



backyard

Bringing the Indoors Out

by William McClenathan



My good friend and co-host, Judy Alleruzzo, kept telling me about this show named, *The Outdoor Room with Jamie Durie*. After a few months of hearing about it, I finally remembered to catch an episode. And what a treat it was! Beautiful and functional, his rooms are simply stunning- although they never mentioned the cost. And this is the point where so many shows drop the ball on their audiences. I mean really, how realistic is it for most people to spend tens of thousands of dollars on their outdoor rooms? Not to mention the fact that I don't know many people who would even be willing to spend a pretty penny on an outdoor room here in the Northwest where the rain and winters tend to have a mind and agenda of their own.

My own private gardens include four specific outdoor rooms. When I first went about creating them, I wasn't sure how long I would own this particular piece of property, so I wasn't about to invest thousands of dollars in elaborate rooms that I might only be able to utilize three or four months out of the year.



I began by scheming about the best ways in which to incorporate semi-protected areas into my gardens for comfortable outdoor rooms. I had previously purchased two of those pop-up structures (that can be used as temporary garages) for my various garden parties. The thought occurred to me that they were sturdy and could be used in the way I desired and the price was right. In all, they put me out about \$150 a piece. I found mine at Costco, although rumor has it that they have them at Bi-Mart as well. After some further investigation I found that retail locations such as Big Lots, Target, and even Fred Meyer sell these very handy patio pop-up tents at relatively low prices. Depending on the size and quality, they range in price from \$150 to \$300.



I have a great brick patio out back. After taking some measurements, I decided two of them, a 10x10 and a 12x10, along with the two garage tents I already had, would be the perfect start to the construction of my outdoor room.

The next steps are where your individual skills and personal taste come into play. I hear all too often people trying to tell me that they don't have the "creative touch." Well here's what I have to say to that: WHATEVER! Each and every one of us does. It is a matter of simply putting in the things that you love most and knowing what you want to utilize the space for, i.e. reading, entertaining, yoga



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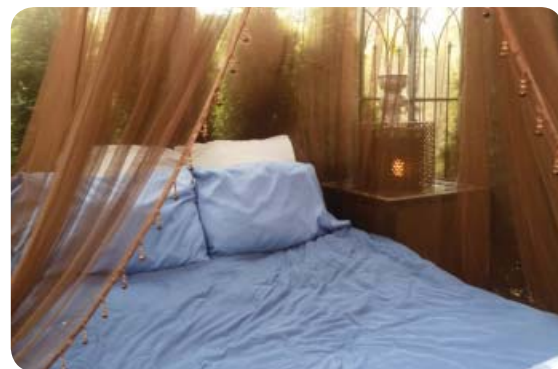
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etc. If you are happy and relaxed in your outdoor room, that is all that matters.

Because I own a few different rental properties, I am always having renters leave furniture behind; some useable, some not so much. Plus, for my rooms, I was constantly keeping an eye out at thrift stores, garage sales, and even for items left out by the road with "free" signs. By going online, as well, I found little treasures for almost nothing or even on occasion for free.

I knew I wanted an outdoor bedroom, among other areas, scattered throughout the gardens to create beautiful places where my friends can sit and enjoy dining and each others company. To make this happen, electricity was something I needed to factor into my planning. And, in order to give the room a more finished feeling, having some sort of hard flooring was important to me.

Remember, almost every apartment, condo and home has some kind of patio or concrete outdoor area. Take advantage of this pre-made flooring and utilize these spaces effectively in order to create your own outdoor room sanctuary.



One other thing to consider while planning and constructing your rooms is wind. When using tent like structures, one must take into account the strong winds we can and do get in the Northwest. I take down the canvas on all but one of my rooms each year in the late fall. With the tops removed, wind is not so much of a concern. The one I leave up is well anchored down and has survived for 3 years.



After all the structural decisions have been made, it's time for the fun stuff to begin. Decorating your room is where you get to add the essence of you. Choose items and materials that will be both functional and beautiful. I try to use materials I know I can throw in the washers, as late night critters sometimes leave me special gifts! Use your imagination and pick the things that are going to suit your desires and purposes for the room.

Outdoor rooms can be easily assembled within just a few hours with just a little bit of planning and a keen eye for the best materials for the job. With minimal strain on your pocket book, you will be basking in the functionality and beauty of this simple project for years to come.