



Hearth & Happiness

This charming outdoor living area is a seamless addition to a Kansas City, Mo., Georgian Colonial.

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For more than 20 years, Mimi Kopulos has been holding onto terracotta pieces that originally adorned historic buildings in downtown Kansas City, Missouri, hoping to one day find a use for them. Thanks to landscape designer Kristopher Dabner, they're now proudly displayed in the Kopulos' quaint outdoor entertaining space.

Taking it one phase at a time, Mimi and her husband, Greg, have spent the past 30 years remodeling the home that they love for their family of five. Now empty nesters, the couple moved their creative ideas and efforts outside, recently transforming the old driveway into an outdoor entertainment space suitable for kids and adults. Direct access from the kitchen, the home's former two-car garage, makes indoor/outdoor entertaining a breeze.

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Outdoor Envy

Take some advice from Kristopher Dabner on how to design a livable outdoor space. (We all want one!)

- Use materials that match the home.
- Define space with paving patterns and overhead planes.
- Build in special memories (like Mimi Kopulos' terracotta collection).
- Soften hard surfaces with planting material, especially climbing plants.
- Plant larger trees and shrubs for privacy from surrounding houses.
- For continued blooms, look for varieties of hydrangeas, limelight, bombshell and incrediball.
- Perennials, in whites and pastels like white casa blanca lilies, anemone white iris, pale lavender catmint and Russian sage, bring seasonal color into any outdoor space.
- Pot those perennials in a collection of white containers, which will complement other surrounding materials, such as limestone and terracotta pieces.

Using the same brick that covers the exterior facade, this outdoor area looks as if it has been there all along. “I’m very sensitive to the architecture of the house and wanted it to be as cohesive and complementary as possible,” says Dabner, owner of The Greensman. The same brick pavers, laid in alternating floor patterns, define each individual space.

For Mimi, it was all about having a maintenance-free space (since she hasn’t owned a mower in more than 20 years) with fire, water and a place to grill, all under a covered pergola (another interesting design feature with bead board-painted insets in pale sage.) Anchoring the space is a wood-burning fireplace that displays a limestone mantel and four of her treasured terracotta keepsakes. Embellishing the nearby water feature are the other three colorful medallions, recreating their former look. Here, you’ll find water iris and thalia mixed with floating water hyacinth and water lettuce. The sound of the soothing waterfall can be heard while drifting off to sleep in the screened-in sun porch on the second floor.

Surrounding the limestone-topped grilling station (with side burner) is the dining space, outfitted with a circular metal table and chairs and a buffet from Restoration Hardware as well as a sitting area—staged with Frontgate furniture picked out by Greg—with a discreetly placed corner TV, also Greg’s choice. Provence lounge furniture provides a cozy place to curl up by the fire.

To soften the edges of the new outdoor space, Dabner planted liriopse, while a pair of blooming magnolia trees add to the overall appeal, along with potted palms, ferns, geraniums and other colorful annuals. A young climbing rose bush will eventually grow up and around one of the beams, further enhancing the space’s charming aesthetics. Along the property’s perimeter, hornbeam and junipers, with rows of hydrangeas, boxwoods, lilies and Russian sage, improve the privacy setting and outline the new driveway, which doubles as a stage for live music and dancing and will one day be the perfect safe place for grandchildren to ride their bikes.

“[Kristopher] did exactly what I wanted and more,” Mimi says. Ready and willing, this space—and its homeowners—is well-equipped for some serious outdoor entertaining action. ●

