



## Outdoor Furniture as Outdoor “Décor”

When you think of outdoor furniture, do visions of folding lawn chairs and wood picnic tables come to mind? Well, gone are the days when these are the only types of furniture you can use to create your outdoor décor.

Approach your outdoor furniture decor just as you would when decorating on the inside. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Choose the furniture that works best for the environment in which it will be placed. For example, *wicker* is very durable; however, it is better suited for a screen porch or semi-covered area. If you plan to use your wicker outdoors, look for pieces that have a protective vinyl coating or are constructed of all-weather materials.

Likewise, *wood furniture* (benches, chairs, tables, etc.) with removable cushions is a good fit when the “elements” (such as rain, snow, etc.) must be considered. Remember: time outdoors only improves wood’s weatherworn appearance...as long as it isn’t exposed to moisture for prolonged periods of time. To help it maintain its quality, seal the wood with beeswax furniture polish to extend its life span, or choose a species that is weather resistant.

Wrought iron or aluminum tables and chairs, if properly painted, are very effective for year-round use. Simply add a cushion or two to give them that inviting feeling.

- Select fabrics for your furniture that encourages lounging. Depending on where your furniture is placed—e.g., inside a screen porch, or under a tree—consider adding pillows and throws.
- Think creatively. While a swing may not be appropriate for the inside of your home, it is 100% acceptable (and quite appealing) as furniture in outdoors areas.
- Accept that you can “mix and match.” A wicker rocker and a wooden bench can share the same space when they share a matching or complimentary fabric.
- Experiment with wood accent pieces such as tables, benches, desks, etc.

If weather is a major concern, considering purchasing items that are already “worn in.” (And...no...your grandmother’s 100-year old table does not qualify as “worn in.”) Look for pieces that have previously held a place in the outside world. If you’re not sure, hire an experienced decorator or consult with our antique/flea market storeowner. He or she can point you to items that are classic, yet ideal candidates for outdoor use.

When you’re finally ready to arrange your furniture, envision how you want an area to look, the feeling you want it have, and the manner in which it’s going to be used. Once completed, you’ll be able to easily transition from your indoor haven to your outdoor world...with time to stop and smell the roses along the way!



## Outdoor Furniture: Putting Your Best Seat Forward

You've seen the photos in magazines, and you've dreamed about how it would look. But, how much do you really know about outdoor furniture. In a nutshell, here are your choices:

- **Cedar** is a superior choice for furniture because of its beauty, practicality, and durability, plus it's naturally resistant to insect damage and decay.
- **Wicker** is a weaving technique using various materials, both flexible and durable, and tightly woven over a rattan, wood, or metal frame. While strong, its durability and practicality is affected by usage and environment.
- **Cast aluminum** is constructed by pouring molten aluminum into molds and letting it cool. It's lightweight, transports easily, and combines non-corrosiveness with great strength.
- **Wrought Iron** has been the material of choice for many artists over the centuries, resulting in intricate designs on doorways, fences and home furnishings.
- **Teak** is a fine wood with a beautiful pattern, exotic scent, and very strong structural properties. It retains oil and therefore repels water.
- **Pine** is very weather resistant, can last many decades without rotting, and is found mainly in the temperate regions of the Northern hemisphere.

### **So, How Do You Choose What's Best for You?**

There are two main factors to consider: (a) price and (b) appropriateness for your climate. A good decorating or landscaping professional familiar with your region of the country can advise you on the following:

- **Availability in your area.** Typically, local merchants don't carry furniture that isn't appropriate for your climate. So, the role of your decorator or landscape professional is going to be to point you in the direction of those retailers having only items designed for your environmental elements. NOTE: If your professional plans to order furniture from a location outside your area (e.g., Florida), investigate the track record of this furniture in a place where snow and cold weather encompasses a few months of the year. (Last time we looked, the snow levels in Florida were not of monumental portions! So, is buying furniture from there a good idea?)
- **Best Selection for Your Lifestyle.** We all love to look at those 'picture perfect' settings with the nicely decorated table and the spotless BBQ. But, let's be real—that isn't what a real yard looks like. Your decorator needs to evaluate your use of your outdoor living space to ensure your furniture selections are complimentary.

Quite simply, consider this purchase a long-term investment. This will ensure that in the "end," you've made the best decision.