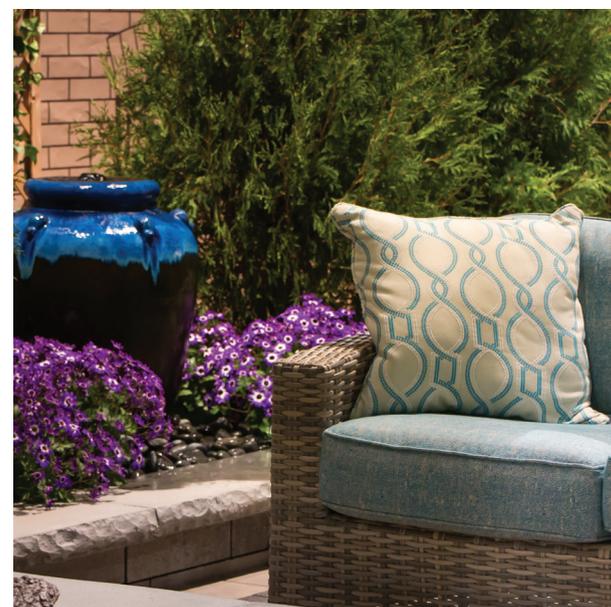


# Patio Personality Plus

Bringing the indoors outdoors has been a trend for a long time, but here are some new trends in outdoor living in 2018.



By Christina Salwitz



**T**rends for 2018 patio décor are a mashup that may hold some unexpected surprises. We've seen the trend of the Old World, Euro-style and ornate on the way out for some time with buyers opting for clean lines, ease of maintenance and above all comfort. If I were to choose one phrase to describe today's options for outdoor décor, it would be "living room worthy."

The phrase that also describes it might be tired to some of us, but it does still ring true: "neutrals with

a pop of color" are dominant stylistically for good reason. There will always be a divergent segment of the population that will want bold bright colors and patterns, but for the most part the hottest color this year is cool gray for the patio.

Whether you choose to call it gray, charcoal, silver or stone, it may sound counterintuitive for those of us who live in gray, snowy and colorless climates for the majority of the year to prefer gray for large investment pieces. But if you think about it, there's

plenty of good reason for it. Gray is the über neutral of neutrals; it can be warm or cool, and straddle the middle ground between quaint cottage and sophisticated high rise. If gray is not your thing, other neutrals like bronze tones and whites are hot as well.

In April when I went to visit my local patio furniture store, Summer House (family owned, products are available for shipping nationwide), the minute I walked into the large showroom, it was plain as day

that gray is no shrinking violet when it comes to variety and style. From the metal finishes to wood tones, fabric choices and accessories, the elegance of gray was everywhere. I found myself saying over and over as I toured the showroom, "I would have this IN my house!"

I interviewed sales expert David Rekow who has been working at Summer House for 30 years about the trends he is seeing for 2018 and he had some amazing insight.

"Other than gray being hot, it's really all about the materials now. A customer can go to Costco and get a secondary market product made specifically for the box store and they will find a great price on a fire pit/table, patio umbrella or set of patio furniture. However, the big difference is the type of materials they are featuring. Even a same brand name product might be an inferior grade fabric or surface and cost the client a lot more to maintain or even replace in the long run."

David recommends seeking out professional guidance on materials and not being afraid to feature a higher performance product that will last longer with minimal care.

#### Patio Furniture Style

It's all about the details these days. From extruded aluminum to milled metals and updated woven materials for furniture, there's a lot to learn about the new lighter weight, harder working, more low-maintenance materials that our latest patio options are made from. Updated powder coatings on various metals offer a wider variety than ever of textures and finishes. Sets that mimic Adirondack styles are updated with the look and feel of the Trex decking materials we have known for years now, yet are vastly upgraded for wear and tear as well as color and style options. You will find newer styles in this classic that have contemporary lines and a wider variety of seating height options.

Sectional sets that feature modular options are incredibly popular for the same reasons we love them indoors, but these sets are featuring mixed materials as well so that you may have teak side tables incorporated into the design ready-made for your cool beverage.

