

Outdoors in Style

Adding the right style of outdoor furniture can transform the look and feel of your backyard.

By Kimberlee Courtney

The backyard is your largest living area, and just as you decorate the rooms inside your home, you can create a stylish exterior room by adding furniture outdoors.

Selecting a Style

The style of the design should complement your home's exterior, as well as your personal taste. Here are several popular furniture styles so you can choose which one is right for you.

Casual. A warm and inviting space with simple details is used to create a relaxing lifestyle. Natural colors, such as beige, white, tan, or gray, are used in the design, but pastels or darker tones, such as navy, olive, or cranberry, can also be included. This style works well in gardens and backyards with many elements of nature (i.e., plants, trees, a pond).

Formal. Elegance and symmetry are the basic elements of a formal design. Fabrics of varying colors and textures are trimmed with ruffles, fringe, or tassels, while woods are polished and rich in color. This precise, ordered design is perfect for a backyard dining area and is a great complement to traditional or colonial style homes.

Contemporary. Subtle sophistication, space, and clean lines are used to create a sleek and fresh

design. Neutral colors, such as white and black, define the space while bright, bold tones function as accents—think cherry red placemats on a white patio table. Furniture is smooth and uncluttered, with straight lines and few decorative elements, and there is a heavy use of metal, stone, and glass.

Traditional. This is a common decorating style that presents a calm, yet orderly feel. Furnishings are classic, and every piece appears to be part of the same set. Colors include mid-range tones, and fabrics are decorated with floral, stripes, plaid, or small patterns. The overall ambiance is cozy and understated.

Tuscan. This style incorporates natural elements for a rustic look and creates a warm and peaceful setting. Marble statues, plants, and fountains are typical features, as are walkways or patios that are set with stone or brick. Terracotta, brick, ochre, green, and gold are the design's main colors, with blues and greens often used as accents.

Material Decisions

Wood has long been used for outdoor furniture and for good reason—it does not absorb heat, and most woods are rot-resistant. Cedar and oak are common choices for outdoors and are lightweight. Wicker is a type of



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furniture easy to move around. Cedar's natural oils preserve it from moisture, insect damage, and decay. Teak also resists decay, but it is a very dense wood that is harder to move around. Its elegant look, however, makes it a popular choice, even though it is the most expensive. Wood furniture can be used for multiple themes, including Tuscan, contemporary, and casual.

Wicker is another popular choice for backyards and suitable for every budget. The type of furniture is made with natural

materials, such as bamboo and rattan. Wicker can be used in both casual and traditional designs, or it can be spruced up with decorative cushions for more formal gatherings.

For modern backyards, cast aluminum is your best bet. Affordable and durable, cast aluminum furniture provides clean lines and a polished appearance, and comes in a variety of colors, including black, bronze, and its natural silver tone. This material is lightweight, does not rust, can be exposed to rain and easily dried off. Aluminum does absorb heat,

however, so you'll want to purchase cushions for the bottoms and backs of the seats.

Heavy-duty plastic and PVC are excellent poolside, as they can handle wet conditions, are sturdy yet lightweight, and can be moved around easily (perfect for sunbathers).

Wrought iron furniture is relatively heavy and can endure harsh conditions—just be sure the surface has been weather-treated. Wrought iron chandeliers, sconces, and other light fixtures can be incorporated to achieve the perfect ambiance—day or night. ☺

Online Poll Results

What is your favorite material for outdoor furniture?

Wrought iron	44%
Aluminum	19%
Plastic	13%
Composite	12%
Wicker/rattan	6%
Wood	6%

Where to Buy

Barlow Tyrie

www.task.com

Casual Creations

www.casualcreations.com

CedarStore.com

www.cedarstore.com

Coastal Wood Products

www.coastalwoodproductsinc.com

Kingsley-Bate™

www.kingsleybate.com

New River Casual Furniture

www.newriverfurniture.com

OW Lee Co.

www.owlee.com

Palm Springs Rattan & Garden Classics

www.palmspringrattan.com

Pride Family Brands

www.pridefamilybrands.com

Trex Company

www.trex.com

Woodard

www.woodard-furniture.com

