

Summer Home & Garden



Spruce up outdoor spaces for summer entertainment

Better weather means increased chances to showcase gardens, patios

A well-tended landscape and maintained outdoor furniture help guests feel welcome in outside spaces.

COURTESY PHOTO

Beautiful weather makes for great opportunities to invite friends over for a starry soiree under the nighttime sky or a sunny afternoon on the back deck. Unlike house parties at which guests will be spending most of their time indoors and in various rooms throughout the house, outdoor parties are often limited to smaller areas, such as patios. That can make things much less taxing on hosts, who won't have much prep work to do to get an outdoor hosting area ready. The following are a few areas to address before guests arrive for your next outdoor get-together.

CLEAR DEBRIS

The walkways and patio may not need too much attention, but give them a once-over with a broom to clear any debris. When clearing the patio of debris, move all furniture, making sure to sweep up any debris, including food, that might have fallen beneath tables and chairs since your last outdoor activity. If the patio is especially dirty, consider power washing it to remove stubborn stains that can rob the area of its aesthetic appeal.



Summer can be a great time to gather friends and family for an outdoor meal together. Whether people grill, plan a potluck, roast s'mores or do other activities, having a comfortable, wind-protected outdoor space allows alternative options to eating at a restaurant.

CLEAN THE FURNITURE

Whether it's been months since your last party on the patio or just a few days, the furniture must be cleaned. Unless items have been stored in a garage or shed, patio furnishings are exposed to the elements, and that means dirt, soil, soot or pollen may have accumulated on the furniture. Wipe down all cushions, using a mild detergent when necessary. Cushions may need some time to dry, so make this one of your first tasks, and leave cushions out in the sun so they dry more quickly. Once the cushions have been cleaned,

wipe down the furniture with a wet towel to clear them of any dirt or debris.

CLEAN, INSPECT THE GRILL

The grill is a go-to accessory when hosting an outdoor party, so give the grill a thorough cleaning before the first guests arrive. Nothing brings a party to a halt like hunger, and guests may begin to grow antsy if they are not served food in a reasonable amount of time.

If you are using a propane grill, check to make sure the tanks are full as you clean the grill. Running out of propane is a summer soiree faux pas, so you might

want to keep an extra tank handy just to be safe.

CLEAR WALKWAYS

Your guests will likely be using the same entryway over and over again during the party, so focus on cleaning this area so guests don't trip or have to jump over toys on their way to an indoor restroom. Once the entryway has been cleared of potential tripping hazards, make sure the indoor path to the restroom is clear as well.

PREPARE

LOW-MAINTENANCE FOODS AND DRINKS

Reduce clean up time by choosing foods that do not require cutlery. These could include grilled kebabs, a cheese tray and other finger foods that guests can handle with their hands — as well as the traditional hamburgers and hotdogs.

For drinks, consider drink dispensers with lids or easily-pourable spouts. Dispensers may also help keep out insects. If possible, choose cups with wide bases to prevent spills.

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