

Home expansion grows outdoors

UNTIL RECENTLY, outdoor living spaces, furniture and fabrics were paid little attention by either homeowners or design professionals.

Upscale homeowners in particular were reluctant to invest outdoors, since the vast majority of outdoor textiles sported rough textures and uninspired designs. But the recent explosion in stylish and durable outdoor fabrics, living products and services has attracted homeowners seeking to seamlessly expand their inside rooms to the outside, with about \$62.5 billion spent on outdoor areas in 2004.

Patios, porches and decks are increasingly seen as an extension of a home's interior, with the look and feel of the home being replicated and enhanced outdoors.

"Twenty years ago homeowners were focused on converting basements and recreation rooms to comfortable family rooms," said Brent Cato, a New York City architect. "Now the emphasis has moved outside; the availability of home furnishings and fabrics that are both weather-resistant and beautiful has generated a new decorat-

"Luxurious yet durable fabrics have made outdoors the new indoors."

Kevin Hall,
New York interior designer

Weather-resistant and soft fabrics, such as shown in these groups by Chella Luxury Performance Textiles, replicate the look and feel of indoor fabrics.

ing 'theatre' for homeowners to enjoy."

At the forefront of this outdoor trend are affluent consumers whose recreation-rich lifestyles fuel appreciation for these new fabrics' enduring elegance:

- 38% of luxury consumer homes have luxury patio furniture, and 28% have outdoor shelters.

- 69% of luxury consumers have major redecorating plans within the next 12 months.

- 35% of all homeowners have a finished outdoor room, and 34% of those without one plan to design and furnish an outdoor room by next spring.

- This year, more than 50% of U.S. homes could have outdoor entertaining areas.

- 60% of homeowners want the look

and feel of outdoor living areas to reflect the look and feel of their homes.

- 44% of homeowners with outdoor living spaces update these rooms seasonally.

Outdoor Living Rooms

Realtors, interior designers, architects and garden designers concur that "the outdoor living trend [has taken] on a primary role in the home building and renovations industry," according to a news release by Chella Luxury Performance Textiles.

"Luxurious yet durable fabrics have made outdoors the new indoors," said Kevin Hall, a New York interior designer specializing in luxury homes. "Drab patios are increasingly being transformed into outdoor living rooms."

In a recent survey of design professionals:

- 87% said the design and features of a home's outdoor space can add up to 30% of the total value of a home;

- 65% believe outdoor living space is extremely or very important to their clients;

- 77% agree during warmer months, outdoor living spaces replace the living room for relaxation and entertainment;

- 83% believe homeowners want outdoor living spaces to reflect the design, personality and quality of their interiors.

As outdoor spaces graduate from plastic green chairs to designer furnishings, the emphasis is on exterior living spaces that become an easy extension of the interior.

These trends show no signs of slowing down; wholesale shipments of outdoor furniture have increased 140% in the past 10 years to more than \$2.4 billion. Every indication is the proliferation of beautifully designed luxury performance products will continue to bolster upscale homeowners' interest in enhanced outdoor spaces.

Sources: Unity Marketing study; Propane Education and Research Council; Designing Out: The Home Lifestyle Report; Trend expert Jim Carroll; Don Bowden, former national president, ASID; American Home Furnishings Alliance.

