

# DÉCOR & DINING

## Prêt-à-Patio

CREATE A DELIGHTFUL SUMMER ESCAPE  
RIGHT IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD  
BY SHERI RADFORD



Sarah Keenleyside and Brian McCourt have worked miracles on a lot of patios, decks and backyards. As the hosts of HGTV's *Backyard Builds*, they've designed everything from an outdoor movie theatre in one family's backyard for the entire neighbourhood to enjoy to what Keenleyside describes as "the ultimate country supper club" complete with a "designer chicken coop."

Whether planning major upgrades like these or just a minor touch-up, she advises that you keep in mind the design and flow of any indoor spaces that open or look onto your outdoor space. Treat the area like another room in your home, albeit a room without all the walls—and possibly without a ceiling. Then ask yourself the crucial question: "How do I want to live in that space?" Perhaps you want to focus on lounging, or cooking, or relaxing in front of a firepit.

If your outdoor living space is small, McCourt says making it multifunctional is key: "You can eat on a couch, but you can't lounge on a dining room table." He also advises taking into account your skills and budget, and "not biting off more than you can chew." For him, "A



comfy place to sit is number one." Fortunately, the furniture tech used to construct outdoor pieces has come a long way: "They look like interior pieces, but really, really durable."

The **Informel** armchair and three-seat sofa from **Roche Bobois** feel plush enough to sit in any living room, but are made to withstand the great outdoors. Similarly comfortable, the **Coro** lounge chairs, dining chairs and sun-loungers at **LivingSpace** bring a sleek and modern elegance to the patio, as do chic tables and chairs from **Knoll's** 1966 collection, designed by Richard Schultz. And outdoor pillows from **Details by Mr. K** add a splash of colour along with some extra padding.

When it comes to an outdoor table, consider a modern twist on the traditional picnic table. The Hopper AA aluminum table by **Extremis** looks sleek and streamlined and comes in five highly scratch-resistant colours. Also by Extremis, the geometric-looking Marina picnic table is available in four colours and designed to minimize the number of table legs, which your knees will thank you for. Find both at **Heritage Office Furnishings**.

Outdoor lighting can be as low-key as a simple string from **Indigo** or as elegant and refined as a statement piece from **Louis Vuitton**. The revered brand recently added lanterns by **Zanellato/Bortotto** to its Objets Nomades collection. Each features a blown-glass light dome, interwoven strips of LV leather in a honeycomb pattern and a rechargeable LED light in a frosted glass bulb, which casts a warm and romantic glow.

Some whimsical touches to make outdoor time even more enjoyable include bright trays from Details by Mr. K, a hammock from **MEC** and a Fältmal cushion/quilt from **Ikea**. The clever Fältmal easily converts from a pillow to a blanket with button fastenings, to keep it from sliding off your shoulders. Then there's the ultimate playful purchase for fun in the sun: a small inflatable pool from **Bed Bath & Beyond** (if you live in a condo, make sure your strata allows it).

Keenleyside and McCourt note there are some challenges to designing for Vancouver weather, such as outdoor rugs that never fully dry. To deal with that exact problem, they created what Keenleyside calls "a painted area rug" on one patio, using paint on concrete. She says, "The look is this beautiful geometric area rug, but there is zero chance of any moisture getting stuck underneath it, and it's really easy to spray down with a hose."

One clear advantage of the local weather is the ease with which plants grow. Keenleyside says, "We in Ontario are very jealous of your greenery options, and all year round." McCourt adds, "Plants make any backyard look amazing." And even the tiniest Coal Harbour patio has enough space for a few plants. To help cultivate your green thumb, pick up a watering can from **EQ3** along with a sterling-silver flowerpot and splash out on gardening labels from **Tiffany & Co.**

And don't be daunted if you have neither the experience of Keenleyside and McCourt nor the budget of *Backyard Builds*. The hosts both agree that their most rewarding projects have been the ones with the smallest budgets. According to McCourt, "It really challenges you to use your mind instead of your wallet." ▼

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