

Outdoor Living



Jamie Durie in his gold-medal-winning garden design for the Royal Horticultural Society's Chelsea Flower Show in England.

Take It Outside

Jamie Durie is a man on a mission: He wants to turn your home inside out.

TEXT Ken Wysocky

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“There’s nothing sexier than bathing under the moonlight.”

At least, that’s celebrity landscape designer and horticulturist Jamie Durie’s take on things. And, really, what woman in her right mind would argue with this hunky Aussie?

As the host of *The Outdoor Room USA* on Home & Garden Television, Jamie is one of America’s hottest new imports. And now the Australian wants you to take the inside of your home—family rooms, spas, kitchens, bedrooms, and, yes, even bathrooms—to the great outdoors. Imagine, an outdoor space with plants as living walls, vines or tree canopies as ceilings, and limestone blocks or smooth pebbles underfoot.

“Although we may not want to admit it, we’re all intrinsically connected to the natural world,” Jamie says. “But we’ve surrounded ourselves with so much technology, business and innovation that we’re suffering from nature-deprivation disorder.”

Reconnect With Nature

“The outdoor-room concept is the fastest way to reconnect with nature,” he says. “And it’s not rocket science, either.

“It’s very easy to do a functional analysis and find out what your family and friends want. You can bring outside everything we take for granted inside a home—even bathrooms.”



Curved lines and a tranquil water garden set a serene scene in this Durie-designed patio garden.

GARDEN DESIGN: JAMIE DURIE, PHOTO: JASON BUSCH



Built-in benches and natural fiber walls make this outdoor space feel as comfortable and private as any room indoors.

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Jamie designed this cushion-adorned hammock to hang over a living carpet.

GARDEN DESIGN: JAMIE DURIE, PHOTO: ANDREW CURTIS

It's easy to look at images of gorgeous outdoor rooms and feel intimidated, especially if your budget is as tight as a pair of skinny jeans. As Jamie says: No worries, mate. Here are some strategies for saving big bucks:

- Consult with a local nursery's horticulturist and select the right plants for the spaces you want to fill. While you're at it, get your soil tested, too.

- Buy immature plants, as opposed to full-size; with proper care, they'll grow quickly.

- If you use a contractor for some work, offer some sweat equity. You can reduce the price by shoveling sand yourself, hauling bricks and the like.

- Break the project into three or four—or more—smaller stages to lessen the economic impact.

Speaking of budgets, there's another reason to get jazzed about outdoor rooms: They can dramatically increase the value of your home. Jamie says he's seen even a relatively small investment in outdoor rooms greatly enhance the value of a home.

"A lot of home purchases are made based on a garden," Jamie notes. "That's because we value two days of the week more than any other: Saturday and Sunday. Homebuyers want to spend their downtime in places they can relax."

Little Effort, Big Results

Jamie also notes that small, economical steps can yield dramatic results. For instance, transform a shed wall or other large flat surface with a coat of bright-colored paint, then plant flowers in contrasting colors in front of it.

"Don't underestimate the power of paint," he suggests. "I'm a huge fan of paints and

finishes. They can provide good bang for your buck. Be bold. Strong colors are back in—fuchsia pinks, bright oranges and magenta reds."

Jamie also points out that exciting new paint/finish technologies can provide eye-catching results. For instance, you could try a new paint that's mixed with iron filings that oxidize, giving an otherwise drab surface an arresting rusty-metal look.

"Other paints include copper filings that create that lovely green patina finish," Jamie adds.

Size Doesn't Matter

Don't be dismayed if your backyard is as tiny as a supermodel's waistline. Jamie insists the size of your space simply doesn't matter.

"I've built some of the most powerful gardens in small spaces," he notes. "It's all in how you use it."

In addition, consider what Jamie calls "spatial awareness." Use plants to create spaces that feel intimate, private, safe and nurturing.

"A garden should have intrigue," he says. "You don't want to see it all in one go. Features should pull you from one zone to another. People love the concept of a secret garden, and outdoor rooms allow you to create them."

Still excited about the thought of that moonlit bath? Then it's time to start thinking beyond that grid of "so yesterday" pink patio paver bricks. Go ahead: Imagine. Build. Enjoy. *(To learn more about Jamie Durie and his books, line of paints and other products, visit jamiedurie.com. For further information about The Outdoor Room USA, consult hgtv.com.)*

Top 5 Eco-Friendly Building Materials

Jamie Durie is a big supporter of using sustainable, environmentally sound building materials. "The technology is so much more advanced than it was 25 years ago," he notes.

Here are some of the hottest innovations coming your way to create outdoor rooms:

- 1 Rammed earth** (a durable, insulating mixture of mud, chalk, lime and gravel that's used to build walls)
- 2 Sandbag construction** (also known as earth bags)
- 3 Photovoltaic solar panels**
- 4 Sustainable timber** (lumber that comes from certified forests that use environmentally friendly management practices)
- 5 Natural fibers** (such as bamboo, brush fencing and palm fibers)

Put It on Paper

If the outdoor room concept makes you feel a bit overwhelmed, Jamie suggests investing in hiring a good landscape architect so you can at least get a rough plan on paper. "Get the right advice," he says. "Seeing a plan on paper will help you digest it and make it seem less intimidating—especially if you scale it back into stages."

TIP