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Outdoor Room STYLES

By Debra Maurer

An outdoor room can include everything from an outdoor kitchen, bar, patio, and fireplace





to a pool, spa, and garden. Discover the possibilities for designing your outdoor living space.



Photo courtesy of AMS Landscape Design Studios. Photography by Jeri Koegel (www.jerikoegel.com)



Photo courtesy of AMS Landscape Design Studios; Photography by Jett Koegel (www.jettkoegel.com)

Every luxury home should have a luxury outdoor room to go with it. When you think “outdoor room,” you may think of a sunroom, shaded deck, or specific seating area designed to resemble an indoor space; however, your outdoor room does not have to be limited to just one section of your backyard. Every aspect of your property is a component of your outdoor room and plays an important role in defining how it will be used.

An outdoor room can include numerous amenities, such as a pool, outdoor kitchen, lounge area, patio, garden, pergola, etc. Much like an open concept floor plan, all the sections of your backyard can be interconnected while still serving a designated purpose.

We will explore several al fresco room styles to show you some of the many ways you can make the most of your property. From a custom-designed pool to a cutting garden to a fabulous outdoor kitchen, these properties are the epitome of a luxury outdoor room.

Luxury Resort

Drew Sivgals, president of AMS Landscape Design Studios, Newport Beach, Calif., built the ultimate at-home resort, which has almost everything a homeowner could ask for in an

outdoor room: a cabana, outdoor kitchen, seating areas, outdoor fireplaces, spacious deck, water features, and a pool and spa.

“The clients had a pretty good idea of the main features they wanted to have within their landscape,” says Sivgals. “The items at the top of their list were a pool, spa, outdoor fireplace, and bar/cook center. In addition, they wanted a few open grass areas, a fruit and vegetable garden, and a rose garden. So although there was a healthy request list, the development of the ideas started to really come to life as the conceptual plans were being developed.”

The layout of this outdoor room offers many different places to relax, socialize, and entertain. The pergola next to the outdoor kitchen serves as a partially shaded dining area, and on the other side of the kitchen there is a large roof-covered living room with an outdoor TV. A separate unshaded living room was also built in another area of the yard. Both living rooms have outdoor fireplaces, which offer warmth, ambience, and style.

“The main structure was created to allow for a truly outdoor room feel and design,” says Sivgals. “The clients wanted to entertain in a way that would not be compromised simply because it was outside. Whether the husband wanted to

watch the game with his friends, the wife wanted to enjoy a nice meal outside within the dining room, or they wanted to enjoy a good movie with the fireplace roaring, they wanted to be able to do all of those activities in one general area.”

When selecting amenities for your outdoor room, you want to choose those that will best serve your purposes and maximize your space and budget. In this case, the homeowners wanted a changing room with a shower, restroom, and lockers so that guests would not have to run back into the house; this proves to be a big convenience, especially when the homeowners’ grandchildren come over to visit.

Across from the pool is a long sun lounge patio with planters and water features on either side. This area has room for plenty of lounge chairs and also functions as a unique design element. “The sun lounge patio is centered with the main structure and helps to balance the center walkway. It also provides another way to access the spa,” says Sivgals.

When creating a large outdoor room like this one, it’s important to establish separate areas while still maintaining a unified look to the backyard. “You have to think of the entire room and each space individually. There needs to be

cohesive feel almost becomes a requirement for the project to turn out successfully. Utilization of common materials and strategically repeating certain plantings becomes key to developing a consistency throughout the property." Pennsylvania bluestone was incorporated into the decking, retaining wall caps, and the coping of the pool and spa. A mixture of ashlar cut and random/irregular Pennsylvania bluestone was also used for the walkways, while red cedar was chosen for both the fencing and pergola.

Landscaping played a major role in this outdoor room. A beautiful variety of River Birch, White Paper Birch, Boxwood, 'Miss Kim' Lilac, Cherry Laurel, Peony, Hosta, and Catmint were planted around the spa. Ivy Geranium produces the purple flowers in the planters by the water feature, and bentgrass was planted on the terraces. Since the homeowners are typically away during the summer months, the plantings were selected primarily for a combination of springtime display color and four-season evergreen structure.

Décor is another consideration when creating an outdoor room. Items such as planters, fountains, statues, lighting fixtures, outdoor rugs, and furniture all help to define the theme of your outdoor room. "Many of the antique sculptural elements seen in this garden were sourced by the



Photo courtesy of Hess Landscape Architects, Inc.; Photography by Andie Ruznowski Photography

homeowners during their travels," says Hess. "This provided another way for them to truly personalize their outdoor space."

The statue/water feature and pond form a lovely focal point in front of the seating area, which is separate from the pool and spa. These features add a decorative element to this particular section of the backyard where guests can dine and socialize and the homeowners can simply relax. "Thematically, water is an important part of


the overall property design," Hess explains. "The relative remoteness of the pool and spa from the main exterior areas created an opportunity to incorporate water closer to the house, but in a way that didn't feel forced. The tiered fountain became a focal point for two of the outdoor rooms, and continues the thematic presence of water throughout the entire backyard."

A Shift to the Outdoors

As homeowners continue to embrace the outdoor lifestyle, luxury outdoor rooms are becoming a popular request. "More and more of our clients are requesting elements such as outdoor kitchens, fireplaces, dining terraces, and even outdoor televisions," says Hess. "As we continue to add features like these to landscapes we are shifting the paradigm—activities and living experiences which formerly were exclusive to the indoors now have the ability to move into the garden."

