

# *Outdoor Living* with Concrete





# *Outdoor Living*

## table of **Contents**

Outdoor Living: Bringing the Inside Out	3
Outdoor Living Starts With Concrete Patios	4
Concrete Fireplaces and Fire Pits Warm Up Spaces	5
Concrete Speakers Provide Crystal Clear Sound	6
Concrete Statuary is Newest Form of Art	7
Concrete Pizza Ovens Cook Up Delights	8
The Comforts of Concrete Furniture	9
Concrete Cooks in the Outdoor Kitchen	10
Color Kaleidoscope	11
Davis Color Chart	12
Concrete Maintenance is a Breeze	13
Get Started Today	14
Eight Tips for Hiring a Concrete Contractor	15
About The Concrete Network	16





“Homeowners almost always want an extension of their house. They want something that flows with the indoor flooring, and has shade as well as sun.”

—Mike Boeddekker,  
Pristine Concrete,  
Paso Robles, Calif.

# Outdoor Living

## bringing the Inside Out

Yesterday's boring patios with uncomfortable furniture have quickly been replaced with fireplaces, kitchens, brick pizza ovens and more, all to create dramatic al fresco "living rooms" that extend interior living space into the backyard.

Creating an outdoor space that allows you to entertain, to spend time with your family or just to unwind after a long day is a great way to expand your overall living area. And transforming patios, pool decks and backyards into "rooms" is one way to achieve that goal.

According to Michelle Snyder of the American Society of Interior Designers, "It's kind of about creating a unified space between inside and outside — so that you can't tell so much where the one space ends and the other begins."

Outdoor living design rises to a new level with concrete. Now you can bring the style and elements of your indoor rooms to the outside, as living rooms are extended to the outdoors in matching color, textures, shape and more, all using a material that withstands the weather and provides innumerable choices in color and design. Outdoor rooms also enhance the usability of homes, expanding the area used for entertaining.

Concrete is often the material of choice for outdoor rooms, as it has the ability to handle a large range of temperatures and will retain its design through the dead of winter and the height of summer. Sealers can be applied for water and stain resistance, and clean-up can be as simple as hosing down the area.

By integrating a dining area as one of your outdoor rooms, you can increase the functionality of the space as well as have a perfect area for family gatherings. One way to bring design to the outdoor dining space is to create a permanent rug through the use of decorative concrete. Creating a pattern on the floor helps define the area and also brings visual interest and color to the area.

A concrete rug will be able to handle sun, rain, snow and foot traffic and is easy to keep clean. You can add a colorful rug to your existing concrete patio by scoring a pattern with a concrete saw and masonry blade. Colors can be added to the design with a special staining system.

Outdoor areas are meant to be enjoyed. No matter how large or how small the area you have to work with, the basic principles of design can be followed to create wonderful and inviting functional areas for your friends and family to enjoy.



# *Outdoor Living* starts with **Concrete Patios**

Homeowners want to enjoy their homes, but they also see upgrading their back yards as an investment. Creating the look of an authentic stone patio, or slate patio, or cobblestone patio is more economical to install using decorative concrete, and adds value to the home.

Concrete patios, sometimes referred to as cement patios, provide the perfect sanctuary for outdoor living spaces because they are often connected to the house and blend the interior with the exterior living areas. For example, homeowners can match the stone facade of their house by installing decorative concrete to create a stone patio without the expense of installing traditional individual stones.

Gone are the days of boring grey concrete—today's concrete patios are as unique as their owners. From stamping, to staining, to creative color techniques, today's concrete patios

will complement any landscape, as well as provide a touch of individuality to a backyard.

Bringing the style and elements of indoor rooms to the outside, concrete can match color, textures, shape and more, all while withstanding weather and remaining virtually maintenance free.

With concrete, design options are endless—from a huge color palette, to custom stencils and stamps, options for decorative concrete patios are limited only by the imagination.



# Concrete Fireplaces

## & fire pits Warm Up Spaces

An outdoor fireplace is a must-have for any outdoor room and creates an intimate space for relaxation. To ward off chilly nights or to create romance, the fireplace is also great for evening gatherings.

