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Outdoor Design

# Product Interaction

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Great outdoor design brings together a range of elements to achieve the perfect finish. Whether the focal point of the project is a fire pit, an outdoor kitchen, or a swimming pool, the product and material choices are just as important to nailing the final look.

In this document, we'll demonstrate how different objects and materials interact to enhance the mood of the finished space.

We'll look to four common focal points found in outdoor design and illustrate how different styles can be achieved.



## Fire Pits

Fire pits have grown in popularity in recent years and the ability to use them all year round makes them a valuable garden addition. Fire pits can foster decadence and relaxation but can also be the centrepiece for festive and celebratory events. Their adaptability is the key to their success.

In this chapter, we will explore material choices for creating fire pits in a range of different styles:

- Contemporary design
- Mediterranean design
- Traditional design



## Contemporary Design



### 1. Fire Pit

Contemporary fire pits come in a range of aesthetics and add a striking focal point to any modern setting. Cast iron braziers really suit the look and, as an added bonus, these 'fire in a bowl' pits are easily placed on top of patio slabs or gravel – no 'installation' required. Avoid fussy details and go for a simple circular, square or sculptural brazier.



### 2. Flooring

Braziers are best placed on top of patio slabs, heat proof mats or gravel. A good rule of thumb, according to [gardenflame.co.uk](http://gardenflame.co.uk), is to keep 2m of space around the bowl clear of any materials that are not fire resistant. If you are going for a contemporary blackened or eroded brazier, a pale material such as porcelain would provide the perfect contrast. For obvious reasons, it's not a good idea to put a fire pit directly onto timber or Millboard decking, but you can frame your tiled area with these materials – providing you keep a sensible clearance.



### 3. Lighting

Firepits are mostly used at night, making it essential to light pathways leading to and from the pit. In modern designs, portable ambient lamps can fit nicely into the scheme.



### 4. Planting

Potted plants can be used to frame a seating area around a fire pit. Modern outdoor design uses plants such as Yucca and Carex to complement the materials around them. The Yucca is a particularly useful plant as it is impervious to droughts.





## Mediterranean Design



### 1. Fire Pit

Brazier fire pits really lend themselves to this look and the Mediterranean brazier can be far more elaborate than the simple and contemporary fire bowls mentioned in the previous section. Burnished colours, mosaic effects and filigree are all within the spectrum of the Italianate vibe. Once you've identified the best brazier for your outdoor space, it can be loose-laid onto the patio area.



### 2. Flooring

Travertine limestone is often used in Mediterranean slab designs. The tiles come in a variety of beiges and browns, producing an earthy look that complements stucco centre-pieces. The tiles are hardy enough to be used near fire pits and seldom stain.



### 3. Planting

When planted a suitable distance from the fire pit, Olive Trees and Tuscan Cypress's can be used to frame a seating area. Smaller plants such as Chusan and Mediterranean Fan Palms can help make a fire pit more private.



## Traditional Design



### 1. Fire Pit

Bricks are used in and around fire pits to produce a more traditional design. The durable blocks can be laid in any pattern to create a well-organised seating area that is sure to last. Firebricks are used around the heat source to prevent soot staining the rest of the fire pit.



### 2. Seating Area

Rattan furniture looks fresh and textural against the solid construction of a brick fire pit. The market is flooded with cubic, grey rattan at the moment, but for this sort of aesthetic, naturalistic hues might be preferred.



### 3. Planting

Glazed and ceramic pots maintain the stately look of a traditional design. A useful technique for framing a fire pit seating area is to pot acanthus mollis and day lilies around the edges, enclosing the space for increased privacy.





## Outdoor Kitchens

Luxury kitchens are a hallmark of opulent design but their appeal means that many people now want to integrate elements of the concept into their outside spaces. With the right material and product choices, an outdoor kitchen can add real distinction to any outdoor environment for years to come.

In this chapter, we'll be looking at the materials and finishes that foster a contemporary, Mediterranean or traditional outdoor kitchen design.



### Storage

Drawers and cupboards in an outdoor kitchen must be watertight to prevent rain from getting inside.

Cabinets with exposed hinges should be avoided as they are vulnerable to rusting.



## Contemporary Design

The materials used to construct outdoor kitchens need to resist the general wear and tear of regular usage and endure the weather. Tiles and granite feature heavily in modern design. The density of both materials results in surfaces that are easy to maintain and that resist inclement weather.



