



# All decked out



Their deck is the favorite gathering spot for the Wayne family — Lauren, Mark, Joshua and Ilana.

Homeowners are creating fabulous retreats — right in their own backyards. *By Linda Bachmann*

**“WITH BIG OVERHEAD EXPOSED BEAMS, IT FEELS PRIVATE AND OUTDOORSY. IT’S OUR OWN LITTLE HAVEN,” SAYS LAUREN WAYNE OF ATLANTA.**

“There’s beautiful tropical hardwood, columns with gentle arches bordered by a Japanese red maple, hanging ferns and bright morning sun,” says Dunwoody resident Michael Greenwald.

These are places to have a quiet breakfast, to listen to chirping birds, to star gaze or to watch storm clouds amass. Sanctuaries to take refuge from the outside world or to relax and kick back with friends.

Are they speaking of a favorite mountain get-away? An extravagant four-star resort? No, these “vacation spots” are right in their own backyards... literally.

Wayne and Greenwald are both partaking in a trend to create lavish living spaces that bring the indoors outside. Architectural details, comfortable furnishings and high-quality materials are all part of the plan.

There was a time that outdoor living meant setting out a few webbed aluminum chairs on the lawn or building small concrete or pine patios. But with the development of pres-

sure-treated lumber, the 1980s and ’90s saw an explosion in the construction of decks attached to homes. Today, many of those aging structures, along with “postage stamp builder’s decks” on newer homes, are being replaced with elaborate, well-planned designs.

“Typically the deck is the last thing a builder will do — an after-thought” and often not in harmony with the rest of the house, says Rick Goldstein, a registered architect and owner of Deckwright, an Atlanta company that specializes in custom decks, porches and gazebos.

According to an annual survey by *Remodeling Magazine*,

a professionally built deck can provide a substantial return on investment. Research indicates that on a national average, homeowners can expect to recoup 104 percent of the construction costs — and from 90 to 110 percent in the Atlanta market.

“Decks rival kitchens and bathrooms for return on investment,” says Goldstein. His outdoor projects have ranged in price from \$7,000 to \$10,000 on the lower end to upwards of \$150,000.

Goldstein, who has been building decks for almost 20 years, has seen a lot of changes.

“People are realizing that outdoor spaces are more usable



PHOTOS: TRIPP LILES/DECKWRIGHT

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 ►

JUNE 2005

# chai

INSIDE

PEOPLE • HOME • SHOPPING • PARENTING • ARCHIVES

Chai readers  
share summer  
entertaining tips

## All decked out

Like many others,  
the Wayne family  
has created a  
fabulous retreat  
in their own  
backyard

inside

### What's in a name?



When a baby  
is on the way,  
selecting a

name is serious business



4 Questions  
for JCC  
President  
Mark Murovitz

— they're an extension of the inside," he says. "Atlanta is a huge deck market, for obvious reasons" — its climate, trees and beautiful backyards are conducive to outdoor living — "and people are spending more time at home and creating little retreats." That often includes hot tubs, built-in benches, fireplaces and conversation nooks.

Construction was recently completed on the multi-level deck and screened porch Lauren and Mark Wayne added to their 11-year-old Dunwoody home. When it's time to relax or hang out with their children — Joshua, 10, and Ilana, 7 — Lauren's "favorite place in the house" is actually outside — the entire backyard area, which includes a multi-level deck and pool — and screened porch with hanging swings, which "is just divine."

The Waynes are structural engineers and were familiar with the architectural details, including wrapped columns and exposed beams, they wanted to incorporate into their design.

"Plus, it's an easy way to create a *sukkah*," says Lauren. "We'll just slap some lattice work on the top."

In addition to Sukkot



celebrations, she says the family does a lot of outdoor entertaining — "easy no-frills" gatherings where paper plates and cookouts are the norm.

### Decking materials

When it comes to decking materials, one of today's most popular is a wood and plastic composite that has been on the market for 10 to 12 years. A product called Trex leads the industry, say builders.

Dan Weidmann, a certified remodeler and president of

Weidmann & Associates in Atlanta, says most of his clients are upgrading from pressure treated woods to cedar, cypress and redwood — all naturally rot-resistant.

And a relatively new and popular option is ipe (pronounced ee-pay) a dense Brazilian hardwood that is virtually rot- and insect-proof.

"It's gorgeous, with a dark mahogany look and people fall in love with it," says Goldstein, adding that it has a fire rating that is "similar to concrete."

These are places to have a quiet breakfast, to listen to chirping birds, to star gaze or to watch storm clouds amass. Sanctuaries to take refuge from the outside world or to relax and kick back with friends.

Ipe will reach a silvery gray natural patina if the wood isn't stained, but is virtually "maintenance free."

### Let there be light

It's smart to plan lighting into the design phase so that wiring and fixtures can be integrated into the deck construction.

Outdoor lighting — trying to mimic a nighttime feel — often consists of wall-mounted sconces by a doorway, fixtures along a pathway, floodlights that illuminate a specific area

like the pool or the barbecue grill, motion detector lights for security and lights that shine on stair treads.

"Outdoor lighting should almost disappear," says Goldstein. "The lights are not the focus, but rather special features" — like lights in trees to create a moonlight effect.

Outdoor fireplaces are the rage and now a common request when building a screened porch, a deck or as a stand-alone feature as part of the outdoor landscape, says Weidmann.

"Fireplaces have really taken off in the past year. It definitely becomes the focal point of the space," he says.

Weidmann says the outdoor fireplaces are typically wrapped in stone. He is installing both prefabricated fireplaces designed for outdoor use — a new product on the market "that addresses the trend but keeps the cost down" — or all-masonry designs, a more expensive option.

