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Using Landscaping and Design Tips, It's Easy to Create an Outdoor Oasis

Begin planning now. Soon, you'll have a backyard haven to match your landscape vision

ROSEVILLE, MINN. (September 4, 2008) – If you've ever dreamt of hosting elegant garden parties, or simply enjoying warm afternoons amidst a beautifully manicured yard – but were uncertain how to arrive at that perfect landscape environment – you're not alone.

No matter what area of the country you live in, the [American Institute of Architects \(AIA\)](#) reports one of the hottest current home trends is the creation of outdoor living spaces that bring lush gardens, natural beauty and unique landscape elements to life.

“Combining the functionality of indoor leisure space with the beauty and vitality of shade trees, waterfalls and other natural landscape elements, an outdoor living space becomes an extension of the homeowner's lifestyle,” said Michelle Sahlin, managing director of the [Professional Awning Manufacturers Association \(PAMA\)](#). “Whether you are an avid gardener, enjoy entertaining or are raising a young family, a creatively designed outdoor living space should be a reflection of your life and interests.”

There are a multitude of considerations when designing and building an outdoor living space — first and foremost is determining the location's “floor and ceiling” needs. According to Sahlin, awnings, canopies and other garden shade structures aid in creating beauty and blend structural components of the home with the natural landscape elements. Fabric choices provide enhancements through color, texture and shape.

“Creating an outdoor leisure space can be invigorating,” said Sahlin. To bring your landscape vision to life, the experts at [PAMA](#) have compiled guidelines to assist in creating an outdoor space to match your style:

- **Establish your primary uses:** Our lifestyles are unique, and your outdoor living space should further enhance your specific interests. Determining your primary use for the outdoor space will provide a guideline for planning. If you hope for lively BBQs or pool parties, you'll need to plan differently than those who want a private, quiet location for reading or doing yoga, or for those who enjoy updating their gardens throughout the entire planting season.
- **Determine the fixed elements:** If more formal outdoor dinner parties are your primary use, it may require a more significant investment, such as a large deck and outdoor fireplace. Less costly options – awnings, trellises or fountains –

can help define the space, adding eye-catching color or unique touches. In the case of awnings, design melds well with function, as awnings reduce damage to furnishings caused by the sun and other weather elements. Awnings reduce indoor-cooling costs by approximately 25 percent and can act as a transition between the home's structural qualities and the softer, more natural textures, shape and colors of nearby greenery.

- **Work with a landscape architect:** Collaborating with a landscape architect to select your shrubs, flowers and natural grasses can reduce frustration and stretch your budget. By choosing the right plant for the conditions, a landscape architect can ensure flowers will be in continuous bloom and plantings will provide natural definition of the space. To find a landscape architect near you, visit the [American Society of Landscape Architects \(ASLA\)](#) Web site.
- **Add color in final touches:** Adding color in the final touches of your outdoor living space will bring your new environment to life. Sahlin recommends using a color scheme that coordinates with the design of your awning. Incorporate bright sunny colors through the use of throw pillows, beach towels, dinner plates or even hand-selected mosaic tiles around the pool. Add cheerful potted blooms, then sit back and enjoy.

About PAMA

The Professional Awning Manufacturers Association (PAMA), a division of the Industrial Fabrics Association International (IFAI), is the only international trade association committed to the awning industry. PAMA membership is open to companies who are current members of IFAI and manufacture or sell awnings, as well as those who supply goods/services to the awning industry.

PAMA maintains two Web sites – www.awninginfo.com, which focuses on association members and commercial awning use, and www.awningstoday.com, which educates consumers about awnings and awning benefits.

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