



Patios, decks, outdoor kitchens, special features—these can transform your outdoor area into a year-round, multifunctional living space that's perfect for dining and entertaining. Even a small space can transform into an appealing outdoor retreat. Why stay cooped up inside? Extend the livable portion of your home by creating an outdoor living space. ?Add a Deck – The most common way to enhance your outdoor space is to add a deck. A deck increases the usability of your space, particularly if you have a sloped yard, bare patches, or uneven areas to hide. Decks provide a flat, finished entertainment space. Screened porches, gazebos, grill stations, planter boxes, built-in benches, and dining nooks can take your deck to the next level. Depending on

the building material you use, you can achieve almost any look.

Wood is still a viable decking material. Pressure-treated lumber is easy to work with and can be refinished for years. Exotic hardwoods like redwood or cedar are beautiful and naturally resistant to insects and decay. Quality composite materials are a low-maintenance alternative to wood; these generally resist fading, cracking, and rotting. A newer alternative is aluminum. Aluminum systems create a gapless deck surface that is completely waterproof. Aluminum decking is powder-coated with a nonslip surface that eliminates the need for painting and staining. Aluminum stays cooler to the touch than some other deck surfaces.

Custom Patios – Patios are another outdoor favorite. This is a great solution when a house is constructed on a concrete slab and is too close to the ground for a deck. Constructed of concrete or brick pavers, a patio functions much the same as a deck. But gone are the days of the dull gray concrete slab. Stencils, stamping tools, custom designs and textures, stains, and colorants can give a concrete slab the look of flagstone or tile. If you prefer brick pavers, these can be mixed and matched by color or style to create beautiful patterns or a one-of-a-kind work of art.

Build an Outdoor Kitchen – Outdoor kitchens have become surprisingly popular. An outdoor kitchen can be as simple as a patio with a gas grill station or as elaborate as a full meal-preparation center complete with built-in gas-burner stoves, ovens, refrigerators, and sinks. Covered dining areas provide all-weather enjoyment for your guests and family.

Add a special feature – Other features make your space uniquely suited to your taste and lifestyle. A fire pit or built-in outdoor fireplace extends the use of your outdoor living area well into winter, providing warmth and a focus for cold-weather gatherings. Architectural features such as pergolas or trellises and carefully selected plantings create secluded areas for meditation. A water feature, such as a pond or fountain, can provide a beautiful focal point. Outdoor lighting can accent special features and provide security.

Whether you have acres or just a few square feet of space, consult an exterior designer for great ideas on making the most of your outdoor space.

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