

The

Patio Decorating



Idea Book



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INTRODUCTION

Patios are common features in homes around the world. In places that have warm weather all year long patios are often considered to be an additional room in the house that are used just as much for daily activities as any other room. In Italy and in Spain and in some parts of the Middle East patios are often built into the interior of a home with the main living spaces being built around a central open-air patio that lets light and air into the home while at the same offering a protected outdoor space for the family to enjoy.

In the US patios are often built as an adjunct to a home. Many homes have a concrete or flagstone patio area that encompasses part of the backyard of the home and is often used for outdoor entertaining during the warm summer months. Patios are becoming more important to homeowners because many homeowners are choosing to stay home and entertain rather than go out to eat or go to bars because of the increases in the cost of gas, food, and other basic living necessities.

Homeowners are realizing that adding the luxury of a well-decorated and furnished patio to their homes is an excellent investment. The more they do to spruce up their patio the more they add value to their home. Plus, they are finding that it is fun and economical to invite their friends and family to their homes to entertain and spend time with loved ones in a relaxing, comfortable environment.

With the renewed interest in home entertaining that is sweeping through the country more and more people are trying to find new and fun ways to enjoy their patios. Even if you have let your patio go it's still possible to transform your patio into a comfortable, inviting spot where you and your family and friends will love to spend time. Patios aren't just for barbecuing anymore, and there are hundreds of ways that you can easily create the outdoor space of your dreams using the patio that you already have and a small budget for furniture and supplies.

If you use your imagination and the tips in this book you'll be amazed at the many different functional, comfortable, and beautiful outdoor spaces you can create with your existing patio. Isn't it time that you turned your patio from an afterthought into one of the places in your home that you love to be?

Let's get started!

DESIGN TIPS FOR DESIGNING A NEW PATIO

Most new homes are built with a patio already included in the design but if you have an older home or are purchasing an older home a patio might not be included. It's easy to build a new patio for your home as long as you have some backyard space. You can spend as little or as much as you want building your new patio because there are endless ways to fit a patio into an existing backyard if you are creative.

There are some important factors that you need to take into account and some design rules you should follow if you want to create a great patio that you and your family and friends can enjoy for years to come. Here are some tips that will help you design a new patio:

Where are you going to put the patio?

Do you want your patio to be adjacent to your house? Most patios are, but they don't have to be. Some people find it more convenient to have a patio attached to the kitchen or dining room to make it easier to bring dishes, drinks and other items out to the patio but the patio can really go anywhere.



You could create a lovely open air patio in the center of your backyard, or at the far end of your backyard, or on the side of the house. If you are going to put the patio somewhere other than adjacent to the house make sure that you make a plan to add a walkway to the patio so that you and your guests aren't walking on uneven ground to get to the patio from the house.

You also need to consider the sun when deciding where in the yard to place the patio. How much sun does your yard get? How does the sun travel over your yard? In other words, what is in sun or in shade at certain times during the day and early evening? If you are planning on being outdoors mostly in the afternoon ask where the sun will be shining at that time. If you don't want your patio to have full sun exposure in the afternoon then you might want to place the patio in an area of the yard that only gets partial sun, or that has some kind of natural shade like trees or bushes.

What shape do you want the patio to be?

This really depends on where you choose to put the patio. Most people choose a large, square patio if the patio is coming off from the house. If you're going to put the patio in another part of the yard then you can get creative with the shape of the patio. You could put a large circular patio in the center of your yard, or a kidney shaped patio at one end of the yard. Think about where you want the patio to go and make the patio a shape that will fit in well with the natural shape of the yard.

What materials are you going to use to build your patio?

Most people only think about materials in terms of the cost of the materials but that is not your only consideration. You also need to think about what materials are going to last well over time and what kind of maintenance each type of material will require. When you're figuring out your budget for the patio take into the account the maintenance costs of each different type of material and you might find that you're better off choosing a more expensive but more durable material up front rather than choosing a cheaper material that has a higher average maintenance cost. Also make sure that you budget for any additional walkways or paths that need to be built.

When you are choosing the material to use as a foundation for the patio, think about the long-term practicality of the material before you make a final decision. Concrete is probably the easiest material in terms of upkeep and maintenance, but patio tiles or brick paving stones can add a lot of personality to your patio. Though more expensive, you can buy special patio brick or stone that is designed to wear well in high-traffic, need little maintenance, and could last for decades. Remember that your patio is an investment so an up-front higher cost can actually be a better expense in the long term. No matter what material you choose make sure it's easy to clean and that it will stand up well to the climate that you live in.

