

# How to turn a basic patio into an 'outdoor room'

By Melissa Rayworth / The Associated Press

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.

But what separates these outdoor entertaining spaces from more typically decorated backyards?

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 BHDH — 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.”

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

Some of these may actually dry more quickly after rain than more expensive,

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thicker outdoor rugs.

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.

## LIGHTING

Typical outdoor lighting can be harsh and unflattering, and “overhead lighting is nobody’s friend,” says Mazzarini. So 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.

As a finishing touch, Beldock loves adding to the glow by using lots of candles with glass hurricane covers.

## 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.”

Velvety, chenille fabrics durable enough for outdoors have become popular, says Fenimore. Despite their cozy texture, she says, these fabrics don’t trap heat and can be comfortable all summer long.

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.

Another option, Fenimore says, is using beautiful indoor throw pillows when you entertain outside and then bringing them in when the party is over. A deep pile of pillows will bring indoor comfort to your outdoor sofa, encouraging guests to

stay and relax, she says.

Finishing touch: Fenimore suggests keeping a basket filled with soft, lightweight throw blankets so that guests lounging outdoors in the evening can have that extra touch of softness and luxury if the wind begins to blow.



Grandin Road Outdoor Velvet Throw Pillow, \$34 at [grandinroad.com](http://grandinroad.com)



Fatboy Edison the Petit Lamp, \$89 at [lumens.com](http://lumens.com)