

DEVELOPING YOUR OUTDOOR ROOM(S)

- I. Discover your area's purpose or use(s). What do you want this area to be?
 - a. Small area to dine
 - b. Kids play area
 - c. Meditation Station
 - d. Herb Garden
 - e. Outdoor Entertainment for many. Mostly casual or Formal?

- II. Discover your area's Focal Point(s). Where does your eye naturally fall? Where or to what are you naturally drawn to?
 - a. The back fence
 - b. An already established "landscaped" focal point (existing fountain, birdbath, bench, or large plant or tree.
 - c. The air conditioner or pool equipment.

- III. Focal Points should direct the "theme" even if your theme is "eclectic"
 - a. Does your existing focal point make sense? Don't feel "trapped" by what is already there especially if you don't love it.
 - b. Do you like a certain type of garden or look that you would like to try?

- IV. Create Your Focal Points around its intended use.
 - a. Do you need to just put a blooming vine on an empty fence to do the trick? Or maybe you want the back fence to be more of an experience with a winding pathway and arbor over the back gate. Or maybe it is time to redirect your view with an eye-catching foreground focal like a statue or little patio with a bistro table and chairs.

- V. Give it something unexpected, where is your surprise and delight?
 - a. Don't get "hemmed in" to making a play area a "play area". Where is the giant logs to climb over? Fallen logs look cool too if they are the right thing for the area. Where are the reclaimed junkyard treasures planted and placed on tree stumps? Why not put a sundial in the center of the herb garden? Why not try tropical plants in the ground? Why not pick up a rock on every walk you take and build a mosaic path through the flower beds? Where is the statue half buried in the ground?
 - b. All great focal points are generally either found through happenstance (a great estate sale or a great designer) or through thoughtful interpretation of your space, so be patient with yourself... it's the journey remember!

- VI. Use repeating colors and textures through plants, pots, furniture, and accessories.
 - a. My favorite design technique is use of monochromatic colors. That is the use of one color but in slightly different shades or tones. It is a modern and sleek way to use color decoratively. It also helps those of us who are not sure which plants to pick because most everyone can "match" colors and lighter and darker ones too.
 - b. The same purchased element over and over and in different shapes is effective but sometimes cost prohibitive so I have added a few ideas for inexpensive yet effective ways to have continuity in your outdoor spaces:
 1. If your brick is red repeat that red in the cushions on the bench in an outdoor rug, and in a throw (and don't forget a bowl of fresh red apples)
 2. If your furniture is made of heavy woods use blocks of wood to make your pedestals for your

pots and more chunks of wood for garden sculpture.

3. Use flagstone for paths, porches, stepping stones, edging, fountains, and sculptures.
4. Use bamboo poles for plant supports, fencing, filler for empty pots, fountain spouts, and curtain rods.
5. Use your indoor plants as outdoor décor during the spring and summer months. Spider plants are great multipliers!
6. Use polished or unpolished rocks to fill in empty spaces in pots, at the base of planters, in flowerbeds, and on table-tops.

VII. You are not finished until it is "finished"

1. Pulling all together is not always easy. Tweaking it is sometime endless. But you need to come to a finishing and enjoy it or you will find it to be another job. None of us need more work to do! Often as we are relaxing and content that is when the stroke of excitement will come to us, so live in your room awhile and maybe you will want to add a tree-house later, but really go ahead and enjoy it!
2. The difference between a finished outdoor space and an unfinished outdoor space is also sometimes the little accessories that make your space more functional and comfortable, some examples include: leaving yourself a place to store an extra pair of reading glasses or the extra matches for the grill or an extra towel, or kids toys, or a blanket... all the little things you find yourself going inside to get and hauling back in. This must be a livable and comfortable environment or you will not work it into your life.



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