

special touches SPECIAL TOUCHES

amenities that make the space



When you have an idea of what spaces to incorporate in your outdoor living design, it's time to have a little fun. The number of amenities available for outdoor living is exciting but can also be quite daunting. When choosing what to include in your outdoor décor, keep in mind that less is often more. A few well-placed items will create a special atmosphere that is enjoyed by many. Too many attractions can turn a lovely fresh air space into a gaudy showroom.

Part of keeping outdoor living spaces functional is keeping them comfortable. Outdoor fans and fireplaces add decorative touches with practical purposes. Outdoor fans are the same as indoor fans – they circulate the air, provide a light breeze, and help shoo away disruptive bugs that permeate the outdoors. Whether over the dining or sitting areas, outdoor fans are rated for damp or wet use, meaning they can be placed in partially uncovered situations.

Outdoor fireplaces come in numerous shapes and sizes, the perfect accessory for any space. Two-sided fireplaces can be placed in the home's exterior wall and enjoyed both inside and out. Chimineas are free-standing pot-bellied fireplaces, perfect for smaller patios and situations that may require mobility. Fire pits can be permanent or portable and radiate warmth to all sides. These are the most popular choice for many of today's homes. Lastly, is the built-in outdoor fireplace. These are permanent masterpieces of masonry, fully constructed like indoor fireplaces with surrounds and mantles. Stunning and functional, built-in fireplaces can be prohibitively expensive and do require regular maintenance.



It is easy to see these features are much more than average outdoor ornaments. Jim Buckley of Buckley Rumford Company (www.rumford.com) notes, "Radiant heating Rumford fireplaces that heat people instead of the air are great for extending the hour and the season of an outdoor space." From a warm summer night to a chilly fall evening, outdoor fans and fireplaces keep you and guests enjoying the outdoors far longer than expected.

fans and fireplaces





For some homeowners, it cannot be paradise without a little water in the picture. This could mean a fountain, a pool, or a natural pond. Outdoor showers are also growing in popularity.

Pools that are classically shaped (rectangular) or infinity (best with view properties), can all fit wonderfully into most outdoor living plans. If installing a pool, it will be necessary to check local codes and regulations, plan for maintenance, and consider appropriate lighting and fencing with a lockable entrance. These measures ensure pool safety while adding to the richness of outdoor living areas.

Fountains and Ponds are often incorporated as decorative elements that serve no other function. The designs are numerous and can fit into any outdoor scheme. If these options are more practical than pool placement, contact a local landscaper to discuss incorporation into your outdoor living design.

amenities that make the space **water fixtures**





Photo courtesy of Sunbrella® Fabrics

Today's *patio furniture* is available in numerous materials and styles that add something extra to any decorative theme. Some furniture pieces, for example stone benches, can be built into various tiers of the patio, while others like teak and wicker are sturdy but can be moved and relocated as necessary. The most important factor of patio furniture is weatherproofing. Fabric and padding for cushions should be made to resist mildew and fading. While many companies are starting to produce beautiful resistant fabrics that are no longer rough and uncomfortable, there are companies that solely specialize in decorative, luxurious fabrics designed for the outdoors, like Sunbrella® Fabrics. "Sunbrella delivers a complete package of color, design, durability, fade resistance and ease of cleaning," explains Harry Gobble, Director of Marketing for Glen Raven Custom Fabrics, the maker of Sunbrella Fabrics. Do note, no matter the resistance to mildew and fading, it is recommended that outdoor furniture be stored when not in regular use or when weather is inclement.

fabrics and furniture



After observing just a few of all the outdoor living options, it is critical to remember to work with what is most practical for your lifestyle. Take the time now to plan ahead, designating space and planning for future utilities. Keep in mind what amenities may be desired in the future. By not overextending yourself at the outset, outdoor living dreams can become a pleasant reality.