

This porch by New South Home bridges the gap between indoor and out.

INSIDE OUT

THE LINE BETWEEN INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR SPACES CONTINUES TO BLUR

BY **JENNIFER BRINGLE**



There was a time when the line — make that walls — between indoor and outdoor spaces were very clearly defined. Living room here, patio there, separate and very rarely equal.

Those days are most assuredly over. With the rise of design sophistication among consumers (thanks to Pinterest, HGTV and the like) coupled with incredible innovations

in performance materials that make things like outdoor upholstery and exterior rugs a reality, the line between inside and out is blurrier than ever.

“With the warm weather creeping further into the fall, people want to spend as much time as possible outside before the dreaded cold weather months, and they are realizing that with all the outdoor product available on the market, they can extend their

living spaces beyond their walls,” says designer Libby Langdon. “It’s the ultimate luxury, being able to relax in the fresh air in a space that is as luxurious and styled as

the indoor living room.”

One of the biggest drivers of this trend of elevated outdoor living is certainly advances in performance materials. Performance fabrics are soft, luxurious and designed with the same level of style as their indoor-only counterparts. Plush outdoor rugs boast lavish texture, while exterior lamps let the party continue well into the night. Powder-coated metals, realistic faux wood materials and even outdoor-safe upholstery upgrade casual furnishings above the simple patio sets of yore.

“Performance fabrics, specifically the extent of options now available, are definitely the strongest factor driving this trend,” says Sarah Keelen, design director, Swavelle/Bella Dura. “People just didn’t have the opportunity a decade ago to use materials that mimicked the look and feel of the ones inside their homes.

“And a few years ago traditionally outdoor fabric manufacturers made a big push into the indoor market and consumers responded strongly, wanting furniture inside their homes to be easily cleanable. To sell to these mar-

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kets, outdoor fabric suppliers had to adjust their offerings to look more residential, which simultaneously gave outdoor manufacturers access to more of these looks than ever before.”

The expansion of the outdoor kitchen industry has opened up a new avenue for exterior design, as well. Clients who have a fully appointed outdoor living space don't want just a grill off to the side — they need an exterior kitchen that not only boasts a grill with all the bells and whistles, but also sinks, refrigerators, wine coolers, storage and so much more.

But this synergy isn't only something that happens in the backyard. The lines are blurring indoors, as well, with

clients requesting indoor/outdoor rugs, furnishings and draperies in performance fabrics that resist fading and wear, and are easy to clean.

And it's not just about bringing outdoor products inside — this notion of welcoming the exterior in is expressed in other ways, too, such as nature-inspired palettes and prints, natural fibers and even actual plants.

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“The movement towards more casual and relaxed living and entertaining shows this — less formal spaces and large open concept rooms and homes,” says Melissa Lee, principal designer, New South Home. “Bringing natural elements and textures into the home through furnishings and accessories creates a vacation/resort feel that is relaxing and calming to the soul.”

This trend of creating harmony between interior and exterior rooms has a major benefit for designers, too — more work. Now the project doesn't have to stop at the back door, and with so many homes devoting more space to outdoor functionality, the possibility to design multiple exterior rooms is increasing. In fact, according to research from sister publication *Casual Living*, more than two-thirds of designer clients are requesting assistance with planning and buying for their outdoor spaces. And 78% of those clients want their indoor and outdoor rooms to have a sense of continuity.



The Playa, Catskill and Tectonic collections by Wesley Mancini for Bella Dura utilize novelty threads to create style that's as soft as it is beautiful.

“This move is no doubt beneficial to designers because it means more work for us, which is great,” says Langdon. “Not only are we designing the traditional indoor spaces of a home to feel complete, but now outdoor living and dining rooms, as well.”

And creating these spaces for clients means more than simply finding complementary colors and matching the indoors with the out. It's about building a vibe that permeates the home from the front door all the way through to the backyard. It's about embracing the total home, and creating spaces that are a haven for clients and allow them to escape the pressures of the outside world.

“Having the comforts of the indoors such as fully upholstered seating, televisions, outdoor cooking centers — all surrounded by the beauty of nature — creates the sense of being on vacation at a high end resort right in your backyard,” says Lee. ▸