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Create A Garden And Patio Design To Enjoy Year–Round

By Robert Mosse

Retreat to a garden and patio design that's beautiful year–round, and takes minimum fuss. What makes this possible? Carefree plants with continuous blooms, and a well–planned garden structure.

You don't need to be a lawn and garden expert or landscape designer to do this. Here are a few tips for creating a super yet simple garden and patio design that will be a knockout!

The first step is to take a birds–eye view of your garden and patio area. Make a rough sketch of your space, and play around with a few designs until you like what you see. As you're doing this, get some great ideas from existing garden and patio decorations. Pay a visit to other people's gardens, or public gardens. Look through home landscaping and gardening magazines, find what you like, and develop plans of your own.

Decide what style or theme is right for you... formal, casual, rustic, Southwestern, Japanese... there are enormous possibilities. Then stay with that style and theme so the overall effect does not become confusing. For instance, you wouldn't want to combine bronze garden sculptures of saints or cherubs with rustic wooden wagon wheels.

Imagine what your patio area will most often be used for. You may plan to entertain lots of outdoor dinner guests. If so, be sure your patio space has plenty of room for the largest number of people right from the beginning. Your patio may be more of a private, reflective retreat for enjoying the sun, reading a book, or gazing up at the stars. Determine the use of shade, open sun, or even covering it with a roof.

Now take your favorite ideas and put them into your rough plans – and soon you'll have a design that is ready for action.

The next step is to create your garden and patio design to scale – you can use landscaping software for this, or do it by hand. Choose the flowers you intend to plant, noting how many you will need for each month of your growing season, and select the landscaping structures that will give your design its form.

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Some say the secret to a beautiful garden and patio design is having a good amount of hard structure. This is what landscape designers refer to as "good bones" – walls, fences, garden bridges, gates, garden arbors, landscape statues, garden fountains ... even a strong line of evergreen plants.

Garden structures such as these create forms and lines, giving your garden and patio design definition and dimension. Plus, in the winter when most plants are empty and bare, your garden will preserve its shape and sense of completeness. It's amazing how just one or two structures can produce this satisfying effect.

Most garden and landscaping structures are built to withstand the elements. Treated pine, cedar and teak garden furniture, trellises, arbors, and decorative fencing are great choices. Stone, copper, and bronze garden statuary will never let you down. Garden fountains bring incredible beauty and atmosphere to any garden and patio design – in fact, entire gardens have been built around them.

Next, choose annual spring flowers and perennial plants that will give you blooms from one season to the next. For instance, select carefree roses that need no pruning or spraying, and bloom continuously from spring through fall. Fill planters with beautiful blooming flowers such as Oriental lilies or verbena for different colors all summer long. Establish flower beds in corners or along walk ways. Always consider your local climate and plant according to the sun and shade needs of your plants.

As you plan your garden and patio design, create paths or walk ways that lead from one area to the next. Rambling garden paths are relaxing and charming... and if laid out thoughtfully, will be a big help to you as the gardener. Paths can be of stone, brick, flagstone, gravel, or mown turf, although grass paths require more upkeep. Garden sculptures or sitting benches thoughtfully placed along the way provide wonderful expression.

If you want garden and patio designs that are pre-drawn, there are ready-made plans available in books and magazines. This is another fine way to get off to a solid start. Use pre-made garden plans from start to finish, or incorporate parts of them right into you own creative plans.

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Robert Mosse is a gardening and lawn care specialist and author of the "Easy" Lawn and Gardening Book Series. Visit Robert at

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Warm & Toasty Outdoors with Patio Heaters

By Nicholas Webb

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The Heat is On with Patio Heaters.

Any outdoor lover will tell you that the right patio heater will allow you to extend your love of the open-air life all year round.

A 15–20 foot circle of heat can easily increase the outside temperature by 10–25 degrees Fahrenheit and that makes all the difference between having to stay inside and eating out.

As with most patio equipment, the choice of the right heater for your needs isn't always such an immediate process. First thing to know is whether you really need or want one. Some factors to consider are your lifestyle. How often do you eat or entertain outside? What is the weather predominantly like?

Now a few words concerning your budget.

How much are you willing to spend for a patio heater?

Prices for free standing models generally start at around \$200–\$250 and can go up to and over the \$1000 mark. For normal domestic use, most sources indicate a \$300–\$400 model as being perfect.

The more expensive models are generally intended for commercial use. The newer, better-made patio heaters offer a selection of safety features and temperature controls. They will allow you to entertain in the early spring evenings. Just take a family breakfast set outside, or simply have a barbecue anytime you feel like it.

Modern patio heaters are: so safe, you needn't worry about fire very quiet really make having a patio or deck worthwhile

Freestanding heaters are usually about 7 feet tall and resemble a lamppost with a conical umbrella type housing on top. This helps radiate heat downwards. Some electric models are available but the majority use propane or natural gas, and these are by far the best type to consider. The gas canisters are contained in the base of the heater.

A quality patio or garden heater will generate around 45–50,000 BTUs, and that would be enough to keep you warm when you sit anywhere within a 20-foot diameter.

Most models now come with wheels, which facilitate moving your heater from one place to another while some even come with carrying cases. When it's not in use, you can put the patio or deck heater in its carry case, or under an appropriate cover, and just wheel it away!

Many retailers are also able to offer smaller tabletop, or footstool, versions of the freestanding models.

So, apart from the price, the main things to look out for are the BTUs and temperature controls. The rest is really just design. Choose something you like ... and prepare to enjoy more quality time outdoors.

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In summary, garden or patio heaters will allow you to enjoy the outdoor life all year round.

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A

site that provides valuable patio furniture and patio accessories consumer tips and buying advice. Check it out before parting with your money.

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