Is the ground in your backyard level and even?

If it isn't then you might need to grade the backyard or at least the part of the backyard where you plan to build your patio. You have to make sure the patio is level. A small amount of unevenness won't be enough to be noticeable to the people who are standing on the patio but if your patio foundation is laid over uneven ground then eventually the foundation will start to crack and split and you might have to lay a whole new foundation. So make sure the ground where you want to build the patio is even to begin with to make sure you can enjoy your patio for many years to come. It is a good idea to hire a contractor who can assess the evenness and stability of the ground where you want your patio. A good contractor can suggest ways to handle any potential problems.



PATIO FURNITURE

Buying patio furniture can be a little overwhelming because there are several types of patio furniture and hundreds of styles made from those materials. The type of patio furniture that you choose should depend on your personal taste but also on the climate where you live, whether your patio is covered or uncovered, your budget and several other factors. Through keeping your priorities in order and thinking things through, selecting the right patio furniture for you can be easy.

When you're choosing new patio furniture the first thing that you need to do is pick a type of material. The most common materials for patio furniture are wood, wicker and rattan, metal, and plastic.

Wood

Wooden patio furniture is very popular. In general wood patio furniture can stand up to the elements like very hot sun or summer storms pretty well but if you're going to use wood patio furniture you should treat it with a water resistant stain to protect it from drying out in the sun or becoming damaged from being out in the rain. Wood furniture is a good choice if you do a lot of entertaining because it's very sturdy and can accommodate people of all different sizes. It's also very easy to change the look of wood furniture with a new coat of paint. If you like to change the décor of your patio frequently and don't want to have to buy new patio furniture every time then Wicker or Rattan furniture would be a good choice for you. Good quality wooden patio furniture can be expensive but if you perform regular maintenance of painting or staining the wood every few years the furniture will last for a long time.

Wicker and Rattan

Wicker and rattan furniture is the second most popular type of patio furniture that is made from natural materials. Both wicker and rattan furniture is very strong but also very light, making it great for patio furniture that needs to be brought indoors or moved frequently. Wicker is actually not a material by itself. Wicker is the end result of weaving rattan with other materials, usually bamboo slats, to make furniture.

Rattan is technically a tree although it grows like a vine along the ground. The rattan vines are cut and peeled, then steamed to make them pliable, and then they are used to create furniture. Rattan furniture can be made of stripes of Rattan that are woven together when the wood is wet or it can be strips of Bamboo or other materials woven around straight rattan slats.

Both rattan and wicker furniture are an inexpensive alternative to hardwood patio furniture if you want to have patio furniture that is made from natural materials. These types of patio furniture don't require a lot of maintenance and be used in or outdoors all year long. It's also possible to change the look of Wicker or Rattan furniture by giving the furniture a new coat of paint, so if you change the décor of your patio frequently without buying new patio furniture every time then wicker or rattan furniture would be a good choice for you.



Metal

Metal patio furniture is often a more economical choice than hard wood patio furniture for people that want the stability of wood but can't afford to pay a lot of money for patio furniture. Metal furniture is also great for people that want furniture that is low maintenance because most metal patio furniture doesn't require the kind of maintenance that wooden furniture does. There are three main types of metal patio furniture that you can buy: tubular metal, wrought iron, and aluminum.

- **Wrought iron patio furniture** is one of the most expensive types of patio furniture. Wrought iron furniture is very popular because it's stylish and adds a very classic feel to a patio but it's also popular because it's so durable. Wrought iron furniture is heavy and requires almost no upkeep. A new coat of paint every year or so will keep wrought iron furniture looking beautiful for years. And wrought iron furniture is sturdy so that it can be comfortable and safe for people of all sizes. It is very heavy which is good in that it won't blow away in strong winds but so heavy that it can be difficult to move.
- **Aluminum patio furniture** is often used by businesses because it's so easy to maintain and because it's so tough. Hotels, public pools, resorts, and other types of businesses that deal with the public often use aluminum patio furniture for their outdoor patios. So if you have a patio that has a lot of traffic and you will have a variety of people in all shapes and sizes that will be using your patio furniture frequently then aluminum patio furniture is a great choice. Aluminum is a much lighter metal than wrought iron so if you will frequently need to move your furniture, aluminum may be a better choice. Aluminum furniture can be a bit pricey for some budgets but the cost is negligible over time and aluminum patio furniture will last a long time.
- **Tubular metal patio furniture** is the least expensive type of metal patio furniture and easily found at discount stores. It has some of the durability that other types of metal patio furniture have although it's not as sturdy as aluminum or wrought iron. Tubular metal patio furniture doesn't require a lot of maintenance and lasts for a long time. It can though become bent and damaged and can never quite be bent back into its original shape. It is also light enough to easily be blown away in strong winds.

