

# Creative design takes outdoor living spaces beyond summer

Ask any landscape professional what most homeowners are demanding these days and you'll hear the same refrain over and over: outdoor living rooms, kitchens and other luxurious living spaces that mirror those found inside the home.

Today's professionally designed landscape is replacing that old-fashioned plank deck with a professional-grade kitchen, fireplace room, spa, full-service wet bar and cushy lounge furniture. And it's all located outside.

"Homeowners are using their outdoor space as a true extension of their home," said Tom Wood of Wood Landscape Services. "These new living spaces go far beyond the patio people once used just a few times each year for a cookout."

By thoughtfully discussing their lifestyle and goals with a professional landscape designer, homeowners can discover how to best create — and use — these new living areas.

"We can design divisions of space that result in outdoor 'rooms' they'll enjoy year-round and far more extensively than they enjoyed that summer



*Grand Effects Inc.*

**Colorful flames leap from stunning cast concrete pots, such as these from Grand Effects, creating luminous reflections on backyard pools and water features and adding drama to any outdoor room.**

patio," Wood explained.

Wood's firm works with clients to install heating systems and other necessities that greatly extend the seasons in which homeowners can enjoy outdoor living, whether warmth comes from a fire pit, stove, fireplace, heated water or other warming elements.

One Dublin family hired Wood Landscape Services to design and install a deluxe,

gourmet kitchen outdoors.

Two countertops crafted of beautifully stained concrete and surrounded by bar stools offer an artistic, functioning focal point that has become the gathering spot for family and friends.

A professional grill with satellite burners and a fully plumbed outdoor sink facilitate entertaining. The custom-designed bar caddy and ice-

maker are fixtures, while electric outlets in the counter backsplash enable the homeowner to bring small appliances outdoors — whether it's a blender for whipping up frozen drinks or a toaster oven for quickly warming hors d'oeuvres. The stainless-steel finish of the compact refrigerator, grill and cooktop can withstand harsher weather.

For another client, Wood's designers created a spectacular outdoor oasis that provides multiple uses during the different seasons. A large in-ground swimming pool provides a sparkling centerpiece, with one end of the pool featuring a waterfall that spills into a warm, bubbling spa. Another corner is ornamented with a natural stone pond water feature.

Stunning oversized concrete fire bowls are perched above the swimming pool, adding bursts of warm air and incredible drama as flickering flames reflect on the pool's surface. A countertop island floats at the shallow end of the pool, where submerged bar stools offer guests a place to swim up

for a refreshing drink or snack. Planters inset around the pool drip with beautiful vegetation. Decorative tiles tie pool edges, bar stools and planters together.

Nearby, a rooftop covers the fireplace and dining and sitting areas, defining yet another relaxing outdoor room. Comfortable lounge chairs, an outdoor sofa and a dining table and chairs offer plenty of seating for groups.

Finally, the Wood team created a lush landscape to surround the entire project. Yucca, magnolia, spruce, weigela, sky-rocket juniper and plant-filled pots create a restful air, while an irrigation system makes it all easy to maintain.

Maximizing the potential of outdoor space starts with a good, professional design process, Wood stressed, with design costs based on how long the process takes. The payoff comes in plantings, stone, decorative items and natural surfaces, combined with innovative new designs for outdoor furnishings, that allow homeowners to create beautiful outdoor rooms in their back yard.