Create a comfortable space by creating a conversation area that centers around the fireplace. Make this living space an extension of your home through the use of furnishings and accent touches. If you are looking for minimal care of outdoor furniture, consider having permanent furniture made of concrete. By casting couches, chaises or chairs of concrete, it is easy to soften the look with the use of cushions of vibrant colors and textures.

Fire pits are a fast growing trend in outdoor design. Visit [www.concretenetwork.com/fire-pits](http://www.concretenetwork.com/fire-pits) for possible fire pit designs, construction techniques, location suggestions and more.

Visit The Concrete Network's online photo galleries of concrete fireplaces and concrete fire pits.

Find a Contractor in Your Local Area - [www.ConcreteNetwork.com](http://www.ConcreteNetwork.com)

Michael Rogers Studios, Salem, OR





# Concrete Speakers

provide crystal **Clear Sound**

Ever thought you could have the clarity of an indoor sound system fill the air in your outdoor living room? Ed Winslow of Silvermine Workshop in Wilton, Conn., did when he created concrete speaker boxes that provide sound that's extremely clear and equivalent to a high-end recording studio.

The speaker boxes have 4-inch thick walls, with a cavity opening underneath the top of the boxes that houses PVC tubing for the speakers and wiring. Lights were installed in the base of the boxes. Because of the solidity of the concrete and the construction, there is no vibration of the sound within the boxes. The crystal clear sound projects into any area it faces.

Silvermine Workshop, Wilton, CT



# Concrete Statuary

## is newest Form of Art

Campania International

Statuary, fountains and other ornamentation provide structure, contrast and decorative interest in outdoor rooms. Stone has long served that ornamental purpose because of its natural weathering qualities and its ability to be carved into intricate forms and shapes.

But today there's growing interest in a concrete alternative to stone that offers even greater aesthetic value at a fraction of the cost.

Statues, fountains, benches, pond blocks and a vast array of other decorative pieces made of cast stone — a fancy term for sturdy, reliable precast concrete — are showing up in gardens everywhere in every form imaginable, from quaint patio retreats accented with cast stone urns, to palatial courtyards with water cascading from towering cast stone fountains.

"Concrete is an ideal medium for creating themed gardenscapes," says Janice Lucioni of Secret Garden Statuary, Seattle, one of a growing number of garden centers and specialty retailers sprouting up across the country that offer this addictive yard ornamentation. "Two trends popular with our customers include Asian-themed designs and Art-Deco styles with plain, clean lines to go with modern architecture. Taller fountains are in demand too, with customers going for multi-tiered units 6 to 7 feet high," she says.

While natural stone will always have a place in the garden, there are many reasons why concrete statuary is emerging as the newest outdoor art form.

"It boils down to versatility and cost," says Lucioni. "Because these products are cast into molds, you can create multiples of the same piece at a lower price. Depending on the mix used, cast stone is often more durable than porous stones, such as granite, especially when exposed to freeze-thaw conditions," she adds.

Cast stone is a highly refined architectural precast concrete that can be manufactured to simulate nearly any type of natural cut stone including limestone, sandstone, granite, slate and travertine. Think of it as precast concrete taken to the ultimate level, with strength, weathering and aesthetic properties that often exceed those of quarried stone, depending on the quality of the mix design used.



From left to right: Campania International; Concrete-N-Counters, Lutz, FL; Secret Garden Statuary, Seattle, WA

Cast stone can be made from white or gray cement, and often mineral pigments or decorative aggregates are tossed into the mix to add color and variation. Because the pieces are cast in molds under controlled manufacturing and curing conditions, they are more consistent in appearance and more predictable in performance than natural stone. Plus, they can be reinforced with steel or with glass or plastic fibers to improve strength and inhibit cracking.

Water features are highly coveted centerpieces for many courtyards and gardens because they appeal to multiple senses, providing visual beauty enhanced by tranquil sounds and hypnotic movement. Cast stone fountains are available in myriad sizes and styles to enhance any outdoor environment.



