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**Porch perfect: 11
local spaces
maximizing
outdoor living**



Photo: Prakash Patel



C-VILLE
Writers



1:50 p.m. May 8,

2015

The countdown is on: one month 'til summer. If you ask us, that's just early enough to start moving the party outside. We've rounded up 13 of our favorite outdoor spaces—from a Gothic Revival to a stucco four-square—to glean inspiration.

Easy breezy (*above*)

The two wings of this house frame a woodsy view and, once inside the dogtrot (the open breezeway connecting the structures), one

can see through the house to the left and right—an enactment of a Japanese architectural concept that means “gradually opening up.” The homeowners spend much time in the open-air space. Nine months of the year, they eat dinner and most breakfasts in the dogtrot. And they’re constantly traveling through it as they move from one wing to another.

It’s a far cry from the couple’s former home in New York City. “I remember so many days in New York not knowing what temperature it was outside,” said homeowner Roxana Bonnell. “Here, you know what the animals are doing, and whether it smells like it’s going to rain.”

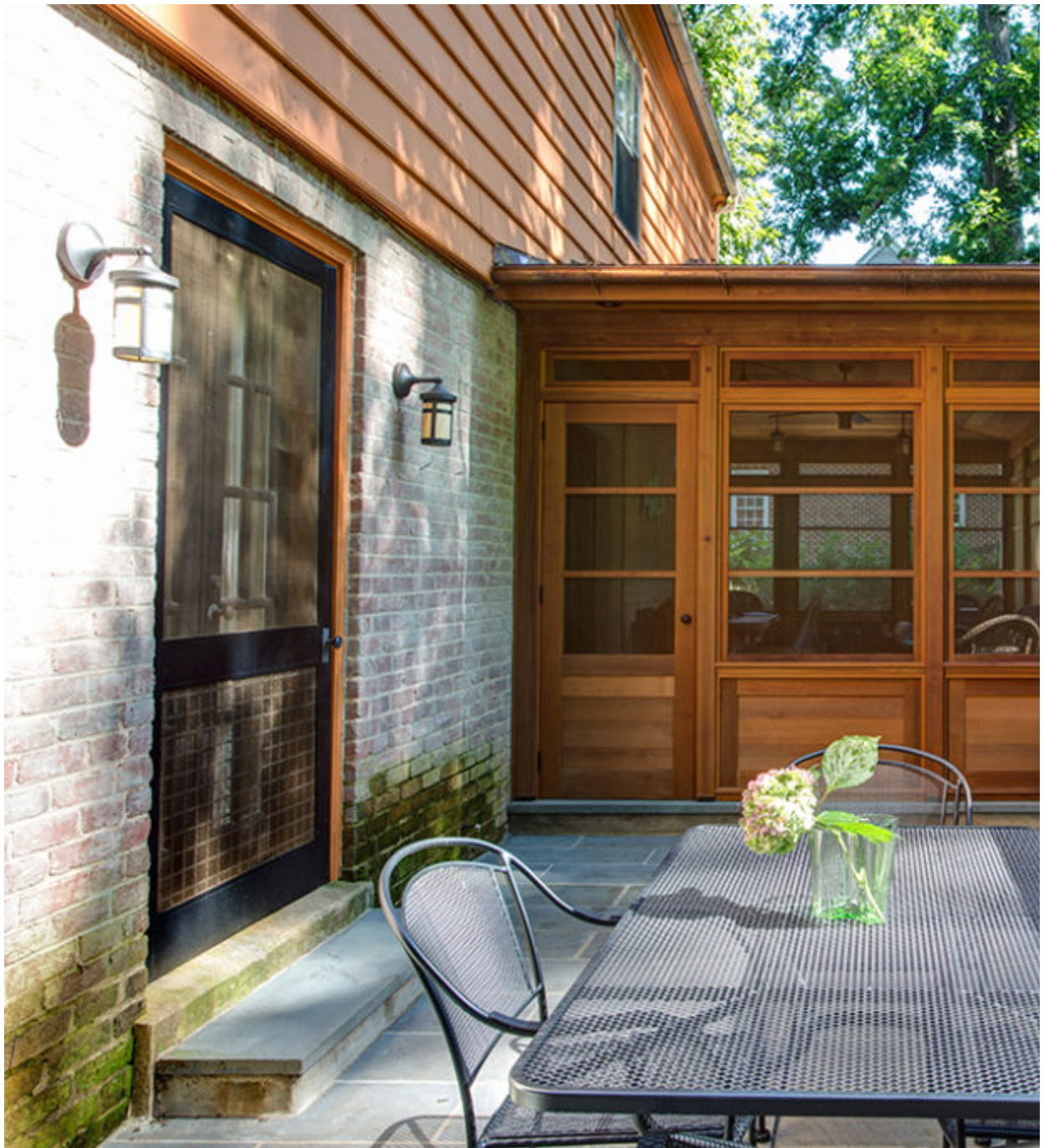


Photo: Andrea Hubbell

Inside outside

The homeowners of this 1940s-era Charlottesville house asked design-build firm STOA to create a three-season porch from an existing stoop that would “last as long as the house was built to last.”

