

Creating Outdoor Rooms



by

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Outdoor Rooms Defining Spaces

Lovely, and water-wise, this approach to garden design re-claims space that traditionally has been boring wall to wall turf. Anytime we reduce the amount of lawn in the landscape we save water. It is also a fairly easy design project.

I believe the primary reason for creative frustration is this: people operate under the erroneous assumption that design is simply random artistic expression. That it is a sort of mysterious gifting that some people have and some don't.

Not true. Design is a process. The truth of the matter is, there are certain steps that can be taken and guidelines that can be followed that will result in a pleasing composition.

When creating outdoor rooms the process is fairly simple - we take the familiar spaces found inside the home and translate a similar floor plan in the garden with sitting areas, dining rooms, outdoor kitchens, etc. These rooms are then connected with 'hallways'. A cool and leafy canopy becomes your ceiling. The result is wonderful useable spaces, both attractive and functional.

Here are some of the main points to consider:

Form Follows Function: Think - How do I want to use this space, what are the functional needs ? How big does it need to be ? Do I need shade, sun, irrigation, lighting, privacy screening? The list can also include fragrant plants, bird habitat, preferred color palette, outdoor speakers for music. Consider both practical and esthetic needs.

Floor is the ground plane : Pea gravel, sand-set pavers, brick, wood decking, outdoor rugs, D.G. (decomposed granite) concrete, flagstone, recycled concrete.

Walls are the vertical accents: Screening plants, trees, hedges, bamboo screening panels, wood lattice panels, seat walls. These 'walls' do not need to be high - a low hedge of only 18" can effectively define a space.

Doors creating a sense of entry: A change in elevation: Steps up or down can define a space. A couple of potted plants flanking a path, arbors, trees, gates.

Ceiling: When outdoors you generally want a mix of 'ceiling' heights. The big open sky is always welcome if your view is pleasing. Patio covers and Gazebos are an obvious way to create cover, but consider also tree canopy. Just as in an interior, some spaces may be intimate, and some open and spacious.

Hallways: Consider using 'hallways' to connect your outdoor rooms. These spaces can be simple paths, stepping stones. They can be defined with clipped hedges, or plantings such as colorful groundcovers. Be mindful of the vertical plane - don't go too high or you'll wind up with a space that feels too narrow.

Floor Plan: Classic geometry in garden design is beautiful and traditional; it is also easy to do. Simple geometry can create strong axial lines directing focus to a water feature, a bench, a container planting...

Color: Use a specific color palette to unify design

▪ Pastel Palette:

- Blue
- Purple
- Lavender
- Soft Pink
- White

▪ Hot Palette:

- Orange
- Yellow
- Red
- Purple
- White

▪ Monochromatic - (one color)

- White (use gray foliage accents as white also)
- Yellow
- Red
- Purple-Blue

Easy Care Plants for the Garden

... a few of my favorites

Succulents

- Aeonium - many
- Agave - use soft tip for safety!
- Aloe - many
- Crassula - Jade Plant
- Echeveria - Hens & Chicks
- Euphorbia - many
- Kalanchoe - many
- Sedums - many
- Senecio - Chalk Plant



Perennials & Flowering Shrubs

- French Lavender (*L. dentata*)
- Cistus spp.
- Scented geraniums (*Pelargoniums*)
- Cape Fuchsia (*Phygelius*)
- Salvia spp. (*clevelandii* is native)
- Roses - floribundas & shrub
 - Iceberg
 - Julia Child
- Yarrow - gray leafed
- Bearded Iris
- Santa Barbara Daisy - *Erigeron karvinskianus*

Grasses

- Pennisetum spp - Fountain Grasses
- Muhlenbergia capillaris - Pink Muhly
- Miscanthus spp - Maiden Grass
- Sesleria caerulea - Blue Moor Grass
- Festuca glauca - Blue Fescue

