

# The Charlotte Observer

## The great (room) outdoors

Be true to your home,  
and design with a consistent eye

BY ELAINE MARKOUTSAS

Universal UClick

**W**hen it comes to furnishing a home, context is everything. That goes for the outdoors, as well.

Although some disparate decorating styles may coexist, there can't be a total disconnect. Which is why outdoor spaces are being designed as a key part to the overall scheme.

At least one catalyst is the National Association of Home Builders' Best in America Living Awards, which last year gave top honors to a townhouse in Plymouth, Mass. The home wrapped around a courtyard with an outdoor fireplace.

Heather McCune, former editor of Professional Builder magazine and now marketing director for a Newport Beach, Calif., architectural firm, said the judges regarded the recognition as a "sea change in design."

For award-winning designer Richard Frinier, it's simply an evolution.

"For me, the outdoor room was never really a trend; rather, it is a lifestyle," Frinier said. "People are returning to the pleasure of entertaining at home." The most sophisticated outdoor spaces now include areas for entertaining, cooking and lounging, with water and fireplace features. Stylish decorating preferred.

At the very least, there must be some consistency, if not compatibility, in scale, palette and finishes.

John Gidding, host of HGTV's "Curb Appeal," knows a thing or two about that, and his advice is simple.

"One important thing about (house) facades is to never be trend-based," Gidding said, referring not just to a front exterior, but to side and back as well. "Be true to the architecture."

### **Furniture and accessory choices abound**

The latest designs from outdoor furniture and accessories manufacturers feature a wide range of decorative styles,

shapes and materials. Wood choices abound, from the ubiquitous teak to rich mahogany, in finishes that include weathered taupes and grays (tones also are emerging in fabrics) like those that fit Restoration Hardware's Belgian modern interior looks.

Weaves in resin or synthetic wicker lookalikes continue to

SEE OUTDOORS, 3H

push the envelope, with herringbone, sweaterlike and open meshes that add intrigue to shape. Metals run the gamut from sleek and shiny or matte stainless steel to oxidized looks and flamboyant brights in powder-coated enamels.

"The addition of accessories such as pillows or throws is an easy way to add a punch of color," said Gina Wicker, creative director for Sunbrella fabrics.

Area rugs also add color and pattern, if you choose, as they also define "rooms." Pottery Barn this spring has outdoor "kilims" handloomed in typical colors, in stripes and vibrant diamonds, woven in polyester yarns.

Consumers want no-fuss features, so rugs designed to withstand sun, dirt, stains and mildew are now go-to options indoors, especially in high-traffic areas and even in formal dining rooms.

### Coloring the outside

Some tend to be a bit more playful with color outdoors, while others stick to neutral comfort zones. But when color is monochromatic, an all-blue, green or plum palette that is fairly quiet, the hues almost act as neutrals without a jarring neon orange or lime green.

That said, a jolt of color can be fun and even whimsical, as in a baroque-style table in acid yellow whose cabriole legs and elaborate carving – in resin! – are an unexpected counterpoint to a straight-lined gray sofa at Horchow.

Try, as some do with interiors, teaming a set of colorful chairs around a neutral table. Gloster Furniture demonstrates such with its Asta collection. The sling seats on the chairs are interchangeable to suit your mood.

Consider mixing wovens with wood or metal to relieve what could be monotonous all-matching suites. From wicker lookalikes in resin or other synthetic fabrics some in sophisticated patterns such as herringbone, to lacey open weaves, this category lends texture and even subtle color.

### Going sectional

One outdoor trend that's clearly here to stay is modular seating. Just as it has become a popular go-to option indoors – particularly in family rooms, where extending seating and offering stretch-out options like chaises is the rule – it makes perfect sense.

With such a warm and early spring, no doubt that many already have gotten a jump on sprucing up their outdoor spaces.

### Source book

**ALAXI SUNBRELLA FOR SILVER**

**STATE FABRICS:** [alaxifabrics.com](http://alaxifabrics.com)

**BEACON HILL:** [beaconhilldesign.com](http://beaconhilldesign.com)

**BROWN JORDAN:** [brownjordan.com](http://brownjordan.com)

**ELAINE SMITH:** [elainessmith.com](http://elainessmith.com)

**GLOSTER:** [gloster.com](http://gloster.com)

**HORCHOW:** [horchow.com](http://horchow.com)

**JANUS ET CIE:** [janusetcie.com](http://janusetcie.com)

**LEE INDUSTRIES:** [leeindustries.com](http://leeindustries.com)

**LIORA MANNE:** [lioramanne.com](http://lioramanne.com)

**PERENNIALS FABRICS:**

[perennialsfabrics.com](http://perennialsfabrics.com)

**POTTERY BARN:** [potterybarn.com](http://potterybarn.com)

**RESTORATION HARDWARE:** [restorationhardware.com](http://restorationhardware.com)

**SEASONAL LIVING:**

[seasonalliving.com](http://seasonalliving.com)

**SUMMER CLASSICS INC.:**

[summerclassics.com](http://summerclassics.com)

**SUNBRELLA:** Glen Raven Custom Fabrics LLC, [sunbrella.com](http://sunbrella.com)





COURTESY OF STEVE EXUM

▲ A palette of orange, brick, golden yellow and pale green happily coexists in the outside space.

▶ The ikat, geometric and ethnic-inspired fabrics go to work outside in performance fabric.



COURTESY OF PERENNIALS