn't mean it isn't fun or colourful or exciting, just that the core of the design makes good sense. The materials you select for your outdoor entertaining or living space are a great example of that. Choose the right materials and you won't need to worry about guests slipping or stains from barbecue spills — and it will all harmonise with your home.

Choose the wrong materials and everything looks disjointed; you'll be cursing the day you decided to do anything outside. So do