



Outdoor Rooms Grow in Popularity

by Jennifer Barley

Homeowners are remodeling and renovating like never before. And many who love to spend time outside are integrating decorative concrete into their outdoor renovation projects. Residents in the central California area are clamoring for home improvement projects conducive to outdoor living. [Continue >](#)

Many homeowners are integrating decorative concrete into their outdoor living home improvement projects. (Photo courtesy of Tom Ralston Concrete)





“Today people want their own private vacation spot, somewhere they can retreat to every day,” says Mike Boeddeker of Pristine Concrete, Paso Robles, Calif. He is receiving a lot of requests for outdoor kitchens with barbecues, sinks, burners, warmers, refrigerators, and even storage areas. “Homeowners often want an extension of their house; they want an exterior surface that flows with the indoor flooring materials they have used.”

AMCON, located in Gaithersburg, MD., is seeing a large increase in pool-related projects. “Many homeowners not only want a pool, but a total package—a backyard retreat in which they can escape and relax at the end of the day and on weekends,” says Mary Amaro of AMCON. “We’re seeing more homeowners getting away from dull, gray concrete. They’re becoming familiar with what’s now on the market.”

Homeowners are learning about the aesthetic options with decorative concrete by seeing installations in restaurants, stores, and salons. “People don’t know anything about it. Then they see (a decorative project) in a magazine and they have to have it,” says Bill Guthro of Distinctive Concrete, Rowley, Mass.





Inspired by this new breed of concrete with its beautiful colors, variety of patterns, and ability to meld with its environment, homeowners are now incorporating concrete into their home improvement projects.

Decorative concrete is booming. Every year I think it can't get any bigger and it does. You don't have to settle for the old, gray stuff anymore.

With the availability of custom colors and penetrating stains, the looks that can be achieved have become more natural, making concrete more appealing to homeowners, says Mark Foreman of Apex Concrete Designs, Auburn, Calif. "Decorative concrete has become more popular than stone, brick, and tile (for exterior projects) because it costs less, is better in quality, and has the unlimited ability to be created into whatever the client wants as far as color, texture, and pattern go," he says.



This outdoor countertop by Craftsmanship Workshop provides a place to gather around while enjoying the outdoors.



Here are some ways homeowners are using concrete to create outdoor rooms for cooking, alfresco dining, and evening gatherings:

Countertops and prep surfaces

Complete backyard kitchens with cooking surfaces, sinks, bars, and storage areas are becoming increasingly popular, allowing all cooking and entertaining activities to move outdoors. Concrete is often the countertop material of choice because it is highly functional as well as decorative. Homeowners can have it custom molded into any shape, permitting surfaces with soft curves or sharp angles. They can also incorporate sinks made of concrete or stainless steel. Applying a sealer makes concrete cooking and eating surfaces water and stain resistant.

Terraces and patios

Homeowners are using decorative concrete flatwork to help define their outdoor rooms while adding visual interest and color. Stamped concrete offers unlimited design possibilities, with countless colors and patterns available such as slate, cobblestone, brick, and fieldstone. Or contractors can sawcut patterns in existing concrete and apply chemical stains to give homeowners colorful concrete “rugs” to accent seating areas.





Fireplaces

Outdoor fireplaces, some with built-in ovens, are becoming popular focal points for backyard settings and create intimate, warm spaces for evening gatherings. Concrete is an ideal material for building fireplaces because it is naturally fireproof and able to retain heat. Homeowners also like the versatility of concrete, and are asking contractors to mold it into custom curvilinear or rectangular shapes accented by hearths, mantels, pillars, and corbels.

Furniture

Chairs, benches, and even couches cast in concrete function as permanent, low-maintenance outdoor furniture. Adding cushions with vibrant colors and textures soften the look.

For those who enjoy spending time outside, choosing to combine your backyard with the beauty of decorative concrete presents a wide variety of options for creative renovation. Research the options available and have fun creating your outdoor retreat!



This concrete bench by J.S. Frazer is perfect for withstanding various weather conditions.



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NAVIGATION & USER TIPS

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KEYBOARD SHORT CUTS

	PC	MAC
Zoom in (Larger)	[Ctrl] [+]	[⌘] [+]
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Full screen/normal screen view	[Ctrl] [L]	[⌘] [L]

ABOUT THE CONCRETE SHERPA

The Concrete Sherpa is a team of people that represent the experience, teaching and learning of our team members and other industry leaders *on a mission to make life better for the concrete contractor*. We are an idea center striving to deliver thought provoking ideas based on “Concrete Advice for Business and Life” to stimulate you to reach new heights. As a user, you should remember to consider all information you receive, here at the Concrete Sherpa or elsewhere, not as a *cast in concrete* recommendation, but rather as an idea for you to consider and ponder.

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THE JOURNEY LEADING TO THE CONCRETE SHERPA PROJECT

The Concrete Sherpa Project (A [Sherpa](#) is a “guide”) was born at The Concrete Network in mid 2004. Here is how it happened:

The biggest surprise, or gift, since starting The Concrete Network in 1999 has been the concrete contractor friends from around the country we’ve made and witnessing the passion they have for what they do. These people include Dave Pettigrew, up in the San Francisco Bay Area, or the Verlennich brothers in Minnesota, or Bob Harris in Georgia, the list goes on and on. It’s quite inspiring.

We were once asked, “How are you so excited every day about concrete?” Well the answer is simple, it is impossible to not be excited about concrete when you have the job we do—interacting with hundreds of concrete contractors from every state in the country.

The thing we’ve learned about concrete contractors is that most are passionate *craftsmen*—they are often less passionate and experienced in the “office stuff”. Human nature channels us to do what we are most comfortable with; learning how to use a new saw-cutting tool is comfortable; learning and implementing a new estimating strategy, or job management tool, is not so comfortable.



Sherpa info

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES...

So Sherpa was born to provide FREE and easy to use information on topics many contractors are not too comfortable with.

- Concrete Sherpa is here to provide help to contractors who are often 'Lone Rangers' and don't have anyone to get solid business advice from.
- Concrete Sherpa is here to provide help for contractors who have to work too hard and too many hours in their business, and one day realize they need to work *on their business, not in their business*.
- Have fun with Concrete Sherpa and go faster towards reaching success than you might have on your own.
- To skeptics who think something free can't be valuable, or there must be a trick- visit Concrete Sherpa and decide for yourself.

We hope you make great use of the Concrete Sherpa and it helps you to become an awesome success for yourself, your family, your church, and your community.

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