

Home Grown



Landscape designer Franchesca Watson suggests ways to create the perfect outdoor environment, making it all the more tempting to stay at home this summer

I'm fascinated by the concept of a staycation – a holiday where one stays put and enjoys the attractions of your home and local environs, planning days out but using your home too. It suggests less impact on the environment in terms of travel miles and air fuel, a less stressful approach and more intrinsic value in terms of relevance and relaxation. It's also much easier on the budget in these recessionary times. Some people go as far as only leaving home for their usual errands such as shopping, which implies that they must be able to have as much fun on their property as they might have had going anywhere else.

Which gets me thinking about what one needs in the garden to ensure all this fun. Certainly a fabulous swimming pool, preferably with a natural filter and no chemicals so you and the kids can spend hours in the water. And a great terrace big enough to have a huge table to eat at, and really comfortable furniture to loll about on. Another must is an easy method of cooking outside – either a braai, pizza oven or even an outside fire pit that one can also sit around chatting after supper. Perhaps some recreation opportunities to suit your family in the garden – these can range from play equipment to tennis courts, cycle tracks, putting greens, mini-skateboard parks, netted-ball areas, hammocks and tree houses, depending on the space available. There are misting systems to keep one cool and outdoor heaters to keep one warm. Good lighting in the garden will extend the use of your facilities and glam up your evenings.



The key to a staycation is to ensure that the outdoor living area is comfortable and inviting

'THERE YOU CAN FEEL THE ENERGY OF THE LIFE IN THE GARDEN AND BE FILLED WITH CREATIVITY EVERY DAY' FRANCESCA WATSON

But I guess one would also have to avoid the usual routine, and stay away from email or at least work mail. This certainly in my life, would require great discipline.

But what if you had a fantastic outdoor office, one that is a little removed from your house so you had to wind through the garden, listening to the birds, around a corner to a secluded spot. There, nestled into the vegetation with lovely views of the garden, is your would-be private office space, a glass box with great views of the

garden, perhaps looking onto a little pond so you can watch the dragonflies and see the sunshine on the water lilies. There you can feel the energy of the life in the garden and be filled with creativity every day, watching the progression of the sunshine and shadows and feeling your connectivity to the universe. Maybe you need this anyway, everyday of the year, in fact its starting to feel essential. One would of course have to have full internet connectivity too. ■ *Franchesca Watson* @ www.franchescawatson.com