



When it comes to porches, what really matters is a comfortable seat and beautiful view.

# OUT ON THE PORCH

BY CATHY PURPLE CHERRY, AIA, LEED AP, PURPLE CHERRY ARCHITECTS

No indoor space does for us emotionally what sitting outside does for our soul. Here peace is found on a warm summer night, with a cocktail in hand and a dog on the lap. We are connected with nature. Quiet and release from the stress of the day is found on the porch. Any porch. Doesn't matter how fancy. What really matters is a comfortable seat and beautiful view. What I have found

in my 30 years of professional practice is that each of us is uniquely connected in different ways to different elements in nature. Views of the mountains, of water, of woodlands, of bustling streetscapes, of animal habitats. We each are drawn to something so specific that it traditionally connects back to childhood experiences and memories.

For me, it's the mountains. And while I have lived on the water for 35 years, my

home is here in Charlottesville because my heart is with the mountains—more specifically, long views of rolling ranges. For those who may go to Annapolis, it's the water. But what is common to both locations and all other venues is the structure from which we all make these connections to nature.

The porch. Created before the Civil War to protect us from the sun and the rain, the porch came to represent a

place of gathering for friends and family. It was a place to feel the breeze and escape the heat of the unconditioned home. With time and the invention of central air conditioning, the porch became less used. Further, the invention of television brought us into the house.

It's not until recent years when technology became portable that we have begun to see porches be re-embraced back into the function of the





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home. The marrying of the porch and technology is somewhat contradictory to my opening statement. The blending of immediate accessibility to media and a calming connection to the landscape has created a new zest for the porch. Further, the ability to build a smaller house yet double living areas by flowing out onto the screened and, at times, heated porch has allowed an overall reduction in construction costs where applicable. Maybe best of all, with the invention of synthetic materials, porches can be built to last decades longer than the colonial porch. Don't assume that synthetic means ugly. Today, we can build two identical porches—one made of wood and one of synthetic materials—and you cannot tell the difference.



David Burroughs



Without comfortable furniture, the porch is not where you will stay. Make sure that if you build one, you save a budget for the interior design too!

Why do people build covered porches, versus screen porches, versus three season porches? There actually are specific reasons independently applicable to each. The covered porch it's ideal for a climate in which there is a continuous breeze. This breeze helps to reduce bugs. Many clients of mine ask for a covered porch with no screening out of concern for obstructing views; however, the amazing screen materials used today are nearly transparent. So don't let that stop you from screening. Screens allow you to open all doors from the interior to the porch, with no concern for a bug infestation in your home. The screens can also be removable or electronically retractable. They can roll up or they can pleat and fold to the side. They can be hidden in built-in pockets. Each of these steps as a layer cost. In both of these porch options, new infrared heaters can be built-in or freestanding, to extend the use of the porch in colder climates.

The sunroom or three season room is a completely different animal. When

you build a sunroom, you need to ask yourself if you really mean to have a four season room. If it is only a three season room and you have not been raised with one as a child or you're not a plant lover, you will find that it may become a collector of all sorts of things, or that it is converted and opened to the house.

The most magnificent example of a three season room is an English conservatory. Reflective of fairy tale stories with its glass roof allowing view of the night stars, the English conservatory has to be one of the most romantic structures ever built. And in its most beautiful form, these structures can cost from \$300,000 up. They are built from a passion for architecture.

On porches, we are seeing all kinds of fun things happen. Beds that swing, ethanol fireplaces, retractable televisions, wet bars. However, what's so very true is that without comfortable sprawling furniture, the porch is not where you will stay. So make sure that if you build one, you save a budget for the interior design too.

Born and raised in Virginia, **Cathy Purple Cherry** ultimately landed in Annapolis where she grew a large architectural firm specializing in high-end custom homes and estates. A talented architect, visionary, and three-dimensional thinker, Cathy is able to marry clients' dreams with the reality of the built environment. Cathy's intense love for the mountains has always been deeply rooted in her, and as such, Cathy is passionate about extending her 25-year old practice through DC and down the range to Charlottesville, where she and her husband are building their second home, which they will one day retire in on Ennis Mountain.

While Cathy revels in the intricate design opportunities presented by high-end residential architecture, Cathy is equally passionate about her philanthropic efforts and her work serving the special needs community through the firm's Purposeful Architecture studio.

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