

# A few touches bring comfort and style to outdoor spaces

By **Melissa Rayworth**  
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Designers often talk about the perfect “outdoor living room” — a deck or patio that combines the comfort and style of indoor decorating with the pleasure of relaxing outside.

We’ve asked three interior designers — Brett Beldock of New York-based Brett Design Inc., Abbe Fenimore of Studio Ten25 in Dallas and Dan Mazzarini of the design firm BHD — about what items they use to elevate a simple deck or patio to true “outdoor room” status.

## **The perfect rug**

“Adding textiles underfoot,” says Mazzarini, brings “that added tactile quality that’s expected to be only indoors, and helps sort of redefine the outdoor space.”

Beldock agrees, and says companies like Sunbrella and Perennials offer soft rugs made of durable, dyed acrylic yarns in gorgeous patterns and colors. “It doesn’t feel like plastic,” Beldock says, but “you can hose it down.”

And fortunately, says Fenimore, you don’t have to invest a lot — even big-box stores like Sam’s Club

sometimes offer good-quality outdoor rugs in geometric prints or stripes.

Some of these may actually dry more quickly after rain than more expensive, thicker outdoor rugs. Choosing a rug that drains and dries well is especially important if you have a concrete floor or little direct sunlight.

In choosing the number of rugs and their placement, consider defining separate entertaining areas: one rug for the dining area under the table and chairs, and another to define a seating area that serves as a living room.

## **Living-room lighting**

Typical outdoor lighting can be harsh and unflattering, and “overhead lighting is nobody’s friend,” says Mazzarini. Look for outdoor table lamps and floor lamps to add the soft glow of indoor lighting.

Although they vary in what weather conditions they can handle, outdoor lamps can be used throughout much of the year, Mazzarini says.

Fenimore agrees: “Bringing in lamplight, especially outside, is really beautiful and subtle,” she says, and it’s easy to find a wide range of styles and prices

for outdoor lamps at home-decor retailers.

## **Temperature control**

Managing the air is another indoor touch you can work with outdoors.

For clients in hot climates, Fenimore often suggests fans to circulate the air on an outdoor patio. At her own home, “we have a wall-mounted fan hanging under one of the eaves,” she says, to keep air moving and hopefully deter mosquitoes.

## **Upholstery and fabrics**

Just as with your indoor living room, choose a comfortable, stylish sofa for outdoors and pair it with a loveseat or comfortable upholstered chairs. Indoor/outdoor fabrics have come a long way, these designers say, so choose a texture that feels like indoor upholstery. And don’t just stick with one color, says Beldock: “Mix and match fabrics the way you do in an indoor situation.”

To complete the look, add throw pillows to your outdoor sofa. Many outdoor throw pillows are available with stuffing that can dry easily without getting moldy.