

homefront



Inside Out: Your backyard is the new family room

By Kimberly Ho, Scott Stone, Inc

As with Disco and polyester, the cement patios and outdoor clotheslines so common in the 1970's are being replaced. The world as a whole is moving toward a Greener, more in-touch lifestyle, blending the personality of homeowners with their natural surroundings. Green-living is spurring outdoor eco-friendly living areas while the volatile economy is leading homeowners to look for low-maintenance, at home entertainment options that can increase their property values. Indeed, from landscaped pools to full alfresco kitchens, and garden fireplaces; the backyard has become an unrestricted living and stay-at-home vacation area for modern families.

As one of the largest natural stone suppliers in the Southeast, Scott Stone provides new stone solutions, designs, support and installation for outdoor projects; this is the bulk our business. Quality stone in outdoor design renovations has become the must-have just as granite countertops have become standard in modern kitchens. Because there are many types of stone, homeowners can separate, accentuate, and tie all aspects of outdoor designs together.

Stone veneered fireplaces complemented with stone seatwalls, counters, grills, and floors create cohesive outdoor kitchen/entertaining areas ideal for hosting friends and family. The warmth generated by these elements treats homeowners to outdoor enjoyment even during colder seasons of the year. Stone-accented pools and water features create unique finished looks. Custom bull-nosed pool caps and three-piece recycled granite pavers create an ultra modern expression, where irregular natural flagging and sculpture boulders lend more toward a rustic Old-World feel. The variety, durability, and versatility of stone are unmatched giving your designer a rare freedom of expression that will stand for years.

While smaller outdoor features are tempting for D.I.Y. projects, there are essential elements that make larger endeavors successful. Hiring the right team of experts ensures that a project comes to fruition smoothly, quickly, and with the least amount of inconvenience to the homeowner. Along with proper planning, professionals will save you stress, time, and money in the long run.

Every plan begins with three key components; intention, space, and budget.



Know what you want from your outdoor area.

Do you want to relax in a natural setting, enjoy that day at your private pool, and create an outdoor dinner for yourself or your family? To attain full enjoyment of your outdoor space you must begin by deciding what your area will be used for. Discussing the purpose of your outdoor space will help your team design it to your needs and desires. Ask to see examples of various modern and rustic styles if you are unsure of the exact look you want.

Space requirements for your plan are the next step.

Do you want a simple patio for grilling, or have you envisioned an elaborate outdoor addition to your home? Modern landscape technology can transform practically any environment into a useable area. Even if your area is small, proper placement of stone accents can unify your vision and give a larger appearance to a smaller area. Pay special attention to how traffic will flow through your outdoor space. Much like houses, large outdoor areas should have a floor plan. Each "room" should have a mini landscape design that makes it suited to its intended purpose while still maintaining an overall effect of synergy. The more separate these spaces, the more differences you can incorporate without creating discord.

Color harmony is also important in your area. Begin by researching the different stone options available then build your plant landscape around it. Warm tones of reds, browns and buffs create a different environment than those of blues grays and greens and your plants can be chosen to complement either.

It is much easier to adjust the colors of the flowers around your stone to match your vision than it is to adjust the color of your stone.

Budget. Perhaps this is the most important step in your planning. Discuss your overall plan with experts to get an estimate of what the entire design will cost. Then decide how much you are willing to spend at a given time on your project. Dream outdoor living experiences can be built one step at a time, and your team can help you determine each phase to accommodate your budget. If you decide to create your outdoor area in one fell swoop, be prepared for your vision—and budget—to evolve from your original concept.

Though stone, quality products, and professional installation may seem expensive at the beginning of a project, a homeowner should look at the long-term, low-maintenance aspects of the area he or she is creating. Natural stone requires the least long-term maintenance, and proper garden design can preserve mature vegetation well suited to last for years at your location. Cheaper products are not always better and a solid investment in the present represents a more viable investment in the future.

As with any construction, installation has its headaches, but the joy you'll derive from your outdoor retreat will far outlast the brief and sometimes stressful construction period — thanks to the right team of trained experts who know how to transform dreams to reality.

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