The project wasn’t without its challenges—the designers needed to hold back the slope of the backyard without creating a towering

wall that would block light. Instead of one, they built two, the rear one being 2' higher.

The resulting porch is spacious, with bluestone flooring, custom-built Spanish cedar framing, bronze screens and a copper roof and gutters. It's flanked by two patios and opens off both the dining room and kitchen. "This becomes a secondary dining room," said STOA's Justin Heiser. And it's a complement, clean-lined and cozy, to the sturdy house it adjoins.



Photo: Stephen Barling

Modern classic

This house, at first glance, looks like many other Virginia farmhouses: white clapboard, wide front porch, standing-seam metal roof. But its details reveal more contemporary origins. “We looked for opportunities to open it up and simplify details,” said architect Fred Wolf of local firm Wolf Ackerman.

To that end, a long, shallow bluestone porch overlooks the L-shaped home’s flat, grassy terrace, which is surrounded by a stucco and bluestone retaining wall. Situated carefully on its site to take full advantage of sunlight throughout the day, it also utilizes prevailing breezes for passive cooling during the hot, humid summers.



Photo: Galvin Architects

Georgian on my mind

“Building exteriors and interiors are complementary,” said architect Kathy Galvin, also a Charlottesville City Councillor.

“Various architectural styles ranging from classical to arts and crafts to modern are used as appropriate, so as to be in harmony with what came before.” In the case of this particular home, the original structure was Georgian, built during the beginning of the 20th century. But it needed a few updates to make sense for a modern family.

“Like all houses of that style, rooms and windows followed a strict symmetry, even if it meant that the resulting rooms felt cramped and dark,” Galvin said. A beautiful rear garden was only viewable from a few double-hung windows and a single door onto a pressure-treated deck, so to integrate the outside with the inside, a John Singer Sargent painting called “Breakfast in the Loggia” provided Galvin with a jumping-off point, and she designed a long, spacious room and deck across the entire back of the house. It “was more transparent than solid,” but stayed true to the structure’s Georgian symmetry.

The result? “A gracious, lively space [to] enjoy the beauty of every season of the year,” said Galvin.





Photo: Sutphin Architecture

Fire and water

The best of both worlds. That's the easiest way to describe this pool structure designed by H. Adams Sutphin, in collaboration with landscape architecture firm Nelson Byrd Woltz. On one end of the pavilion, a fieldstone fireplace with herringbone-patterned brick anchors a sitting area, while at the opposite end, an easily hideable kitchenette and bath with both interior and exterior showers.

Says Sutphin, "The open structure creates the light airy feel desired while still providing adequate protection for either sun or rain." What more do you need?



Photo: Stephen Barling

En plein air

Inside Mossy Rock, a collection of Midwestern landscape art lines the walls. Outside, the western views speak for themselves, framed by a wide porch on the west. The south section cozies up to a fireplace and is screened by vertical cypress separated by gaps. Two openings in the screen mirror a window and a doorway on the opposite end of the house.

Because the porch floor is just a few inches higher than grade, looking at and stepping into the landscape are activities that blend and merge. Said architect Jeff Bushman, "The landscape is an extension of the living space."



Decked out

When architects Christopher Hays and Allison Ewing found a corner lot in Charlottesville's Woolen Mills neighborhood, they set out to build a low-impact but comfortable home for them and their two children.

The sprawling deck is an impressive feature of the design: It feels nearly continuous with the first floor and adds considerably to its spaciousness.

From its partial shade, one can take in the views in relative privacy, thanks to a row of birch trees planted along Riverside Avenue. "We wanted a nice, large deck for the kids to play on," said Hays—and this one is easily monitored from inside.

Native plantings and an old maple tree grace the yard. Cypress siding on the back of the house and through the dogtrot contrasts with Hardiplank panels on the other three sides—as though the house were "an egg cracked open," Ewing said.