Plastic or PVC patio furniture

Plastic or PVC patio furniture is the cheapest option when it comes to patio furniture and can be easily found at discount stores. Stackable Plastic or PVC patio furniture can be found at any discount store, sometimes even at the grocery store. Plastic patio furniture is easy to maintain because all you need to do to clean it is wipe it off. It stands up well to the elements but usually will only last for one season.

Plastic patio furniture isn't very sturdy and can easily break. It might become a safety issue if you have little children using it frequently because it tends to tip over or break. Plastic patio furniture also tends to crack and splinter very easily. If you are looking for some cheap, quick patio furniture then plastic is the best choice but don't expect plastic or PVC patio furniture to last for more than one season.

THE 5 MOST COMMON TYPES OF PATIO FURNITURE

Even though there are hundreds of different styles of patio furniture on the market there are certain basic types of furniture that are always more popular than any others. They are what people expect on a patio and with good reason because these types serve a patio well.



When you're designing your patio you should try to incorporate at least one or two of these types of patio furniture into your design because these are tried and true furniture styles that people find comfortable and inviting.

These classic furniture types are available in many different materials and styles so you'll be able to find furniture that can fit into any décor. As an added bonus most of the time you completely change the look of these types of furniture just by changing the cushions so you can keep the same furniture and change the décor of your patio over and over again.

Picnic Tables

Almost any family with small kids knows the value of having a picnic table on the patio. A patio almost seems bare without one. Their major purpose is as an informal outdoor dining table. Picnic tables can seat large groups of people of various sizes and they are easy for kids to get on and off by themselves. If you have a lot of summer buffet style parties picnic tables can serve as a dining table and a buffet, making them essential for families. Picnic tables don't have to be the clunky ugly things you see in nature parks. Many now are made that look quite stylish.

Conversational Groupings

The name sounds formal but the furniture isn't. Picnic tables are good for dining but not so good for relaxing and conversing. Think of it like how you think of the inside of your home – you have a dining table in the dining room for eating, but in the living room you have sofas and chairs, or conversational groupings. So, the same for outdoors, sofas, comfortable chairs, and small coffee or occasional tables for drinks are a must if you spend a lot of time outdoors. If you entertain guests often conversational groupings of furniture are a great way to enjoy a breezy summer afternoon or a warm summer night with your friends.

Dining Sets

Picnic tables may suit the kids better than adults. You may want a more formal and comfortable dining setup. Outdoor dining sets are a little more formal than picnic tables and are great for people that give a lot of summer cocktail parties. Many dining sets for outdoors look similar to indoor dining sets but are made of material that can better withstand the rain, wind, and sun of the outdoors. Dining sets add an air of elegance to your patio décor and also are great for romantic dinners outdoors.

Bar Tables and Stools

Pub tables or bar tables are very high tables that usually are accompanied by two stools. They are also sometimes called café sets. You may have seen these if you have ever stayed a tropical resort or hotel and been in their patio bar. These are a nice addition to a patio when you have to have additional seating that isn't formal. If you often have parties in the summer a few bar tables and stools and a conversational grouping can make your patio feel like your favorite pub.



Bistro Tables

Bistro tables are small tables, usually made from wrought iron or aluminum, that fit just about anywhere on the patio. They are great to have as a place to sit and drink your morning coffee or tea or as a place to bring your laptop and do some work outdoors. Bistro tables are cute and functional which is why they are so popular. A bistro table with two chairs is also a great way to make a small patio functional and chic.

THE BEST WOODEN PATIO FURNITURE

Wooden patio furniture is made from several types of wood and each type has its own pros and cons. If you are sure that you want to use wood patio furniture here is a brief overview of the different types of wooden furniture to help you select the right type of wooden patio furniture for your lifestyle and your climate:

Teak

Teak is the most expensive type of patio furniture. You can expect to pay thousands of dollars for high quality teak furniture. But teak patio furniture is really an investment because even outdoors it will last for years, sometimes decades. Teak is a very unique wood and it can withstand the elements very well without any maintenance and it stays great looking no matter what type of weather it's exposed to. You can even leave teak furniture out in the snow or cold and it won't harm the furniture.

