

THE AUTHORITY ON LIFESTYLE

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As the blazing heat of summer begins to retreat, and the leaves begin to rustle, outdoor entertaining returns to the forefront of the mind. Whether a cocktail party or a sports viewing event, nothing provides a dramatic and inviting backdrop for an intimate outdoor gathering like the warmth of a fire.

"Fire features are one of the fastest growing trends of the landscape industry," says Ken O'Neill, Vice President of Belgard® Hardscapes, leading manufacturer of upscale pavers and garden wall products. "Homeowners continue

factory-built components, Belgard offers some advice on pre-design considerations.

"Talk to your landscape designer about how you plan to use the space," says O'Neill. "Will you entertain large groups? Do you want a large mingling area, or do you prefer to create multiple intimate gathering spaces? Do you want to create a remote destination area? And remember to leave adequate space around each fire feature for seating, walking or gathering."

There are also a number of safety considerations. "Have your contractor check with local building codes and covenants about placement or restrictions on fire features. Although it varies, gas-burning features can usually be placed just about anywhere. However, most codes require a wood-burning feature to be at least ten feet from any vertical structure," says Joe Raboine, President of

OUTDOOR DESIGNS WITH FLARE

By Madison Freeman

to look for ways to make their outdoor living environments an extension of their home, and a grand fireplace is becoming one of the 'must haves' in outdoor design."

Outdoor fire features come in a number of different forms, from simple to elaborate in scale. As experts at creating luxury outdoor living environments, Belgard offers unlimited options for adding the element of fire to an outdoor design. "Our paver and wall products are developed to resist the effects of diverse temperature shifts, making them ideal for building custom fireplaces and fire pits that coordinate beautifully with our paver patios and garden walls for an overall cohesive look," says O'Neill.

Belgard also offers a variety of fire features in their Belgard Elements line of modular factory-constructed outdoor living and kitchen components. Fireplaces, fire pits, and fire tables – constructed with Belgard Hardscapes materials – are manufactured in a controlled setting, shipped on a pallet, and easily installed by a professional landscape contractor.

"The beauty of the Belgard Elements line is that you can get a custom look without the invasiveness of site-built fire features," says O'Neill. "What would take weeks to build on site can be installed in merely hours." Custom upgrades to the factory-constructed Elements line include decorative stone embellishments, copper vents, lighting fixtures and a variety of coordinating modular components such as wood boxes, pillars, water features and decorative garden wall insets. All of these modular Elements are created to install together to form a seamless, harmonious design.

Whether you're building a one-of-a-kind fire feature from the ground up or designing your oasis with their

Harmony Outdoor Living, manufacturer of the Belgard Elements line.

Raboine also recommends including a fire-resistant liner when building a site-built fire pit over existing hardscapes. "This is especially important if the fire pit is on top of granite or limestone, which can retain water and explode when overheated," he says.

When using a wood-burning fire feature, Raboine recommends testing wind patterns in the yard with a portable grill to check smoke flow direction. "Hills, trees and existing structures often affect the wind patterns. The last thing you want to do is build a beautiful fireplace or fire pit that can't be used because the smoke always chokes out the seating areas," he explains.

For more information on Belgard Hardscapes or to view their design gallery, visit www.Belgard.biz or call 877-BELGARD (877-235-4273) to request a catalog or idea guide.



1. A custom fire pit is the perfect way to create a destination area on a remote section of your property. The sunken level and circular wall add to the intimacy of this secluded spot. The fire pit and coordinating wall are both constructed with Belgard Weston Wall. Belgard Urbana® pavers are incorporated with natural stone to complement the picturesque landscape. Lighting installed into the pillars and along landscaping safely guides guests and adds to the ambiance.

2. A cozy fireplace can convert an open space into an intimate gathering area. The structure of this custom fireplace was built with rough-hewn Belgard Celtic Wall. Tumbled Belgard Weston Wall was used for accents and to create the hearth. To add dimension and create a cozier space, curved wings radiate from the central fireplace, providing both linear space and wood storage. The patio was created with complementary hues of Belgard Urbana® and Mega-Arbel™ pavers.

3. To create an elegant backyard retreat in a fraction of the time, design your outdoor living room using pieces from the Belgard Elements Collection. These elements from the Bristol Collection,—fireplace, water features, pillars, and wall accents,—were all pre-built in a factory setting and shipped ready for quick installation. All of these modular pieces were tied together on site using coordinating Weston Wall to create a seamless, integrated look. In addition, Mega-Arbel® pavers, which are used as accents on the Bristol Elements, were used to pave the patio to create an overall cohesive design.