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**HIGH STREET CHOICE:** San Marino outdoor garden hut with five cushions, £2,499, from Bhs.

# Patio

Summer's on the way and revamping the patio's a priority if you want to take advantage of sunny days and sultry nights. Wavering between wood and wire, or wrestling over rattan and wicker? **Gabrielle Fagan** puts together the best looks for outdoor rooms

**S**ummer's on the way and revamping the patio is a priority if you want to take full advantage of sunny days and sultry nights.

There's a superb choice of furniture and accessories which could transform even a drab, tiny space - with prices that won't raise your temperature by turning the bank balance red.

Create some patio party razzmatazz with glow-in-the-dark furniture and vibrantly coloured gnomes, or be more demure with decorative wired pieces or classic rattan furniture.

And for outdoor decor divas there's the ultra-fashionable 'outdoor room' look with swinging cocoon seats, coffee tables and canopied loungers.

"Over the years we've seen a move away from functional, utilitarian garden furniture as cus-

tomers demand a lot more from their outside space," says Nicola Gidlow, outdoor living buyer for John Lewis.

"People want a recognisable style, rather than random pieces, and a space which is tailored to their lifestyle and matches their interior taste.

"Also, what's emerging strongly this season is a trend for creating settings which conjure a holiday, exotic atmosphere that probably reflects a trend to 'staycation'."

Rob Fairhurst, managing director at Outdoor Chic, says patios are fast becoming the new 'play areas' for adults.

"There's a strong trend for kitchen/family rooms opening out on to a terrace or garden so the area's highly visible from the home, and that means people require the setting to have the 'wow' factor and be a focal point.

"Let's face it, secretly most people want to turn the neigh-

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# perfect

hours green with envy with a sophisticated 'outdoor' room which is as comfortable as a lounge and enhances their property."

If you're wavering between wood and wire, or wrestling over rattan and wicker, make it simple by checking out perfect patio looks.

It's hardly surprising that as an island nation we never tire of coastal style, and it's sailed in again this season.

"Natural wood furniture, crisp blue and white fabrics for cushions and tablecloths and smart navy parasols have a timeless appeal and conjure an easy informality which is just right for relaxing," says Gidlow.

"No matter what the location, it's easy to mimic that by-the-sea atmosphere with a few seaside accessories, from blue hurricane lamps, to striped deckchairs and a barbecue bucket."

John Lewis's Garda hardwood range, with its curved retro lines, is so handsome it wouldn't be out of place indoors. Table, £499; bench, £350; and chair, £199.

You'll almost smell the sea breezes once you've added a Beach stripe deckchair, £34.99, and turquoise bucket barbecue, £14.99, both from Sainsbury's.

Turn up the heat in the garden with exotic florals, spicy hues and light-up furniture that makes a patio an irresistible entertaining space in the evening.

"Colour and technology are the big story for patios," says Rob Fairhurst. "Furniture which incorporates lighting is fun but also highly effective at glamorising even modest patios and adding an extra dimension to the outdoors at night."

If you're not on a budget, the Extremis Corral & Bronco High set, light-up table with stools (various colours available), is £3,260 from Outdoor Chic.

On the high street, both Bhs and Marks & Spencer offer impressive ranges.



GET THE LOOK: St Tropez armchair, £399 and sofa and table set, £999, from John Lewis.

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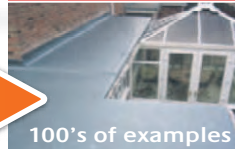
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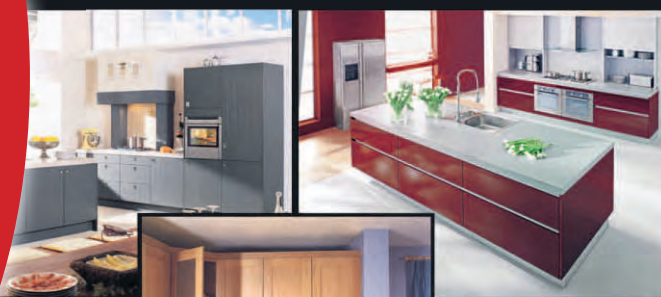
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