

Great outdoor rooms

*Extend the season by
expanding your living space.*

By Cynthia G. La Ferle
special writer

Call it moving the indoors out or bringing the outdoors in — it's all a matter of perspective. Either way, the walls that separate us from the great outdoors are coming down.

Alfresco living spaces — porches, decks, gardens, and patios — extend the pleasures of Michigan's fleeting summer by providing additional places to eat, entertain, and enjoy the natural world.

"The days of the old cement patio slab are gone," says Jim Sica, President of Jimmies Rustics, Livonia. "The trend is toward making beautiful — sometimes elaborate — extensions of the interior, right down to sophisticated outdoor furnishings and cushion fabrics. It has a lot to do with the fact that people are spending more free time at home and want to make the most of it."

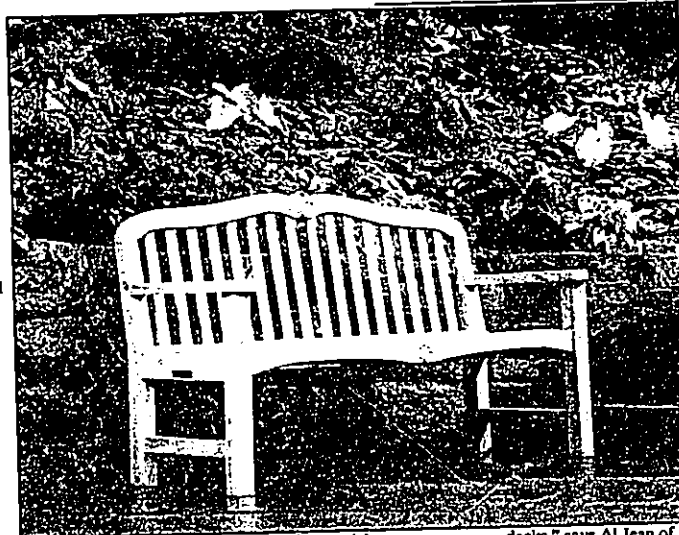
Unlike other home improvement projects, an outdoor "room" doesn't require tremendous effort or a huge budget. Using your imagination and a variety of furnishings and products, you can fashion an inviting retreat in a matter of days.

First, define your outdoor domain with walls of latticework, bright area rugs, awnings, canopies, or arbors. Walkways and paths designed from brick, grave, or bluestone can extend the space to the pool or garden.

ALL DECKED OUT

Decks can be plain-and-simple extensions of your interior world, or multi-level architectural wonders. Most decks are fairly easy to assemble — if you're a reasonably skilled carpenter.

But before you start, visit your local lumber yard and discuss your ideas with someone who can explain the pros and cons of the varieties of lumber available — cedar or redwood, for example. The experts at Erb Lumber in Birmingham and Haggerty Lumber in Walled Lake can offer tips on how to treat and maintain



"Teakwood — for benches, dining sets, & planters — is coming on strong this season," notes Jim Sica of Jimmies Rustics in Livonia. "It's insect-proof and durable enough to last a lifetime."

Elegant teak English benches, such as the one pictured here, are perfect in a private corner of a garden.

your chosen deck materials.

Front or back porches become nostalgic escapes when outfitted with down-home comforts and accessories.

Hanging swings, like the one on Great Grandma's porch, are making a comeback. These are available at most local hardware or lumber suppliers. "We're also stocking the old-fashioned gliders, which you can use on porches or

decks," says Al Jean of Jean's Hardware in Farmington Hills.

Complete the setting with a huge pot of red geraniums and a pitcher of lemonade, and you've got it made in the shade.

FINE FURNISHINGS

The newest garden furniture is so stylish that it's not surprising to find it used indoors as well as outside — depending on the whim of the decorator.

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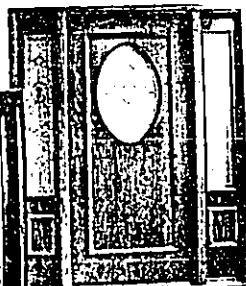
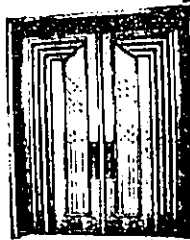
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