

Transform your backyard into an extension of your home

(NC) Summer is almost here and now is the time to prepare our outdoor spaces for the season. To help maximize your living areas, Sharon Grech, Benjamin Moore colour and design expert, shares tips on how to bring the latest looks to your open-air escape.

Dine al fresco. Backyard patio areas traditionally connected to the exterior of the home to gain easy access from the inside. Consider pushing your al fresco dining areas further out into the yard for a unique and ambient experience. "Cooking under the stars is the perfect way to spend time with family and friends while embracing the weather throughout the summer months," says Grech. Barbecues, fire pits and outdoor wood-ovens are great options for cooking when entertaining guests, as most of the cooking can be done right there.

Create an outdoor oasis. Injecting colourful accessories into your landscape is one of the simplest and most cost-effective ways to elevate a backyard and make it feel like an extension of your home. Whether it's bright, colourful ornate items or hand-crafted outdoor rugs, adding colour to your backyard will create a vibrant and inviting retreat. Flower boxes, string lights and cushions are great ways to make a backyard feel like a serene and inviting oasis.

Deck design. Create areas of interest by using both semi-transparent and



solid stains on your deck and rails. "I like to apply a natural, lighter stain on the deck, with a darker solid stain to enhance vertical architectural features like the railing," says Grech. If your wood is new or in great shape, treat it with a simple translucent or semi-transparent stain like Benjamin Moore Arborcoat to heighten natural wood colour. Semi-solid stains are great for covering imperfections, allowing some of the grain and texture of the wood to show through, while solid stains are more like paint and leave an opaque colour and texture. "You can test the different translucencies and colours with pint sample cans. It's always best to try-before-you-buy," recommends Grech.



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