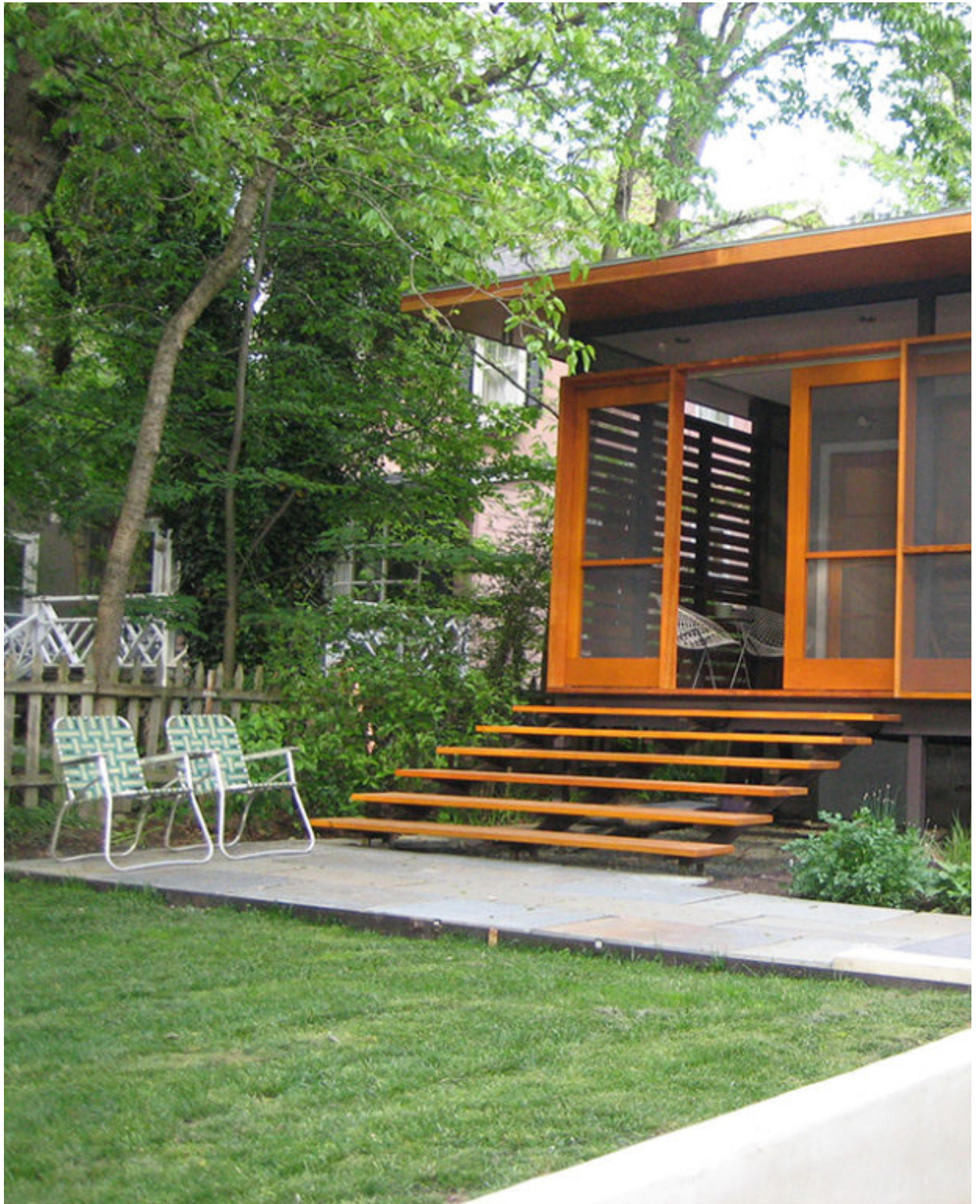


Photo: Fred Wolf

Open out

Built to complement the 1890s stucco city home it's attached to, this screened porch comprises a thin roof with deep overhangs, supported by a frame that seemingly floats overhead, thanks to dark gray supports to help it visually recede.

A slatted wall provides privacy on one side while, on the other, a solid wood wainscot creates a hiding spot for a daybed or extra chairs. But our favorite part? The everyday door hinges, and a second oversized door slides open to create a 10' doorway that mimics the oversized steps. And, in the kitchen, a large 10' window drops into a pocket below the sill, effectively making the kitchen and porch into one space.



Photo: Rosney Co. Architec

New views

The Copper Hill Farm project began with the move of an 1850s Gothic Revival home to a site 15 miles away, where an historic house on that property had burned down. The fire left the homesite intact, with mature walnut trees and a family cemetery, but with no house for its towering oak trees to frame. Once the home was in place, Rosney Co. Architects set about satisfying the homeowners' desire to have the focus of family gatherings center on the pastoral landscape surrounding the property.

"[We] opened up each of the primary spaces to the outdoors—many of which spill onto this porch," said architect Julie Dixon.

The porch wraps the historic Gothic Revival portion of the house and connects it to the addition. "They wanted the landscape to take the place of the oft over-scaled family room," Dixon said. "Siting the relocated house on the historic site created a seamless connection to its surroundings."



Just swimmingly

This pool and shade pavilion took its cues from the existing house it accompanies, which has accents of stone and heavy timbers. Architect H. Adams Sutphin chose bluestone pavers to provide a continuous link between the pool terrace and the sitting area. "This shade pavilion provides a destination at the end of a narrow lap pool," he says.

And what of the view? The pool and pavilion provide plenty of visibility across an open field to the mountains beyond.





Photo: Virginia Hamrick

Country strong

Slate Hill, the longtime home of architect Bethany Puopolo and her family, was designed with temporary structures in mind: “a camp or a revival tent, something very plain and very simple,” she said.

A central breezeway runs throughout the house and porches line much of its exterior. They’re meant as a nod to Southern blueprints, but also demonstrate an engagement with the land that was—and continues to be—important to Puopolo.

“There’s a strong sense of the place and its special features, whether it’s a mountain or a lake,” she said. “We said, ‘Let’s live that way.’”

While this particular site has no mountain view or lake, it does have a subtle beauty—rolling topography and wooded pockets that hide outcroppings of slate. The Puopolos have planted trees, laid walkways, installed a pool and created a classic, parklike atmosphere. “The outside is as much a part of the house as the rooms,” she said.

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