

Bricks & Mortar

Alfresco living

THE TOP TRENDS FOR SUMMER
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Alfresco living: top trends for summer



Penthouses in Chelsea Island, west London, come with private terraces (£3.75 million). Below: gothic-style shed, from £2,800, from The Posh Shed Company

Outdoor kitchens with wine chillers and fancy barbecues are the must-haves for 2017, report Carol Lewis and Laura Whateley

Despite the vagaries of the British weather, the nation is embracing the Mediterranean lifestyle with a new-found penchant for elaborate outdoor living spaces that include kitchens, bars and hot tubs. The warm, dry start to spring has led to record sales of outdoor furniture and barbecues. Vicky Angell, the outdoor living buyer for John Lewis, says: "Last week was the second biggest week we have had in sales of outdoor products, and it's only April. We are already selling 47 per cent more garden furniture than this time last year and 79 per cent more barbecues."

While we might be conservative with our interior decor, we are willing to be bolder outside. What is more, we are spreading beyond the patio and are keen to use the whole garden as a living space. Here are the key outdoor living trends for this summer.

Living large

Outdoor living spaces are ideally large and divided into zones for cooking, dining and lounging. They are not gardens in the traditional sense, with all that time-consuming weeding, but more outdoor extensions. Indeed, these spaces are starting to outdo their indoor counterparts. At Berkeley Group's One Tower Bridge development the Prospero penthouse terrace at the top of Sandringham House measures 5,356 sq ft — 30 per cent larger than the apartment's internal space. It features an outdoor kitchen (see below), dining area, living area (called the "sky lounge" in the marketing brochure) and a hot tub — all with views of Tower Bridge (£13.75 million).

It is a similar tale at the top of Beau House, Dalesden's newly launched development on Jernyn Street, where the terrace includes a kitchen and bar

area with sink, wine chiller, fridge, barbecue and counter, as well as a dining area, and a living area with a fire and outdoor television. There is also underfloor heating and views across to Christopher Wren's St James's Church (offers in excess of £15 million). The tower penthouse at Chelsea Creek, by the developer St George, is 3,400 sq ft with alfresco kitchen, barbecue and hot tub (£16.95 million).

These may not be traditional gardens, but that doesn't stop you from having a gardener. The terrace at the Riverwalk penthouse on Millbank (£2.5 million) was designed by Stephen Woodhams, the Chelsea Flower Show gold-medal winner and judge. At Ashbery House, a townhouse by the developer Morphous London, in Chelsea (£26 million), the backyard has been transformed into a living and entertaining space with a fireplace, lounge and dining area. The garden and house has been overseen by a feng shui consultant — hence the elaborate water feature by the Chelsea Flower Show winner David Harber.

For those with real gardens there is still the opportunity to have fun, Angell says. A formal outdoor kitchen and dining area can be created close to the house with small hidden cases created in quiet corners furnished with pool chairs.

Outdoor kitchens

Flipping sausages on a charcoal barbecue while huddled under an umbrella will no longer cut it. Now it's all about professional-style kitchens, with integrated grills, ovens, fridges and sinks.

Once the preserve of the super-rich, outdoor kitchens are now considered a way of extending living space for homeowners. Developers are putting "summer kitchens" into modestly priced properties. Maisonnettes for sale in the Olympic Park's Chobham Mansions development, where prices start at £375,000, come with outdoor sinks,



work surfaces and electric sockets. Tom Howard, the director of Tom Howard garden design and landscaping, says he has received requests for outdoor kitchens, including built-in gas barbecues with granite worktops and cupboards. "Many clients with small gardens want to make the best use of the space for kids to play, entertaining, storage and cooking," he says. "Outdoor kitchens can be tucked into a corner, and having cupboards below the barbecue makes good use of space." Some of the kitchens have hydraulic garage-style canopy doors for watertight storage, built-in seating, side burners for boiling vegetables or pasta, and outdoor fridges, which are easy to add if there are electrical sockets already in place. The designer ceramic charcoal cookers, Big Green Eggs (from £599), are also popular. In one project, Howard says he sank the egg into a hole cut out of a granite worktop.

Fun furniture

The tribal look has been muted indoors, but outdoors it's a different story. Angell says that sales of John Lewis's brightly coloured Sales range of garden furniture "has rocketed since it was launched in February". Customers are looking for quirky pieces, mixing colours and textiles for an eclectic look. Think interesting throws, metallic plant pots and strings of coloured lights. The craze for cosy (hygge) spaces doesn't end with winter.

Customers at Marks & Spencer are more subdued. Its outdoor furniture buyer, Alison Hutchinson, says: "Our grey-painted Melrose range of wooden outdoor furniture is successful. The colourway is new

for us and I think that customers enjoy the muted, soft and contemporary palette. Our Capri chairs have also proved popular, and this summer we have introduced two colourways — teal and grey. A cool, low-seated chair with a retro twist is perfect for stylish sunbathing."

Posh sheds

This is Britain and it is going to rain, so as well as canopies and garden beaters the other big trend is the posh shed. These can be simple smart sheds, such as those sold by The Posh Shed Company (from £1,650), or elaborate garden pods (check out the range from CuckooLand.com, priced from £3,495 to £18,995). They are a step-up from the traditional garden shed — these are garden rooms.

