



The Outdoors

Outdoor entertaining is in, so make sure your patio, deck and other exterior spaces are ready for company. A well-manicured lawn and stylish deck furniture are a good place to start, but your yard will also need plenty of electronic systems to keep the good times rolling. Music and elegant lighting, for example, can help set the mood for your alfresco dinner party. Even items commonly found indoors, like TVs, kitchen appliances and remote controls, are smart additions for the backyard. You'll be able to catch the game and grab yourself a cold one without leaving the chaise. By working the components listed here into your home's exterior spaces, you'll discover a new appreciation for the great outdoors.

TOP 5 SYSTEMS FOR YOUR OUTDOOR SPACE

- 1 Weather-Hardy Speakers
- 2 Decorative Lighting
- 3 Protected Entrance
- 4 Wireless TV
- 5 Automated Hot Tub and Pool

Music is a wonderful complement to any outdoor activity. To ensure that they could hear all their favorites from anywhere in the yard, the owners placed speakers at the porch, within the landscaping and even inside the pool. A handheld remote lets them control the audio components inside the house while swimming, sunbathing or entertaining guests. Design and installation by Tech Homes of Powder Springs, GA.



This outdoor space can be used even when the weather gets chilly. The open walls of the pool house can be closed with sliding glass doors and a dedicated heating and cooling system can be started up to keep the temperature toasty. While the family is there, they can watch high-definition satellite TV, a DVD or something stored on a media server on a 50-inch plasma TV. When the weather's nice, a whole-house music system pipes tunes to the backyard. The owners divided the space into five independent listening zones so that something different can play in each area at the same time. The entertainment systems as well as the pool, hot tub, waterfalls, lighting, ceiling fans and electronically operated screens can be controlled through either a built-in touchpanel in the pool house or a wireless handheld remote. Design and installation by Gramophone of Timonium, MD.

Weather-Hardy Speakers

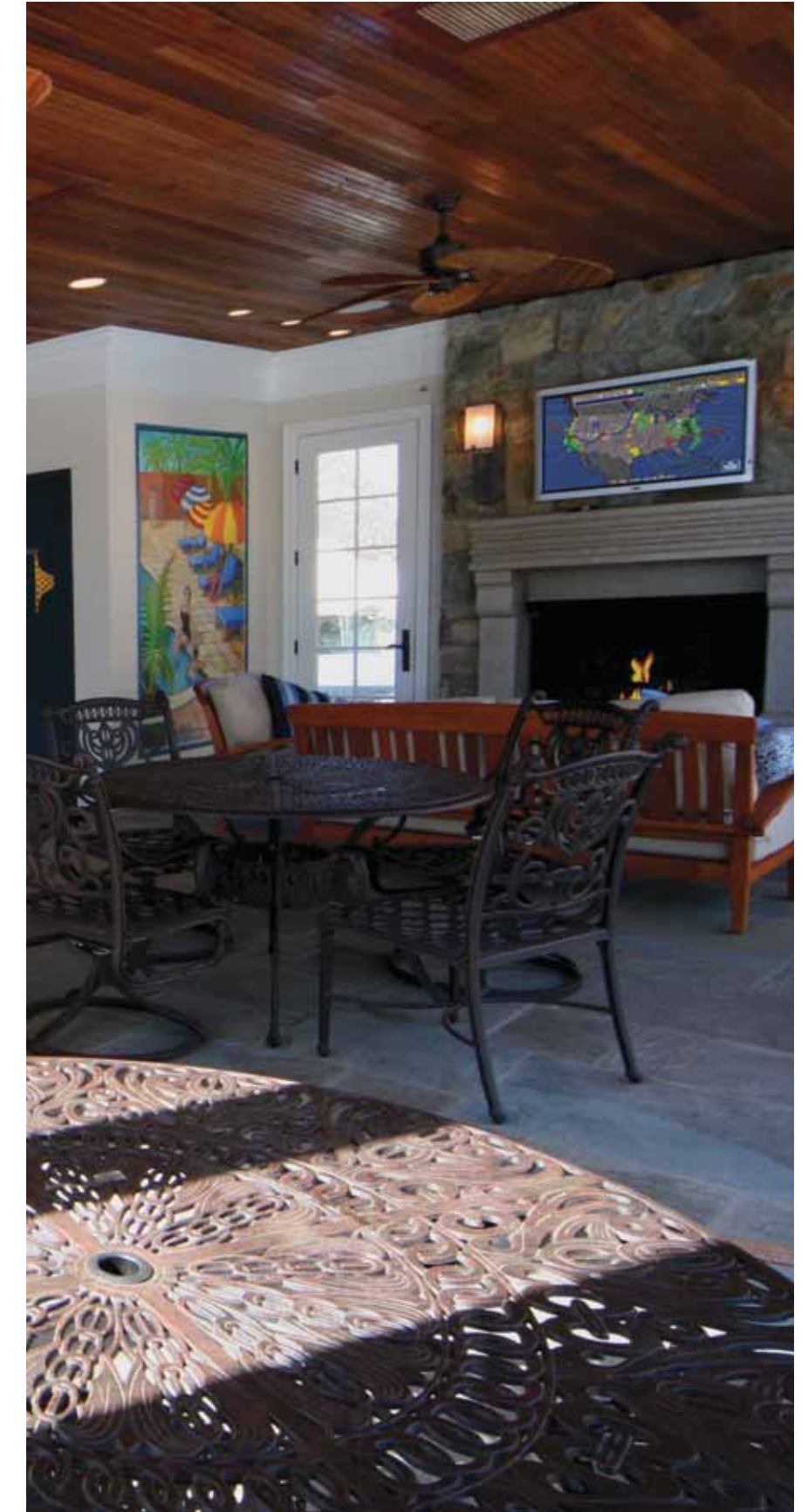
Whether you're pruning the bushes, hosting a neighborhood barbecue or snoozing in the hammock, music makes every activity more enjoyable. And thanks to technology, you'll no longer have to carry along a boom box to have the tunes at your side. The same system that can distribute songs from your family room entertainment system to speakers throughout the house can also pipe music to the patio, deck, gardens, swimming pool and anywhere else you want.