# Concrete Pizza Ovens

## COOK UP Delights

Concrete pizza ovens are fast becoming the must-have item for outdoor kitchens. But not just any pizza oven will work. The alumina content of an oven's components should be a percentage that provides a balance between functionality and strength. While a level greater than 40% may produce a stronger building material, it does not provide for a better cooking surface. Percentages over 40% decrease the floor's porosity, thus preventing the immediate absorption of steam from raw pizza dough. The fine layer of steam trapped between the dough and the floor produces a soggy, undercooked bottom crust.

Tom Ralston, owner of Tom Ralston Concrete in Santa Cruz, Calif., uses Mugnaini ovens, which are perfectly balanced, always giving pizzas and rustic or flat breads a wonderfully crispy bottom crust. Mugnaini oven components also feel naturally porous and slightly rough to the touch, which is exactly how a real Tuscan clay wood-fired oven should feel.

The floor elements of a pizza oven should fit inside the surrounding walls and overhead crown elements, which

ensures that the heat in the floor remains within the oven and is not lost through the floor and surrounding structure. A "contained" floor design provides for a consistent and predictable floor temperature.

The interior oven walls and overhead crown elements should have no flat surfaces, because flat surfaces cause a "destructive interference", or interruption of the otherwise natural convection airflow pattern necessary for excellent cooking.

The flue of the oven should begin from just inside the oven, never outside of the oven opening. This important design feature captures all the smoke, never allowing it to roll out the oven mouth, and maintains clear visibility through the oven opening at all fire stages.

Oven openings should balance the needs for visibility, functionality and thermal efficiency. Excessively large oven openings are thermally inefficient and require more fuel.





# The Comforts of concrete Furniture

**As concrete's popularity continues to grow, people are starting to realize its potential in the area of furniture.**

Nowadays, concrete is being used for tables, benches, bookcases and even chairs. The very same elements that make a beautiful and unique kitchen countertop or bathroom vanity will also make a one-of-a-kind piece of furniture. There has been an explosion of new colors and decorative options.

"Concrete is one of the oldest, strongest and most durable materials that humans have ever made. Because it is mixed and poured, its variations and design potentials are almost infinite. Applications are limited only by the imagination", says Wanda Ellerbeck of Grotto Designs in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

**Concrete offers many qualities for furniture:**

It's versatile and can be molded to have soft, graceful curves and warm, soothing color tones. For a look that's bold and contemporary, fabricators can cast concrete into interesting geometric shapes and color it an array of bright, vivid hues.

Because concrete can be poured to shape any form, it can also

be cast to accommodate any type of existing space restrictions.

Concrete offers a unique look and its creative possibilities are endless. Each concrete artisan approaches his or her craft personally, achieving a distinct look by building his or her own forms, developing special casting techniques, and using proprietary materials and coloring methods.

Concrete also gives a natural look and feel, and blends well with other design elements.

Each contractor has his or her own secret recipe and uses different types and amounts of cement and aggregates. In fact, cement will vary in different parts of the country. There are different brands of pigments, stains, and aggregate colors, so concrete furniture will always be one-of-a-kind.

At Meld USA in Raleigh, North Carolina, there are over 60 standard colors with more than 300 colors in the color library, which is continuously expanding. Their in-house design computer program develops batches, prints out the "recipe," catalogs colors, and even provides the water-to-cement ratio.



# Concrete Cooks in the outdoor Kitchen

Outdoor kitchens have come a long way from the charcoal grill. Today, there are gas ranges, sinks, faucets and countertop prep areas, as well as mini fridges, pizza ovens and rotisseries.

Backyard kitchens are quickly outdoing their interior counterparts, with cooking equipment, wine storage units, ranges, dishwashers, refrigerators, pizza ovens and barbeques fit to satisfy any budding chef.

Design is also simple with concrete countertops, which are poured into custom molds of any shape you desire. You can integrate soft curves or sharp angles to your outdoor areas, creating motion and rhythm to the space. You can also design a regular countertop, as well as a bistro bar area for eating and sharing conversation with the cook.

