

VIEWING POINT Named Outhouse for its connection with nature, this Forest of Dean home by Loyn & Co Architects (029 2071 1432; loyn.co.uk) has perimeter walkways and a large courtyard, open on one side. The project won RIBA South West's 2016 Building of the Year Award



IN FOCUS

Creating a level threshold

>> If there is a single design feature that successfully merges inside and out, it's the level threshold. House and garden are on exactly the same plane, with no step up or down, and this is especially effective if the same materials are used in both areas. A level threshold needs to be carefully detailed, however, with water ingress being the biggest potential issue.

>> The track for sliding or bi-fold doors is recessed into the floor; the closed doors sit in this channel, creating a weather-tight seal. Some form of drainage needs to run parallel to the track, carrying away water before it reaches the door.

>> Some door manufacturers such as IQ Glass (01494 722 880; iqglassuk.com) have developed track systems with integrated drainage. In exposed locations, most door manufacturers do not recommend flush thresholds; a rebated threshold, sunk below floor level, is usually suggested, which will give a height difference of about 20mm but ensure weathertightness.

SMOOTH SURFACE

Kitchen unit proportions are continued outside in this extension by Architecture for London (020 3637 4236; architectureforlondon.com). Made from blockwork covered in limestone tiles, the outdoor feature acts as a raised planter



they also act as transitional areas, softening the boundary between house and garden, and can be useful as covered walkways.

Consider a courtyard

While a walkway will give you a definitively outward-facing home, a courtyard layout will do the opposite, creating a secluded pocket of space. Because they are enclosed, courtyards already have some of the characteristics of a room, and you can amplify that with built-in seating or an outdoor firepit.

Outdoor living rooms

If you really want to make the most of your outdoor space, furnish it with features more common to indoor rooms. Outdoor kitchens are becoming popular, which at its simplest means a built-in barbecue with some worktop space either side, but could also include a sink, wine fridge and outdoor plug sockets so you can bring appliances outside and have everything you need to cook a full meal.

Walk the line

If you're building or renovating a detached property, consider incorporating a perimeter

walkway all the way round, with lots of access points – for example, not just sliding doors from the kitchen-diner to the main part of the garden, but further access from your living room or snug. Multiple outdoor areas will make the most of the sun's position throughout the day and give you more opportunities to enjoy some fresh air.

Take it outside

Built-in structures that follow the same line inside and out are another way of blurring the boundaries. Install bench seating along the perimeter wall of your kitchen-diner and construct mirror-image seating along the garden wall for outdoor dining. Similarly, the shape and proportions of kitchen cabinetry can be continued outside, perhaps as a rendered wall that acts as a planter, or as built-in cupboards for an outdoor kitchen.

Matched materials

Although glazing and level thresholds are the most obvious ways of making an internal-external link, they are not the only tools at your disposal. Materials and proportions can be echoed in both spaces; →

FIRESIDE GLOW Urban Fires (020 7183 1806; urbanfires.co.uk) supplied a bespoke gas firebox, from £3,000, and a Cathy Azria sculpture, from £2,900, for this London garden. The design by Luciano Giubbilei (020 7622 2616; lucianogiubbilei.com) makes the garden look like a true outdoor living room



OPEN PLAN Large-format concrete tiles are used inside and out in this project by Granit Chartered Architects (020 7924 4555; granit.co.uk); the outdoor versions have a slightly rougher surface. Sliding doors stack one in front of the other to leave a large central opening