



KATRINA BURROUGHS
@Kat_Burroughs

Being stuck at home has meant a new devotion to outdoor decor, with rugs and cushions bringing indoor comfort to the backyard

Create cosy, living room-style spaces with cushions, lights and low tables. Painted with Cuprinol Garden Shades, £20 for 2.5l, B&Q, [diy.com](https://www.diy.com)

A friend working from home in the Borders says he has devised a new method of house-training his puppy during the pandemic. The clever ruse that avoids indoor incidents? My friend works on his laptop, eats and spends his evenings in the garden – and only enters the house to go to the bathroom or sleep.

This devotion to outdoor decor has been a ray of sunshine in an otherwise

stormy few months for retailers. Habitat, whose furniture lines for this summer are now pretty much sold out, saw a big increase in demand for outdoor modular sofas, with customers looking for padded couches over traditional benches, and a big rise in orders for garden lanterns. Wayfair's customer searches for sun loungers were up 102 per cent year on year, and its garden bestsellers included outdoor rugs and cushions, for which searches were up 108 per cent. "We've seen an increasing trend for customers treating their gardens as a cosy extension of their homes," says Nadia McCowan Hill, Wayfair's style adviser. Comfiness has been key for buyers of budget and designer brands alike. "It's a phenomenon that's really taken off this summer," says Ludovic Aublanc, creative director of Chaplins Furniture,



Chesney's Clean Burn outdoor wood-burner stove has proved popular this summer. It is eco-friendly, emitting almost no smoke and running on very little fuel. £1,249, [chesneys.co.uk](https://www.chesneys.co.uk)

where an outdoor sofa might set you back more than £3,000. "Leaps forward in fabric technology have meant that design-lovers can now expect memory foam padding and sartorial stitching from their weather-hardy outdoor furniture. A revolution that began with Paola Lenti has since spread to every other major outdoor design house, and clients are looking to swap traditional deck chairs for cosy modular outdoor poufs and loungers."

Lockdown created a pause that allowed homeowners to focus on every detail of their garden improvements. "[Our customers] have had more time to tend to them and add a few stylish touches," says Sam Hood, head of buying and creative director at Amara. "This May we saw a 79 per cent spike in our customers investing in our range of planters." Hood also reports

increased interest in her collection of colourful cushions and outdoor rugs.

Demand for extra comfort has benefited specialists in indoor/outdoor textiles, such as Tasha Green, co-founder of eco-friendly brand Weaver Green. She says: "It's all about extending the amount of time you can spend outdoors. As the evenings start to draw in, a cosy blanket over bare shoulders means an extra hour or two in the garden. We use our cushions as seat pads on all our outdoor benches and seating, and it makes such a difference to both comfort and warmth." Her textiles, made from recycled plastic bottles, don't absorb dew and damp, dry quickly and can go in the washing machine.

Lucy Uren of Rowen & Wren launched kapok mattresses for the garden this year and has seen them snapped up for use as oversized terrace