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GOOD TIME
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Page 6

PREMIER'S SPOTLIGHT ON

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS



BRINGING THE INSIDE OUT

It is easy to understand that the design of a home's landscape and the selection of the materials, plants, and lighting for this area are all done with a common goal in mind, which is to accentuate the design of the home as well as the site plan. A great landscape architect often uses landscaping to bring out the hidden character of the a house or coverup an unfavorable corner, both making the home more visually appealing and welcoming. However, as with any decade or generation, there are new trends that continually influence the design of the landscape, selection of materials, and functionality of the space.

Bringing the outdoors in is something most homeowners are familiar with. Buyers look for bright, sunny homes with expansive windows that allow for natural light to flood in during the day. Most homeowners also accentuate their indoor living space with elements that are more commonly found in nature. Water, stone, wood, plants, and fire are just a few of the elements used to add an outdoor feel within the four walls of their home.

But what about bringing the indoors out? As more and more homeowners are looking to have their backyard designed as an expansion of an indoor room, this space that was once designed mostly for summer outdoor activities is now being transformed into an outdoor entertaining area, recreational area, or kitchen and dining area. Whether it is the living room, kitchen, or master bedroom that is being expanded into this area,

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"CREATING AN OUTDOOR LIVING SPACE IS PROBABLY THE MOST POPULAR OF THE RECENT TRENDS IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE."

this addition is providing a new level of style, comfort, and design.

"Creating an outdoor living space is probably the most popular of the recent trends in landscape architecture," according to David McCullough, Vice President of Chapter Visibility and Public Relations for the San Diego Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA).

With regards to the outdoor kitchenettes, McCullough says, "I've seen everything from hot dog or pizza ovens, barbeque counters with every amenity imaginable, from rotisserie cookers, to smokers, and any other type of kitchen accessory you can think of, as well as outdoor fireplaces." McCullough is also principal architect at McCullough Landscape Architects, Inc. in San Diego. Outdoor barbeques have been expanded to full service cooking/dining areas. Items such as refrigerators, storage cupboards and cabinets, warming drawers, and long counters with stools for entertaining are just some of the amenities that have been added.

Multiple patio areas are also quite common in the design of the backyard these days, according to Landscape Architect Nick Martin. "These multiple patio areas can all have different furniture set-ups or be on different elevation levels with different vantage points," says Martin. "The important thing to remember that it needs to be exciting and it needs to give people lots of choices of where to congregate."



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McCullough also says that the elements of fire and water added to the landscape make for a very mystical, warm, inviting atmosphere. The combination of the flickering light that the flame of the fire creates and the color and light reflection in the water is almost magical.

Martin agrees with the dramatic effect the combination of fire and water have when put next to each other. "It creates drama and excitement, especially at night," says Martin.

Having discovered that there is something about water that people gravitate toward, Martin's initial design step is to determine whether or not there will be a water feature present. "Whether it is the most common water feature which is a pool, or a spa, waterfall, or fountain, that feature becomes the anchor of the design and the focal point of the project."

Martin, who owns Nick Martin Landscape Architecture, Inc. in Escondido, takes the design concept cues from the owners themselves. "Homeowners need to figure out their own special design. They need to look at their personal lifestyle, taste in aesthetics, and budget before deciding on the final project," urges Martin. Beyond that, it is important that the outdoor living space relates to the overall architecture of the home, the interior floor plan, and follows how the residents move around their home.

There are also new materials that are being incorporated into backyard designs. Hardwood decking is very popular right now, says McCullough.

Ipe decking, which has a nice, rich, finished look is a popular choice for decks. Unlike its deck material predecessors, redwood and cedar, ipe hardwood is much denser of a wood. The deck lasts longer and because of the density, doesn't splinter as easily. Ipe hardwood is very comfortable to walk on and it also does not require as much maintenance as other deck woods.

Artificial stones and veneers are very popular and continue to look more and more real for homeowners who want an interesting, earthy element to their space. The veneers and artificial stone come in a variety of styles and colors which help homeowners keep a unique look to their yard.

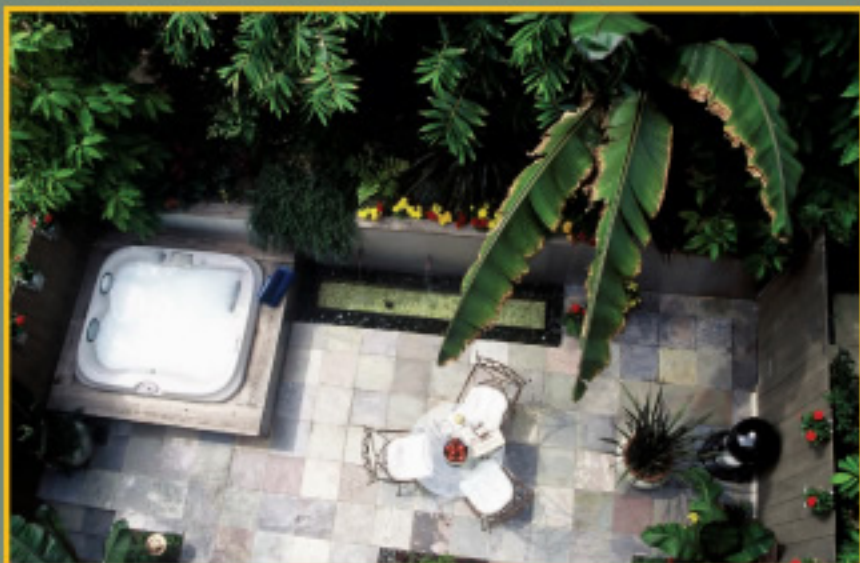
According to Martin, outdoor lighting is a must in order to extend the hours this area can be used. "You can light up anything these days, steps, pathways, overhead canopies, trees, barbeque counter spaces, just to name a few. Tiki torches and fire pits help light up the area too."

The backdrop for some of these outdoor living areas can be breathtaking and unparalleled. By taking advantage of the home's ocean, golf course, city lights, or mountain and valley views, it only adds to the overall experience of bringing the indoors out.

"The sky is the limit when designing an outdoor living area," says Martin. The Tutley Project in the hills of Ramona, which is his most memorable, involved adding a 60-foot water slide built into a steep hillside. "It looked absolutely amazing," says Martin. "The pool was a level below the home. Rocks and boulders were placed on the hillside around the slide and there was a cave underneath a portion of the slide that looked like something out of Pirates of the Caribbean."

McCullough often offers a few pieces of advice when approached by clients who are interested in having an outdoor living space designed. "One thing I tell them is to create a space that is transitional," he says. "You should be able to move between the inside room and the outside area without really noticing." A great way to achieve this fluidity between the two spaces is to use some of the same materials both inside and out. Another way is to keep the threshold as close as possible between the inside room and the patio area, though zoning laws typically make this trick of the trade a bit more challenging.

"Think comfort. Use a design and even fabrics that radiate comfort and look and feel very warm and inviting to your guests," McCullough adds. He typically encourages owners to make their outdoor space as usable as the indoor space, "especially in the climate we have here in Southern California and the price we pay to live here. Make the most of it."



Text by Cheryl Binner. Photos courtesy of David McCullough Landscape Inc. & Nick Martin Landscape Architecture Inc.