

EDGE

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MAGAZINE



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New backyard trends

With the latest evolution of outdoor entertaining areas, your next favorite room could be the backyard

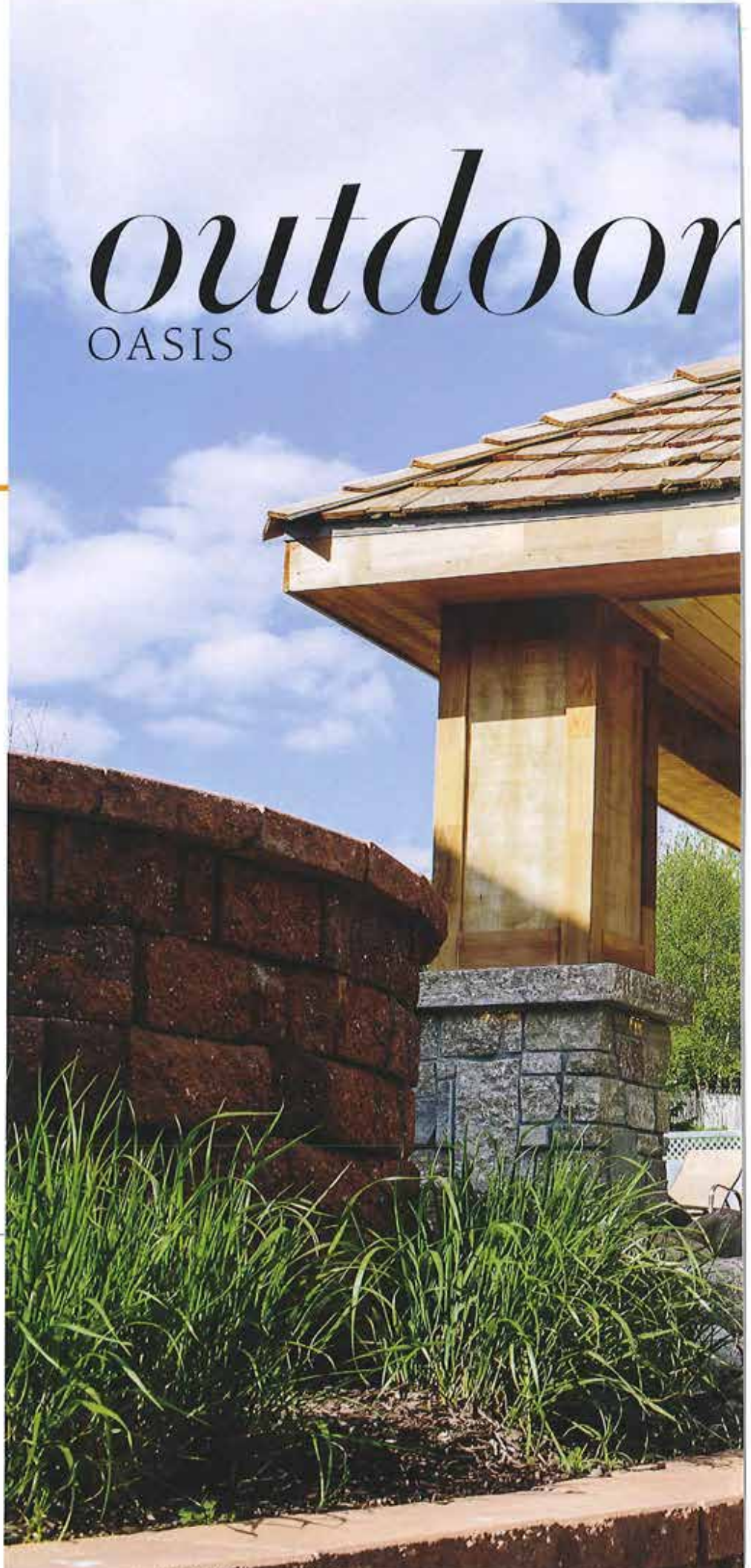
a cozy nook for a fireside glass of wine. A poolside cabana bar to watch the game. A scenic getaway where the kids can play while their parents relax.

The above may sound like a vacation resort, but increasingly, retreats like these are cropping up in Omaha backyards. Driven by a desire to get outside, affluent homeowners are creating outdoor entertainment oases where families can cook, eat, drink and relax.

"People like being outside and entertaining outside, because everyone is cooped up in an office all day long," said Jason Decker of Elite Landscaping. "People enjoy doing a bit of yard work, getting fresh air or sitting around a fire pit with friends."

outdoor

OASIS



Story by KRYSTAL OVERMYER
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The most upscale designs feature extensive landscapes with pools, natural-stone patios, fire features, waterfalls, a pool house and a self-sufficient kitchen as a centerpiece. In these kitchens, grilling is hardly a lonely activity with a hard-worn grill. "You have the outdoor kitchen with the grill, smoker, refrigerator, blender, a warming drawer," said Darrin Loftus of Table Rock Company. "The accessories are unbelievable."

Regardless of the amount of bells and whistles, these outdoor spaces seek to create a peaceful escape from the day-to-day grind. Outdoor living aficionados "want a place to go to, without having to get on a plane, to take their mind away from their current setting," said Clayton Adams of landscaping company Carson Enterprises.

