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OUTDOOR LIVING FOR ALL SEASONS

Don't let the weather stop you from
enjoying your space all year round

Words Carrol Baker

Special feature outdoor living

Out From The Blue. Photography by Patrick
Redmond, oftb.com.au



Annie Sloan,
anniesloan.com



Image courtesy of Bayon Gardens.
Photography by Tim Turner,
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Garden Trading,
gardentrading.co.uk

It's no secret most Aussies love outdoor living. Unfortunately, chilly winter evenings, rainy weather and sizzling summer days can send even the most ardent outdoor enthusiasts scurrying indoors. But that doesn't have to be the case. No matter what the weather, it's possible to create a beautiful, liveable outdoor haven in your own backyard that you can enjoy all year round.

FLUID DESIGN

The key to creating any liveable outdoor space is to find the balance between comfort and functionality. Claire Dowling from Sunshine Coast Interior Design says most importantly it should be inviting. "It needs to be beckoning and relaxing — a few throws, large generous chairs, and side tables for drinks will always create a welcoming space."

Claire says the positioning of furniture also adds comfort. "For example, a dry bar with chairs and a high table can be moved around an outdoor space to catch the sun or avoid the wind in the changing seasons."

Keeping the design versatile is important to create a cosy winter nook, a cool summer retreat, or a place to enjoy lazy lunches during spring when the garden is in bloom. By keeping key elements in place and then swapping things out, and changing the look and personality of your outdoor space, it can take you from season to season in style.

Designer Lauren Chan from K2LD Architects says when designing an area for all seasons, think about what you'll be using the space for. "Do you want the space primarily for dining, lounging, relaxing, or all of the above? This will impact on both the location and orientation of the external space, and also the outdoor shelter requirements," she says. "Figuring out your brief will establish where you want and need flexibility in all elements, and will help guide you in the right choices for furniture and materials."

When designing outdoor spaces, Lauren says orientation is key. "Knowing what parts of the outdoor space are going to be in sun and which in shade, and for what period of the day, is always step one," she says. "In the southern hemisphere, the optimum direction is usually to face the main outdoor space to the north in order to gain the most amount of sunlight. This influences how you might choose to use the space, the setting, plant selection and shading."

Everyone loves creature comforts such as soft throws and plush pillows, so taking these outdoors will also extend the amount of time you can enjoy outside the home. Adding some metal art or screening can also create more intimate spaces and a feeling of warmth. During the summer months, adding

cooler elements, lighter textures and colours, access to cool drinks and outdoor cooking all help to create a festive summer ambience.

The use of colours, materials and textures is a great way to help transition an outdoor space from season to season. Claire says during winter, the art of layering comes to the fore. She suggests starting with a block of colour in dark earthy tones — mustard, sand, plum — then layering with other patterns. "For example, place a chunky mustard-coloured throw over wicker furniture, then add stripes or florals in cushions with other colours, including mustard, so it flows. My clients are still loving pops of pinks too. In summer, blues and whites are popular as they are what we embrace to feel cool and relaxed."

In the cooler months look for soft, cosy, tactile fabrics like velvet, faux fur, wool and sheepskin that invite you to snuggle up. A cosy rug underfoot can also winterise a space. If you don't have a hard roof structure, draping fabrics can add a sense of warmth and enclose a space in winter.

In summer opt for lighter, softer textiles; sheer curtains over a daybed, cool cottons and bright patterns.

Choosing furniture that is fit for purpose is also key to creating an outdoor space for all seasons. Opt for materials like powder-coated aluminium, wood and wicker — these are manufactured to withstand the elements.

Lauren says for external furniture, Crypton fabric is a good idea. "It's highly durable and resistant to UV, stains, water, pet saliva and mildew. Most on the market are also machine washable and bleach cleanable if required," she says.