Sally Coulthard, the author of *Shed Decor*, says: "Sheds are used for pretty much anything that goes on in a house — bedrooms, playrooms, gyms, offices, kitchens. Compact living is a huge trend, and sheds are a natural extension. "Every trend that you see in the interiors world is reflected in sheds, but on a micro scale. Flooring is a big deal for 2017 — people are paying more attention to designs and patterns beneath their feet, especially wood and lino flooring. Window seats, window sills and big windows are also big — there's a lot in the media about how to make the most of views and window spaces. Wallpaper is also popular, particularly interesting geometric design."

What premiums do they command? It varies, but according to Sacha Moussaieff of Milton Stone estate agency in South Kensington, west London, houses with a garden square — and in a borough where the average asking price is already about £2 million — the premium is 20 per cent, and houses sell 30 per cent faster.

Kensington and Chelsea has 100 garden squares, the highest concentration in the country. A three-bedroom maisonette on Cornwall Gardens, South Kensington, is on the market with Milton Stone for £5.25 million. A first-floor one-bedroom flat in Ennismore Gardens, Knightsbridge, is being marketed for £2.49 million.

According to research by the Marsh and Parsons estate agency, premiums can reach 50 per cent in Knightsbridge and Belgravia in central London. Savills is selling Belgravia's Thatcher's former home, a grade II listed seven-bedroom house in Chester Square, for £30 million. The square, one of the most exclusive in Belgravia, was built in the 19th century. Savills is advertising a six-bedroom house on Kensington Square, west London, for £19.5 million.

Richard Gutteridge, the head of the Savills Sloane Street offices, says: "The inviting look of the gardens in spring drives premiums higher, although the amount depends on the position of the property. "Spring is the time when garden square homes photograph and show best, and the time when residents see the benefits of their investment in the form of an immaculate garden view."

Few urban features could be considered more quintessentially British than a garden square. Lovingly maintained by the often rich and famous residents whose properties surround them, many are accessible only to those who have keys.

These secret gardens, flanked by Georgian terraces or white stuccoed villas, are being hailed by some as the saviours of a floundering prime property market, commanding premiums of up to 50 per cent in areas where prices are otherwise slumping.

So what exactly is a garden square? First, they're not necessarily a square — they can be a crescent, or a circus. According to the London Parks & Gardens Trust, they began to catch on after the devastation of the plague and then the Great Fire of 1666 to provide a healthy urban living environment for Londoners. The first square by name, Bloomsbury Square, was laid out in the 1670s by the 4th Earl of Southampton. Most, however, were built in the 18th and 19th centuries with the idea of creating city "wildernesses" to attract wildlife. In most cases access was restricted to residents who had keys. Other cities copied the model, but the vast majority are in London.

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A three-bedroom maisonette in Egerton Gardens in Knightsbridge, central London, is £5.75 million with Strutt & Parker. Below: a five-bedroom terraced house off Imperial Square in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, is £2 million through Savills

Why it's hip to be on a garden square

What about outside London? Cities and towns throughout Britain, from York to Cheltenham, Manchester to Bristol, have outstanding garden squares. Some of the best, however, are in Scotland. Moray Place, one of Edinburgh's most expensive addresses, was designed in an oval shape by the 18th Earl of Moray and contains more than three acres of lawns, walkways and trees. Properties often sell for more than 1 million. Belgrave Crescent and Rutland Square are two of the most sought-after addresses in Edinburgh. In Glasgow, Park Circus is one of the city's best-known addresses.

The 17th-century concept of creating garden squares to regenerate decaying and polluted urban land is also making a comeback. In Birmingham, the New Garden Square scheme aims to turn an 11-acre site to the west of the city, filled with unoccupied industrial buildings, into apartments, shops and cafes around a public landscaped garden square. A similar scheme is being developed in Uxlin Square, in Cambridge, and a block of apartments is being built on Portland Square, one of Bristol's best-known Regency squares.

Savills is advertising a grade II listed terraced house off Imperial Square in

Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, for £2 million through Savills. A five-bedroom, three-bathroom house on Archery Square in Deal, Kent, is on the market with Strutt & Parker in Canterbury for £950,000.

According to figures collated by Countrywide, the number of homes being built on garden squares in England and Wales is soaring as their value to developers and agents increases.

Last year 1,192 homes were built on garden squares, compared with 393 in 1995. Of these, 968 were built in London and 54 in the northwest.

Can anyone enjoy them? It depends on the area. In some places, garden squares are strictly for residents, with keys guarded by the garden committees. Others in Islington, north London, are generally open to the public and maintained by the council. Many that were previously private were given to the public for other uses during the Second World War and never regained their private status. According to Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, the president of the London Parks & Gardens Trust, who has written a book on the history of garden squares, some of the public squares are poorly maintained because of a lack of funds.

Who do they attract? Belgrave Square, one of the grandest and largest in London, features houses with price tags in excess of £100 million. The emir of Qatar and the Russian oligarch Oleg Deripaska have homes here.

Nearby Eaton Square is home to the Duke of Westminster's family, and Chester Square in Belgravia has a home owned by Konan Abramovich, the owner of Chelsea Football Club. Montagu Square in Marylebone, in central London, used to be home to Ringo Starr, Jimi Hendrix, John Lennon and Yoko Ono. David Byers

Trend alert



Wooden garden shower, £58.99
manomano.co.uk



Rocking deck chair, £75
gardentrading.co.uk



Big Green Egg barbecue, £1,300
johnlewis.com



Duck egg parasol, £79
marksandspencer.com



Cadiz multicoloured plant pot, £20
habitat.co.uk



Garden chair, £120
johnlewis.com

Compiled by Tatiana Salmon

An outdoor kitchen by DesignSpaceLondon. Prices start at £25,000