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# ROOMS without WALLS

by Maryjo Faith Morgan



Casual Dining Set. Photo courtesy of Norwalk, The Furniture Idea.

**m**auve skies and plum shadows welcome evening to your balcony. Night-blooming jasmine perfumes the gentle breeze that tickles your skin. Glasses clink while dinner sizzles on the grill flickering nearby. You cozy back into the cushiony depths of the chaise, wrapped in the soft hum of conversation. Basking in the warmth of friends gathered in this extension of your home, this room without walls, you sigh, satisfied that you've moved your living room outside.

strings of soft lighting. It would appear that the trend is out. Outside. Just move it outside.

Look at the furnishings currently available in fabrics suitable for the outdoors and you will see that ho-hum stripes give way to colorful prints, sophisticated florals, and woven textures. Even manufacturers of fine upholstery fabrics are offering outdoor varieties, some in weather-resistant acrylic. We are talking comfort and elegance in sun or shade. Faux stone dining tables or stone mosaics.



Intrigued by the thought of plush comfort outdoors but just don't know where to start? Do you wonder how to furnish a room with a ceiling made of sky? For some inspiration peruse some Ethan Allen brochures and see page after page of sumptuous furnishings displayed on patios and grassy knolls. The sheer variety of lavish styles and designs makes you feel like a kid in a candy store! With our temperate climate and fantastic views, it's only natural to move the indoors out, amenities and all.

Your fresh air room can be elaborately planned or charmingly simple. To get some more ideas, flip through some outdoor decorating magazines or do a quick google of "rooms without walls." You'll find rooms reminiscent of Italian villas with plush ottomans and armchairs beneath vine-sheltered porticos, low tables set with fruits and cheeses, flowers, and wine, and chandeliers or

Ceramic tile table tops that can be mixed and color-matched to cushions or your whim. Wicker-look resin covers sturdy aluminum frames, and fluffy pillows in every hue invite lounging and conversation. No molded plastic in sight! Don't worry too much, though. Everything you set outside on porch or patio does not need to be lightning-proof!

Daunted? Decide first how you want to use your outdoor space. Do you like to dine or nap? Read or entertain? Perchance, to daydream? Create a reading nook beneath a shade tree, or customize your patio.

Steve Hendricks of Greeley Tent and Awning suggests asking yourself three questions: How much time do you want to spend outside? What time of day suits you best? What would make it pleasant? Patio covers and shades will help you enjoy your special oasis any time of the day. "There are

**Chaise Lounge.** (left) Photo courtesy of Norwalk, The Furniture Idea.

**Wrought Iron Baker's Shelf.** (top) Photo courtesy of Ethan Allen.

**Decorative Engraved Table.** (top) Photo courtesy of Norwalk, The Furniture Idea.

**Table Pit.** (top) Photo courtesy of Patio & Dining Lifestyles.



retractable patio covers in manual or motorized models," says Hendricks. You can add vertical drop curtains for additional shade or screens for pest protection. Rick Pease of Innovative Openings adds, "Retractable Solar Screens Patio Shades are great for bright sunny days because they block the sun and not the view. Makes west facing patios usable and enjoyable for outdoor dining." He explained that the solar screens cut heat, ultraviolet rays, and glare up to 95% without having a closed in feeling.

Solariums or screen rooms offer extended comfort over three seasons; the passive solar of a glass-walled room enables you

to enjoy a sheltered but expansive view. Steve Lambert of Champion Windows says you simply decide how you want to use the space. What would be most comfortable may depend on directional exposure. You can make your room as formal or as casual as you desire.

Dianna Klawon of Norwalk- The Furniture Idea, suggests that for protected areas like covered patios, front porches, and solariums, carpets can add a homey touch. "Polypropylene pile area rugs are designed to look like sisal and are edged with leather-look vinyl, perfect for a porch grouping. Paint or faux finishes on concrete porches and patios also add character." Klawon adds that while some cushions may require covering to prevent fading, many offer UV protection and are water, mildew, fade, and stain resistant. Fabrics come in a full spectrum of colors and designs.

Design consultant Janna Jacobs at Patio and Dining Lifestyles suggests mesh sling chairs which are contoured for unparalleled comfort and sheer durability. "Mesh fabrics resist wind and are breathable." Of course the weight of the furniture should be considered if your area is exposed to wind or occasional strong gusts. There is a dazzling array of replacement cushion sets that would upgrade your comfort considerably.

Choose a cozy "party pit" as your seating centerpiece featuring a low table complete with a burner, logs and lava rocks, or an inset BBQ. Or perhaps a brushed aluminum bistro set is more your style, sleek and high. Embellish your patio with a "rug" of hand-painted tile or patterns actually stamped in the concrete. To create room-like groupings of furniture, use mirrors, and add lamps specially designed with canvas shades, stable bases, and heavy duty wiring for the outdoors. Story sticks and wrought iron or faux finish cement sculptures and showy planters liberally brimming with flowering plants will round out your space.

Transform smaller spaces such as balconies into lush relaxation areas by adding comfy seating and greenery.



**Stone Dining Table with Chandelier.** (top left) Photo courtesy of Norwalk, The Furniture Idea.

**Awning at Night.** (top) Photo courtesy of Greeley Tent and Awning.

**Cozy Corner with Wrought Iron Sling Back Chairs.** (left) Photo courtesy of Norwalk, The Furniture Idea.



Jerry Simons of Palmer Flowers and Decorating Gallery says growing fresh herbs in pots or an easy care artificial cedar cone tree or two adds privacy and character to your "living room" outdoors. Choose live potted plants or trees according to the amount of exposure. Not quite sure how to create those beautiful baskets of hanging plants or pots spilling over with a variety of colors and textures, visit Paul Wood Florist and let the designers create them for you. Add a lamp or framed print, a plush chaise in a soothing color, and you'll have a retreat worth returning to each day.

As you expand your living space outdoors consider adding water features. The sound of water bubbling over rocks is uniquely relaxing. Water is a natural draw for birds, and bird watching is a great



**Striped Patio Awning.** (top left) Photo courtesy of Innovative Openings.

**Natural Pond.** (top) Photo courtesy of Koi Lagoon.

*Continued on page 30.*

*Put your plans in motion.*



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Photos courtesy of Norwalk, The Furniture Idea.




way to enjoy the outdoors. Balconies and small patios easily afford space for self-contained fountains and gentle water falls that require no plumbing or special preparation.



A great way to relax and let the world slip by is with your own koi pond. Your koi pond will become a beautiful ecosystem of gorgeous colorful creatures, flowering plants, and crystal clear water with just a little planning on your part. Ray Smith of Koi Lagoon suggests that you begin with a pond that is at least 18" deep. "The deeper the



pond the better for the koi. They have more places to hide from predators such as raccoons and the water chemistry is more stable." Smith further explains that it is important to have a good filter system. "For a healthy pond you should have a biological filter, a source of aeration, a circulation pump, and adequate space." Like a fish tank, a koi pond requires regular cleaning and maintenance. To maximize your chances of creating a successful koi pond, I would suggest visiting with Koi Lagoon.

Take advantage of our temperate Colorado weather for the summer months and well into fall. Be brave and bold. Blur the boundaries between indoors and the great outdoors and furnish your balcony or backyard as a personal vacation spot. You'll experience rewarding moments relishing your own home in a whole new way. It is an investment in yourself you'll never regret. 

*Maryjo Faith Morgan is a freelance writer living in Loveland.*

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