

Taking the indoors outdoors

If your home lacks space inside and is in need of better indoor/outdoor flow then an outdoor room may be the answer says Deb Tapp.

Outdoor rooms are on-trend right now, simply because they give homeowners that relaxing, uncluttered space outside.

That's according to Aspen Landscapes owner Stuart Baines, who says adding on an exterior room means Kiwis, as people who love the outdoors, can spend even more time outside.

Landscaper Stuart and his team of 34 tackle projects in the greater Wellington region that range from simply weeding an elderly woman's garden through to full-scale residential makeovers that involve retaining walls, fences, pergolas, decking, outdoor fireplaces, instant lawn and all planting.

But over the last year every other job has been about creating outdoor rooms for people who want or need that extra space.

A typical outdoor room would feature everything from an outdoor fire, barbecue, sink or bench with a fridge underneath, to drop-down sides, sofas, loungers and tables, and finished off with cushions and outdoor lighting.

"Outdoor fires are usually the main feature of an outdoor room, people enjoy that lovely sense of smell and the sound of a fire, and they enjoy gathering around a fire," says Stuart.

"A lot of models have cooking options, you can cook pizza, so it becomes a cooker and an outdoor heater, which is great if you live in Wellington!"

Barbecues in outdoor rooms can either be frameless, built in and plumbed in, or portable with traditional gas bottles.

Outdoor kitchens can be as extravagant or as minimal as the budget allows, says Stuart.

Furniture depends on the size of the outdoor room, but typically includes sofas, loungers and even bean bags.

All of these items usually sit on a deck or patio made of timber, concrete or tiles.

"The beauty of timber is it has that softening effect and it doesn't hold the heat like concrete, but then concrete or tiles you get the warmth out of as the sun goes down," says Stuart.

"You can get larger, porcelain pavers which have been on trend for a while now, in some beautiful colours, or in natural tones.

"They are non-slip, they are frost and heat resistant, they don't expand and contract a lot, they don't require sealing, they don't allow moisture to come through, they're not porous so you don't generally get algae or mould on them."

Flooring aside, many outdoor rooms are semi-covered these days, for wind protection or privacy reasons.

Options include an adaptable roof that can retract or open if the weather allows, or provide shelter



A home with well designed outdoor living spaces is like adding an extra room. This example from Scott Construction in Nelson took out a number of awards.



Adding a louvred roof to an outdoor area offers shelter from rain or too much sun on the hottest days.



Try to use the same or similar materials and features in an outdoor room as you do in your house, maybe even similar colours, but maybe more casual.

from the rain. Shelter from wind is another consideration, and Stuart says drop-down sides are often added for that reason alone.

Sides can range from building permanent walls to hedging, blinds, and screens.

"We are seeing more desire to have outdoor rooms semi-covered or the ability to close off an area or open it up depending on where the wind or sun is coming from."

Lighting is often overlooked in outdoor rooms, but is important because it can set the mood, says Stuart.

"You can have fun with lighting, you can put in lights that will wash across the patio so you can see where you're going, you can use different colour palettes, or you can light up different zones, or light up a feature like a tree, sculpture or water feature, or you can use solar-powered string lights or lanterns for a bit of fun.

"Lighting to an outdoor area is like a frame is to a picture, it really sets it off," says Stuart.

Stuart says the same about landscaping.

"Adding the right plants, shrubs and trees in the surrounding area is important too, they bring it all together to create that ambience."

The elements of any outdoor room though come down to finances at the end of the day, says Stuart.

But the real key to the success lies in the planning, he says.

"You can't just plop furniture and a table outside in the backyard and call it your outdoor room, you've got to think about some important things first."

Location is number one - is it convenient to the house for traipsing in and out from the kitchen?

"One of the key ingredients for making sure an outdoor room works really well is making sure that whatever room you depart from, which is more often than not a lounge, is close enough to the kitchen.

