

Inside out, outside in

SUMMER READY

How to turn outdoors into a summer haven

Andrea Janus

If your home has even a few square feet of outdoor space, it's that time again to tackle the job of getting it ready for the few precious months you have to enjoy it.

Getting the patio, rooftop deck or solarium summer-ready doesn't have to be a daunting task, especially if you take time to consider a key question.

Think about what function you want the space to serve, advises interior designer William MacDonald of WillMac Design. Is it a space to dine al fresco on warm summer nights, or a place to put your feet up with a glass of wine and the Sunday paper? If your space is big enough for both, great.

But in a space with limited square footage, like a solarium or a condo balcony, "it's important to make a choice," MacDonald said.

"You have to base your design ideas in reality."

Answering this question may involve spending some time in the space before making big decor investments.

"Get a stool and sit outside and see what times you like to be out there," MacDonald said.

When you're ready to move on to decor, approach the outdoor space as you would your indoor space: invest in good-quality larger pieces — like dining sets, chairs and loungers.

"It's a good investment," MacDonald said. "You'll only buy them once."

Opt for neutral tones, like black, brown, grey, white or cream, and then you can go cheap and cheerful, not to mention colourful, for accessories like outdoor rugs, pillows, poufs and blankets.

Current colour trends include jewel tones — think orange, turquoise and yellow — but softer pastels appear poised to make a comeback in the next year or two, MacDonald predicts. Dusty blue, lilac and rose make for a very traditional look, but also hold up well outdoors because they don't show dust as much as darker tones.

Whether your space is for dining or lounging, or both, everything that goes in it is affected by one key factor: the weather. Make sure your decor can withstand sun, heat, wind and rain, MacDonald says.

That means hurricane lan-



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terns to hold candles, weather-proof fabrics like Sunbrella for pillows, cushions and umbrellas, and outdoor rugs.

And don't forget about lighting. Standing lamps work well in smaller spaces. Uplights, which sit on the ground and project lighting upward, can be planted around a garden or patio, while electric candles can be spaced at intervals around a balcony or rooftop terrace.

Finish off the look with some greenery: a handful of large outdoor planters for a big space or boxwood to line a smaller space.

+ TIPS FOR SAVING ON OUTDOOR DECOR

Buy off-season

Good-quality patio furniture can cost as much as indoor items, so buy your big pieces over the winter, MacDonald says. "You'll get a better price, and you'll get it on time."

Play the long game

If you can't buy everything at once, buy the big, must-have items first (tables,

chairs) and add accessories as you can.

Repurpose

Buy outdoor furniture that can be brought inside to a solarium or living room for the winter, and "re-merchandise" accessories from the patio around the house. Chinese garden stools, for instance, can be added to the living room, powder room or bedroom.

GARDENING

Small, outdoor space? Consider a raised bed

Not everyone has a traditional yard with ample space for perennial gardens and a vegetable patch. Despite this, clever green thumbs are maximizing the space they do have to grow a variety of edible crops.

Here are a few tips that will give you a head start on your garden.

This also leaves more space in the actual garden to grow other things. You can also buy or build tiered structures with "drawers" you can fill with soil and plant greens, like lettuce or herbs, which thrive in a shallower space.

Upcycle a raised bed

Antique markets, your parents' backyard, these are both places where you may find items you can upcycle into a garden. Old wooden washtubs, wine barrels, wooden suitcases, you name it. Stock tanks are another modern-looking option that you can buy new or used. And an old table can easily be transformed into a mini-salad garden.



A raised bed kit is ideal for small areas. DONNA GRIFFITH

Consider gardening in fabric pots

Fabric pots come in all shapes and sizes and because they're so lightweight, they are perfect for balconies and rooftops. (Note: If you are gardening on a balcony or roof, be sure to look into weight restrictions before introducing a raised bed to the space.)

Consider your space's growing conditions

Most vegetables, especially the heat seekers — tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, etc. — require at least six to eight hours of sunlight a day to bear flowers and then fruit. Take a few days to assess where the sun moves in your space throughout the day to make sure you get enough light. If your space is windy, consider using a shield to protect your plants.

One great thing about raised beds is they can be placed anywhere, making them ideal for a small, urban yard, where the soil may be poor quality. Patio stones and decks are also great space candidates. If all the sunlight happens to shine on your driveway, for example, consider a long, narrow raised bed that runs alongside or some other type of raised bed structure that will still fit when the car is parked.



Fabric pots are easy to store. JOSHUA WHITE FOR WOOLLY POCKET

Many fabric-raised beds are deep enough to plant root vegetables. The best part is you can empty them out and fold them up (be sure they're dry first) for the winter months, pulling them out again next spring. This also makes it easier to bring your "raised bed" with you when you move. Les Urbainculteurs and Woolly Pocket have online shops that sell fabric-raised beds.

Consider a kit

Kits may seem pricey, but consider them a long-term investment. Local companies, such as Freedom Growing, offer raised bed kits perfect for a small area that gets a lot of sun, like the corner of a patio or balcony. And everything you need to put them together will be delivered right to your door. If you don't have the tools, borrow them from a neighbour or a local tool-lending library.

Some companies will deliver a raised bed kit, build it and bring along the soil required to fill it.

TARA NOLAN



Vertical gardens maximize space. DONNA GRIFFITH

Grow up, up, up!

Vertical gardening isn't a new buzzword, but it's one that continues to gain traction as green thumbs get creative with their growing structures. To grow vining veggies, install a small trellis system to train plants to grow upwards to-