

Outdoor Living

Make sure outdoor space receives as much attention as indoors

Gone are the days when the back yard had a small patch of grass, a storage shed, and perhaps a gravel driveway leading to a detached one-car garage.

Thanks to the evolution of home design, homeowners now consider the back yard additional living space.

To optimize your enjoyment of the outdoors, there should be a cohesive design that creates a distinctive mood and ambience.

At the annual International Builders' Show this year, showcased backyard products included fireplaces, space heaters, wet bars, summer kitchens with built-in refrigerators, water features, spas, and weatherproof furniture that looks like it belongs indoors.

While the trend toward including these features began in high-end homes, many are now popular in starter homes.

Outdoor living isn't new in Florida, where we can spend time outside year-round.

What is new, however, are the great lengths to which architects and builders go to make the outdoors an extension of the indoor living areas.

For example, at Verano by Kolter Communities, Affiniti Architects designed single-family and attached villa models that feature Tuscan flavor in this 3,000-acre master-planned community in Port St. Lucie.

Affiniti also placed a high priority on optimizing outdoor living in the single-family homes. Each back yard is an oasis for relaxation, alfresco dining and entertaining.

According to Benjamin Schreier, an Affiniti Architects partner, oversized windows that are wide and tall, as well as walls of sliding glass doors, allow as much light into Verano homes as possible.

The large expanses of glass also provide views of a loggia, pool area, and the land or lake beyond.

"Features such as these bring the outside in," Schreier said.

Conversely, loggias can "let the inside out" if they are spacious, such as the ones at

Verano.

A loggia is an architectural feature, originally of Italian design, on the ground level (or sometimes higher) on the façade of a residence or building. It is covered by a roof, supported by columns, and partially open to the air around it. Loggias also are known by other names: lanais, galleries, verandas, porches or terraces.

"When the right furnishings and amenities are added, the space can function as a livable external room," Schreier said.

Citing the models at Verano, he added, "The loggia isn't just a visual accent to the architecture. It is a fundamental, usable part of the home's living space. It is difficult to imagine the everyday flow of life not spilling into this area."

Architectural detailing also is important to outdoor living spaces, according to Schreier.

"Whether it's trim around the windows, brackets at the eaves line, or other elements, detailing gives the back side of a home additional interest," he said.

"These elements might not be as elaborate as the details on the front façade, but they help to extend, aesthetically, the interior living space outward."

Another backyard component is the pool, which can be built any way clients want it: e.g., big enough for swimming laps, infinity-edge, beach entry. Because moving water provides visual stimulation, waterfalls, water walls, fountains and swirling spas add further enjoyment.

Homeowners also are dressing up their back yards with creative landscaping to create their own private paradise.

With a little imagination, you can "vacation" at home and make your back yard the envy of the neighborhood. Simply make your outdoor living areas as important as your interior spaces.

For information on Verano, visit www.veranoflorida.com, or call (877) 777-8372.



The Dario model at Verano features a summer kitchen, rock fireplace, spa, pool and pedestal fountain that will draw family and friends together. The two stone waterfalls that cascade into the pool and spa complement stonework used on the home's exterior. With tropical landscaping and no visible tile or rock trim, the pool resembles a small lagoon.



The Amata model at Verano also provides a distinct extension of living space to the outdoors. The spa is elevated 18 inches above the deck. The outdoor kitchen and furniture bring entertaining to the pool area, while pavers and brick coping provide elegance.



The view from the rear patio of the Evasio model at Verano is spectacular. The concrete deck provides easy maintenance as well as room for a summer kitchen and outdoor dining area. Coordinated with the pool and spa tile, raised planters, featuring annuals and tropical foliage, impart additional color.