

# martha stewart

## How to Prepare Your Yard for a Season of Outdoor Entertaining

Landscape architects share their best advice for creating the ultimate open-air party space.

By **Caroline Biggs**

June 15, 2020



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ELIZABETH STUART

The warm weather season is officially upon us, which means there's no better time to plan a few outdoor gatherings, both small and large. But before you work on your menu and guest list, don't forget to prep your yard for entertaining. "You'll want to provide a variety of spaces where friends and family can gather," says Edmund Hollander of Hollander Design Landscape Architects. "Should the grill be near the dining area? Are there shady as well as sunny spots around the pool? Whether around a pool with the kids or around a dining table with friends, you should think about how you want to live in each space." Not exactly sure what else you can do to

prepare your yard for a season of outdoor entertaining? We reached out to a few of our favorite landscape architects for advice, and here's what they had to say.

## Spray for insects.

No matter how well you've prepped for an outdoor celebration, if mosquitoes or biting gnats decide to join the affair, the party might be over before it even starts, says Elizabeth Stuart. "If I'm throwing a garden party, I will have the garden sprayed that day or a day ahead for bugs, she says. "However, just in case, I always keep a pretty basket close by with some natural mosquito repellents and Benadryl cream."

## Provide plenty of shade.

There's nothing fun about getting a sunburn, which is why Phillip Thomas says ensuring you have shady spots in your yard to shelter your guests from hazardous rays is a must: "As there has been an increasing concern about skin health, people want to avoid constant and direct sunlight when they are at a party. To this end, I think a beautiful pergola covered patio can offer respite from the sun while still enjoying the outdoors."

## Tend to your lawn and garden.

Views make a big difference at an outdoor soirée, so along with mowing your lawn and trimming your hedges, Thomas recommends sprucing up your garden so it serves as an attractive focal point. "Take care to 'fluff' your garden so that it looks its best," he says. "I like to turn the soil so that it looks fresh and remove weeds and dead flowers from plants."

## Grow fragrant plants.

Instead of the scented candles and perfumed sprays you might use for an indoor get-together, Hollander suggests planting some fragrant flowers in your yard to create a naturally aromatic atmosphere. "Think about adding fragrant plants to your

garden," he says. "Lilacs, daphne, summersweet, and viburnums are all beautiful flowering shrubs that can create a magical fragrance for your garden throughout the months of outdoor entertaining."

## Install electric lighting.

Good lighting is essential at any party, but for outdoor fêtes that continue after the sun sets, it's absolutely crucial. "For evening entertaining, lighting is key," Thomas says. "To this end, I rely on electric lighting to help accent elements in the garden, such as specimen trees or sculptures. Accenting these pieces at night helps to give guests an understanding of depth within a garden and a focal point."