

Outdoor Living: Bring A Little Indoor Comfort Outside!

Outdoor living is booming, and no wonder. Whether you have a deck, a porch, a sunroom, a backyard, balcony or patio, creating an outdoor living area increases your space and lets you enjoy nature. It can be as easy as setting up a gazebo or screen tent and adding outdoor furniture.

The deck or patio isn't just for the grill anymore! It is actually an outdoor room.

Patio furniture continues to be the cornerstone of all outdoor living items. Many outdoor living furniture sets now resemble an indoor living room with an umbrella. It is not uncommon to see a cushioned loveseat, two cushioned armchairs and coffee table. Chaise lounges may not be common inside, but outside, they add comfortable and fashionable seating. Optional coordinating add-ons might include an accent table, serving cart, outdoor rug, wooden gazebo, and outdoor lamps.

Decorating an outdoor living space shouldn't cost a fortune. In order to shop wisely, consider the amount of time you'll spend outside, as well as your comfort level. You will want to create an outdoor area that compliments your lifestyle and tastes and that you'll be proud to show off to friends. Don't forget: you need to please you and your family first, once you do that, your guests will be pleased as well.

Where to begin?

If you think your needs through, you can easily narrow down the choices and focus on finding just the right outdoor furniture pieces for you and your lifestyle. Begin by asking a few questions:

- How large is the outdoor space?
- Do you use your outdoor area primarily for personal/close family relaxation, or large-group entertainment?
- Does the outdoor area receive a lot of sun?
- How often do you use your outdoor area?
- Do you frequently dine outdoors?
- Do you ever use the area in the evening or at night?
- Is the area sheltered, or is it completely open to the elements?
- What pieces of outdoor furniture do you have in mind? Do you want chairs only, or a dining set, or lounge chairs? Do you want a bar or cocktail arrangement?
- How formal or casual do you want your area to be?
- Do you plan to move or rearrange furniture often?

Answers to these questions will help you to identify the types of material(s) your new outdoor living furniture should be made from, how many pieces of furniture you

need, and what types of accessories would enhance the space. You want to look for comfortable, stylish, and durable outdoor furniture.

For example, if you plan to move chairs and other pieces often, you may decide to choose lightweight materials like recycled plastic and aluminum. If you have young children, you may look for outdoor furniture materials that are durable and easily cleaned easily. As you begin to identify materials like teak wood, outdoor or synthetic wicker, recycled plastic, aluminum or wrought iron, you can determine how the amount of care needed to maintain your new outdoor living furniture.

If you use the area primarily for casual breakfasts with your family, a bistro-style outdoor furniture set may be more appropriate than a large, elaborate dining set. If you want to relax outdoors, consider recliners and deep-cushioned seating with ottomans. Cushions should be made with fade- and weather-resistant fabrics, and allow for easy cleaning.

If your area is open and receives a lot of sun, consider adding a patio umbrella or awning. If space allows, you might even add a portable gazebo for welcomed shade. Nighttime use may call for lighting with torches, electric- or solar-powered lamps. If your patio floor is a drab concrete slab, dress it up or disguise it with an outdoor area rug. Rugs made today are easily cleaned with a hose and dry quickly.

Be sure to consider the climate where you live. If you live where winters are harsh, will your outdoor furniture be able to remain in the elements year-round, or will you have to store your furniture during winter? Do you have the required storage space? Perhaps investing in outdoor furniture covers can help maintain your outdoor furniture at its best.

Some other ideas for adding charm and beauty to your deck or patio decor is by adding lovely wind chimes, decorative birdhouses, new or antique watering cans. Don't forget to add color throughout your patio area with plants potted in containers that match your theme or style.

Once you define your outdoor living furniture needs and desires, you can begin to compare against the wide variety of offerings and price points. Hopefully these tips will help you to make the best furniture choice for you and your lifestyle. Happy summer!