

Exterior Design for Outdoor Living

For outdoor living spaces designed for optimal use and personalized designs, homeowners continue to turn to the experts at **Environmental Landscape Associates**.

by **DEBRA L. MURPHY**
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With the cost of travel rising, many choose a “staycation” over vacation. That’s where Keith Frederick and his Doylestown-based firm, Environmental Landscape Associates, come in. Specializing in transforming outdoor spaces into personalized oases, homeowners are able to extend their time outside—through spring, summer, fall, and beyond.

“Creating outdoor living experiences is what we do,” says Frederick, ELA’s president and CEO. “Creating an outdoor living environment is similar to building an addition to your home. It’s just like building a room—in some cases, more than one room. The kind of projects we’re doing require a unique skill set, with knowledge of horticulture, architecture, carpentry, electrical, plumbing, and more. ELA provides that expertise.”



At ELA’s Doylestown showroom and design center, homeowners can envision their outdoor living spaces.

We spoke with Frederick to discuss why now is the ideal time to start planning, and how his expansive Bucks County design center and showroom can benefit the collaboration process with homeowners to create impressive outdoor spaces that can be enjoyed for years to come.

Congratulations on your 30th year in business. What lessons have you learned that make an outdoor living project successful?

Thank you. I’m proud of what we’ve been able to do. We create outdoor living spaces, but we also create transitional spaces from the interior to the exterior. That’s why we may add small additions or bump-outs, or convert windows into doors. We consider spatial relationships and traffic flow, because nobody wants to have a beautiful space that won’t provide room to move comfortably throughout. Traffic flow must be incorporated for all the puzzle pieces to fit together, and avoiding those issues only comes from experience.

What steps should a homeowner take now to get their outdoor living spaces by spring and summer?

The first step is to determine the function, which will ultimately create the form. Who will use it, how will it be used and for how many months of the year? Is it for children to splash in a pool with a small grilling station? Will they roast marshmallows around a fire pit? Or will adults be the focus with an outdoor kitchen and bar? Will there be a gathering area to sip wine and converse in front of a fireplace? I always suggest clients first visit our showroom where they can see, touch, and feel the products at the design center. There’s also a wide variety of ornamental, native, and deer-resistant plants, trees, and shrubs to choose from.

Next, we proceed to a consultation onsite, where I typically meet with them inside the home. Because the outdoor living space should be an extension of the indoor space, it’s important for me to have a clear understanding of three things when leaving the meeting: What is on their wish list? What is their budget? What is the best way to transition their interior style to the exterior space? It’s important for the homeowner to understand them as well, so the best-suited and most informed decisions can be made.

Do the outdoor living projects you create have a distinctive feature or signature?

Every project is unique, and because there



Keith Frederick, president and CEO of Environmental Landscape Associates

are four seasons in the Philadelphia suburbs, our designs definitely contain key components to maximize space and usability. Typically that would include an outdoor kitchen or cooking/grilling space and a dining area; a fire feature, either gas or wood-burning, to provide warmth and ambiance; and a pavilion, pergola, or other type of overhead structure to protect from unpredictable summer weather or to provide shade from the blazing hot summer sun. Flooring components are also very common, whether it’s decorative concrete, pavers, wood or composite decking. Many projects will include a water feature as well, to provide the soothing sound of water or a place to cool off. Because we’re essentially building an outdoor room, all of these elements are fairly standard, as is outdoor lighting and landscaping, either for safety, privacy, or aesthetics. Perennial gardens, organic kitchen gardens, and healing, aromatic herb gardens are also gaining popularity among homeowners.

As the president and CEO, how involved are you throughout the process?

I’m very involved from beginning to end. I meet with every client. When a homeowner works with ELA, they get that level of personalized attention. I’m there as the owner to help them achieve their goals, and to turn their dreams into reality. My job is to make sure their money is invested wisely, and to guide them through the process. I’m there to ensure what we create will provide years of satisfaction and make sure they’ll be happy for a long, long time. ■

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