

Outdoor rooms don't have to be complicated



Creating an outdoor garden room can be accomplished with limited space and budget.

Photo/Gardener's Supply Company

By Melinda Myers

No matter your budget, space or gardening experience, you can design an outdoor entertainment area for you, your family and friends to enjoy.

Start by gathering ideas from magazines and the Internet for examples of outdoor garden spaces.

Next, select an area that is convenient and suitable for your outdoor entertaining. Define the space using outdoor rugs and furniture or tall planters ([gardeners.com](http://www.gardeners.com)) to serve as the

walls for your garden room. A bistro set and a couple of chairs makes for an intimate space on a balcony. Those with more room may want to include an outdoor wicker and teak dining set. Fill the planters with ornamental grasses, papyrus, cannas and other flowering plants to create a living screen.

Add a splash of color and flavor to the space by growing herbs and vegetables combined with flowers in these and additional planters in your garden space. Include ingredients for your favorite drinks, appetizers and meals. Your guests will enjoy plucking a few mint leaves for their iced tea or mojito, harvesting fresh greens from a salad garden bar and dressing up the meal with a few pesticide-free edible flowers like nasturtiums, calendula and day lilies.

Busy gardeners and those that travel may want to try self-watering pots. These containers have built-in water reservoirs to provide a constant flow of water to the plants. This means you need to water less often, while still enjoying healthy and productive plants.

Add some height and focal points with topiaries. Purchase a sculpted evergreen or train vines up a twist topiary frame to create a bit of living art. And don't forget to add some garden art and statuary.

Extend your enjoyment with outdoor lighting. A few votive candles in old punch cups are perfect for intimate gatherings in small spaces. Add a bit more illumination with the help of solar illuminated planters, solar deck lights, post caps, and solar cubes and spheres. No buried electric lines or extension cords needed. Use these lights to lead you down the path to your garden space or brighten the space for an evening of fun.

So get busy creating the garden room of your dreams. Once you get started, you will be looking for more opportunities for that quiet getaway, outdoor kitchen and more ways to enjoy

your garden.

Gardening expert, TV/radio host, author and columnist Melinda Myers has more than 30 years of horticulture experience and has written over 20 gardening books, including "Small Space Gardening and the Midwest Gardener's Handbook".