

Decked out for fun

ALTHOUGH springtime promises warmer days, the nights are still a little chilly for evening entertaining outdoors.

Instead of putting on coats or going inside when the sun goes down, why not gather the family around an open-pit fire, toast some marshmallows or roast a hot dog and enjoy the evening together.

There's something about an open fire in the evening that promotes gentle, quiet conversation.

The small deck, benches and firepit shown in the picture at the left are perfect for those family gatherings. As a unit, they can stand alone in the backyard, or be incorporated into a larger deck.

The 3-foot-square firepit is built of common concrete blocks. A wood cover topping the firepit doubles as a table. The cover is easily built of 2-by-2-inch western lumber spaced one-quarter inch apart in a row and held together by 2-by-2s nailed on each end. A smaller frame of 2-by-2s, installed underneath the cover, keeps the tabletop from sliding around.

A PAIR EACH of 7-foot and 9-foot benches ring the perimeter of the deck. Continuing the style set by the tabletop, the benches are built with a spaced row of 2-by-4s, set on edge, then endcapped with shorter 2-by-4s. Sturdy support for the benches is provided by pressure-treated posts set in concrete.

The deck is simple in design as well as construction. Courses of pressure-treated 2-by-4s, spaced one-quarter inch apart, are laid on sleepers of treated 4-by-4s set on a gravel bed. Each successive course rings the firepit to form an expanding lap pattern.

MAKE SURE ALL wood touching the ground is pressure treated to a quality control standard, such as LP-22 established by the American Wood Preservers Association for lumber in ground contact.

It is also recommended that lumber treated with preservative be handled in accordance with EPA safety guidelines. Western lumber accepts pressure treatment well, so there should be a ready supply available at local building material retailers.

Add some planters and an outdoor lamp post to the firepit deck and you're ready for evening entertaining. Wood is such a versatile and easily worked construction material, the lamp post and planter can be made from the same lumber as the deck and benches.

Plans and a materials list for the firepit, deck, benches, planter and lamp post shown in the picture are all contained in a booklet available for 35 cents in coin from the Western Wood Products Association, Dept. P-11, 1500 Yeon Building, Portland, Ore. 97204.



RICK SMITH/staff photographer

French connection

Sliding patio doors have a fresh updated look that borrows from the past somewhat. It's the return of the French door look that is both practical and romantic. The doors can swing open all the way, offering an unobstructed passage and a grand view. The model shown by Gary Weston of Plymouth is a Polia product.

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