

Patios to be proud of

Long before Paul Hogan urged us to 'throw another prawn on the barbie', Australians were famous for their outdoor entertaining. Given that we spend so much of our leisure time outdoors, it's not surprising that we put a lot of thought and care into our outdoor entertaining areas. From elegant French-inspired patios to the quintessential Australian wraparound deck, outdoor areas are an easy and inexpensive way to expand our living areas into the great outdoors.

For those with space to spare, a wraparound deck adds shade and channels breezes throughout hot Australian summers, but it isn't only country dwellers who are embracing outdoor living. With clever design and innovative thinking, the smallest of outdoor spaces can become a patio to be proud of.

Think vertical

The walls of your outdoor space can be pressed into service to maximise usability. Add wall-mounted flower beds for succulents or other hardy plants or use tall plants like bamboo as screens. Outdoor mirrors hung on walls create an illusion of depth to your space.

Think big

It seems counter-intuitive, but filling a small patio with small objects can actually make it seem more cramped. Instead, choose one or two large pieces of furniture, an oversized sculpture, and an accent plant.

Think outside the box

If you don't have the space at ground level to create a patio, look up; you may have useable space on your roof. Urban rooftop garden areas have flourished in recent years, with townhouse dwellers taking advantage of the overlooked private space on top of their homes. Adapting patio designs for rooftops can be as simple as including a low wall around the perimeter and some plantings for shade on hot days.

Think inside the box

Small spaces have to do double duty, and in some cases that means pressing the humble carport into service as an entertaining area. Install some tall plants in the corners, a rug to cover the oil stains and a comfortable set of outdoor furniture, and you have a covered entertaining area.

In a country blessed with as much good weather as Australia, it seems a shame to sit indoors. With a clever patio design on your side, there's no need to.