## Mediterranean Design

Mediterranean designs often use flagstones as outdoor kitchen worktops. The rustic looking material works well with a stone floor and is simple to maintain using annual acrylic sealing treatments. One problem with flagstone is its inherent brittleness. After a while, it can begin to flake so it's advisable to only use flagstone in covered areas.



## Traditional Design

A wide range of materials can be used to achieve a more traditional finish. Practical choices include granite and concrete - both are easily maintained and come in a variety of colours and styles.





## Dining Areas

The appeal of alfresco dining never diminishes and a tastefully designed outdoor eating area can significantly enhance a property. Choosing a look that complements the house will create an indulgent and flexible space for the homeowners.

This chapter covers the furniture options, screens and flooring most associated with contemporary, Mediterranean and traditional outdoor dining spaces.





## Contemporary Design



### 1. Table

Contemporary design focuses heavily on form and geometry. In terms of tables, this often translates into eye-catching angular centrepieces. Modern tables tend to boast sleek finishes that are free of fussy details. Glass is frequently a popular choice and provides a streamlined look.



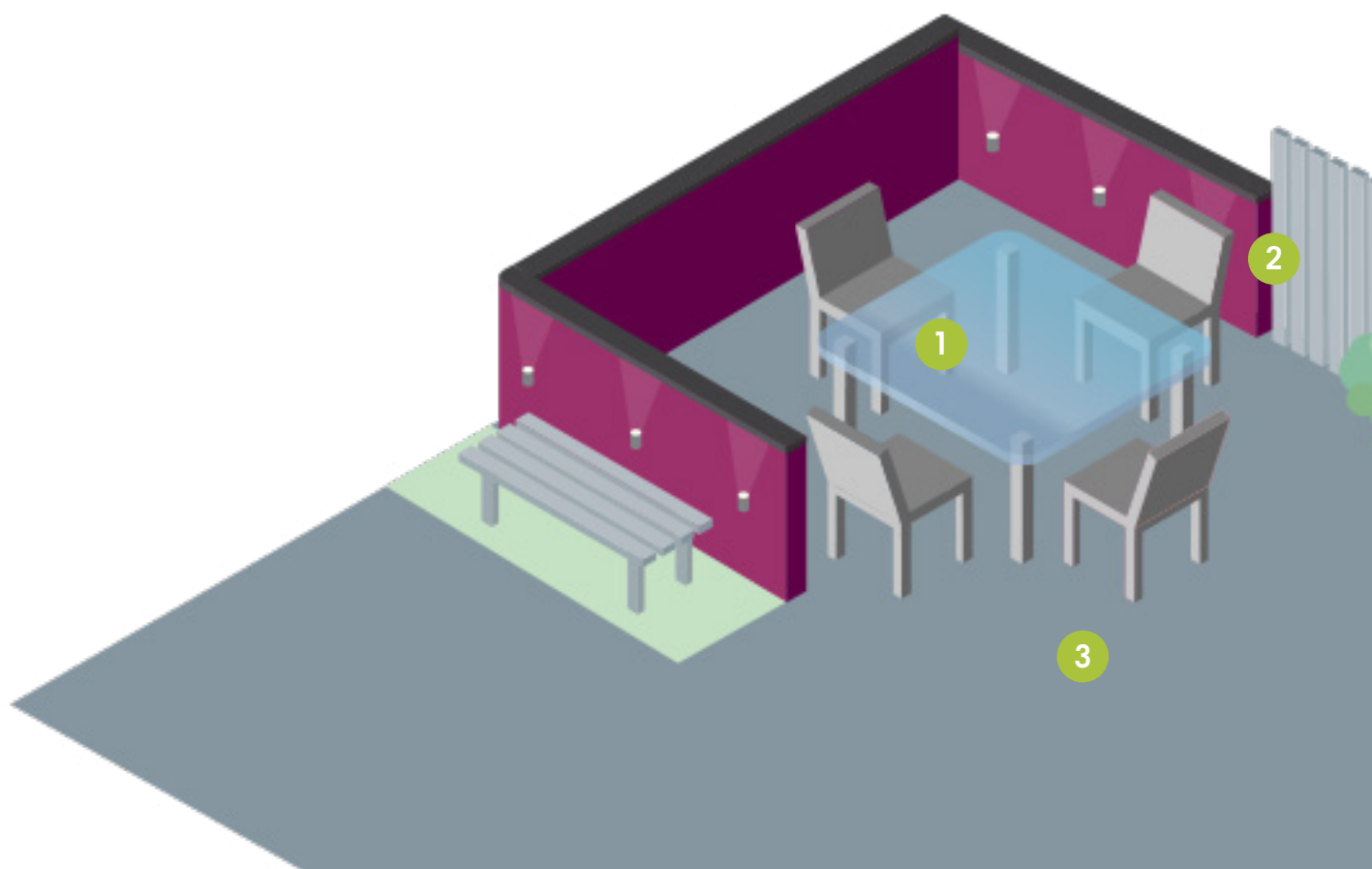
### 2. Privacy

Dining areas can be made private using walls, shades and dividers. One method of creating a sense of privacy is to use opaque glass blocks. Alternatively, you can use wooden panels to create slatted walls. The boards can be erected from the floor or installed on top of a brick wall, blocking views from overlooking neighbours.