Teak naturally is a silver-gray color so left untreated your teak furniture will lighten over time to a silvery color. If you want to preserve the light honey color that the teak furniture comes with all you need to do is rub the furniture with special teak oil once and awhile. Teak is very expensive because it's a slow growth wood, meaning that there's not that much of it to go around since it takes so long for the trees to grow.

If you want something that the durability of fine teak patio furniture but you can't afford to buy teak furniture you should consider cedar patio furniture.

Cedar

Cedar is a very fragrant wood and often used for rustic style patio furniture. Like Teak Cedar is a hard wood and will stand up well to the elements because cedar has a natural immunity to rotting, cracking, and other problems that can destroy untreated wooden patio furniture. Even an untreated piece of cedar patio furniture can last for more than eight years left outside year round in every type of weather.

Just like teak if cedar is left untreated it will fade to a natural silver-gray color that many people like. As an added bonus the pungent aroma of cedar wood acts as a natural insect repellent so having Cedar patio furniture means that you will have fewer pests to deal with when you're trying to enjoy your patio. Cedar is also exceptionally strong, so people of all sizes can be comfortable in Cedar patio furniture all year long.



Bamboo

Technically bamboo is a grass, not a wood, but it's so durable and hard that it gets classified as wood. Bamboo furniture is very popular because it's light but sturdy and has a beautiful natural color that blends into any décor. Bamboo is more affordable than teak or cedar because, like any other grass, it grows quickly and is very easy to get more of. Bamboo needs very little maintenance other than a wash with soap and water once and awhile to keep it gleaming. If you want to turn your patio in an outdoor retreat adding bamboo furniture can help create a relaxing atmosphere.

Eucalyptus

Eucalyptus patio furniture isn't widely available yet but more and more garden and patio furniture sellers are starting to carry it. Eucalyptus wood is very much like teak in strength and durability, and it even has a similar color. But eucalyptus wood furniture costs about half of what teak furniture costs because eucalyptus grows faster and is easier to get than teak. So if you love the look and durability of Teak but can't afford to spend thousands of dollars on outdoor furniture then you should look around until you find a seller that has some eucalyptus wood furniture in stock.

Chinese Oak

There are two types of Oak used to make patio furniture, Chinese Oak and Red Oak. Red Oak is a high quality wood but more manufacturers use Chinese Oak because it has a natural resistance to fungi, rotting, and cracking and because most of the Chinese Oak used for patio furniture is kiln dried which makes it almost guaranteed not to warp or splinter from the heat.

Chinese Oak is a very affordable alternative to some of the other hardwood mentioned. The one thing that wooden patio furniture has in common is that it all can get expensive depending on the type of patio furniture that you're buying and where you're buying it. Chinese Oak grows fast and is easy to harvest to the cost of Chinese Oak is something that most people can afford even if they have a very small budget for patio furniture.

Whichever wood you choose, be sure that the furniture is designed and made to be used outdoors. Normal indoor wood furniture will not withstand the outdoor elements. Wood needs to be specially treated to be used outdoors and last.

FIVE TIPS FOR BUYING PATIO FURNITURE

Now that you know a little more about the common materials that patio furniture is made from and the most popular styles of patio furniture you are almost ready to start buying your own patio furniture. Before you head out to find the perfect patio furniture to go online to shop take these tips into account to make sure that you get a good deal and you buy patio furniture that is right for you.

1. Have a theme for your patio in mind before you shop.

If you don't have a cohesive plan or theme for your patio before you start shopping you could end up with mishmash of mixed pieces that don't go together and don't give the overall impression that you want to give. Plan your patio décor carefully and have an image in your mind of the kinds of pieces that you want to buy before you start to shop.



2. Size up your patio.

You might love that Teak dining seat that seats 8 but do you really have room for it on your patio? If you have a large patio then large dining sets or sofas are fine but if your patio is small or medium sized then you need to keep the size of the furniture that you buy in scale with the size of the patio.

3. Measure, measure and measure again.

This is just good planning. Make sure that you know the exact measurements of your patio and bring a tape measure with you when you shop so that you can measure each piece of furniture to see how it would fit onto your patio before you buy it. To be a really savvy shopper bring your digital camera or use your cell phone camera to take photos of the furniture and then go home and look at the photos outside on the patio to get an idea if the furniture looks good on your patio.

4. Set a budget and stick with it.

When you know how much you can afford to spend on patio furniture you can look at furniture in that price range only. That will make it easier to not overspend. You should always buy the highest quality patio furniture that you can afford but don't overspend. To make your budget go further shop online and at estate sales, or look at yard sales for good deals on high quality patio furniture.