Outdoor sinks, storage cabinets and small under-the-counter refrigerators are other amenities that help complete an outdoor kitchen.

From cooking areas to concrete bar tops, the immediate result is a great place to unwind and entertain, and homeowners also see upgrading their backyards as an investment.

“We are seeing more and more homeowners interested in dressing up their outdoor living spaces.... People are spending money enhancing their homes, not only as an investment vehicle, but to make living in them more pleasurable.”

—Jeffrey Grieve,  
Concrete Art,  
Carlsbad, Calif.



# Color Kaleidoscope

One of the biggest draws of concrete is the expansive range of colors available. Because of ever-advancing technology and jaw-dropping chemical techniques, concrete can be colored in just about any hue you could ever imagine. Some contractors offer upwards of 250 hues and shades.

Two of the most popular methods for coloring newly-placed concrete are integral coloring admixtures and dry-shake color hardeners. Both infuse concrete with rich, long-lasting, fade-resistant color, and in the case of color hardeners, even improve surface hardness and durability.

Stamped concrete contractors often use one or both of these coloring mediums to produce a backdrop for contrasting accent or antiquing colors, such as pigmented powdered or liquid release agents, possibly supplemented by chemical stains or tints. This layering of color is what enables contractors to produce such natural tonal replications.

Colors schemes for stamped concrete are often selected to blend with other architectural elements of the home or the natural surroundings. Subtle earth-tone shades are popular for outdoor pavements, but concrete can also be the canvas for bolder, more vivid color schemes. Dyes and newer acrylic-based stains are available in vibrant tones such as red, yellow, orange and cobalt blue. More decorative contractors are using these products to rev up their color palettes.

Property owners, landscape designers and landscape architects are on the constant lookout for methods to improve the appearance of their properties and projects at a reasonable cost.

Colored concrete meets that objective.

The same colored concrete can be made to look different by employing different finishing techniques: A broom finish creates one look. Brooming the concrete in opposite directions creates shadow effects. "Swirl" or "fan" patterns create a different type of look.

For even more dramatic effect, the colored concrete can be lightly sandblasted or heavily sandblasted, or a retarder can be used and then the aggregate exposed.

The availability of custom colors and penetrating stains has translated into concrete patios that are natural-looking and attractive.

There are several different manufacturers that make integral colors to be mixed with concrete. On the following page you'll find a sampling from one company.

“As far as colors go, earth tones are big—the tans and browns.”

—Lawson Edwards,  
Concrete Creations,  
Moore, Oklahoma



*Davis Colors*

mix-ready® **Color Card**

Color Group: **Subtle**



Sandstone  
5237



Canyon  
160



Santa Fe  
1117



Pebble  
641



Dune  
6058



Outback  
677



Silversmoke  
8084



Light Gray  
8084



Dark Gray  
8.84

Color Group: **Standard**



Mocha  
6058



Rustic Brown  
6058



San Diego Buff  
5237



Sangria  
1117



Sunset Rose  
160



Baja Red  
160



Sequoia Sand  
641



Southern Blush  
10134



Salmon  
10134



Mesa Buff  
5447



Omaha Tan  
5084



Harvest Gold  
5084



Mesquite  
677



Taupe  
677



Sierra  
61078



Bayou  
6130



Cocoa  
6130



Pewter  
860



Cobblestone  
860



Graphite  
8084

Color Group: **Premium**



tile Red  
1117



Brick Red  
160



Terra Cotta  
10134



Spanish Gold  
5084



Palomino  
5447



Flagstone Brown  
641



Adobe  
61078



Kahlua  
677



Willow Green  
5376



Green Slate  
3685

Find more information about coloring concrete at [Davis Colors](http://DavisColors.com).



# Concrete Maintenance is a Breeze

Cleaning and sealing stamped and colored concrete should be done on a regular basis just like any other home maintenance. The frequency will depend on how high a traffic area it is, as well as what type of traffic (cars, foot traffic, water, chemicals) the concrete is exposed to.

