

fireplaces

purpose and placement



Corner gas fireplace with stone veneer and coffered ceiling.

Photo by Jeremy Hess Photographer/JH



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main focal point of the room? Do you want the fireplace to be able to be enjoyed from multiple rooms? Is the main purpose for it to provide a functional heat source for your home? These are all questions that should be answered during the design stage of your project.

Today, the most commonly used fireplace is the gas fireplace. These units are excellent for their low maintenance and ease of operation. Just flip a switch for instant ambience and warmth. Typically, a gas fireplace needs to be either directly vented through an exterior wall (also called 'direct-vented') or through a vent pipe run vertically through the ceiling to exit through the roof. Many manufacturers also provide two or three-sided fireplace units so they can be viewed from multiple rooms and vantage points.

If you appreciate the aroma of real wood burning, then you may want to consider a 'wood-burning fireplace unit'. These units are popular for their ability to burn wood logs without all of the added expense of a masonry foundation and chimney. These units cannot be direct-vented and must be vented vertically through the roof.

If your project does not allow for exterior venting, then an electric fireplace could be the solution for you. The 'flame' of the electric units tend to look less realistic than a gas unit, however manufacturers are continually improving on their style and appearance and have come a long way since they were first introduced into the market.

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Now if a "faux" fireplace unit is not quite what you are looking for, you may want to consider a real masonry fireplace. Masonry fireplaces tend to be a fairly large investment and are typically inefficient for heating. However they do present a sense of permanence and grandeur to any room in which they are featured. Often times masonry fireplaces are constructed in homes with the intention of enjoying the sound and smell of real wood burning on cold winter days.

Because of the time and effort it takes to create a real fire, a masonry fireplace may often become a beautiful but expensive decoration.

Let's talk a little bit about placement: One popular destination for flat screen TV's is above the fireplace. The advantage of that location is that you can centralize the focal point of the room, namely, both the fireplace and the TV

Photo by Jeremy Hess Photographer/JH



Brick masonry fireplace with solid wood beam mantle.

In the mist of summertime warmth, I'm sure thinking about a fireplace is probably the last thing on your mind. However, if you are considering the possibility of an addition or renovation at your home this fall then right now is the ideal time to be contemplating your options for a fireplace.

From a design perspective, you should ask yourself what the primary purpose of the fireplace is. Is it purely decorative and just for occasional use? Do you want it to be the



Gas fireplace with stone veneer, custom trimmed mantle, and tray ceiling.

Photo by Jeremy Hess Photographer/JH

in one line of site. This eliminates the need to be looking at two different walls to view those items. The disadvantage of placing the TV above the fireplace is that you may tend to feel like you are forced to look up at the screen when seated. If you have any neck or back issues, this may not be the best setup for you. Ergonomically speaking, having the TV at eye-level when seated would be ideal.

A creative idea for those of you who would like to position a fireplace so that it can be enjoyed from two adjoining rooms is a double-sided gas fireplace. For example, you could place the fireplace between the living room and the kitchen. Or if your master bedroom has a sitting area, placing a double-sided fireplace between those two spaces would be another option. Some manufacturers also provide indoor-outdoor gas fireplace units so that the fireplace can be enjoyed from both inside the house and outside on the rear patio.

The façade of a fireplace is another way you can add a personal touch to any room. Fireplace façades provide a great opportunity to introduce different materials or textures such as stone, brick, tile, slate, etc. You can be creative with the style and feel of



Photo by Jeremy Hess Photographer/JH

Raised contemporary two-sided fireplace with tile surround.

the mantle as well. Mantles can be custom built utilizing various styles of trim or even one large rustic barn beam. Cast stone mantle pieces are another possible option.

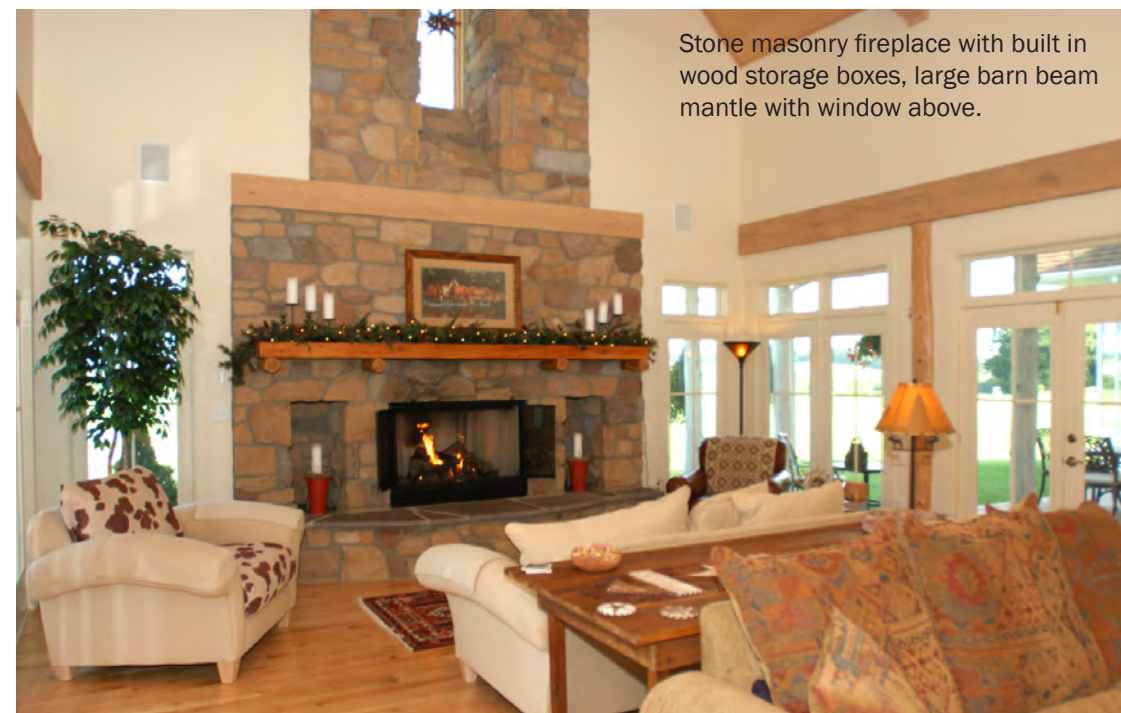
Regardless of the style of your home or addition, a fireplace can be a beautiful element that provides timeless style, comfort and value.

R&A



Two-sided gas fireplace with TV above.

Photo by Don Scanlin Photography



Stone masonry fireplace with built in wood storage boxes, large barn beam mantle with window above.



Photo by Jeremy Hess Photographer/JH

Gas fireplace with raised hearth, stone veneer and custom trimmed mantle.