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Outdoor Survival Guide: **5 Must-Haves for Your Yard, Patio or Balcony**

Between Labour Day and Victoria Day, Canadians dream about their return into the great outdoors. From tried, tested and true essentials to trendy new finds, here are my six must-haves to make the most of your backyard, patio or balcony this year – and for many more to come.



Functional Floorplan

Space-planning isn't just for your interiors. In fact, an empty backyard can begin to take shape much like an open-concept home does. Identify your functional goals for the space: cooking, dining, relaxing or socializing. Then, consider the organic flow from one area to the next, and how they all relate to one another and the home itself. For example, it makes sense to position the cooking and dining area near the home, with easy access to the main kitchen for food prep and serving. Entertaining can take place a little further out, to create a buffer between indoor and outdoor activities. For the R&R zone, consider privacy and a location that is removed from the hub of all the action.

A Great View

Not every outdoor area is graced with breathtaking panoramas of sea, city or countryside, but each has at least one natural attribute that could and should be celebrated. As you plan your layout, take stock of what your outdoors has to offer – the privacy of lush landscaping, sun-drenched mornings or sultry sunsets. Then, strategically organize your zones to maximize those characteristics.

Aesthetic Inspiration

Perhaps the biggest mistake people make when outfitting their outdoors, is not giving this living area the enough attention. I remind clients to treat it as an extension of the indoors, taking queues from your interior colour palette, material selections and textures. Remember to consider flooring, lighting, furniture and accessories. Your choices should meet your standards for style, but be branny enough to stand strong against the elements. Materials such as wood, stone, rattan, wicker, teak and aluminum offer a timeless look and withstand UV exposure, wind, rain and fluctuating temperatures.

Trending Now: I've seen a budding trend toward greater versatility and interchangeability when it comes to outdoor furniture design, with individual pieces that are simple to mix and match with other collections, and easy to adapt to any floorplan. Whether you're re-designing your outdoors, or moving to a new space, pieces like the Somos collection of modular furniture aim to encourage creative exploration in outdoor décor, flying in the face of convention and instead fostering individuality, creativity and personal style expression. See collection www.Somos-living.com

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Indoor-Outdoor

Enclosed outdoor spaces, whether designed with screens or glass, are becoming increasingly sought-after by homeowners living in areas prone to harsh weather, pollen or pesky insects, offering a harmonious blend of indoor comfort and outdoor freedom. With many of these extensions seamlessly connected to the main home, architectural endeavours now focus on enhancing the aesthetic synergy between the home and its adjacent porch.

Lighting

The right lighting does more than merely illuminate pathways and dark corners – although the safety aspect of lighting is critical. Lighting also brings depth and

detail, luxury and warmth that invites you to linger long into the night, whether you're preparing an alfresco meal, dining under the stars, or enjoying cocktails and company. Transform your outdoors into a seamless extension of the indoors, by incorporating up-lighting techniques on trees, fencing or special features that you'd like to highlight.

The great outdoors offer a plethora of benefits, serving as a sanctuary for relaxation, recreation and connection with nature. Beyond mere aesthetics, this is an extension of your living space, fostering opportunities for outdoor gatherings, leisurely activities, and moments of solitude. Make the most of it, before Labour Day rolls around again.



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