Sivgals has observed a shift as well: "Most homeowners are looking to enjoy their outdoor spaces more. And some are interested in creating their own personal resort right in their own backyard."

However you choose to design your outdoor room, the idea of outdoor living is more than a trend—it's an investment in a lifestyle that appears to be here to stay. ❖



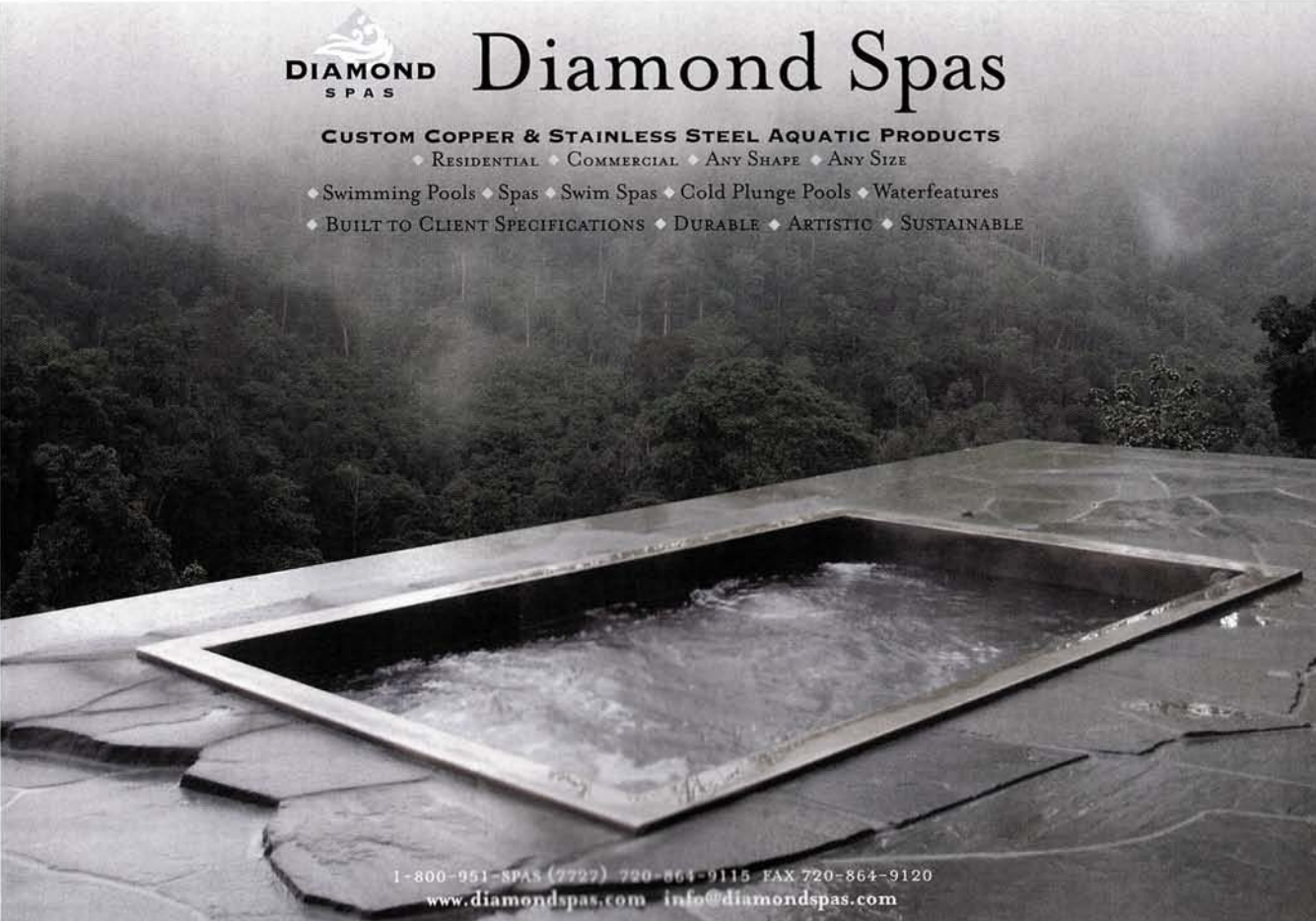
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enough space so that each room fits comfortably and does not feel cramped,” Sivgals explains. “The homeowners have been able to use their outdoor room for a great deal of family gatherings, large parties, and fundraisers.” The openness of the property with its ocean views and surrounding landscape also lends itself to countless beautiful sunsets.

Open Garden Design

Chuck Hess, president of Hess Landscape Architects, Lansdale, Pa., designed a luxury backyard consisting of numerous spaces including a pool, spa, outdoor kitchen, garden, and pergola with a seating area and water feature. “This allocation of exterior space led to the development of seven separate outdoor rooms,” says Hess.

The outdoor dining areas were placed close to both the indoor and outdoor kitchens so that food could be prepared and served easily without having to carry it a far distance. Since the homeowners did not plan to swim or lounge poolside on a regular basis, the pool was placed further from the house near the property’s former rose garden, which was already graded to accommodate the large space required for a pool. The spa was situated near the gym so the owners could relax after workouts.

With a large property like this, Hess stresses the importance of creating harmony: “Developing a

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