

## DESIGN & DECORATING



**LESS-BLOCKY LOUNGERS** Standard Architecture, in Los Angeles, placed teak chairs from Henry Hall Designs around a Palm Springs fire pit.

## The Ins and Outs of Al Fresco Life

We polled over 100 design pros to identify five outdoor styles that have faded and five arriving like a breath of fresh air

### OUT

#### Silly Strings of Lights

A number of the experts we spoke with said that in 2018, they'll pull the plug on what New York designer Mikel Welch calls Charlie Brown string lights. "Hopefully, homeowners will stroll off with this dorm-room décor like Linus with his blanket," he said. Nashville designer Chad James agreed: "They are over-used and just too cutesy looking." And Raun Thorp of Los Angeles's Thorp & Thorp warns against the unfattering glow of exposed-filament bulbs.



#### Inelegant Bulk

"Brown, blocky sofas and chairs have had their day in the sun," said Chicago designer Melissa Lewis. Tina Anastasia, a partner at Mark P. Finley Interiors in Southport, Conn., concurred that last year's trend is tired: "Clients gravitated to a thicker frame and style of furniture, heavier weaves in a darker color." Hulking versions of this look in iron and its ilk are over as well. "The oversize metal sofas and chairs become hot in the sun and make lounging a challenge," said Abbe Fenimore of Studio Ten 25, in Dallas.



#### Brights and Stripes

"I get it, stripes are historical and elegant...but they're also beyond boring," said Maureen Baker, co-founder of New York firm MDLX. Many designers said there are too many great performance-fabric options now to stick to banal motifs. As for more-ornate, bright, blatantly "decorative" patterns, designer Uma Stewart, in South Orange, N.J., warns that they can wear out their welcome: "People are investing more in outdoor décor and want it to work season after season."



#### Horticultural Jumbles

Pots with choreographed combinations of tall, medium and trailing plants can be found at every shopping center and municipal corner. "The thrill, fill, spill approach to planting containers is a tired trope," said writer and floral designer Amy Merrick. Having recently completed an internship at England's famous Great Dixter garden, she noted that the experts there "never, ever mix varieties in a pot." As for vessels: "Please, no more zinc planters," begged landscape architect Janice Parker.



### IN

#### Grown-Up Glow

"We're seeing more outdoor light fixtures with shaded fabrics," said Mr. James, pointing to the Kenroy Home Tanglewood Indoor/Outdoor Floor Lamp at right. New York designer Robert McKinley also favors a less-scattered approach: "Now I prefer randomly placed, low, indirect lighting, creating special moments and high-lights." And Mr. Welch drops a string of battery-operated firefly or dewdrop lights into old wine bottles, which illuminate the table "and leave the view of the stars wide open."



#### Fine-Boned Furniture

The fading appeal of behemoth furnishings aligns with a newish décor approach that treats outdoor space as an extension of a home's interior, said New York designer Phry Sayles. Pieces like the white oak Spindle Back Viewing Chair from Nickey Kehoe's new Outdoor Collection, right, wouldn't look out of a place in a living room. "Light wood furniture with lines upholstery feels really fresh and relaxed," said Los Angeles designer Vanessa Alexander. For another example, see the lithe Henry Hall Designs chairs in the main photo above.



#### Discreet Neutrals

"Folks are moving toward neutrals and sophisticated palettes," said Ms. Stewart, who likes performance fabrics such as Kerry Joyce's, at right. "Shades like this mellow papaya [far right] and marine [next to it] are softer than bright oranges and turquoises and more likely to stand the test of time." San Francisco designer Kendall Wilkinson, who recently launched a line of quietly hued indoor-outdoor fabrics, likes to let the landscaping be the star.



#### Singular Species

"I think that painting with larger strokes, by using masses of single plant varieties [in one container], makes for a more impactful, fresh and modern composition," said San Francisco landscape designer Katharine Webster. Betsy Nathan of Chicago antiques gallery Pagoda Red pointed out that fewer species per pot means fewer potential problems, and noted that clients have massed these sort of plantings to define areas on patios. "The classic garden pots made of terra cotta are always in," said Ms. Parker. "Nothing is more time- and you will ver time."



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### Unpredictable Wicker

What's replacing those wrought-iron and bent-wire furnishings? "Natural wicker speaks of summer and shade, green lawns and fireflies—and luxury," said Ann Pyne of New York design firm McMillen. Said Houston designer Nina Magon, "The airiness in the designs causes light to penetrate through and will create shadow patterns and visual depth in your outdoor space." If you fear an overly Grandma vibe, "choose a piece in a funky or different shape," said New York designer Sasha Bikoff. (A youthful example: Soane's Rattan Ripple Console, right.) "It offers a fresh yet easy update." —Catherine Romano