



DIY ideas for simple outdoor summer living by **Mark Rayner** & seasonal cuisine from **Marilyn Wightman**.

OUR outdoor living areas come into their own on summer days, whether it's just for an early morning cuppa on the deck or for balmy summer barbeques stretching long into the evening. But to get the most from your outdoor living area it's necessary to get the basics right. The area should have plenty of comfortable seating with additional lighting options for after-dark enjoyment. You can supplement your outdoor living area with clever shelving solutions to display favourite plants or garden ornaments or to store eating and drinking utensils. Finish it off by decorating the area with potted colour or hanging baskets.

Wining and dining

Outdoor dining tables and chairs are available at most major DIY stores and come in a range of styles and sizes to suit every taste and budget. But if you fancy building your own from scratch or want to supplement existing seating, there are a few things to bear in mind. A simple sturdy outdoor dining table can be built from a piece of 20mm treated plywood with a 100mm plywood strip running around each edge to keep the tabletop stable. Use 50mm x 50mm timber for the legs. Clamp them together to saw at the same time to ensure they're all the same length). Fix them with exterior glue and galvanised nails and bolts. For maximum protection finish off with a coat of Resene Quick Dry and two coats of Resene Lumbersider in your favourite colour. In the same way, you can give an existing old wooden dining table a new lease of life outside by protecting it with several generous

1. Fill a corner of the deck with favourite potted colour to further enhance your outdoor living.
2. Go vertical and save space by attaching pots to a fence or wall with plastic pot-hangers.
3. A canvas deckchair makes for simple summer seating. The wooden frame of this one has been decorated with a couple of coats of red house paint before assembling.
4. Brighten up outdoor living areas with hanging baskets of potted colour, but ensure they are put well above head height.
5. A plain garden bench can be made from a thick plank, finished off with exterior paint.



- 6. Colonial fence pickets and 20mm plywood makes for a simple outdoor shelf unit. This was finished off with Resene Lumbersider tinted to Resene Lickety Split.
- 7. Supplement garden lighting with candles – this terracotta candleholder has been painted with a decorative verdigris effect.
- 8. Create a simple summer planter from treated fence palings and finish off with potted colour.

coats of exterior paint. Avoid tables made from interior particle board – even if they're painted they'll quickly deteriorate.

Bench seating is much easier to construct than individual chairs, and can be as simple as a heavy plank of wood fixed between two wooden end-supports, concrete plinths or even large upturned terracotta pots. Keep seating to a comfortable height (450mm is a good rule of thumb), and ensure you have an adequate depth to the seat (a minimum of 350mm). Wooden interior dining chairs or stools can also be reconfigured for use outside by replacing the padded seats with treated plywood – simply remove the seat and use it as a template, cutting it out with a jigsaw and fixing it with exterior PVA glue.

Other options for extra summer seating include canvas deckchairs, wicker chairs or even metal gabions filled with stones and topped off with a plank of wood. Another easy idea for a garden stool is a small round concrete paver fixed to an upturned large terracotta pot.

Shelving

Outdoor shelving units can be readily built from fence palings, exterior plywood or landscaping timber and fixed together with galvanised nails and construction glue. Construct them as you would an interior bookcase, and finish off with appropriate exterior timber stain or paint. Another very simple option is to lay a series of fence palings between two columns of concrete blocks (or even terracotta pots), fixing together with a generous blob of construction glue.

Again, old wooden bookcases or cupboards can also be recycled as outdoor shelving, but make sure they're well protected with exterior paint or varnish.





Wicker chairs make comfortable garden seating and an old wooden table repainted takes on a new lease of life.



SITTING PRETTY

To create a fun and funky garden stool, fix a round concrete paver to an upturned terracotta pot with a generous blob of construction glue. Seal the pot and paver with appropriate primers and decorate with testpots of exterior house paint.



MINI DIY IDEA

This mini candleholder was made from a coloured glass tumbler and small terracotta pot and saucer. The terracotta pot and saucer were sealed with Resene Terracotta sealer and then fixed together with exterior PVA glue. They were painted with a Resene testpot of Resene Black and a coat of Resene Crackle Effect, followed by a coat of Resene Red Berry. The candleholder was finished with two coats of Resene Multishield+ gloss.

Lighting

For safety reasons it's important that you use a registered electrician to install mains-operated garden lighting – and they'll also be able to advise what style and intensity of light you'll need to illuminate an outdoor area.

This main lighting can always be supplemented with low-level solar lights or even candlelight. Solar lights can be freestanding or wall-mounted and plastic surrounds can easily be painted with a metallic effect paint to improve their appearance. Candles can be put into large glass vases to stop a breeze from blowing them out and, for a colourful effect, you can simply stand tealights or small candles in coloured glass tumblers. Consider burning citronella candles too, as they can help to keep unwanted insects at bay.

Seasonal scent and colour

Make your outdoor living area even more enticing with a splash of seasonal colour. Create simple planters from offcuts of treated plywood or timber to display potted colour, or go vertical (and save space) by hanging terracotta pots from a fence or wall with plastic pot-hangers (these are available from most DIY stores and garden centres).

Refresh hanging baskets with easy-care summer favourites, making sure they are well above the head height of even the tallest guest. Fill a corner of the deck or patio with a selection of ornamental pots with favourite summer flowers. Consider too, using flowers such as sweet peas or plants with aromatic foliage, such as scented-leafed pelargoniums, to make your outdoor living area fragrant.

– Mark Rayner