



### FIRE PITS AND COZY DECOR CAN KEEP THE CHILL AWAY



PROVIDED BY SHARON MCCORMICK

**HARTFORD** interior designer Sharon McCormick created this outdoor space with elements that allow it to be used in cooler weather.

### OUTDOOR SPACES

# EXTENDING PATIO SEASON

By **KORKY VANN**

kvann@courant.com

**T**here's a chill in the air and leaves are turning brilliant colors — but you don't need to give up outdoor living just yet. With a few easy changes you can transform your patio from a summer hangout into an inviting fall retreat.

"People put a lot of time, effort and expense into outfitting their outdoor spaces and they don't want to close everything down at the end of the summer," says Hartford interior designer Sharon McCormick. "New products on the market are encouraging New Englanders to think about extending the time they can be outside."

McCormick, ([sharonstyleportfolio.com](http://sharonstyleportfolio.com)), who designs both interior and exterior spaces for her clients, says heating sources, lighting and cozy decor are the best ways to make patios comfortable for fall.

"Heating elements, including fireplaces and fire pits, are very popular now," says McCormick. "Some are wood burning and some operate on propane and they are available in a wide range of prices."

Michael Rapp, a sales associate at Porch and Patio, ([porchandpatio.net](http://porchandpatio.net)), in Orange, agrees.

"This time of year, people come in looking

for fire pits," he says. "Fire pits are great for socializing. People gather around and have drinks. If the weather cooperates, you can be out there through November."

Rapp says more and more consumers are opting for propane-operated models.

"Wood burning fire pits can be a challenge. The wind shifts and you've got smoke blowing in people's faces," says Rapp. "At the end of the night, with propane, you shut it down and it's off. With a wood fire, you've got to be more careful that it is completely out."

McCormick says free-standing electric and propane heaters also are popular.

Other products to fight autumn chill

include decorative pillows in soft, yet weather-resistant fabrics. Pier One ([pier1.com](http://pier1.com)), offers a line of indoor/outdoor pillows in fall-inspired patterns that are designed to withstand the elements.

"Indoor outdoor rugs can also add a feeling of warmth," says McCormick. "If you have a covered patio or pergola, adding outdoor curtains will help block the wind."

### Light Up The Landscape

Now that days are shorter, lighting is important to outdoor living.

"New lighting products are really cool," says McCormick. "There are outdoor electric lamps that look just like regular indoor lamps and battery-operated lanterns and candles with remotes so you can turn them off and on easily."

Another tip: light the area beyond your patio as well.

"Landscape lighting creates a view that is just beautiful at night," says McCormick.

(Many of these products can be found online and in home decor stores, at big-box home improvement chains, including Lowe's and Home Depot, and in patio and outdoor furniture stores and fireplace and stove shops.)

Once you've got your patio ready for chilly nights, break out a bottle of red wine or serve hot toddies.



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### AWAY FROM HOME

#### Garden Club Events

**Simsbury Garden Club** will hold its annual herb luncheon at the Apple Barn on Monday at 11:30 a.m. Members bring luncheon dishes to share, made with herbs fresh from the garden. Guest speaker is Chris Prospero, chef and owner of Metro Bis Restaurant in Simsbury, who will share his thoughts on "Seasoning From the Garden." Guests and members-to-be welcome (for a \$5 fee). Information: [simsburygardenclub.org](http://simsburygardenclub.org).

The **Garden Gate Club of Mansfield** and the Windham Garden Club will hold a joint meeting Monday at the Buchanan Auditorium of the Mansfield Public Library, Route 89. Refreshments available at 6:30 p.m. and the meeting will start at 7. After a brief business meeting, Nancy MacKinnon, of Ballek's Garden Center, will talk about "House Plants and their Personalities." Non-members, \$5. Information: 860-428-2541 or [dhultgren@mindspring.com](mailto:dhultgren@mindspring.com).

The **Garden Club of Avon** will meet Monday 11:30 a.m., at St Ann Church Hall, 289 Arch Road, Avon. Linda Fleming, CT master gardener and herb specialist, will share creative ways to use herbs, including how to make herb butter and willow water. Learn how herbs not only enhance the flavor of foods, but also pack powerful nutrients. Learn how to propagate plants, and clever ways to wrap seeds to give as hostess gifts. A light lunch will be at noon, followed by the program. Guests welcome; donation \$5. Information: 860-675-8246.

"Scape to the Wonderful World of Garlic" is the topic at a meeting of the **East Haddam Garden Club** on Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. at the East Haddam Senior Center, 15 Great Hillwood Road, Moodus. The speaker will be advanced master gardener and master composter Maureen Gillis. Learn why this easy and versatile plant should be a staple in your garden. Free. A brief club business meeting at 7 p.m. will precede the program. Information: 860-873-8732.

The **Bristol Garden Club** will meet Thursday at the Bristol Library, 5 High St. The business meeting will begin at 10 a.m., followed by a light luncheon. The speaker is at noon and will be open to the public. Nicole Smith will speak on "Gardening As We Age."

The **Men's Garden Club of Wethersfield** will meet Oct. 24 at 7 p.m. in the Pitkin Community Center, 30

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