

Stylish Solutions

Design for the Great Outdoors

By Ann McDonald



On this covered entry porch we replaced pots that would normally hold high water use plants with graphic decorative pillows. Photo courtesy Couture Chateau LLC, photo Faryn Davis

Summer is fast approaching and that means outdoor decorating is in full swing, and it's time to refresh and update our front or back yard spaces for summer enjoyment. But with the current drought, how do we, as responsible residents of California, decorate our outdoor spaces for gracious and luxurious living on trend, without being wasteful? And what if your design aesthetic simply isn't compatible with some of the drought resistant flowers?

The good news: There is more to decorating, water-wise, than just using succulents on your outdoor tables. While I love the look of cactus, it isn't always a fit for me or my design clients.

Here are my Top Stylish Solutions for water-wise decorating anyone can implement:

Use brightly colored outdoor pillows instead of flowers. Replace pots that would normally hold high water use plants with graphic decorative pillows on your covered entry porch. The traditional design of the house does not lend itself to succulents on the front porch. I wanted a punch of color normally provided by masses of annuals and by purchasing these ready-made, low cost outdoor pillows, placing them where the pots of flowers would normally sit, I have the color punch without the water use.

Match patterns with the surrounding pieces to provide cohesion; for example, a trellis pattern on a pillow can match a similar pattern on a bench or pot. Look for repeating patterns in your own home, and try to match outdoor pillows to a detail. The best part? The pillows cost less than \$20 each, and can help carry the decorating scheme to an outdoor covered porch at the back of the house so the theme would be consistent.

Use statuary where pillows won't work. Don't balk. Trust me, "Let's go buy a statue" is not the first thing out of this decorator's mouth. With careful thought to scale, color and type, I placed concrete formed pieces where piles of flowers would normally be. By purchasing two, I was able to repeat the theme from the entry walkway into an indoor/outdoor space for this season.

This simple tip is easily scaled or modified for the smaller space or contemporary design. No desire for concrete lions? Use a beautiful cast pinecone, the traditional welcome sign. Need a contemporary touch? Reflective orbs do nicely.

Take advantage of the drought to introduce whimsy. Good decorating is all about solutions to problems. When the weather gives issue, consider it an opportunity to be creative. Think outside the box.

Use strong graphic patterns on outdoor fabrics instead of solids. Go bold to focus the eye. Many of my clients purchase investment quality pieces and fabrics that tend toward traditional. This season in outdoor spaces, we had some fun.

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