



The Complete Guide To Planning Your Outdoor Space

Why Outdoor Space Deserves Real Investment

The Monterey Peninsula has one of the most livable climates in the country. Mild temperatures and low humidity mean your outdoor space can work for you in nearly every season, not just summer weekends.

A well-designed outdoor area changes how you use your home every day. It's where the family lands after school, where guests gather on a Friday evening, and where you have your morning coffee before the day starts.

At Lewis Builders, we design outdoor spaces from the beginning of the project so they're incorporated seamlessly with the rest of the home.



Start Here: Questions to Ask Before You Design

Before choosing materials or features, it helps to get clear on how you actually want to use the space.

How do you spend time outside now? If you rarely use your yard, it's worth asking why. Often the answer is that the space doesn't support anything: no seating, no shade, no reason to stay.

Who uses the space, and at what ages? A multi-generational family needs different things than a couple who entertains frequently.

How connected is your indoor space to the outside? If getting outside requires walking through multiple rooms or opening a single narrow door, the connection is broken before you even step out. Good indoor-outdoor flow starts with the architecture.

What's limiting you right now? Common culprits: a driveway or garage eating up usable space, lack of privacy from the street or neighbors, no level ground for seating, or simply no defined zones that invite you to stay.

What does "done" look like for you? Morning coffee outside? Kids playing while adults cook? Evening entertaining? The answer shapes everything about the design.



A Note on Site Layout

The single most impactful outdoor living decision is often how the site itself is organized before any feature is added.

We've freed up 1,200 square feet of usable space simply by reorienting a garage. We've unlocked privacy by rethinking a fence line. If your yard feels limited, it may not be the size that's the problem.

The Outdoor Living Zones Framework

Most well-designed outdoor spaces include a mix of these zones. Not every project needs all of them; the right combination depends on your lot, your lifestyle, and your budget.

Dining & Cooking: Built-in BBQ, outdoor kitchen, or a simple dining area with a covered roof overhead. This zone anchors entertaining.

Gathering & Conversation: A firepit, fire table, or lounge seating area. This is where people linger.

Activity: Putting greens, bocce ball courts, lawn games, or space for kids to run.

Retreat: A quieter spot like a view deck, a private patio off the primary suite, or a covered nook. Somewhere to step away from the crowd.

Transition: The path between inside and out. Large sliding glass doors, step-free thresholds, and a covered transition area all make a meaningful difference in how often the outside gets used.



Designing for the Monterey Peninsula

Outdoor spaces on the Peninsula require thoughtful planning. We often consider:

- **Coastal climate:** Fog, sun, and cool evenings influence comfort and material choices.
- **Views and privacy:** Balancing scenic outlooks with spaces that feel sheltered and intimate.
- **Sloped sites:** Using grading, terraces, and retaining walls to maximize usable space.
- **Durable materials:** Selecting finishes that stand up to coastal moisture and salt air.
- **Local regulations:** Navigating setbacks, permitting, and jurisdiction-specific requirements early.

The best outdoor spaces work with their surroundings, not against them.



What Outdoor Living Can Look Like

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT:

A Multigenerational Outdoor Retreat

The situation: A family kept a home rather than sell it, as a place for adult children and grandchildren to return to. The problem was that the house had almost no usable outdoor space. A long driveway and front-facing garage dominated the property, leaving little room to gather.

What we did: Reorienting the garage to face the street shortened the driveway and freed up roughly 1,200 square feet. This design won the prestigious national Chrysalis Award in 2024. That space became the foundation for a full outdoor retreat:

- Bocce ball court
- Putting green
- Built-in gas firepit with seating
- Built-in BBQ
- Two 4-panel sliding glass doors connecting the living and dining rooms to the patio
- 550 sq ft second-story view deck with beverage center, fire table, and ocean views



"We were so grateful for the ideas that our builder gave us; truly allowing this family home to become home to the future generations. We absolutely love the end result!"

- The Family

Ready To Get Started?

It's better to bring in the experts as early as possible. Outdoor living decisions – especially site layout, door placement, and deck structure – are much easier to make during the design phase than after construction begins.

That said, we regularly transform existing yards and properties that feel like they have no potential. If you're

not sure what's possible on your lot, that's exactly what a consultation is for.

Lewis Builders has designed and built outdoor living spaces across Carmel, Monterey, Pebble Beach, and Carmel Valley for over 25 years. We handle design and construction under one roof, so your outdoor space gets the same attention as every room inside.



Schedule a Consultation Today!

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