

DESIGN & DECORATING



ROPE THAT'S DOPE Designers are loving the lightness and brightness of cord upholstery, like that seen in Paola Lenti's new Jardin line.

What's Hot, What's Not, This Summer

We asked hundreds of design pros for the latest trends in al fresco living. Their forecast? Say hello to playful umbrellas and luxe upholstery—and wave farewell to uninspired planters and bulky plastic-weave furniture.

OUT



Staid Stools

If you can get something next-day delivery from Amazon, it's probably not au courant. "While there will always be a place for the iconic garden stool, that classic, cookie-cutter aesthetic"—most commonly drum-shaped and rendered in preppy blue-and-white chinoiserie—"has definitely become seen as a 'one trick pony,'" said Manhattan interior designer Daun Curry. Added designer Kristen Rivoli, of Boston, "People are tired of the 'everyman' look...that you can get at any big box store, and they want more unique, artistic pieces."

IN



Spirited Ceramics

As more people approach outdoor spaces as personally curated sculpture gardens, one-of-a-kind glazed ceramic furnishings in offbeat silhouettes is adding a welcome artsy flourish. "[They] are durable and weather well...while still creating a look that has soul," said Ms. Rivoli. Favorites among pros we polled include the earthy pressed pieces from Dutch designer Floris Wubben and the trippy Cloud side tables (pictured) from Sun Valley, Calif., artist Bari Zipperstein's BZippy & Co. Said Ms. Curry, "They're a great modern [take] on a traditional shape."



Blah Upholstery

According to our experts, conservative colors like white, tan and navy are on the way out. "Last year's spaces had a lot of neutrals, but homeowners are ready to break free and are increasingly asking for a more distinctive ambience," said designer Michael Tavano of New York City. Also losing their luster: matchy-matchy cushions, said Manhattan designer Brendan Kwinter-Schwartz. How to pull off this layered look? "Use colors that reflect nature's hues—like sky, sun, water tones," said Mr. Tavano, "and you can still go for a very bold pattern or delicious texture."

Next-Gen Performance Fabrics

Gone are the days when "indoor-outdoor" meant canvas duck, period. Thanks to strides in fiber technology, nearly every high-end fabric house—from Pierre Frey to Liberty (pictured)—now carries luxe outdoor offerings. "It's a full palette, from fabulous woven options to towel-soft fabrics that feel like a beach blanket," explained San Francisco designer Noz Nozawa. Even in small doses, they have an impact, said Mr. Tavano, who recently brought in an "outrageous" velvet from Mokum to refresh a client's outdoor seating area.



All-Angles Shades

As interest in hard-edge design has begun to wane, minimalist linear umbrellas, which offer little in the form of congeniality, are losing their allure. "We've been leaning toward more of an intimate indoor feeling for outdoor spaces," said Baltimore-based designer Laura Hodges, and that includes decorating overhead. "Designers often [talk about] the fifth wall—referring to ceilings," explained Melinda James of the Beaumont, Texas, firm M. James Design Group. "Awnings, arbors and umbrellas are just as effective, adding comfort, drama and coziness."

Resort-Style Umbrellas

Scalloped, fringed and layered umbrellas in playful stripes and sherbet colors—the pros say today they're all fair game. "I'm seeing a lot of requests for fun shapes and vibrant colors that feel like you're at the beach," said New York City-based designer Elisa Baran. When Houston designer Mary Patton needs to create shade for clients, which she acknowledges is crucial, she turns to Santa Barbara Designs' iconic and super-customizable umbrellas (pictured), available in dozens of colors and trims and bench-made on the California coast.



Plain-Jane Planters

Unless you want your space to look like a soulless condo vestibule, just say no to the sort of "modern" monolithic planters that seem to be de rigueur in office lobbies and other institutional locales. Los Angeles designer Rydhima Brar is eschewing boring gray floor planters for sculptural varieties "that instantly uplift an entire patio," she said. Ms. Nozawa agrees that outdoor planters have been homogeneous for too long and she is seeing "more silhouettes and surfaces that come from nature."

Containers With Patina

Designers are noticing a surge of interest in planters and containers made of "live" metals and other surfaces that patina over time—a materials trend that has also been thriving in interiors. For his projects, Marblehead, Mass., landscape designer Adam Woodruff routinely installs artisan-made zinc and natural Italian terra cotta planters. Ms. Collarte called out the Corten-steel planters from Domani, shown here—a great option if you want to nod to nature while keeping an industrial edge. "I'm a big fan of materials that react with the elements," she said.



Bulky All-Weather Weaves

Bid goodbye to blocky chairs and sectional sofas the size of sedans. "We are definitely moving away from dark, heavy pieces," said Shaolin Low of the Honolulu-based firm Studio Shaolin. That goes double for those pieces made of the ubiquitous tightly woven synthetic wicker. The all-weather weave is conspicuously faux, doesn't lend itself to delicate design and will soon be in a landfill. "[Plastic furniture is] typically mass-produced, which encourages a wasteful 'throw away' attitude," said Toronto designer Jaclyn Genovese.

Striking Cord

From polyester marine rope to cotton-fiber, "the cord has been rediscovered," said Los Angeles-based designer Darrin Varden. Janelle Burns, interior designer at Maestri Studio, in Dallas, noted that rope furniture "is soft without being a fully upholstered, high-maintenance outdoor piece." Constanza Collarte lauds their lightness, "always a plus during hurricane season!" The Miami designer has lately been mixing into her projects the easily-stowed pieces, like those from the Harp collection from Roda, shown at right.



—Sarah Karnasiewicz

SERGIO ORIENTI/PAOLA LENTI; SHUTTERSTOCK (CHINOISERIE STOOL, PILLOWS, BLACK CHAIR); GETTY IMAGES (UMBRELLA, FLOOR PLANTER)