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## **Expert Tips for Instant Outdoor Style**

Whether you are looking to create an outdoor retreat or just want a great place to entertain this summer, there are a few things you can do to achieve instant outdoor style. Adding accents like a wall fountain, clustering planters near an outdoor bench or even adding chic new cushions to your porch swing will help to update last year's look.

But where do you start? Outdoor living magazine gurus Samantha Thorpe of "Cottage Gardens" magazine and Susan Appleget-Hurst, of "Better Homes & Gardens" magazine share five fail-proof design tips that will instantly brighten any outdoor living space.

### ***#1 QUICK FIX FOR COLOR***

Appleget-Hurst recommends using annuals as a quick fix for injecting color into an outdoor scene. "Annuals are an easy choice," she says. "Many of the new cultivars are longer blooming than plants of the past and offer bold, wow-colors."

When selecting a color palette, Hurst suggests – either monochromatic or colors that complement each other. "Think of putting together an outfit," she says. "If you wouldn't wear the colors together, don't plant them together."

The color-perfect containers from Simply Beautiful® Plant By Number® ([www.plantbynumber.com](http://www.plantbynumber.com)) are mixed by professionals using complementary combinations and monochromatic plantings of annuals.

### ***#2 PATIO-READY PLANTS***

"Patio-ready plants offer a nice solution for home gardeners who want great style, but are starved for time," says Thorpe.

Pre-planted container combinations are popping up everywhere from grocery stores to garden centers. "Ready-to-go plants can be purchased and plopped in place with minimal time and effort."

The new Raymond Evison Patio Clematis Collection™ ([www.hinesvines.com](http://www.hinesvines.com)) is available in a patio pot with a mini trellis. The saucer like flowers in periwinkle blue, burgundy red and reddish purple yellow centers bloom from spring well into fall and are easy to grow. Look for them at local garden centers.

### ***#3 CREATING A FOCAL POINT***

Adding wow-factor to your backyard or patio can be as simple as adding one major feature. "Think of decorating the outdoors the same way you would the interior of your home," says Thorpe. "Just like well-decorated rooms inside the home, outdoor areas need a focal point."

For gardens, Thorpe recommends adding birdbaths or fountains. These elements will dominate the scene the same way a sofa or large armoire would in a living room.

“On patios, I like to create a focal point using a series of smaller accessories. Try placing a set of three planters of varying heights near a doorway, bench or on a table.”

Fountains are the biggest seller in outdoor accessories. Look for fountains by Campania International ([www.campaniainternational.com](http://www.campaniainternational.com)) that are easy to install and maintain, and give your garden a stylish look.

A quick bouquet of the heavenly scented Elle™ rose, a 2005 All America Selections Winner, can make a patio look elegant

#### ***#4 UNIFY THE SPACE***

“Use a color scheme to unify your space,” says Thorpe. “When selecting plants, patio cushions and containers, think about how they will look when they are all grouped together.”

For a quick and easy way to unify an outdoor patio, try adding a few large planters with plants that pick-up the colors in your patio cushions or outdoor rug.”

A container filled with Pink Knock Out® roses by Star® Roses ([www.starroses.com](http://www.starroses.com)), work nicely with a pink-themed patio.

#### ***#5 ACCESSORIZING THE EXTERIOR***

Well-placed accessories like planters, garden ornaments and fountains make all the difference when attempting to upgrade an outdoor style. But selecting and using them appropriately can be a challenge.

When working with accessories, Thorpe says to “think in terms of scale and style.” She advises looking at your homes’ architecture and hardscaping for style clues. “Once you have found your style, be it ultra-modern or cottage garden, pick a theme and continue it throughout the space by adding other accessories of the same genre.”

To determine the right scale, Thorpe recommends locating the vantage point from which the accessory will be viewed as in relation to its setting. “This technique lets users see why sometimes a few larger ornaments will make a stronger impact than a series of smaller ornaments.”

Try wall fountains or plaques also from Campania International to create instant impact on your outside wall or fence.

For more ideas and photos, visit [www.gardenmediagroup.com](http://www.gardenmediagroup.com).

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