### Following the code

"Local jurisdictions have different building codes," says Goldstein, rattling off requirements for footing sizes and depths, railing design and spacing, how a deck is attached to the structure, and even riser and tread widths for stairs.

"Building inspectors will test the soil to make sure it is capable of bearing weight; framing inspectors will make

## exterior design

### FROM RUGS TO CONVERSATION GROUPINGS, THE SELECTION OF OUTDOOR FURNISHINGS IS VAST

"Americans are investing more in outdoor furnishings and décor than ever before — and the big news is color. There's so much more than the hunter green and white stripes," says Jackie Hirschhaut, vice president of the North Carolina-based American Home Furnishings Alliance, which represents more than 500 manufacturers and suppliers in the residential home furnishings industry.

She says the deck has become the latest frontier for homeowners to express their personal sense of style — with wood, metal, wicker, resin and outdoor wovens to select from and mixed-media pieces that combine textures and materials.

"The mixed media offers a very contemporary look. The combination of

stainless steel and teak adds a modern flair," adds Eric Brenner, owner of Authentek on Marietta Street, located in what he calls the up and coming "Aquarium District."

Brenner says popular pieces include deep-seated conversation seatings, "action pieces" that swivel, rock or recline and outdoor rugs, made of Olefin or polypropylene.

"The rugs have a natural feel and are kept clean with a hosing off or vacuuming. They're relatively inexpensive (about \$250 for an 8- by 11-foot rug) and really help to complete the space," says Brenner.

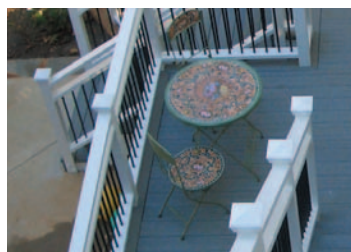
He calls durable teak the "de facto standard of hardwood outdoor furniture." While there are different

grades of teak, Brenner says machine-made pieces are superior to handmade because of advances in machinery and precise measurement standards.

"Furniture has a lot of joints. Especially because pieces that sit in an outdoor environment expand and contract with the cold and warmth, joints can loosen if they're not made with precision," he says.

While teak requires "zero to low maintenance," Brenner adds that all furniture needs to be kept clean of the outdoor elements — especially pollen and tree sap.

He recommends regular cleaning with a damp cloth, hose or light bristle brush and a semi-annual or annual application of "suntan lotion for furniture" to prevent bleaching of the wood. And just like suntan lotion, it needs to be reapplied. The grayness is just at the surface.



Mosaic tabletops are a popular trend in outdoor furnishings.

It can be scrubbed off and there are products that will bring teak furniture back to a honey brown color.

For his own teak furniture, Brenner prefers the "old world charm" that accompanies the silver gray patina of weathered teak. "Weather just affects the aesthetic characteristics of the wood — not its integrity. It won't splinter."

The American Home Furnishings Alliance points to other outdoor furnishing trends including mosaic, tile and stone tabletops as an alternative to glass; high-tech lightweight elasticized "sling" fabrics and removable slipcovers instead of chair and chaise pads and cushions; and complementary accents including outdoor bar trolleys, plant trolleys and throw pillows.



Mixed media pieces combine teak, metal and fabric.

# All decked out

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

sure the deck is attached properly to the home,” says Goldstein, adding that electrical work requires yet another inspection.

Hot tubs that can add roughly 50 square feet and up to 4,000 pounds of weight “add a huge dimension,” he says. “We like to keep the hot tubs as an independent structure — separate from the rest of the deck,” using larger structural joists, shorter spans and more rigorous beam connections.

Smaller deck projects can take two to three weeks while more expansive designs can take up to five months.

“It’s always a challenge to work on people’s homes while they’re living there,” says Goldstein. Extra care is taken to shield houses against rainstorms and to protect the surrounding landscape, which ultimately becomes part of the total outdoor package.

“It’s like surgery,” says Goldstein. “We just can’t come in with equipment and knock everything down. We have to be careful to protect existing old trees.”

And just in case the front of the house is becoming a forgotten stepchild, there’s always a fabulous porch to consider.

“We wanted to enjoy both the front and the back of the house. It’s shadier and we feel like part of the street scene,” says Michael Greenwald of the ipe porch — complete with gentle arches, columns and ceiling fans — on his Dunwoody home.



## ANATOMY OF A DECK

A deck is composed of four major components that function as a single system: foundation, framing, decking and railing. The foundation ties the deck to the ground. Holes are dug down to a depth below the frost line and are filled with concrete. The framing is a combination of vertical wood posts connected to the concrete foundation and horizontal framing (joists) that spans the distance between the wood posts and the house. The decking is the finished floor of the deck and the railing is the protective surround.

**SOURCE:** “DECK AND PATIO IDEA BOOK”

He says his family — wife Jodi and three daughters, Eliana, 7 1/2, Rachel, 5, and Gabby, 2, love being on the porch and they have been watching the progress of a songbird who built a nest in one of their hanging ferns.

Between their porch and backyard deck and pool, the Greenwalds have created an outdoor paradise.

“When we’re on vacation, it’s not uncommon for us to say, why are we here?”

We don’t feel a strong need to get away — it’s easy to spend a lot of time at home.” ■

## GONE TO POT

**Nothing beats the beauty of flower-filled terra cotta pots out on the deck. But they never seem to last more than one season. Because terra cotta absorbs water, it’s best to store them indoors, even in Atlanta’s mild winter climate. When the outdoor season is officially over, dump the soil and the plants and store the pots indoors. If that’s not an option, empty the soil and turn the pots upside down on wooden slats. Or wrap the pots in burlap and cover them with heavy-duty black plastic.**

**SOURCE:** “DECK SCAPING” BY BARBARA W. ELLIS

