

9. OUTDOOR SPACE DESIGN, INTEGRATING INDOOR/OUTDOOR

The rains have finally come and your garden has rebounded from the lack of rain. Some plants did not make it, but your basic landscaping has survived. It is time to take a look at your outdoor spaces including the built environment and make sure you have what you want.

If your building from the ground up or for that matter remodeling there are a few basic things I look for:

- A) What is the quiet or private side of your site?
- B) Where do you get good solar orientation?
- C) How do you live? Do you spend a lot of time outside? Do you like eating outside? Do you like entertaining outside?
- D) How much time do you want to spend on working and maintaining your outdoor space?
- E) Do you have any special needs or things you would like incorporated in the outdoor space?

The first and probably most important thing is locating your outdoor space on the most private part of your site. You probably won't use an outdoor patio or portal if it is right on the road or your neighbors look right at you. I have found people are most comfortable when they feel a certain amount of privacy. Privacy can be achieved in other ways besides just location. Strategically placed evergreens can provide a year round screen as can a properly located fence. Vines can also be used on a trellis to provide enough screening for comfort. When considering location also keep in mind orientation. A dark cold space will not be used much, but a nice light sunny space will. This means locating your outdoor space with a southern angle is important. It can be turned towards the east or west and still feel like a warm space. If your space is facing south it will also be nice to have a shaded area, a few ways to achieve this are:

- 1) A roofed portal
- 2) An awning
- 3) Trellis work with either plant materials or fabrics to diffuse the sun
- 4) A heavy tree canopy formed by a grid of trees
- 5) Locating parts of your house such that they cast shadows to create shade

Southern orientation also has a lot to do with healthy plant growth and certainly if you're going to incorporate a vegetable garden exposure is imperative.

When developing your outdoor area first answer the simple question of what you want to use it for. There is no reason to build an 8'-0" deep portal that you could have a table under if you do not like eating outdoors or do not expect to entertain outside, though for resale it may be a consideration. By the same token there is no reason to have a 600 square foot deck if you do not expect to use it, in other words just build what you need to use keeping in mind your needs may change and you may want to expand those spaces in the future. One thing I think that adds a lot to any outdoor space is some kind of water feature, whether it be as simple as a birdbath or as complicated as a fountain (re-circulating preferably so the water use is minimal). The sound of water is a great pleasure and personally at our office we have a small fountain on our outdoor deck which is really soothing and a great place to just go mellow out.

Having created all this great outdoor space let's make sure you have the time to maintain it. There is no reason to plant a beautiful (preferably drought resistant) garden that you do not have time to keep up. Look at the particular plant types your going to introduce and get an idea of what each requires for maintenance then add all these together to figure how much time you will need to spend for maintaining and probably most important - it's water use.

With a beautiful and usable outdoor space, the other important consideration is being able to see this outdoor space from the indoors. Use French doors and sidelights to exit onto the outdoor areas so you can see through from the inside out. Make windows low so when sitting in a living room or eating space you can look at the outdoor area. Even connect the Master Bedroom and/or other bedrooms to the outside so these rooms can also enjoy the space created outdoors. Above all, use and enjoy this outdoor space to it is fullest and enjoy our great southwest environment.