



A Seat with a View

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VENICE GULF COAST LIVING MAGZINE

Spend even a few moments in a garden, and it's only natural that you begin to feel relaxed. As you enjoy the soothing surroundings, your senses will delight in the beautifully hued, fragrant flowers in bloom, soft, gentle spring breeze, and perhaps colorful butterflies flitting through the air. Time spent in the garden can be so captivating and inspirational, that you may want to take a seat and extend the peaceful, pleasant interlude for as long as you can.

By putting a bench in this wonderful outdoor living space, you and your loved ones will have the opportunity to fully appreciate the serene setting. Strategically placing this functional piece of furniture in certain spots in your lawn and gardens, such as in a nice shady nook, by a focal point like a flower bed or water feature, or along a pathway, can encourage your friends and family to explore these areas. Additionally, benches provide comfortable seating not only for your guests when you are having a garden party, but also when you just want to settle into a soft chair to enjoy a few moments of personal time.

To get you started, you will want to evaluate the design of your garden or backyard and get a sense of your palette. Begin by deciding whether you want a bench that complements or contrasts with the colors in your garden. Some benches will blend so seamlessly into the garden that they may seem to be a natural part of that environment. If you prefer for your new furnishing to stand out, you can choose from plenty of brightly hued benches or can pair one with some vibrant pillows to add your own bold accent of color. Next, you will want to measure the area to determine how large of a bench the space will accommodate. When making these measurements, you will want to take any plants in that space into account, plus provide room for them to grow. After you have determined what color and size you are looking for, you can start to explore what material and style most appeals to you.



Made of a natural material, a wooden bench is imbued with warmth and beauty, offering the perfect vantage point for stopping to smell the flowers. If you like this style, you will want to select a durable, weather-resistant wood such as acacia, cedar, Shorea, or teak. Individuals who prefer a more eco-friendly approach will want to consider acacia, which grows abundantly around the world. A lightweight wood that tends to resist cracking, cedar can be a great choice if you are hoping to match your bench to other outdoor furniture, since it paints and stains well. More sustainable and less expensive than its closely related counterpart, teak, Shorea holds up well to daily use and inclement weather. Highly sought-after, teak is an incredibly strong material that possesses all the qualities one could hope for in a wood for outdoor use, such as being water-repellant, decay-resistant, and aging beautifully.

IN THE GARDEN

The wrought-iron bench has a certain timeless romance to it. When it is placed in the shade beneath a large tree, it becomes a secluded spot, ideal for reading a book, enjoying a picnic for two, or just contemplating the beauty of nature. With proper care, this type of bench can last for generations. If you plan on putting a wrought-iron bench in an outdoor space where it will be exposed to the elements, particularly moisture, it is recommended to purchase one that has a weather-resistant finish. Even with this finish, however, some pieces may be more vulnerable to rust; to protect your wrought-iron furniture, experts suggest periodically applying car wax, as it helps to repel water.

Nowadays, the look of wrought-iron can be achieved with benches constructed of other metals such as cast-aluminum or steel. Additionally, since many are painted in vibrant shades like yellow, red, or blue, they can create a bright and beautiful contrast that adds a dash of color. By choosing one in a complementary hue, such as the green bench that is pictured, it may seamlessly blend into its surroundings.



Situated in the corner to create a cozy outdoor nook, a floating bench (opposite page) seems to effortlessly blend into its surroundings, almost as if it has always been there. Although this type of seating may appear to be levitating, the bench is securely adhered to the wall behind it with sturdy underlying shelving and reinforced metal brackets. When a quartet of attractive pillows is placed right where the two sections of wood meet, the bench beckons as the ideal spot to curl up with a good book or to take a catnap.

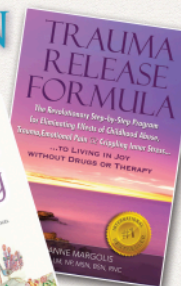
Want a bench that serves multiple purposes? A storage bench (above) can be a great option since it gives you a place to stow

some items such as your gardening supplies or other equipment that you want to keep close at hand. It can be used to store items like pillows, keeping these protected from the elements. In addition to being a wonderful place to put your stuff, some are outfitted with a fold-up seat and, by topping it with a comfortable bench-sized pillow, others can serve this same function. These benches come in a wide variety of materials, including rattan, wood, and wicker. If you select one made of durable plastic, another perk is that it can easily be cleaned.

Whatever style you like, consider getting a bench and placing it in your garden. Soon, you and your loved ones will be able to stroll through your floral displays and enjoy your place in the sun!

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