

# OUTDOOR

# Family rooms

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One of the hottest trends in today's home improvement market is outdoor living. More and more families are heading to their backyards for more than just play. They are transforming their backyards to be extensions of their homes – for dining, for entertaining and even for inspiration.

Some outdoor living spaces are designed with water features while others incorporate pools and spas. Still others are designed with built-in kitchens. Each year there are more and more outdoor accessories available for consumers to choose from—patio furniture, fire pits, outdoor lighting, statues,

All photos courtesy of  
Esbshade's Landscaping.

pergolas and containers—and that’s before any flowers and shrubs are even planted.

Converting your backyard into an outdoor living paradise can appear to be a mammoth task—but it doesn’t have to be. With the help of a professional landscaping design center, they can lead you through the process so you can quickly start enjoying the outdoors!

**So Where Do I Start?**

Is your backyard beckoning you to do something with it this spring but you don’t even know where to start? You aren’t alone. Many consumers come to us looking for ideas on how to transform their landscape into something new. They know that what they have now isn’t working for their lifestyle, but they just don’t know how to begin.

The best place to start, before you even meet with landscape designers, is by looking at other outdoor living projects. Look at magazines, books, the Internet, and even take a walk around your neighborhood to see what other homeowners have done. This will give you some ideas.

Next, call a landscape design professional. He’ll arrange an appointment to visit your home to discuss your outdoor living project in further detail.

**How Will You Use The Space?**

When the landscape designer visits, he’ll ask you what you’ll be using the outdoor space for. Outdoor living spaces should complement your lifestyle and be functional. Will it be used for the kids to play or for entertaining? Will it be used simply to be outside to enjoy nature? Or will it be used for meditation or tranquility purposes? Or will it be used for a combination of many things? From there the designer will be able to form an outline of what elements



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At Esbenshade’s Landscaping, our goal is to create your outdoor living space as an extension of your home. Our landscape design and installation team is made up of experienced and accredited professionals dedicated to providing excellence in each landscape installation. We are known for our skilled workmanship and quality and selection of materials.

Esbenshade’s Landscaping is proud to announce we received five 2007 Awards in Landscape Excellence from the Pennsylvania Landscape & Nursery Association. To view all of our award-winning projects, visit us online at [www.esbenshades.com](http://www.esbenshades.com).



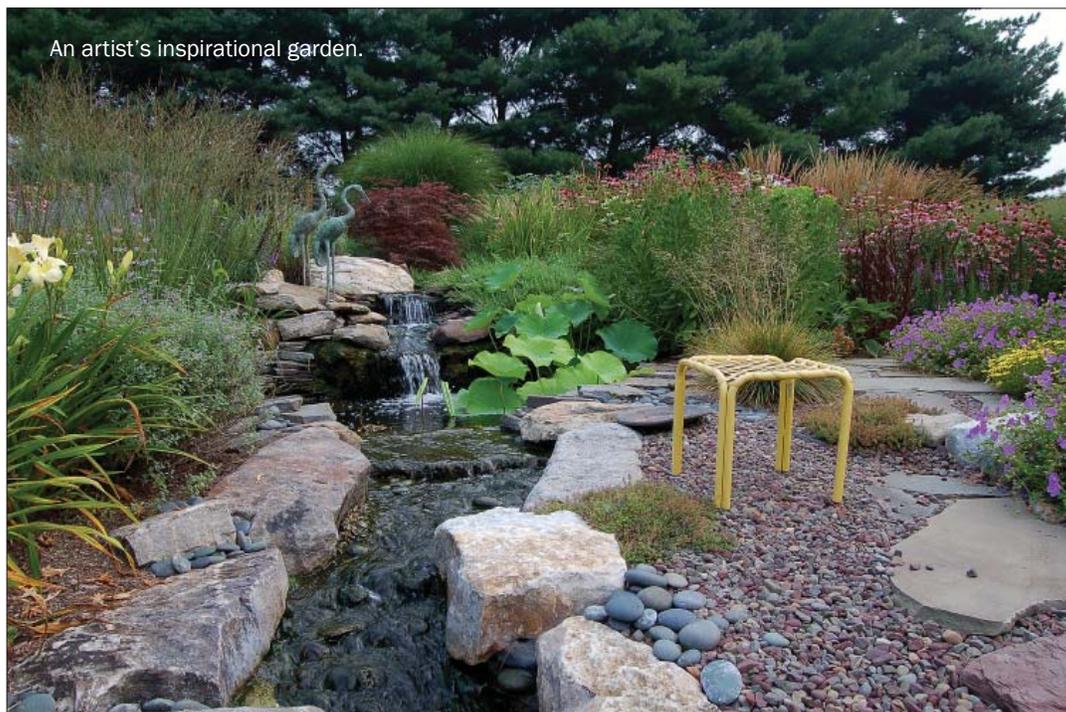
These two photos showcase an outdoor living space that was designed to have two rooms—a dining area and a more intimate conversational area under the pergola.