There are a couple of ways to bring music to the backyard. The first is by using a wireless distribution system. Comprised of a transmitter that plugs into the entertainment system indoors, and wireless speakers outside, the system enables music to travel over radio frequency airwaves. No wiring is necessary, which means the speakers can be moved around the outdoor area. As long as they're within range of the transmitter and can be plugged into an A/C outlet (or have fresh batteries), the speakers will work just about anywhere—the shed, the garden or the front porch.

However, if having high-quality audio is important to you, opt for speakers that are wired directly to the entertainment system. Once the wire is trenched into the ground, it'll be difficult to move it, so be sure to map out where you want the speakers before burying the speaker wire. Places to consider include decks and patios, the swimming pool and hot tub, your gardens and the front porch.

Like their indoor cousins, outdoor speakers are available in a range of styles. Popular choices for the yard and around the pool are speakers that resemble rocks. Made of natural-looking materials, they're designed to blend right in with the landscape. Plus, they're weather- and water-resistant, which means you can leave them out in the rain and snow. You can also find speakers that can double as planters for your hydrangeas, speakers that can be hung from the trees and speakers that look just like regular bookshelf-style units that can be mounted to the exterior of your house.

Outdoor speakers differ in how they direct their sound. Some units, for example, project sound outward from the front of their grilles. These are ideal for locations like a deck, where you'll be sit-





Finding ways to make the electronics disappear is often the objective when it comes to designing an outdoor space. For the owners of this elegant backyard, that meant using speakers that resemble rocks. Placed within the trees and shrubs, they look more like a part of the landscape than a piece of technology. Design and installation by Audio Video Excellence of Pleasantville, NY.

ting in one place and would like to enjoy a two-channel stereo effect. Omnidirectional speakers, meanwhile, spill out sound from all sides. No matter where you stand or sit, you'll be able to hear the music, which makes these speakers a good choice for gardens, pathways and other areas where you'll be moving around.

Decorative Lighting

For evening gatherings, you'll need more than just the standard motion-triggered lights for your backyard. Fixtures planted around the perimeter of patios, decks and other social spots can help define the area and create a festive atmosphere. Plus, it'll make it easier for your guests to find their way around. When you put the lights on a control system, you won't even have to worry about turning them on and off. As the sun sets, the system can

activate the lights, for example. Then at midnight (or whatever time you choose), the system can shut them off. Of course, there will be times when you'll want to stay in control. From a keypad, you can decide which groups of lights to turn on and which to leave off. For instance, on Halloween, you could choose to illuminate only the front porch and leave the rest of the yard dark and spooky. Your Christmas lights could also be controlled by the system.

Outdoor lighting is also a good way to protect your home and family. By tying the exterior lights into your home's security system, you'll be able to illuminate the entire backyard simply by pressing one button. The instant flash of light will scare off any trespassers who step onto your property. And if the pizza delivery guy gets lost, the same all-on command can help him find your house.

Protected Entrance

Most people want their home to look friendly and inviting. At the same time, they want to ensure that their house and family are well protected. There are several technologies that can help you achieve both. A motorized gate, for example, can add visual interest to your property and also prevent vehicles from entering your driveway. There are a number of ways to operate a motorized gate. You can use a handheld remote to control the gate from the house or have a system open and shut it automatically according to the time of day. At the gate, you can punch a code into a weather-resistant keypad to swing it open. The gate-control keypad can also function as an intercom station. You can speak with the visitor from an intercom station (or a telephone) inside your house before deciding to grant him or her access. Complement the setup by having a sur-

veillance camera installed by the gate. This arrangement will enable you to see who's come for a visit. Also consider placing a camera at the front door and in the backyard. A home systems installer can assign the camera footage to an unused channel on your home's cable TV system. By tuning to the channel, you'll be able to see every area of your property on the screen of any TV.

Wireless TV

Tiny battery-operated TVs that you can take outside are nothing new, but if you're going to be watching the big game with the crew, you'll definitely need a bigger screen. New makes of wireless TVs offer screen sizes of about 20 inches or so, making them an ideal accessory for your patio or deck. And here's the best part: You won't need to string a rat's nest of cabling to connect the TV to your cable box or DVD player. A small transmitter wirelessly sends the A/V signals from the equipment indoors to the TV outside. Look for a TV with a wide viewing angle (so that people seated or standing to the side of the screen can see the picture) and with a special coating to reduce glare.

A wireless TV is an awesome outdoor companion, but when you go inside, the set should too. The device simply isn't made to be left out in the rain. However, by storing it inside a weatherproof cabinet, it could be possible to make the TV a permanent fixture in your outdoor space. If you placed the set on a motorized lift, you could command it to ascend from its hiding spot when you're ready to watch.

Automated Hot Tub and Pool

Here's a way to impress your friends: Have the jets and lights pop on in the hot tub and pool before you step outside. Specialty pool and hot tub control systems can do the job, but the keypads that transmit commands to the equipment can look rather big and obtrusive mounted to a wall inside your house. A more eye-appealing solution is to integrate the pool and spa controls with some other outdoor system, such as the lighting or music system. That way, you can activate the water effects from the same keypad that you use to turn on the music and lights. **HEI**