

HOMES + CONDOS

IT'S TIME TO TAKE IT OUTSIDE

As the weather warms up, many Canadians are moving their indoor activities outside, a trend called "backyarding" that experts expect will outlast the pandemic. Backyarding can involve working, studying, exercising or relaxing in your green space, or the green space of someone in your social bubble. The point is to revel in the outdoors while lockdowns and restrictions remain uncertain.

"Homeowners got really creative as they



expanded and enjoyed their yards over the last year," said Kris Kiser, president & CEO of the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute and the TurfMutt Foundation.

To get more out of your yard, the foundation suggests designing your dream lawn and garden, creating a makeshift vacation resort, or adding flowering plants, trees and shrubs to give wildlife and pollinators extra food and shelter.

Melissa Hank

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SECTION C

ALL THE HOME'S A STAGE

Two top designers offer their tips for transforming rooms into magazine-worthy spaces

LOUISE RACHLIS

When prospective buyers look for a new place, often what they see is a model of a new home or a house perfectly staged for resale.

Often though, our own homes are anything like what you see on the market, so we turned to two prominent, nationally recognized interior decorators for advice.

"Scale is usually one of the biggest differentiators between homes that are magazine worthy and not," according to Louis Duncan-He of Louis Duncan-He Designs. "You really want to make sure there is the right proportion to any piece in the space that takes up a lot of visual prominence."

Duncan-He says that one of the biggest mistakes is to have area rugs that are just too small. "An area rug should cover the entire seating area and not just under the coffee table. Our eyes are trained to view the amount of space a carpet takes up in a living room as the amount of actual living space."

So even if you have a large room with beautiful furniture, a tiny rug will visually trick the eye into thinking the living space is much smaller than it is, he adds.

Artwork and lighting are also items that fall in this category. "Really, from a designer's point of view, most of the time it's safer to get something a little too large than too small. Going larger looks purposeful whereas too small looks like a mistake."

"Living spaces and your kitchen is what will catch everyone's eye first," says Kate Davidson, founder and principal designer of Kate + Co Design. "Having an open concept kitchen and family room is a big selling feature and makes people want to be in the space."

She says what makes it appealing is "the careful balance of lived-in elements such as pillows, blankets, a sofa that looks soft and inviting, mixed with a few more elegant details like a marble top coffee table and elegant light fixture."

A cohesive look is key, Davidson adds. "Stick to a few tones in a space and stay consistent. Blending too many wood tones and colours can make a space look busy, cluttered and unpolished."

Born and raised in Ottawa, Davidson says that with every project done by Kate + Co Design, it is their goal "to transform it into a highly functional space; not just stylish but that adapts and enhances how they live and use the space. It doesn't matter if it's pretty. If you have no area for storage and an everyday place for items, it will cause distress."

For all their projects, Kate + Co review the needs of the space and always offer storage solutions and hidden areas to be added for extra storage. "Beautiful interiors must above all, also provide functional



Living spaces and your kitchen are the areas that will catch everyone's eye first, says Kate Davidson, principal designer of Kate + Co Design.



A beautifully designed home doesn't rely on just furniture, but also "wallpaper, drapery, light fixtures and artwork," says designer Louis Duncan-He.



Strive for a careful balance of lived-in elements such as pillows, blankets, and a sofa that looks soft and inviting.

around to suit your needs, suggests Davidson. "Often we reconfigure furniture to bring in more flow and allow for the room to function better for the entire family. We advise clients to also reassess and edit and remove items that no longer serve a purpose and provide enjoyment."

The hallmarks of an attractive home environment for Kate + Co are "well-proportioned items, lots of bookcases, and various comfy accents, pillows positioned well and personal items and clutter removed." For a "staged" home, "you have to see yourself in someone's home and so personal photos or clutter is always removed."

And finally, it's important to be natural and not formulaic.

"I don't like homes that look overly 'staged,' to be honest," says Duncan-He. "I want our homeowners' spaces to look livable, natural and also beautiful."

Duncan-He says the No. 1 thing that makes spaces look overly staged are the accents and the colours. "Just because you have a yellow pillow doesn't mean you need to have the exact same yellow vase, piece of artwork and blanket in all areas of the house."

He suggests opting for transitional tones. "Bring in some taupes, rich earth tones, creams and also pale mustards — to create a more natural and sophisticated realization of colours."

storage elements."

Some elements to a room that provide hidden storage are ottomans, window seat benches, and built-in units, as well as add-in storage items like baskets for animal and kids' toys.

And, a beautifully designed house doesn't rely on just the furniture, says Duncan-He. "You want to make sure you are focusing on the other areas that make up a room — so wallpaper, drapery, light fixtures, artwork. A beautiful-

ly designed room should already tell a story of the intent and style of the space before any furniture is brought in."

He feels that the biggest mistake homeowners make is to rely on furniture and decor "to shift the tone of a room... and what ends up happening when we aren't considering the room as a whole, is it just looks cluttered and confused."

His firm recently did a big home renovation for a client and changed the cladding around the

kitchen island in order to shift the overall tone of the white kitchen cupboards.

"We then also continued the same wood tone we used on the island throughout the home, and added in functional built-ins for the kids off the kitchen. This added both more function, but also added a fresher texture from one space to the next, which bridged the overall shift in design aesthetic."

In living spaces, switch rooms

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