Above, notice the nook for the gas grill along with the handsome and very practical serving wall perfect for plating up food.

should be brought into your outdoor living space.

### What Do You Like?

The designer will then gauge what your likes and dislikes are with respect to plants. Perennials, trees, shrubs ... what do you like? What does your spouse like? And he'll even ask the reasons why you are fond of a particular plant. It could be that the husband is originally from the Pacific Northwest and loves evergreens, or that the wife's favorite roadside plant is a daisy. Whatever the reasons are, the designer will work with you by offering plant and shrub suggestions. He will also include existing trees, plants



when developing a hardscape plan—where materials vary in size, color and use. A good designer may show you over 100 photos, just to hear your reaction to them. “Oohs,” “ahs” and even

“yucks” help the designer determine what you want to see in your garden. If you really don't like the look of a particular stone, it is better for the designer to hear it in the preliminary stages than after the design process begins.

A landscape designer will spend time listening to you. He will make sure your design is right and fits your lifestyle so your garden is an extension of your home.

and shrubs that you already have in your backyard.

The designer will also take your home's architecture into consideration and develop a design that fits the home. If there are arches at the entrance of your home, the designer may include those features into your outdoor living space. If you have a particular style, the designer will work to carry those styles to the outside of your home.

### Show and Tell

The designer will also bring along photos of other projects to show you. This helps him determine, again, what you like and dislike. This is especially useful



A flagstone patio was installed that is large enough for entertaining, yet proportioned appropriately to the size of the home.



### Building Your Outdoor Room

The designer will then take all of the information you've provided him and begin designing your outdoor living space. Some landscaping designers hand-draw designs for their clients. At Esbenschade's, our landscape design team takes a digital photo of the yard and from that, develops a computer-aided landscape design. This technology is welcomed by clients because it allows our team to make changes to a landscape design instantaneously. Clients can see how their home will fit into the landscape design—and it is a simple mouse click to change a Blue Spruce tree to an Oak tree.

### Now the Work Begins

Once the design is finalized and approved, work can begin. Depending on how large and labor intensive the project is will dictate the length of time it takes the landscaping team to complete the work. But once it is finished, your family will have an additional "room" added to your home that was specifically designed with your outdoor living lifestyle in mind.

see our ad on the inside front cover

R&A

## 7 Tips for Hiring the Right Landscaping Professional

**1. Ask friends for referrals.** You can ask your landscaper for referrals, and he'll be happy to provide them to you, but nothing beats a referral from someone you already know. Your friends will tell you—candidly—the ups and downs of their landscaping project and what they'd do differently.

**2. Do your homework.** Educate yourself on landscaping before you begin interviewing design professionals. This doesn't mean that you need a degree in landscape design, but if you know some of the basic terms, you will not be lost when discussing your project with the designer.

**3. Quality of workmanship and warranty provided.** What does the finished project look like? How deep is the hardscape base material? What is the warranty on the job? (Esbenschade's Landscaping provides a 10 year warranty on workmanship).

**4. Comfort level.** Are you comfortable with your landscaper? This is probably the most important aspect of hiring any landscaping professional. In just about any home improvement project—inside or out—issues come up that need addressing. You, as the homeowner, need to feel comfortable that the landscaper will deal with the issues in a professional manner. Even years after the project is complete, you should feel comfortable contacting your landscaper to ask questions.

**5. Get more than one bid.** Meet with at least two or three landscape designers before hiring. This will allow you to see ideas other designers have for your space. It will also help you figure out which designer you are most comfortable with and determine the fair price for the work being performed.

**6. It is more than just price.** Yes, price is a factor, but different designers will incorporate different elements into their design—and that affects the price. You should be able to ask each designer you interview, "What are you doing differently?" It could be plant selection, design elements, or the depth of base material for the hardscape element of your outdoor living space. But be sure you know exactly what you are getting for the price quoted.

**7. Payment schedule.** You should be comfortable with the payment schedule. You shouldn't feel pressured into providing more up-front money than you are comfortable with (industry standard is between 25 and 40 percent), and you should never give 100 percent of the cost up front.