Homeowners across the nation are

fueling the outdoor living boom. The landscaping and outdoor living sector has grown to a \$60 billion a year industry, according to a Garden Media Group report. Fueled by social trends like barbecuing, camping and hosting lawn parties, North Americans now spend more on their backyards than they do on weddings or pets.

Omaha landscapers say the trend is growing in the Midwest. While fire pits and fireplaces have been fixtures in Omaha backyards for several years, the evolution of the outdoor entertainment area has taken such landscaping to a new level. Instead of adding on to an existing home, homeowners are looking to their backyards to create an alternative living space. "People are saying, 'Why aren't we living outdoors as long as we can?'" Loftus said.

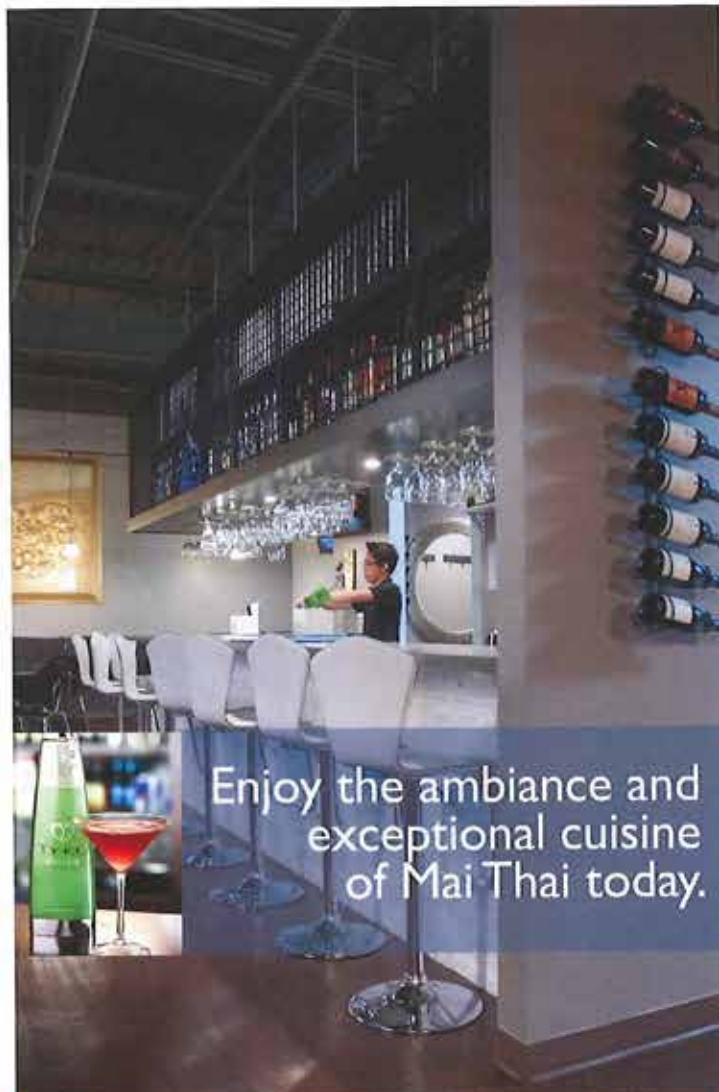


Accordingly, local landscapers are taking outdoor living trends from Florida and Arizona and modifying them to suit Nebraska weather and tastes. New designs feature artful hardscaping, the use of hard materials to create surfaces like patios, sidewalks or retaining walls in a landscape. Poolscaping, the landscaping specific to a pool's surrounds, is also an emphasis. Projects can vary from an outdoor hearth area to a fantasy-like garden refuge. "Your imagination and creativity are the cap," Decker said.

When designing an outdoor living area, landscapers take into consideration the style of the existing home and the needs of the homeowners. By taking a peek at the home's interior, Clayton Adams of Carson Enterprises gets a better feel for the homeowners' tastes and style. His designs seek to take the flavor of the home and extend it outdoors. "We take your setting and build something completely custom," he said.

Given Nebraska's seasonal weather, homeowners are often drawn to fireplaces. "We do a lot of work for couples that want to go outside after work, have a glass of wine, sit by the fire and enjoy the sound of a waterfall in a peaceful, relaxing area," Adams said.

Once expensive, natural stone has come down in price



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thanks to more cost-effective fabrication techniques, said Loftus of Table Rock Company. The rock offers textures and colors not found in manufactured stone. "Each piece of stone is uniquely different than the next," Loftus said. "Each job is uniquely different. That's what makes it really cool and beautiful."

Natural stone also has the advantage of holding up to wear and tear. Stone that has survived in the ground for hundreds of years isn't going to crack or erode, Adams said.

Moreover, natural stone plays well with Omahans' affinity for more rustic, natural styles versus modern designs, Adams said. Using stone, landscapers can create outdoor kitchens, bars, cabanas, pool houses, hearth areas, spas, water features and more.

Adams uses natural stone sourced from Turkey to create seemingly native retaining walls and water features. "We want it to look like you built your house around what we did," he said.

