



# THE GREAT OUTDOORS

The most special entertainment areas are where the inside meets the outside of a home. When you can expand the indoor living or kitchen area of the house into the “outside room,” you can embrace the views, the wind, and the smell of nature while doubling the floor area of your entertainment space. Outdoor living spaces are opportunities for introducing open fire and flowing water, for creating whimsy and introducing sounds that differ significantly from the emotions experienced inside the home.

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What are all the unique design opportunities I have experienced in doing custom residential designs for over 25 years? Imagine entering into your large glass master shower and seeing a second glass

door leading to a small private garden shower. This outdoor space provided privacy by way of a surrounding enclosure while allowing for a starlit open roof. The feeling of bathing nude outside is something most of us don’t remember from our youth—like when our mother stripped us naked outside after coming off the beach!

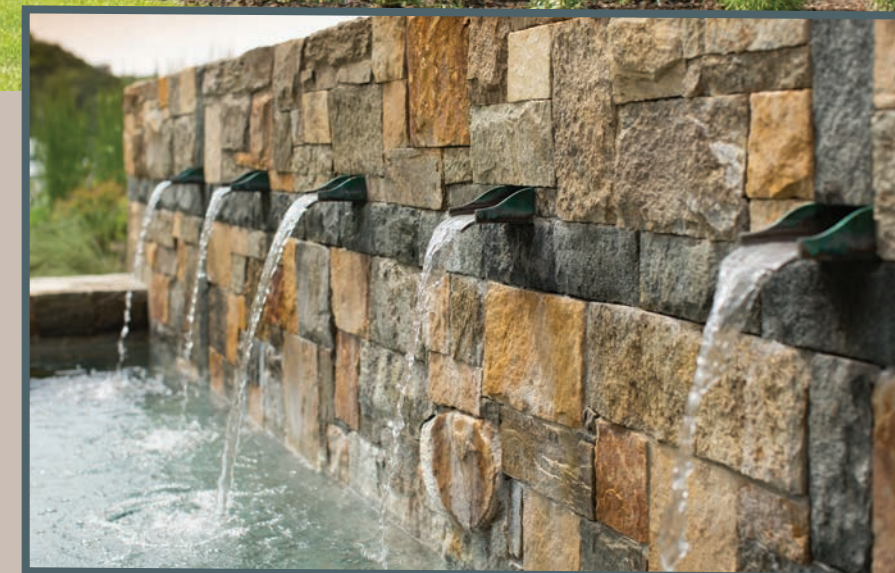
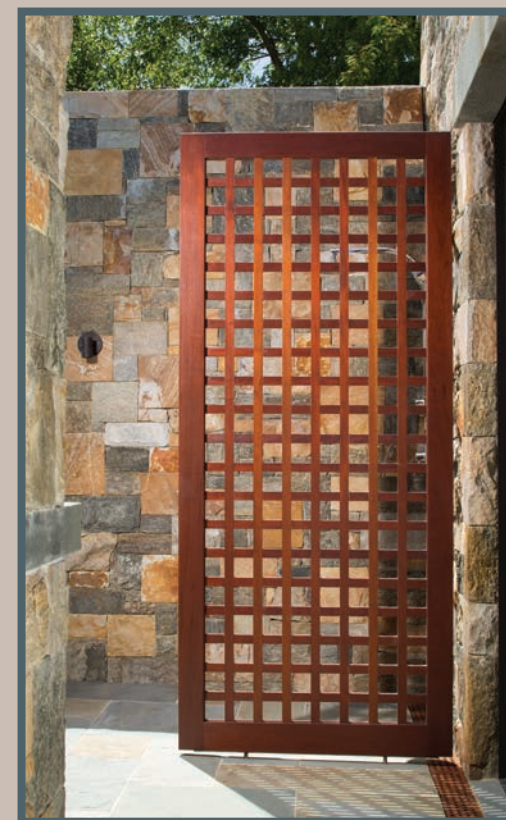
Next, how about ducking through a closet to a hidden ship’s ladder that leads to a hatch? And upon opening this hatch, you climb up to an open deck at the peak of the roof. A true widow’s walk allows the homeowners a 360 degree view of their 500-acre farm while sipping wine in two comfortable chairs.

And last, fold away a fifty foot glass wall and step onto a timber frame porch

looking down the incredible mountain range of Hot Springs towards the historic Omni Homestead Resort. A wrapping low stone wall provides alternate seating options once all the comfy outdoor chairs are filled by friends and family.

The best outdoor spaces are created when an architect and landscape architect work together in a symbiotic design relationship. Together, these two disciplines can marry unique designs and materials to develop a seamlessness to how nature meets building. It’s important in a co-design process that egos are left at the door. The best solutions are made when the designers enjoy working together and respect each other’s opinions.

So, if you asked me what you might want to know from a practicality standpoint when creating these “edge” spaces, I would probably teach you some of the same tidbits I explain to clients when designing their homes. For example, folding glass wall systems, like the one mentioned above, are bringing the outdoors inside rather than what has been the typically two separate areas—inside and outside. During great weather, these



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systems allow the doubling of an entertainment area with easy flow across the width of the large opening. These walls can fold on themselves in a scissor-like fashion or they can slide and stack into a wall pocket. For broad stroke planning, they are approximately \$1000 per linear foot. They have different threshold conditions so be cognizant that if you desire a totally flush floor system, this dictates a certain product. These systems are more often found in areas of year-round warm weather. And when bugs prevail, a large screen is married with the folding glass panels. These screens can be accordion sheets or one large blanket with a split for walking through. These large door units are perfect for the walls between a great room and a screened porch.

When creating a “firepit” area, consideration should be given to the amount of wind anticipated. With fire, comes smoke. And while this is the aromatic component of fire, it is also the most irritating part. The beauty of a large gas loop is that you can create a “bonfire” event without having to play musical chairs to avoid the moving smoke. And when designing a campfire

setting, it’s ideal to know your actual furniture so that the pit is designed with a surrounding low wall of perfect distance from the concentric seating such that everyone can rest their feet near the fire.

And lastly, when considering a pool in your outdoor space, while you may want an organic shape, retractable pool covers only work on orthogonal shapes. So, consideration needs to be given to safety, ease of care, and containment of temperature. And when placing a pool within the outdoor space in the state of Virginia, half of the year the pool will be closed. So, consider placing it a couple of steps down into the landscape to help drop it to the lower area of your site line or slide it just off-sides of the primary view.

With imagery so accessible via magazines or the internet, it’s amazing how you can be inspired by just looking for ideas. Outdoor spaces are typically created in response to a need or in honor of a memory and experience of your childhood. Don’t we all wish we could build a swinging bridge, a cave, a unique treehouse or a massive large fishing pond to help us remember the joys of our past?

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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