Distinctive Concrete of New England recommends resealing every two or three years. If you wait longer, you may notice the color fade slightly. But just like waxing a car, reseal your stamped concrete and the color will be as vibrant as the day it was installed.

**Distinctive Concrete offers the following maintenance plan:**

1. Rinse dirt/debris off stamped concrete surface with a garden hose or pressure washer.
2. Apply a small amount of liquid dish soap to surface and scrub with a push broom.
3. Rinse well with a garden hose or pressure washer until there is no sign of soapsuds.
4. DRY surface completely by using a leaf blower or by waiting 24 hours to air dry.

**DO NOT APPLY SEALER TO A DAMP/WET SURFACE.**

5. Once the surface is completely dry, apply the sealer as follows:
  - Stir in one jar of Anti-Skid material to a 5-gallon pail of sealer.
  - APPLY SEALER USING A 1" NAP ROLLER ONLY. ANTI-SKID MATERIAL WILL NOT TRANSFER THROUGH A SPRAYER. Apply sealer in approximately 2-foot by 4-foot sections. This will ensure full coverage without missed spots. Keep stirring sealer while applying to keep the Anti-Skid suspended in the sealer.
  - Sealer should be applied when air temperature is above 55° F. Best results will be obtained by applying sealer during cooler temperatures — fall and spring — or before 10 a.m. and after 4 p.m. in summer months when surface temperatures should be under 90° F.
6. A second coat can be applied after the first coat is tack free (not sticky to your touch).
7. Your stamped concrete should be resealed every two to three years to protect your investment. One 5-gallon pail of sealer will cover approximately 1,000 square feet.



# *Get Started* **Today**

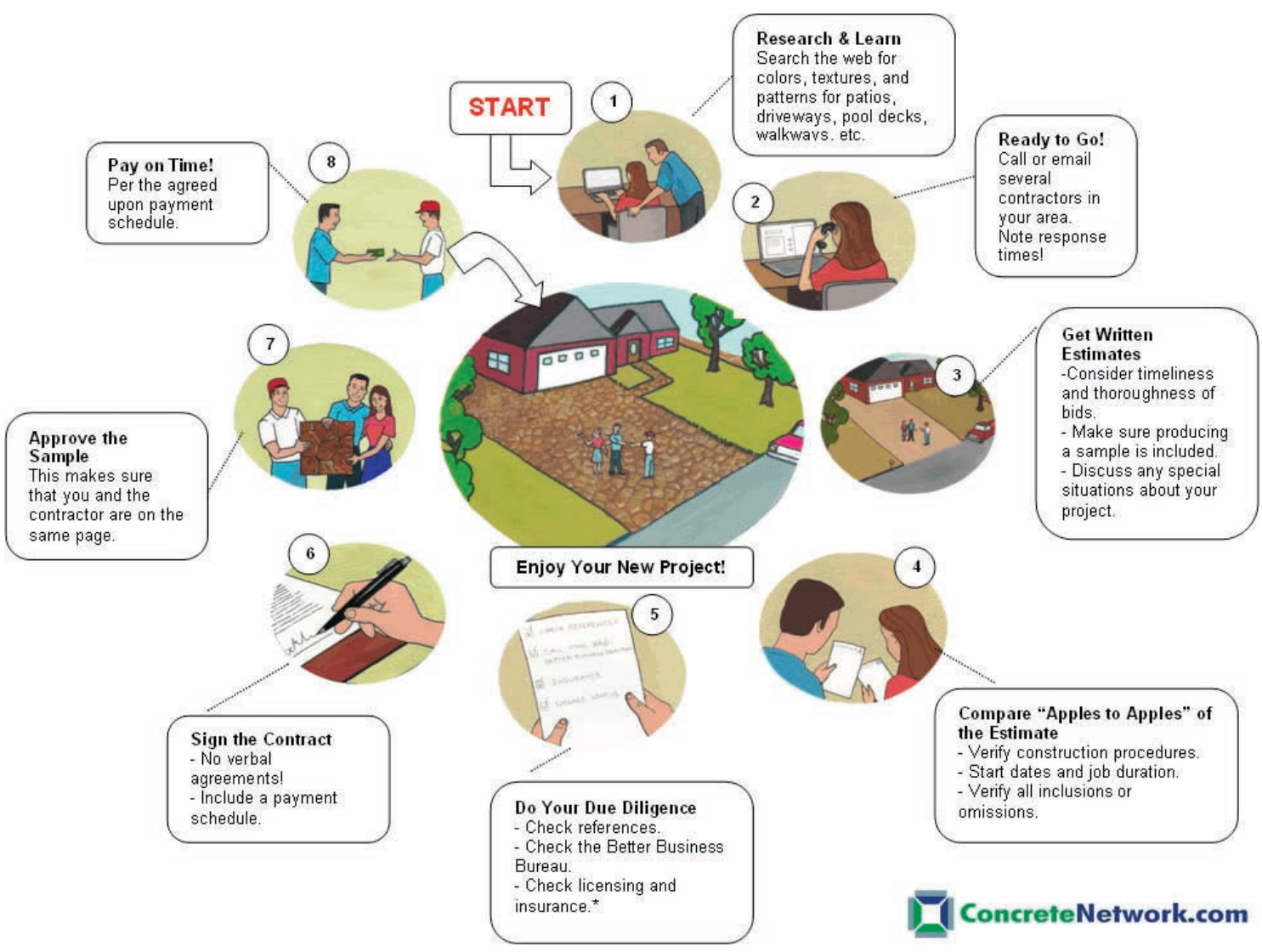
Clearly, concrete is the material of choice for all elements of outdoor living, including patios, fireplaces and fire pits, speaker boxes, statuary, pizza ovens, furniture and countertops. Not only does concrete offer unlimited design possibilities, but it also provides durability at an affordable price.

