

Design a dream outdoor entertaining space

Upon the arrival of warm weather, many individuals prefer to spend their free time outside, relishing the fresh air and sunshine and evenings spent under the stars.

But cracked patios and make-shift chairs and tables may not establish the desired ambiance. An outdoor entertaining area that offers the same amenities found inside a home can make outdoor retreats both comfortable and functional. Creative planning can help homeowners design dream areas perfect for hosting friends or family.



ESTABLISH GOALS

As with any project, the first step when coordinating outdoor living areas is to determine what you hope to achieve with the space. Will it be a location for lounging? Will people be cooking meals outside? Is the pool the central focus of the yard? Answering these questions and more can help homeowners decide

how to design their entertaining spaces. Remember, however, that goals may evolve as landscape designers and even architects make their own suggestions for the space or present limitations.

EVALUATE THE SPACE

Look at the lot and decide what will go where, such as where to place the party space, where to create a quiet hideaway and where to locate a poolhouse or outdoor shower.

A large, flat yard can be divided into a series of patios that serve different purposes. Yards that are built on a hill or a slope can still be utilized with creative design elements, such as multi-tiered decking. By working with qualified designers, homeowners can bring their ideas to life.

EASY FOOD AND DRINK ACCESS

Traipsing in and out of the house for refreshments can become tiresome when entertaining outside. In such situations, people also can track dirt inside of the home or leave a trail of pool water in their wake. Outdoor kitchens allow easy access to food and drink that makes outdoor entertaining much easier. The experts at Angie's List suggest outdoor kitchens be built close to the house to make it easier to run electricity and plumbing to the outdoor kitchen.

Outdoor kitchens should include a sink, small refrigerator, built-in grill, and bar area.

CREATURE COMFORTS

Homeowners should think about the things that make the inside of their homes so comfortable and then replicate that outside. Sofas and loveseats covered in fabric suited for outdoors and plenty of pillows can make for great lounging. Lighting that can be adjusted for day or night, or even to set the mood, is another consideration. Shade structures, like a trellis or retractable awning, will keep the area comfortable and can also define outdoor "rooms" and establish privacy.

FIRE IT UP

Many homeowners enjoy having fire elements in their yards. Lanterns and candles may create a romantic feel, but a fire pit or outdoor fireplace may help extend use of the outdoor entertaining area beyond summer.

Entertaining outdoors is made that much more enticing with a dream outdoor living space full of amenities.

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