

indoor-outdoor



IN AND OUT

Story: Natalie Raad

Indoor-outdoor living gives you the best of both worlds, no matter what the season



Modern garden design has embraced the idea of indoor-outdoor spaces, and for good reason. Not only does connecting the interior with the exterior extend both spaces, it also invites the garden into the home and vice versa.

“The most important component to consider when designing an indoor-outdoor space is the relationship between the two areas and how they connect visually,” says Aaron Worth, Director of Utopia Landscape Design.

Ideally, the two rooms should almost present as one, and by removing or minimising the elements that divide the space, such as doors and walls, the more free-flowing the two spaces will appear.

A larger opening is obviously going to give a better flow than a single door, says landscape designer Nick Kennedy, from Art in Green. Bi-fold doors that run the full length of the wall are ideal, however this isn't always a possibility. If not, double-glass sliding doors also work well.

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“A significant benefit of establishing an indoor-outdoor connection is that the interior of the home can appear larger as the outdoor entertaining or living area extends the inside of the home out toward the garden,” says Scott Brown, Director of Scott Brown Landscape Design.

This indoor-outdoor connection can also bring the garden into the home so the garden adds another dimension to the residence, regardless of the time of year. If possible, you should also opt for plenty of floor-to-ceiling windows to invite the garden — and natural light — inside the house.

Glassed internal courtyards can have the same effect, which is something to consider when building a new home or planning a renovation.

There should be a theme which provides some link between the indoor and outdoor areas. This theme can be demonstrated in a number of ways, such as maintaining a similar style and colour between the interior of the home and the outside area.

“In order to ensure an easy-flow connection between interior and exterior spaces, it is important to introduce at least one material or item that is consistent to the two areas,” says Aaron.

This is more effective when large surfaces are involved, such as floors and walls. For example, an internal timber floor that adjoins a timber deck provides material consistency that helps the space feel as one.

Nick agrees. “The flooring material is important. Although it doesn’t need to be a direct match, it does need to complement or harmonise together in colour, size and texture,” he says.

If the flooring is almost the same but not quite, it can often look like a mistake, in which case you’re better off making it deliberately different, says Nick.

Nick believes it is important to keep flooring on the same level. However, if you do need steps down to the outdoor area, you should make the treads wide (so they are more like a landing) and run them the full width of the doors, or longer.

According to Scott, a significant floor height difference will decrease the connection between the inside and outside environments, especially if the outdoor entertaining area is in



1. The similar paving and wall colours plus a design element that runs from inside to out connect both spaces. Photo courtesy of Dulux.

2. The indoor-outdoor connection serves to make the interior living area and the small courtyard seem bigger. Garden by Ami-Co Landscapes.

3. The big kitchen windows invite the outside in: a sea view on one side, a Japanese garden on the other. A skylight enhances the effect.

close proximity to the house.

“In a situation where the house floor is higher, the outdoor entertaining area could be raised to match the house floor (or at least be within one step height) in order for the two areas to be better linked,” says Scott.

Other than flooring, introducing elements that are consistent to both the indoor and outdoor spaces can be as simple as wall colours or furnishings.

“The furnishings used in the indoor-outdoor spaces offer the flexibility that the more structural elements such as floors don’t, as they are easier to change if required,” says Aaron.

There is a lot of furniture around that is suitable for the outdoors that has a real indoors look and feel to it, thus further

enhancing the indoor-outdoor connection.

The key is to include items that help link the two areas visually. For example, furnishings may be quite different, but paint colour tones and incidental items such as urns and scatter cushions may be complementary to both areas and therefore create that connection.

Don’t be afraid to put a vase on the outdoor table, says Nick. Very often outdoor spaces are left bland. Add some accessories as you would to the inside living room.

Elements that connect through the walls as if the wall wasn’t there can also work really well, says Nick — such as using the same colour of an interior wall on the extension of the wall outside, or a bench or counter that starts inside and continues outside. →



“Colour is one of the easiest ways to provide a visual link”

Another helpful addition is to create a visual destination to the rear of the outdoor area. This can be done using simple items such as feature plants, pots and urns, or more permanent elements such as water features and outdoor kitchens to help draw the eye through both spaces.

The line of sight from inside the house to the outside garden is important, so avoid stopping the eye at the door with furniture or objects. “The placement and direction of furniture and objects is important. The outdoor room needs to flow back into the house as much as the inside needs to flow out in order to make it feel like part of the house,” says Nick.

Colour is one of the easiest ways to provide a visual link between the indoor and outdoor areas. “This use of colour doesn’t have to be restricted to building materials — it can also be featured in plant material,” says Scott.

Plants can be entrenched within the built environment by having them in tubs or planters, which can further enhance the connection between the home and the garden.

Aaron believes that regardless of the

climate, indoor-outdoor areas have a place in every home. “In warmer climates, outdoor rooms provide a cool respite as they encourage cool breezes and have the relaxing sounds of water features,” he says. “Cooler climates also benefit from an outdoor room with the help of café-style blinds, gas heaters and comfortable wicker lounges.”

Scott agrees that indoor-outdoor living is something we can all participate in no matter what the weather or the season. If outdoor areas are sympathetically designed, strategically located and comfortably furnished, they can function as a permanent extension of the home and offer us year-round enjoyment. ■

4. The interior living areas of this house have been oriented to maximise the sea view and the natural light. Garden by John Hope Designs.

5. Bi-fold doors slide back to connect the internal dining and living areas of this converted warehouse to the deck. Design by Archengine.