What was apparent at Summer House was that no matter whether you are a customer or reseller, flex use was important to everyone. Pieces that can be re-arranged to suit

small gatherings or larger parties are being favored. The term for this that I learned is called "non-standard configuration," which makes sense for today's customers who prefer to think of themselves often as one of a kind in their tastes.

The new woven styles are thicker, chunkier and getting tons of buzz too. More resistant to weather, these sets are

being sold as sectionals too, but they are often featuring that textural look that customers who favor contemporary, or transitional styles, love for the mixed materials look. Even old-fashioned-looking wicker styles are updated for 2018 with heavy-duty aluminum framing and thicker, heavier weave textures.



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Blurring the traditional lines of personal style, you will see 2018 still featuring the trendy “Boho Chic” look with bold print fabric accents and handcrafted looking details. Also, the “Coastal or Seaside Casual” movement is still strong with sage green now accompanying the typical blue, white and sand colors in outdoor furnishings. Both of these looks play into the “Staycation” movement where customers are putting funds into the patio and staying home rather than traveling to crowded summer locales.

Last but not least in the hot style category that’s newer to outdoor fashions is “Industrial Mod.”

Though it’s been popular inside for a few years already, this design aesthetic has come outdoors with gusto. Cool neutrals and masculine details are gaining momentum outside. Even if you add bits of bold color here and there to customize and brighten it for summer, the industrial look is all about those details. Bolstered by the steam punk movement, you will see more details of this style going forward for sure as hotels and resorts begin to move away from some of the traditional styles of the 20th century.



### What other trends should you be on the lookout for in 2018?

- Outdoor daybeds are selling like crazy. In styles ranging from big, round, nap-worthy pieces to unique and hand-carved wood, a cozy spot to spend the lazy summer days curled up with a good book is an idea that sells.
- Space saving shade umbrellas are huge. They’re offset so that you don’t have to take up valuable space with the umbrella footing in the center of the patio and are ideal when it comes to function. Many of the newer fabrics are made to last much longer without fading.
- Flooring, from outdoor carpets that bring color and pattern to a neutral space to woven and wood look ceramics, keeping our bare summer feet comfy without splinters and heat is high priority for consumers.
- Updated styles in outdoor ceiling fans are incredibly valuable in hotter and humid climates as well as in-ceiling heating that blends in seamlessly without taking up floor space like old freestanding models.
- Accessories like privacy screens, lanterns and container gardens continue to gain popularity.
- Lighting, whether it’s a walkway, path, stairways or garden accent lighting, having a well-lit landscape and patio is important for style-conscious customers.
- A few unexpected things that are catching many customers’ attention for the patio and outdoor living space that may surprise you as a trend: yoga decks or spaces devoted only to yoga; spaces for outdoor movie nights; and one that makes a ton of sense in the 21st century, outdoor charging stations for all of our devices so that we can stay near the pool, fire pit or play area longer.



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## DIRTY SECRETS



Cushion technology has been updated too. Sectional sofas need to be able take the rain and other conditions before we cover them and put them away for winter, and wow do they ever! New types of cushion fill and venting allow them to drain and dry faster than ever before.

Customers have also demanded improvements in pillows too as our patios are gaining strength as an extension of our indoor square footage for summer. Customers are seeking weather-friendly fabrics that behave like indoor comfort. People want to be able to karate chop those pillows and get that softened look just like indoors and the old stiff uncomfortable styles didn't allow for that. CHOP away!

In patio tables, I was enamored with a fantastic lightweight aluminum table that looked and felt exactly like wood. It was so beautiful, I'd consider having that inside my house too. Mosaic was another finish detail that caught my eye. What a way to bring color, visual texture and artistic personality to any space.



### High Fire Design

Fire pits and fire tables continue to grow in popularity. For 2018, the emphasis is now on square and rectangular or low-profile styles over the round. And the surface options are beautiful.

Heat-tolerant ceramics in many flexible colors are accented with glittery glass fire media to cover the gas jets for that "pop of color." The low-profile fire tables are fashionable for the low-profile sectional sets and even have a unique gas canister and sits on its side for efficient use of space.

You can even get some that are lit with LED lighting from underneath, glass windscreens and toppers for when not in use that feature hammered copper! **LGR**

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