Out From The Blue.
Photography by Patrick Redmond, oftb.com.au

Keeping the design versatile is important to create a cosy winter nook, a cool summer retreat, or a place to enjoy lazy lunches during spring when the garden is in bloom



Boral, boral.com.au

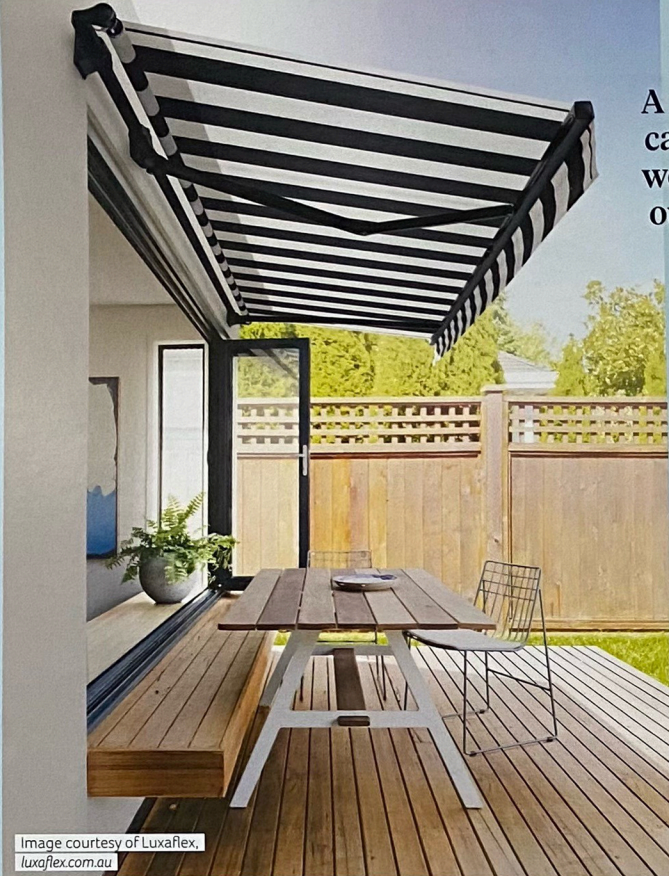


Image courtesy of Luxaflex,
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A retractable canopy or awning can extend during rainy or cool weather and fold back and tuck out of sight to invite in warmth

COVER UP

Without a roof over your outdoor space, the area is limited in potential. Holding an outdoor gathering and then having to race indoors in a downpour can reduce the enjoyment factor for any get-together. Not sure what roof to install over your outdoor spot? If you choose to build a pergola or outdoor entertaining space with the same roofing material as your home, there's a lot on offer — from concrete and terracotta tiles to metal roofs, all with a vast array of colour choices.

If your outdoor area is a separate structure, or you just want to choose a different material, there are retractable roofs, awnings that fold away out of sight, see-through roofs, and blinds for shade and privacy when you need them. A retractable canopy or awning can extend during rainy or cool weather and fold back and tuck out of sight to invite in warmth.

LET YOUR OUTDOOR SPACES SHINE

As the long hot days of summer melt into the promise of cooler autumn evenings, there's one easy way to extend outdoor living and that's through lighting. Lighting paves the way along pathways when darkness falls, adequate lighting makes cooking outdoors easy, and alfresco lighting means you can eat outdoors any time of year.

Lighting can create warmth or coolness in a space depending on the type and positioning. When temperatures start to fall, Claire says there's lots you can do to keep the party going outside. "A firepit, or a bioethanol fire, adds not only heat but creates a warmer atmosphere," she suggests.

Change your lighting as the seasons change. Switch cool, white outdoor lighting with warmer lighting just by changing globes to winterise a space. Festoon lights can ramp up the party no matter what the season.

In summer, twinkling garlands of pretty lights strung up around trees can also enliven the atmosphere. "With longer days in summer, candles can add a little light while a dimmer switch on an outdoor fan/light combination creates a summer mood and cools things down," says Claire.



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GET IN THE SWIM

When autumn leaves start to fall, for many that means it's time to pack away the pool toys until next summer. But a pool cover, heater, or combination of both can extend the life of your swimming pool.