"If your outdoor room is at the other end of your section, you won't use it, it becomes a chore and it's hard work to get to that



This stylish pool pavilion in Clevedon, with its outdoor fire and multiple seating areas, won an Outdoor Living award.

PHOTO: RMB

space, whereas off a lounge or dining room, a room that gets used a lot, it's just there and you'll find you'll use that space more readily and regularly."

An outdoor room is also not a space you want to step up or down to, says Stuart.

"You want it to flow straight from the house, it's human nature, people will use it if it's easy."

Consider orientation too. It must be functional to work well and you'll want an outdoor room in a spot that perhaps gets the sun

longest or is sheltered from the wind.

Size also matters, says Stuart. "You don't want an outdoor room to take up the whole yard - you still need space for other things."

That said, to determine size, it's important to weigh up what exactly you want to put in your outdoor room.

"Overcrowding can gobble up your space, so before you hit the shops draw up your ideal layout to scale with things like barbecues,

outdoor fires and furniture included.

"You'll be surprised at how fast your space will fill up - be mindful of the space you've got in order to avoid it feeling too cluttered."

Be mindful of storage, investing in the likes of bench seats that double as storage for items like cushions.

Continuity counts too, for that indoor/outdoor flow, says Stuart.

"Try to use the same or similar materials and features in an outdoor room as you do in your

house, maybe even similar colours, but maybe more casual."

Most important of all is the budget, but keep in mind a well-designed room with upcycled furniture can look as great as one where the sky's the limit.

"Outdoor rooms, whatever the budget, are all about mood and ambience, done well they're a comfortable place you gravitate to in order to relax, unwind and enjoy conversation, food and drink around the glow and warmth of an outdoor fire."

Latest House Values

Wellington

Suburb	2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4 bedroom	5 bedroom
Highbury		\$926,000	\$1,018,500	
Kaiwharawhara		\$1,125,000	\$1,392,500	
Karori	\$645,000	\$804,000	\$1,032,000	\$1,344,000
Kelburn	\$650,000	\$1,093,000	\$1,395,500	\$1,760,000
Northland	\$703,000	\$868,000	\$1,058,000	\$1,253,000
Pipitea	\$539,000	\$709,000		
Thorndon	\$675,000	\$935,500	\$1,346,500	\$2,076,000
Wadestown	\$661,000	\$947,000	\$1,210,000	\$1,504,500
Wilton	\$548,500	\$792,000	\$916,000	

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Keep your guard up at home

The holidays are over, the kids are heading back to school, but with the house empty again during the day now's not the time to let your guard down.

Thankfully, it's easier and more affordable than ever to install a home security camera system to safeguard your home against intruders.

But there are even simpler and cheaper ways to thwart their intentions.

The most important security precaution is to shut and lock all doors, even if going out only briefly - but don't "hide" keys outside the house or leave them in an obvious place near doors or windows.

Closing and locking windows will help to deter burglars, as they don't like to draw attention by smashing glass.

And if they do get in through a window, having doors with deadlocks will make it harder for them to get out with their spoils. It's also a good idea to put a deadlock on the internal access door between the garage and the house.

Visible burglar alarms are another great turn-off for thieves, although make sure they turn off after a few minutes so your neighbours aren't disturbed unduly.

The same is true of security lights - place them near entry points but not



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where they'll keep neighbours awake.

Use timers on radios and lights to make your home look occupied and don't leave consumer electronics in plain sight.

If you're treated yourself to a new TV or computer for Christmas, don't advertise it by leaving out the empty boxes for rubbish collection or recycling

(or at least turn them inside out and fold them down).

Hide or lock away passports and official documents and engrave possessions so they're harder for thieves to re-sell. If you're tidying up around the section make sure you lock away garden tools and ladders that could be used to gain access to the house.

If you're heading off for a long weekend, ask a neighbour to stop by to collect junk mail, and open and close curtains, and leave them your contact details so you can be reached in the event of a break-in or an emergency.

Even better, have a friend or relative housesit while you're away.