### 3. Flooring

It's inevitable that food and drink will be spilled in the dining area. Contemporary design regularly features engineered flooring that resists staining, scratching and slipping. Millboard's wood-free decking alternative is made from stain-resistant polymers and is the closest visual match to natural wood. Such alternative materials as these provide superior finish with maximum durability.





## Mediterranean Design



### 1. Table

Mediterranean designs are warmer than contemporary designs. Instead of smooth, minimalist finishes, a richer, more weathered look needs to be encouraged. This can be cultivated with mosaic-top tables and dense, lush planting. Colour palettes run from spicy to earthy in tone.



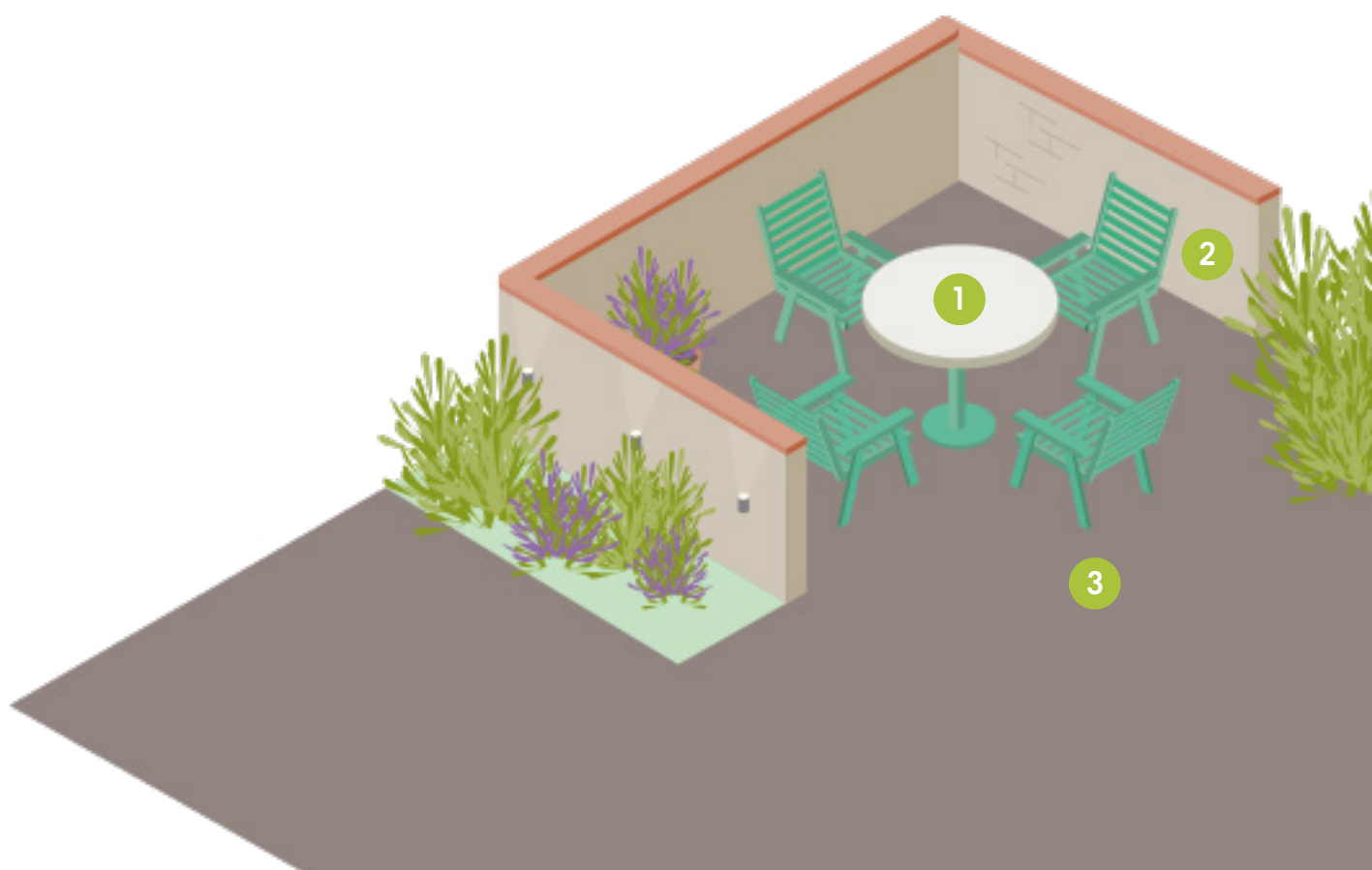
### 2. Privacy

Plants are an essential part of Mediterranean design. Bushy lavender hedges are an ideal way of creating a sense of privacy, and when they are coupled with wooden pergolas and climbing vines, the space will feel like a secluded nature retreat.



### 3. Flooring

Gravel or stone flooring lends itself well to the natural vibe of Mediterranean design. The rustic colours combine well with potted plants and can be used alongside a densely planted border. Alternatively, Millboard's Weathered Oak range can help to cultivate a 'lived in' feel to the design.



## Traditional Design



### 1. Table

Similar to contemporary designs, traditional spaces tend to be defined by order and function. However, the design ethos that underpins this style is less about being avant-garde and more about harking back to the golden era of the English country garden. Think wrought iron tables, gravel crunching underfoot and glazed terracotta pots bursting with patio roses.



### 2. Privacy

Trellis panels are a staple of traditional design. The frames are the perfect support for climbing plants of both the edible and ornamental variety. Combining these will create dense walls of foliage, evoking the richness of a late summer English garden. Combining hard-scape and soft-scape materials will add to the timeless cottage garden atmosphere.



### 3. Flooring

Traditional designs often use cobblestone, brownstone, limestone or brick as flooring. These materials help to keep the overall design feeling grand and stately. Cleanliness can be an issue if the stones or blocks are not treated to resist stains and scratches. These materials can all be maintained with regular soapy water. Alternatively, Millboard's Enhanced Grain range is well-suited to the 'heritage' feel of traditional spaces.





## Swimming Pools

Swimming pools work best when designed to integrate beautifully into their surroundings. A swimming pool project can be challenging but if safety, practical considerations and visual impact are all carefully balanced, the results can be stunning.

In this section, we'll be looking at the methods and materials most used to cultivate contemporary, Mediterranean and traditional swimming pool styles.





## Contemporary Design



### 1. Style

Modern pool designs adopt fluid lines and clean contours that complement the relaxing character of a pool. Those with built-in hot-tub areas maximise the options, encouraging use and enjoyment.