Chris Samaryzis, CEO of SPASA Victoria, says there are some great options to keep you swimming all year round. "A solar blanket is always a good idea, even if you have an alternative heat source," he says. "Solar heating is cost efficient and extends the life of your pool for a couple of months either side of summer, but it won't heat up enough to take you right through winter, especially in the southern states. Gas heating works via a gas unit that is attached to the filtration system and is a very efficient way to heat your pool," says Chris.

Electric heat pumps are energy efficient and can maintain comfortable swimming temperatures; the warmer the air temperature, the better they work.

If your pool isn't heated, the good news is this can be organised after a pool is built. "All of these heating options can be retrofitted if you don't already have a heating solution," says Chris.

When your pool isn't in use, appropriate lighting can transform it into an attractive water feature that can be enjoyed all year round. Or you can add a sauna or hot tub to enjoy the therapeutic benefits of warm, soothing water or steam, no matter what the outdoor temperature.

TURNING UP THE HEAT

Nothing spells comfort on chilly winter evenings like a cosy heat source. It not only extends the time you can enjoy outdoors, it also adds a warm, welcoming ambience. There are many options. Those that can be wheeled away when not needed, take up little space, are dual function (when not being used as a heat source they are used to cook) or serve as a focal point when not in use are great for all seasons. For example, a sleek, modern suspended fireplace can be a showstopper; when not in use during the warmer months it becomes a talking point.

Bioethanol heaters also create a cosy ambience; they don't usually emit a lot of heat so are more of a decorative feature. Slimline heat strips over contemporary outdoor dining spaces are unobtrusive, and portable gas heaters can be easily stored when not in use.

In contemporary backyards, firepits are gaining momentum as a must have and are perfect for small spaces. And of course, when temperatures are on the rise, installing an outdoor fan will help keep you cool during the hotter months of the year.

COOKING FOR ALL SEASONS

If you love cooking and entertaining outdoors, a well-designed space for year-round entertainment is essential, according to celebrity chef Miguel Maestre. "We've just finished our place — we played with the sun and light in undercover spaces and got the right balance of soft and hard landscaping," he says. "We included a pizza oven that provides heat in winter and is a focal point, and sacrificed part of the space for the swimming pool to include a hot tub so we can use it all year round."

When it comes to cooking outdoors, Miguel says including a large window leading from the kitchen to the outside area works to connect spaces. "At home I can open up the kitchen and cook indoors if it's really chilly and just pass the food out," he says.

As well as an undercover barbecue, Miguel suggests cooking items that can be moved as needed. "I have alternative cooking devices that aren't locked into a location, for example a smoker on wheels; I can move it around to where it's sunny," he says.

When temperatures start to fall, change up the menu, swapping out sizzling steaks and summer salad dishes for warm winter roasts on the barbecue. Or get your guests onboard cooking up some mouthwatering pizzas in a pizza oven. That, according to Miguel, really is the key to successful entertaining, no matter what the time of year. "There's a misconception that everything has to be ready before guests arrive, but when I'm thinking entertaining, I think of dishes that become the entertainment and get everyone involved," he says.

Miguel's favourite crowd pleaser is paella; he swaps out ingredients depending on the season. Pizza is another favourite, with guests crafting their own signature pizzas. "Have the dough and trimmings ready to go and guests can add their own toppings. Even when cooking steak, cube it and let guests DIY; they can create their own skewers on the barbecue," he suggests.

In the cooler months, setting up a little trolley with a small coffee station, or a drinks trolley in summer, is also a good idea. "We have a little bench as a bar to put glasses on when people arrive. Often it's just little things that don't have to break the bank that make year-round outdoor entertaining easy," he says. "But most importantly, turn food into entertainment and make sure everyone is hands on — that's the secret to having a beautiful Australian gathering at home. It's all about the journey." **HD**



The Living Room host, Miguel Maestre



Image courtesy of Chaplins Furniture, chaplins.co.uk



Image courtesy of Bayon Gardens. Photography by Tim Turner, bayongardens.com.au