



↑ The flat roof of this ramada serves as a deck offering sweeping views of the mountains and Arizona sunsets. It also incorporates a fire pit to ease the chill on cool winter nights. (Design and photography courtesy Exteriors By Chad Robert, Inc.)

LIVING LARGE OUTDOORS

Gaining Outdoor Peace and Relaxation
with Pergolas and Ramadas

BY WANDA PERKINS

TODAY'S OUTDOOR LIVING spaces encompass more than a few comfortable lounge chairs and a table to dine at. Homeowners desire to enjoy the outdoors with a variety of indoor amenities and visual architectural landscape designs. One way to enhance your outdoor space is by incorporating a pergola or a ramada.

Licensed landscape architect Chad Robert, Exteriors By Chad Robert Inc. of Phoenix, Arizona, defines a ramada as a structure with a solid roof that is often tied to the style of the house. "It's an extension of indoor space, which is set up to be an outdoor room," Robert explains. "Ramadas often have fireplaces, furniture and a rug, and they're usually far enough from the main structure to encourage people to venture into the garden. Sometimes they're connected to an outdoor pool for relief from the sun. In contrast, a pergola is typically an open-air structure."

Climate, location and history are all factors to consider prior to selecting and constructing a pergola or ramada. Materials that work in one location may not be



← Proper location of a structure in the garden will ensure its continued use. This ramada perfectly frames mountain views and is connected to both the pool and the hummingbird garden. (Design and photography courtesy Exteriors By Chad Robert, Inc.)

↑ “When you consider how homeowners live, then everything else with the design falls into place,” says landscape architect Chad Robert, ASLA, CLARB; Exteriors By Chad Robert, Phoenix, Arizona.

← Reflecting the home’s Spanish Mediterranean style, this ramada’s roof extends over the pool, allowing two water scuppers and a rain shower to be incorporated into the structure while using the pool as a basin. This creates a swim-up space that connects the active pool area to the relaxing seating area. (Design and photography courtesy Exteriors By Chad Robert, Inc.)

functional in others. “In Arizona, we don’t use much wood, because of extreme heat. Stucco and clay-tile roofs used by early Spanish settlers are still used here,” notes Robert. “If wood is used, we try to protect it from the elements. There’s also an increase in using rusted metal.”

With new construction on the rise, many areas lack developed shade trees. Pergolas can also provide a function of shade during hot and sunny days. “Homeowners who put substantial investment into their backyard want the option to comfortably sit outside and enjoy their space,” adds Zach Fluto, owner of Premium Decks in Fargo. “Adding a pergola is a simple solution, and with unlimited designs and artistic talents of designers and craftsmen, you can create a truly unique structure to admire.”

When using a pergola or ramada within your outside space, it’s important to decide on the main purpose for its use. “Homeowners should consider whether they are looking at adding a pergola for shade, looks or both. If your location is in direct sunlight, you’ll probably prefer something that provides more shade,” states Todd Funfar, president of Deckmasters in Fargo. “Material is an important factor as well. Cedar is less expensive, but there is more maintenance involved. Painting or staining the wood can be tedious. Low-

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← Constructed of western red cedar, this rustic pergola definitely makes an appealing backyard statement! Design and photography by Premium Decks. Landscape design by Valley Landscaping.



↑ "Homeowners who put substantial investment into their backyard want the option to comfortably sit outside and enjoy their space," says Zach Fluto owner of Premium Decks.

← An attractive curved roof on this western red cedar pergola adds interest to this outdoor setting. Design and photography by Premium Decks.



maintenance materials such as vinyl, aluminum or fiberglass are great options. Fiberglass has a very wide range of colors. It is also a bit stronger compared to other material."

A variety of architectural landscape designs offer interest and beauty, which also function in providing a relaxing, peaceful and protected space. "Outdoor spaces and gardens are always connected to a client and the programming of the house," Robert explains. "When designing, it's important to consider the homeowner's lifestyle. A family with children is more active and needs outdoor places to explore, whereas older clients prefer retreats, reading and quiet spaces. Those with teens often incorporate a pool with a diving board or cooking areas. When you consider how homeowners live, then everything else with the design falls into place. Hiring a professional will insure proper setbacks, building requirements and proper construction will all be considered."



← This gazebo-like pergola is constructed of durable fiberglass for years of carefree enjoyment. Design by Deckmasters and Natural Environments Landscaping. Photography courtesy Natural Environments Landscaping.



← Plenty of walking space flows around this hexagonal white vinyl pergola. A welcoming gathering area underneath is great for guests. Design by Todd Funfar. Photography courtesy Deckmasters.



“Pergolas can create an intimate sitting area while providing another outdoor living and entertaining space,” Funfar adds. “You also gain a bit of privacy from the posts, and you gain more shade by planting climbing plants along the sides and the top.”

There’s a growing trend toward incorporating plans that include comfortable outdoor living spaces. “New and exciting products in today’s market

are more durable and long lasting. Modern advances in building and installation techniques have greatly improved,” concludes Fluto. “Outdoor spaces can be a substantial investment, but these investments increase home values. My advice is simple: Know your installer. Seek professional advice and design service, and then create a master plan where outdoor rooms and landscapes flow together.”

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Go ahead! Plan your dream outdoor living space. Ponder ... design ... build – and enjoy! Everyone deserves a little peace and relaxation. Why not make the outdoors your oasis? ✿

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