

# YOUR YARD

## New Outdoor Furnishings Help Americans Create A Relaxing Oasis

(NAPSA)—Americans are increasingly looking to outdoor spaces around their homes for a tranquil retreat. In research conducted by the American Home Furnishings Alliance, 42 percent of the homeowners think of their outdoor space as “an outdoor room.” When asked to list the most important attributes for that space, 86 percent said it should be “relaxing.” Sixty percent said it should be a place for family and friends to “hang out” and 57 percent wanted “a sanctuary.”

The most sought-after sanctuary may be the modular gazebo, now more affordable than ever. Top features include removable screens and elegant canopies, plus windows that can be opened and closed.

A more mobile option is a generously scaled sun lounger that offers a commodious retreat for one or an intimate oasis for two, when draped with privacy sheers or shaded with a canopy. When the cozy corner of a covered porch is not available for that nostalgic emblem of tranquility—the porch swing—there are portable porch swing stands to turn any spot in the garden into a place for peaceful repose.

A soothing palette of spa blues and earthy greens and visual references to Asian symbols of serenity abound. The new Kyoto collection from Century Leisure “echoes our longing for an oasis of peace and beauty,” states its designer, Richard Frinier. “The look is pure elegance, pure tranquility, pure harmony.”

“Outdoor living is exploding at all price levels,” says residential architect Cheryl O’Brien. Even in urban areas where there is precious little outdoor space, Americans want more than a few potted plants. These consumers will find stylish and functional designs suited for a compact little place in the sun. Two-seater café sets, diminutive drop-leaf tables and



**The Breakfast Gazebo by Laneventure provides the ultimate sanctuary for relaxation. The aluminum frame has a canopy, windows that open and removable screening.**

even a mid-height bar with bar stools that elevate a person’s sight line just above the typical balcony rail are especially designed for urban outdoor living.

Other trends include:

**Fire and Ice.** Portable propane fireplaces created for the outdoor living space are extending the season for outdoor entertaining and relaxation. Some have slate or marble tops, as well as faux stone materials. Coordinated seating gives backyard enthusiasts the ability to create comfortable conversation groups around the firepit.

If the warmth of a fire doesn’t draw guests to gather round, perhaps an outdoor bar or a table with an ice bucket full of cool beverages in the center will.

**Cushion Innovations.** High-tech cushions retain their plump looks and continue to provide excellent support. New filling blends add softness without sacrificing water resistance. One manufacturer has even added padded cushions to low maintenance sling

seating using a unique polyester fiber with enhanced moisture shedding.

Innovation in outdoor fabrics also includes a new breathable polyurethane that looks and feels like leather. It’s anti-fungal and resists mildew, stains, scratches and fading. Other new fabrics bring the aesthetic of silk and linen to outdoor furnishings.

**Comfort Underfoot.** The maker of a premier line of hand-woven rope hammocks has added a designer line of exclusive outdoor rugs to bring the softness of cotton to the porch or patio floor. Other manufacturers offer braided textures, machine-woven patterns and vibrant colors to match umbrellas and cushions. All boast mold and mildew resistance, easy cleaning and fade resistance.

**Protection Overhead.** Lounge chairs, swings and hammocks all come with protective awnings or canopies. As for the umbrella, new designs rotate and pivot to block harmful rays throughout the day.

**New Life for Recycled Products.** There may be more than meets the eye in new outdoor furnishings. Several companies take plastic bottles destined for landfills and recycle them into an amazingly strong and durable polymer that can be crafted to look and feel like wood. These poly-resin products won’t mildew, crack, splinter, rust or fade. Nearly as durable but without a hint of modern plastics are furnishings made from recycled antique farm implements collected from Thailand. Teakwood yokes, plows, sugarcane grinders and wagons are all finding a second life as rugged outdoor furnishings.

For more information about outdoor furniture and shopping tips, visit [www.findyourfurniture.com](http://www.findyourfurniture.com).