Everything you wanted to know about outdoor living rooms is just a click away. And don't forget, you can get some amazing ideas for your project in The Concrete Network's comprehensive photo gallery, so you'll know just what you want when you're ready to hire a contractor.

Go to [ConcreteNetwork.com](http://ConcreteNetwork.com) and find a contractor in your area who can help you get started building the backyard oasis of your dreams.

# Eight Tips for hiring a concrete Contractor

Use this guide to make sure you're prepared when it comes to hiring a contractor. These 8 simple steps are your key to knowing what information you should look for, what questions you should ask, and to understanding some vital do's and don'ts during the process. Your preparedness can make a difference in how smoothly your project gets installed. Print a copy of this diagram and refer to it through each step of your project. Before you know it, you'll be enjoying your new concrete too!





# About the concrete Network

The Concrete Network ([www.concretenetwork.com](http://www.concretenetwork.com)), located in Yucaipa, Calif., is the largest and most comprehensive resource online for concrete information. Over 1.1 million people visited the site in May 2007 to read articles, get design ideas, and to search its extensive directory for a concrete contractor in their area.

Established in 1999, The Concrete Network's purpose is to educate homeowners, contractors, builders, and designers on popular decorative techniques and applications. With thousands of articles, photographs, and a comprehensive directory of concrete contractors, The Concrete Network is a repository of information about the industry's products and services, including stamped concrete, stained concrete floors, concrete countertops, polished concrete, and much more.

The site excels at connecting buyers with local contractors in their area through its Find-A-Contractor service. The service provides visitors with a list of decorative concrete contractors

throughout the U.S. and Canada, and is fully searchable by 23 types of decorative concrete work and 200 regional areas throughout North America. The directory is organized by area and specialty, such as patios, pool decks, driveways, countertops, floors, stamped concrete, and water features, among many others.

Site visitors can choose their local area and view concrete contractors and concrete products, obtain full contact information for the listed businesses, and contact them directly.

The Concrete Network was founded by Jim Peterson, a former vice president of a major concrete company in Riverside, Calif. During the 1999 World of Concrete Trade Show in Las Vegas, Peterson had the idea to create an industry portal on the World Wide Web for all things related to concrete.

