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Take it Outside

Outdoor rooms extend the season, your living space and your peace of mind.

BY TERRY SCHUSTER

When the pandemic hit and we spent even more time at home working and relaxing, the desire to improve our outdoor spaces skyrocketed.

That trend shows no sign of slowing in 2022. Decks and patios have effectively become an extension of our indoor living rooms: Fire pits and brick sitting walls add a cozy permanence to outdoor spaces, while three-season porches or temporary enclosures bring your living room and office outside.

“We’re seeing a continuation of outdoor living that’s going from pergolas to pavilions with full roofs,” says David Guthery, sales manager and landscape designer for Landcrafters Landscaping. “Pavilions are solid, permanent structures that extend the season from April through October.”

Pavilions are anchored to the ground with a frost-free foundation and often have heaters installed in the eaves, he notes. “They’re as strong, or even stronger, than a garage,” Guthery says.

For those who prefer a patio with full sunlight, today’s designs include various sizes, shapes and colors of brick and stone pavers. “Just like your

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kitchen floor design now has an inlay [for different colors and textures], the movement outdoors is to have that same contrasting experience,” Guthery says.

“Reimagining properties to take advantage of all aspects of the site continues to be a growing trend,” says Richard Sherer, CEO/founder of Deep River Partners. “Creating outdoor rooms with decks, terraces, covered porches and even pavilion-style outbuildings allows for year-round entertainment. We are designing fire features, large opening glass walls, beverage and grilling terraces, outdoor kitchens, and lounge areas into these spaces.” **MKE**

Idea Center

Staring at your yard or snow-covered deck and considering ways to maximize your time outdoors to start earlier and stay later? Here are a few thoughts and trends to extend time spent enjoying the season.

Fire And Heat

- **Fire pits:** Corrugated metal ring or stone-surround fire pits are a low cost, DIY way to crank up the heat in cool weather.
- **Freestanding fire tables** add a classy yet affordable look to patios.
- **Stone fireplaces** add a permanent focal point to the outdoor living space.
- **Outdoor kitchens** are a popular trend, including outdoor appliances such as pizza ovens, deep fryers, smokers and grills.
- **Propane or electric heaters** help to keep guests cozy.

Structures

- **Gazebos** (DIY kits or installed) are a backyard centerpiece that can be accented with softscape plants.
- **Pergolas** add a stunning architectural addition and can be installed with sliding louvered panels to protect from the elements.
- **Temporary or permanent three-season porches** with adjustable walls allow for changes in weather.
- **Pavilions** provide a more permanent outdoor living space.
- **Sitting walls and benches** (DIY or installed) enclose a patio area for a more private, intimate feel.
- **Deck saunas** offer an alternative method to stay warm and provide relief from inflammation and muscle soreness.



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Water Additions

- **Hot tubs** are a less-expensive pool alternative. Turn the temperature down, and the kids will enjoy hours of fun in the summer. Turn up the heat in the winter for a soothing al fresco feel.
- **Outdoor water fountains** add simple beauty and sound to your yard. Many free-standing, DIY sets offer energy-saving water conservation.
- **Rain barrels:** Did you know that one inch of rain falling on a 1,000 square-foot roof harvests up to 600 gallons of rainwater? Learn how to paint your own rain barrel too, to add beauty to your landscape at milwaukeekeeper.org/2021-diy-barrels.

Patio extensions

- **DIY pavers or decorative bricks** (pathway or as deck/patio extensions) are ideal for adding solid space for walkways or as a foundation for grills or other patio gear.
- **Gravel paths** are both elegant and versatile. They blend beautifully with your softscape plants, and make a great border. Use pea gravel or slate chips or stone pavers for a more defined look.
- **Decks:** There are several alternatives to wood, such as composite, plastic or even aluminum.

Pet-Friendly Yards

A 2021 survey by the National Association of Realtors found that 43 percent of people would be willing to move to better accommodate their pets. Most are looking for a larger outdoor space for relaxation and exercise. Yet how do you create a pet-friendly landscape design?

- Installing an electric fence is aesthetically pleasing and not harmful to your dog.
- If a fence is not for you, consider a designated hardscape and small grassy area to reduce urine spots.
- To attract your pet to this area, keep a fresh water source nearby.
- Landscape with non-toxic plants and flowers such as dill, marigolds, sunflowers, rosemary, fennel and snapdragons. **MKE**