



How To Make The Most Out Of The Outdoor Living Trend If You Don'T Have A Patio Or Backyard

Urban dwellers must become more creative than their rural peers.

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07/14/2017

It's acknowledged among city dwellers that if you want to reside in an American metropolis and have everything at your fingertips, you're going to have to pay the piper. Rent is high, parking is nearly non-existent and one bedroom apartments are smaller than what most people consider an acceptable studio, not to mention having to trade in your washer and dryer for a public laundromat.

Many renters or homeowners lucky enough to own a large patio or urban garden in the city have created beautiful works of art. Plants, vegetables, water displays and furniture turn concrete jungles into livable spaces to escape the cramped apartment or condo. But for those

without the additional space, making the most out of what you have can pose a challenge. That's why ESTATENVY spoke to some experts who provide basic solutions.

Ben Bowen is the head landscape designer at [Ross NW Watergardens](#), his family's landscape design-build firm located in Portland, Oregon. He's been working with his dad since 2005 and first started in the family business as a teenager installing irrigation timers with his grandfather in Phoenix. Bowen says he's seen plenty of people work with the limited space they have and admires one couple in particular he recently worked with.

"They have a balcony that is 15 feet wide but only three feet deep," Bowen says. "Instead of trying to create space that could be used for seating, cooking and gardening, they dedicated all of it to their view from their big living room windows."

Bowen says the couple doesn't have any chairs or room for items like a grill, but the space is beautiful because they designed it perfectly based on the dimensions.

"By being pragmatic and willing to sacrifice common outdoor space uses, they will have a space that does one thing really well," Bowen says.

Being flexible and willing to move things around offers residents the opportunity to reconfigure. Benches, tables and small planters can be shifted or removed when additional space is needed.

"You can also take everything with you when you move," Bowen says. "If you want to squeeze every functional inch out of a space, look to build in custom pieces."

Small spaces, just like large spaces, are designed uniquely depending on the neighborhood, city and region of the country. Regardless of where you live, however, vegetation can universally help make spaces appear larger than they are. Bowen says many people tend to shy away from trees, but that can be a mistake.

"A tree is something we associate with larger spaces, so using a well-chosen tree in a small space can make it feel it feel larger," he says. "Potted trees will have smaller mature sizes, and the bulk of the tree is a canopy above your head. They fit in small spaces quite well, really."

Adding in outdoor mirrors designed to handle mother nature's elements can also make it appear as though your space is filled with more vegetation than what's really there.

"It makes the garden or outdoor area look twice the size," says Kilian Ganly.

Ganly is the owner of [All Decked Out NYC](#), a full-service landscape design-build contractor specializing in urban gardens in The Big Apple. Folks in large cities like New York living who in high rise buildings predictably don't have outdoor spaces of any kind to call their own. When that's the case, Ganly suggests it's easy to bring the outdoors in.

"Everybody has house plants," Ganly says. "And there are so many kinds. Find plants that

don't require a lot of sunlight. Money trees and any kind of palm help solve the problem of not having an outdoor patio.”

Whether it's picking types of plants and trees to invest in, or looking for advice on furniture layout, Bowen says people shouldn't feel lost. If the creative juices simply aren't flowing, look for a landscape architect or designer who has experience with small spaces.

“If you want to do the work yourself, make that clear, and they can keep the design within your skill level and budget.”