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Architect

Nothing can capture the spirit of summer more quickly than a patio. Whether it is for family recreation or elegant entertaining, the simplest way to describe a patio is "summer fun."

Barefeet on warm pavement. The tempting aroma of zesty barbecue! Hopeful pets and your own sweaty-faced moppets (plus a few of the neighborhood strays) sitting in rapt attention eyeing the grill with smug expectation! Soft music drifting out from inside as the ice in your drink melts a little more.

It's all a part of the attitude that goes along with having a patio or "outdoor room" to lounge and relax in. Some mornings, it is early breakfasts where you can listen to the day's beginning noises, and perhaps catch a glimpse of a momma moosher pulling a reluctant worm from your garden for her young.

By day, it is a play area for the children. Many a terrace has formed the boundary for a denplan to the yard and the house. It is also an excellent setting for learning to use wheel toys and to roller skate, as well as an ideal place to permanently mark space for games such as hopscotch, marbles or shuffleboard.

It is a particularly inviting spot for shooting water pistols, making mud pies and other fun items that are on the forbidden list indoors.

Converts Easily

By night, the area converts easily to a place to play ping-pong or dance for the teenagers. It can also provide the backdrop for a romantic dinner party complete with quartet tables and candlelight for adults.

Technically, "patio" is a broad term that includes many different versions. The most popular is a paved area alongside the house set right out in the open with the sky for a ceiling and shrubs for the wall.

It can be fully enclosed as in a courtyard. Some people prefer a covering for protection from the sun while others enjoy a feeling of openness. In the broad sense, patios include the structures such as lanais, loggias, garden shelters, pool houses, sun porches and even summer houses.

The main essential for a successful patio is that it be scaled to the yard and house. It should provide the home with the spaciousness for outside cooking, dining and lounging.

Gardewise, it is most effective when it relates to the garden plan of the whole yard.

There are a variety of paving materials for patios. Among the lesser expensive and those that can be handled by an energetic amateur are bricks, concrete and asphalt.

Flagstones and tiles are the most expensive elements used in paving but are the most durable and pretty. Often patio surfaces can be supplemented by soft materials like fine gravel, tanbark or crushed brick in adjacent areas for special effect.

Whether your personal preference is to let the sun in your patio or to shut it out, you've quite a variety of methods to get the special feeling that you want.

If you are a middle-of-the-line and just want partial protection from the sun, you are still in luck, because you can use the lattice effect with wood or canvas stripping and let enough of the sun in without sacrificing style. These lattices can also be used as arbors for vines that increase further the coolness of the area.

Among the roofs that invite the sun in are the glass and the plastic varieties that let in the light of the sun but don't let the intense heat filter through.

Wooden porch covers are the most positive method of keeping the sun out overhead completely. The biggest advantage of these is that of convenience of shelter in bad weather.

Also, you don't have to drag in the lawn furniture every time it begins to sprinkle or have it damaged by bleaching in the scorching sun. Solid canvas and burlap are two other materials used to protect patios from the sun. Though they are adequate, they do not offer the protection the wooden covers do.

When the lyrics to Porgy and Bess "Summertime" and "The Living is Easy" were written, patios were not the rage they are today. There is no doubt about it, though. If it hadn't been written then, patio life today would surely have inspired someone else to do it.