

Considerations *for an* OUTDOOR ROOM

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It happens every year. We spend months braving the inclement Michigan weather; gloomy skies, rain, sleet, and snow are just a few of the things that we Michiganders endure from November to March. Why do we do this, you ask? The answer of course is summer time! It's the time when all of us want to live life outdoors. Thus, the trend of creating outdoor rooms as a means to take advantage of the beautiful Michigan weather continues.

As with the interior of a home, there are a lot of things to consider when creating an outdoor room. Here are some tips to consider to create a comfortable, functional room that you'll look forward to spending time in.

- Think about what the space will be used for and the atmosphere you want it to have. Is it exposed to the elements or is it an extension of your home such as a sun room or screened in porch? Is it for entertaining or for comfort to be enjoyed just by you? A clear vision of what the room will be used for and by whom will help you pull everything together.



If you are thinking lounge space, a deep seating set might be the way to go. Sectional sofas, love seats or sofas plus a couple of tables can make the space mirror your interior style and create a room you'll thoroughly enjoy.

- Select furniture that is durable and will hold up to our climate if your space is exposed to the elements. Some of our go-to outdoor furniture is constructed of teak, recycled plastic, marine-grade polymer, stainless steel, and resin wicker. These materials are great because they are heavy and hold up to the Michigan climate.

- Fabrics set the mood for every outdoor space. Acrylic performance fabrics are recommended for outdoor designs because they hold up to the sun and are easy to keep clean. Tying the fabrics and colors to the style of the home and background setting makes a seamless transition from the inside to the outside.

- Add fun elements like rugs, accent pillows, lanterns, and pouffes to help the space feel homier. This is where you can really personalize the space, so have fun with your accessories!

- Look for low-maintenance furnishings and clever storage options. This will enable you to enjoy the room you've created without the headache of constantly cleaning it. With Michigan's climate, there is no such thing as a maintenance-free outdoor space, but adding furniture covers or a deck box for cushions is a great way to keep your space looking beautiful when not in use.

- Look for good sun protection. There are a wide variety of shade products available, including patio umbrellas, cantilever umbrellas, pergolas, gazebos, and shade sails. By choosing the right shade solution, you'll be able to enjoy the space even when the sun's rays are dangerously hot.

- Continue to evolve your space by adding or removing elements for functionality.

- Use the space. After all of the effort and expense to create the space, make sure you actually take the time to appreciate it. So use and enjoy it!

- Don't be afraid to ask a patio store design consultant for help.



ASHLEIGH KOSIN

Ashleigh is the Owner/Designer at Bell Tower Lake House Living Co. in Richland since 2008. Ashleigh has extensive experience designing inside and outdoor spaces. Her buying skills at Bell Tower are a testament to her nautical, coastal chic attitude.