

Inside-out

Today's outdoor spaces are all about blurring the line between inside and out

Story: Aaron Worth



Material selection is very much driven by trends and at the moment in Queensland there is a distinct move towards more natural, organic materials. Natural sandstone, bluestone, porphyry, basalt and travertine are highly sought after because of their natural appeal and increased affordability. Even products with a more “industrial” look, like concrete, are being finished in ways that give them a stronger, natural appearance — for example, honing concrete to reveal the stone aggregate within.

Along with this interest in natural materials has come a resurgence of interest in the use of plants, with many Queenslanders now opting for the more timeless, tropical planting style. Well-designed tropical and sub-tropical gardens provide a cooling environment where, for the most part, foliage colour and contrast create year-round interest rather than seasonal flowers. Although, of course, plants like gingers and Heliconias produce some of the most spectacular flowers you will find. Tropical and sub-tropical gardens also have the added benefit of being quite drought-tolerant and low-maintenance.

But whatever the prevailing trends and regardless of budget, if you create an outdoor space that fits the site and meets your family's needs, you can transform your life.

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Whether it is architecture or furniture and clothing design, we are all influenced by trends and landscaping is no exception. Some trends are short-lived while others take a more permanent place. Yet despite the impact trend shifts can make, it is how we want to live that has the most fundamental effect on how we design our outdoor spaces.

As with any home design, the more thought, effort and money we invest in our landscaping the more beautiful, functional and satisfying the result. Our homes used to be little more than a series of functional, simple boxes. They had insufficient natural light and segregated family members. Now our homes are well-lit open spaces designed to be enjoyed — contemporary landscaping is part of this evolution.

In Queensland, bringing the outside in has always been a priority; however, it is now seen as a sound investment and an essential part of life, improving our physical and mental wellbeing. Today there is better synergy between indoor and outdoor spaces in modern home designs and renovations, with architects and landscape designers working together to ensure a seamless transition between inside and out.

Achieving an effortless blend of indoor

and outdoor living can be accomplished in various ways. One is to substitute walls for doors that open to a large undercover outdoor space, which then extends (via steps or a pathway) into the garden. The repeated use of colours, fabrics and materials inside and out strengthens this effect and makes it hard to define where one space starts and another begins.

Furniture plays an important element in blurring the lines and in Queensland, as elsewhere around the country, outdoor furniture now looks more like indoor furniture. So, too, the modern outdoor kitchen, which is a far cry from the days when outdoor entertaining meant a trolley barbecue and an Esky.

And we mustn't forget lighting. We want to enjoy our outdoor spaces night and day so the same kind of attention is paid to lighting our gardens and outdoor rooms as is given to lighting our indoor living areas.

In terms of style, the somewhat sterile minimalist “less is more” approach favoured in recent times is evolving into a new style, which still maintains clean lines but adds more interest. Large expanses of white walls and the heavy use of glass and concrete are now making way for more intriguing combinations of materials such as aluminium, timber, glass, natural stone, Corten steel and concrete.

1

1. In this Acadia Landscapes' project there is good flow from the house to the outdoor entertaining area to the garden.

2. Tropical and sub-tropical planting styles are making a return and are the ideal fit for various parts of Queensland.