

5 Outdoor Living Design Trends for 2021

By Teresa McPherson

These offerings can turn your customers' outdoor living space into the space of their dreams.

Don't call it a comeback — outdoor living has been a big category in lawn and garden for years. But the pandemic — and subsequent stay-at-home mandates we've all endured — have sent it into new levels of growth. After all, who wants to stare at the same four walls all day when you can have fresh air and sunshine?

We've all had to find new ways to entertain ourselves (and, carefully, others) as we quarantined, creating outdoor spaces we actually want to spend time in. And as a result, many garden centers have benefitted from the extra time and investment that we've all put into these outdoor spaces.

So what's to come in the outdoor living arena? Several design trends have emerged that you'll want to keep in mind for your outdoor living merchandise.

1 Connecting the Outdoors and Indoors

While creating a more seamless transition between indoor and outdoor living space is a trend common in the West and South, it is expected to take flight in the warmer summer months of the North and East.

"Your outdoor space should feel like an extension of your home," Abbey Stark, senior interior design leader at IKEA,

told Better Homes and Gardens. While this might be easier in warm-weather climates, where patio doors and windows can be left open, your customers can use the same materials both indoors and out (such as outdoor rugs, string or pendant lights, and tropical potted plants that can be brought in when the evening air cools).

2 Creating Experience Spaces

Homeowners are approaching outdoor living spaces by imagining and then creating the experiences they want to have, instead of the aesthetics, according to Better Homes and Gardens. This can mean stone pizza ovens, outdoor bars or cozy reading nooks. Comfy seating with pillows and cushions arranged around a fire pit create a space where your customers will want to spend their time.

Veranda magazine anticipates greater investment in products to make our patios, balconies, and backyards more livable in colder temperatures that would ordinarily keep us indoors. They suggest looking to the Scandinavians, whose Danish term Hygge (pronounced “hoo-ga,”) encompasses a feeling of cozy contentment and well-being — even in the coldest winter months. Think fireplaces or fire pits, outdoor heaters and plenty of thick blankets to enjoy the outdoors.

3 Gardening in Small Spaces

City dwellers can create a dynamic outdoor living area in a smaller space; it just requires a bit more intentionality, according to Veranda. A patio or small balcony can be transformed into a verdant area of relaxation with vertical gardens such as living walls, trellises or screens.

Potted plants can also thrive on a small, sunny balcony — a perfect spot for a cutting garden or potted herbs that are just steps away from the kitchen. What’s more, growers are starting to recognize the need for indoor edible plants with miniature vegetable plants. These potted plants can be grown and harvested indoors without the need for planting them in the ground.



4 Front Yard Entertaining

While the backyard or patio can serve as a quiet and calm space, the front yard offers a safe venue for more impromptu gatherings — and plenty of social distancing space. A long table or a set or two of comfortable chairs can provide a spot to casually catch up with the neighbors or host a happy hour.

A water fountain can add to the ambiance, as can some container plants. Lawn games such as darts, cornhole or giant Jenga can add to the fun and get the whole family outside together.

5 Warm Tones

According to Better Homes and Gardens, softer shades of orange, yellow, pink and green are making a comeback. These warm and welcoming tones are showing up in many outdoor living and accents and décor products like furniture, decorative lighting and outdoor rugs.

Yellow, in particular, is vying for more widespread use. Pantone selected “Illuminating” [yellow] as the 2021 Pantone Color of the Year, and the National Garden Bureau declared 2021 as the “Year of the Sunflower.” While sunflowers are sure to be a big seller, customers might also be looking for annuals and perennials that fit better in a container or in a flower bed — think daffodils, lilies, irises and marigolds. 🌻

