



## DESIGNER DEFERENCE

# WEATHERING WELL

HOW TO CREATE DURABLE EXTERIOR SPACES FOR YEAR-ROUND LIVING THAT ARE AS STYLISH AND FUNCTIONAL AS THOSE INDOORS

BY GAYLENE SALOMONS

Mother Nature provides a welcoming ambience for relaxation, dining, and playing. Even when the sultry summer air hovers in Southwest Florida, there is something magical about being outdoors—especially after sundown. Ashley Mutch and Genevieve Webb, the creative team behind **Feather Hill Interiors**, a design firm with offices in Stevenson, Maryland, and Naples, share their advice for creating beautiful, timeless, and practical exterior designs wherever your home may be. Read on for a Q&A with these two designers. (*featherhillinteriors.com*)



**NI: What should be considered when designing outdoor spaces?**

**Mutch:** Don't treat this area as an afterthought. Think of it as an extension of the home's interior. Design continuity is key. Choose materials, colors, and furnishings that seamlessly transition from indoors to outdoors to create a cohesive, intentional space. And don't overlook scale; outdoor areas often require larger furniture, as well as strategic spatial planning to maintain balance.

**How do you cultivate entertaining spaces outdoors?**

**Webb:** It's all about flow and function. Ensuring natural gathering zones, defined conversation areas, and seamless movement between lounging, din-



BRIAN WETZEL PHOTOGRAPHY



GENEVIEVE WEBB (LEFT) AND ASHLEY MUTCH (RIGHT), THE CREATIVE TEAM BEHIND FEATHER HILL INTERIORS, CONSIDER THE OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT AN EXTENSION OF THE HOME'S INTERIOR AND PUT MUCH THOUGHT INTO ALFRESCO DECOR.



ing, and food-prep areas is important. Include multifunctional seating by incorporating a mix of lounge chairs, benches, and built-in seating; this should create some flexibility for different types of gatherings. Whether it's a formal dining table or a casual bistro setup, having a dedicated setting for meals anchors the design. If space allows, an outdoor bar or built-in kitchen elevates the hosting experience and eliminates the need for constant trips inside. Umbrellas, pergolas, or covered



terraces ensure the space remains comfortable throughout the day. Side tables, console tables, and drink ledges help facilitate effortless hosting.

**Are there specific products or brands you prefer for exterior spaces?**

**Mutch:** We gravitate toward brands that prioritize craftsmanship, durability, and timeless design. A few favorites include Sutherland, for beautifully shaped and high-end outdoor pieces, fabrics, rugs, and accessories; Gloster, for contemporary yet woven and teak furniture; Janus et Cie, for sophisticated and durable outdoor furniture collections; Bernhardt, for elegant, high-end outdoor furnishings with transitional appeal; Tuuci, for luxury shade solutions, including beautiful, durable umbrellas that blend seamlessly into high-end outdoor spaces; and Palecek, for handcrafted furniture inspired by natural materials that bring warmth to outdoor settings.

**Do you have any recommendations for weatherproof materials?**

**Webb:** Longevity is essential for outdoor

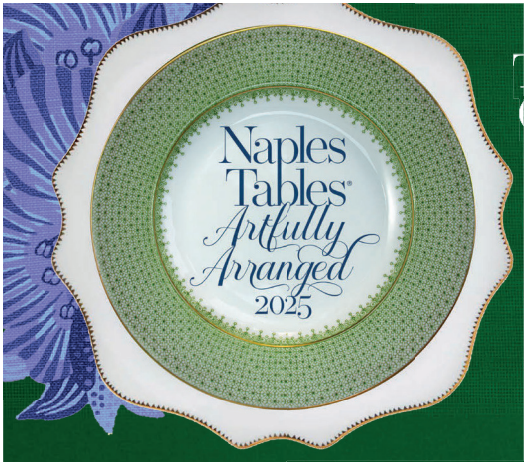


furnishings. We prioritize materials that are durable and design-forward, such as teak and ipe woods, which are naturally weather-resistant and age beautifully over time; lightweight, rust-proof aluminum and powder-coated metal; performance fabrics made by Sunbrella and Perennials that are fade-resistant

and quick-drying; natural stone and concrete, which are timeless, low-maintenance, and perfect for tables and built-ins; and resin and synthetic wicker, offering a great alternative to natural rattan for longevity.

**Can you offer any tips and tricks when it comes time for refreshing an elevated outdoor space?**

**Mutch:** Cushions, rugs, and pillows can fade or wear over time. Swap in fresh, weather-resistant textiles to instantly update the look. Be sure to layer in greenery. Potted plants, seasonal flowers, and even structured planters help soften hardscapes and bring in new energy. In addition, update your accessories. Adding sculptural lanterns, planters, and layered tabletop decor elevates a space without a complete overhaul. Put thought into outdoor lighting, which is essential for ambience. Integrating soft uplighting, string lights, or lanterns extends the usability of the space well into the evening.



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