5. Try out the furniture before you buy it.

There is nothing worse than uncomfortable patio furniture that you paid a fortune for. Sit or lounge on the furniture for at least half an hour in the store to make sure that it's comfortable before you spend a lot of money on it. You and your family and friends are going to be sitting on that furniture all summer so it has to be comfortable.

FIVE WAYS TO GET GREAT DEALS ON OUTDOOR PATIO FURNITURE

High quality wood or metal patio furniture is often very expensive, but if you have a small budget for patio furniture and you think you won't be able to afford the good stuff don't give up just yet. If you're a savvy shopper you can find ways to get great patio furniture for discount prices. Here are five ways that you can get great patio furniture at a discounted price:

1. Buy floor samples.

If you're shopping in a high end garden and patio design studio or your favorite home improvement store and they have some high quality teak or wrought iron patio furniture on display that you love but can't afford ask if you can buy the unit that is on display. Most stores heavily discount floor models because they have been used and handled by customers. You might have to wait to bring them home until the store changes the display but you could be rewarded for your patience by getting as much as 75% off on great quality patio furniture.

2. Look on some online auction sites.

Stores and wholesalers will often sell their discontinued or closeout items through online auction sites like Ebay at a fraction of the retail cost. Many offer free shipping too so that you don't end up paying a small fortune for the item. Check the online auction sites regularly and you could end up with a great bargain. A word of caution though – when you're buying through an online auction you need to be ready to buy an item the moment you see it. You might not get another chance to bid on it so if you see something you want you need to go for it.

3. Buy from the manufacturer directly.

Some manufacturers don't sell to the general public but if you find one that does you can save a fortune on high quality patio furniture. Do a Web search to find manufacturers that sell directly to the public. Often you can get the same high end patio furniture you've seen in your local stores at the same cost that the stores pay. Cutting out the middleman can save you a lot of money.



4. Buy at the end of the season.

When the weather starts to turn cold the home and garden centers start to pack away their patio furniture and summer items. They'd rather not. Usually they try to sell as much of it as they can rather than pack it in and have to store it for the winter. That means if you shop at the end of the season you can get large discounts on high quality furniture.

5. Shop at secondhand stores.

You'd be amazed at the quality of furniture you can find at charity shops and secondhand stores like the Salvation Army. For great deals on furniture try the Habitat for Humanity ReStore where the charity sells furniture that it doesn't need in order to raise money to buy the things they do need to provide new homes for people.

FIVE TIPS FOR BUYING PATIO FURNITURE ONLINE

You can get great deals when you buy patio furniture online but many people are put off by the idea of paying a lot of money for furniture that they've never seen up close. Buying a large, expensive item like furniture online is a lot different than buying a book or a CD online. But if you're a smart shopper and you follow these five tips you can shop for patio furniture online and feel confident that you will get quality merchandise at a good price.

1. Do some research online.

Look at some opinion and review websites like Epinions and see what online patio furniture sites other people recommend or don't recommend for buying patio furniture. Recommendations from other buyers are a great way to find out what companies are reliable and which ones aren't. You can also look at the Better Business Bureau website to see if a particular company has any complaints filed against them by buyers.

2. Check photographs closely.

When you do find a site that you like and you're shopping around click on the photos to get a larger view and then look very closely at the photos. This is especially true if you are buying off of an auction site. You need to see a photo of the actual item being sold, not a sample photo. Sometimes there are small blemishes that are visible in the photos if you look closely enough. If the site only offers a small stock photo of the furniture you should email their customer service contact email to ask for more photos of the item.

3. Look at the warranty information and other policies.

Not all patio furniture websites give warranties and some give only limited warranties so be sure to look under the store policies section of the website to find out what kind of warranty, if any, the site offers. It's also important that you know what the store's return policy is so that if you're really unhappy with the furniture you know what you need to do in order to return it. Since furniture is a big ticket item some stores won't accept returns and others will only accept returns under limited circumstances.

4. Find out how the furniture will be delivered before you buy.

Having furniture delivered can be pricey because it is heavy and bulky. Some sites won't tell you exactly how much you will have to pay for shipping or how the items will be shipped until after you pay for the furniture. Call customer service if you have to but make sure that you know what the shipping charges will be and what delivery service the site uses before you buy the furniture.

5. Always check the product description for details.

The photos will give you a good idea of what the furniture will look like but the size of the furniture and other details should be listed in the product description. Measure the space on your patio carefully and check it against the size of the furniture listed in the product description before you buy to make sure that the furniture will fit on your patio before you have it shipped to you.



Download the rest of this book for \$14.99

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