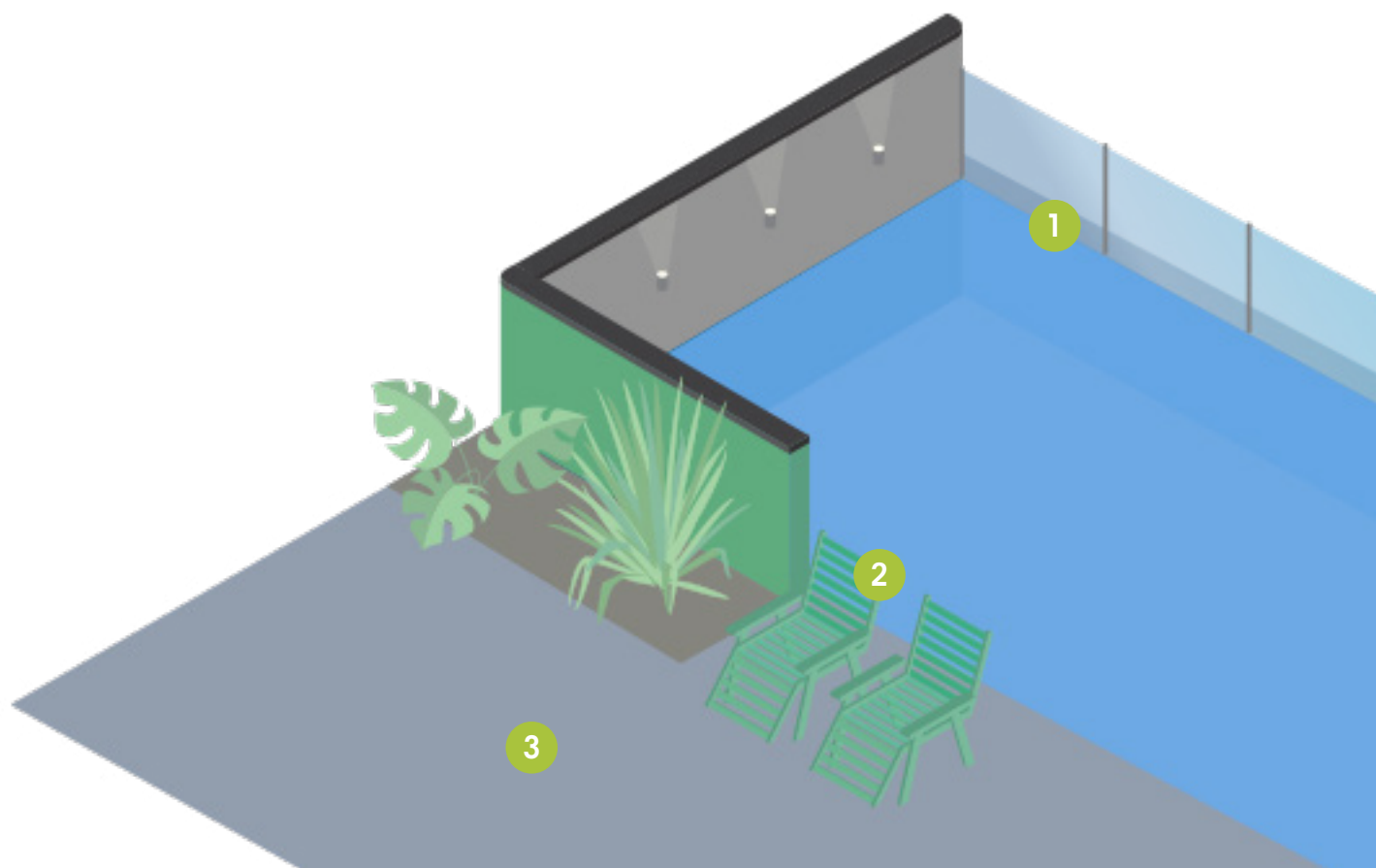
### 2. Seating area

The interaction between the pool and seating area is dependent on distance, orientation and accessibility. As modern designs are typically uncluttered, seating areas are often structurally uncomplicated. Furniture is artfully placed just-so around the pool, maintaining the clean feel of the design.



### 3. Flooring

Ensuring that a floor has the right level of slip resistance is an important consideration when building a pool. Newly engineered materials outperform natural materials, such as wood, in wet conditions. Synthetic materials, like Millboard decking, come in a variety of styles and colours and offer smooth and sleek finishes that work well around contemporary pools.



## Mediterranean Design



### 1. Style

Mediterranean pools can be achieved with the application of curved lines and classical features. Enhance your pool surround with pots of herbs, tomato plants and stone sculptures. Bringing these elements closer to the border creates an intimate relationship between the pool and its environment. Water features and waterfalls that flow into the pool reinforce that interaction.



### 2. Seating area

Mediterranean outdoor pools are designed for hot, sunny locations. As a result, seating areas tend to incorporate shading to keep out the intensity of the mid-day Spanish sun. Cultivate foliage to climb pergolas for an integrated, harmonious feel.



### 3. Flooring

Stone is the most common choice of flooring for Mediterranean swimming pools. The slabs can be used to create a small walkway around the edge of the pool, allowing plants and other features to be positioned closer to the water. The variety of colour found on stone slabs links well with the colour pallet used to create a Mediterranean appearance.





## Traditional Design



### 1. Style

A heavily planted border around the edges of a pool's path is a characteristic feature of traditional design. Use symmetry to underpin your traditional pool with a sense of solid and time-honoured workmanship. Use the pool as a centrepiece for the rest of the garden's planting patterns, profile and colour-scape.



### 2. Seating area

Traditional seating areas typically follow the lengths of the pool. Wrought iron furniture can introduce a hint of antiquated grandeur and shade can be provided by pergolas dripping with native plants such as ivy and wisteria.



### 3. Flooring

Natural stone and tiles are often first choice for a swimming pool of this style. You can also opt for wood-free synthetic decking to achieve a natural look that incorporates slip resistance and waterproofing. These materials can make so many patterns possible, allowing for creative freedom and exclusive design. The pool can be rendered to suit the surrounding gardens perfectly.



# Conclusion

## Conclusion

Outdoor design works best when elements are chosen to interact with each other to build grandeur, drama or calm. In this guide, we have shown how different products and materials can influence each other and maintain a consistent design overall.

This design guide was produced by Millboard.

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