

part four

## The Perimeter



Buff tones of craborchard paving on this terrace in Charlotte, NC provide a comfortable seating area with fountain accent complete with seating wall for parties.

# Extensions of the Perimeter

CREATING A SEAMLESS VISIBLE FLOW



The perimeter consists of the outdoor spaces immediately adjacent to the house and within easy reach of interior rooms. Typically, you might access the perimeter from the kitchen, breakfast room, dining room, spa, library and/or living room. These user-friendly spaces invite you to step out of the house but not stray very far. Their purpose is to provide sheer enjoyment outdoors—conveniently. As extensions of the home, perimeter spaces sustain every sort of activity, from robust entertaining to retreating from the world for a precious moment or two.

Perimeters accommodate a wide spectrum of treatments. Something as simple as a grass lawn covered with a few large paving stones might be all that's needed for an understated, low-key perimeter space. However, most households can use the extra living space perimeters afford. This part of the master plan includes the creation of paved terraces, swimming pools, grill gardens or outdoor fireplaces, loggias, arbors, dining pavilions, kitchen and herb gardens and raised flower beds.

Outdoor living and recreation areas link together through paving or garden areas so that a series of perimeter spaces wrap around a substantial portion of the house. One functional area flows into the next, creating a tightly designed but flexible network of outdoor spaces accessed at different points

from several interior rooms. Alternately, specific perimeter spaces are designed as self-contained rooms. The same house might have a tiny walled courtyard off a spa, small terrace off the master bedroom, and a large, gracious entertainment terrace opening off the dining room. Each is a perimeter space, but all exist in separate worlds. Perimeter spaces expand the function of the nearest adjoining room or rooms.

Multifunctional by definition, the perimeter is one of the most flexible components of the Four-Part Master Plan. Take a small terrace, for example. In the early morning, a solitary person wanders out for a moment of calm before the day begins; that afternoon, the same space provides an informal spot for a working luncheon for a small group of colleagues; in the evening, it is transformed into the candlelit stage for an elegant dinner party with friends.

Perimeter spaces are places for people. How do you use and enjoy the outdoor areas adjoining your house? You might long for a tranquil and shady place to read, share a beverage with a partner or stare mindlessly into the garden (instead of into a television) when you get home from work. Do you entertain small grandchildren with toys spread around or take a shady nap? Perhaps, envision a small swimming pool near the house where refreshment on a hot summer afternoon lies only a

few feet away. Develop your wish list. Once the functions are defined, the design of a coherent perimeter begins to fall into place.

When developing the perimeter, keep these points in mind:

- The perimeter reads as an extension of the house; it is a seamless visual flow from the house. Attention to building materials and construction details is paramount.

- Begin with a wish list. Be sure that it covers everything you want your perimeter space to do for you at different times of the day. Be as specific as possible.

- Take a realistic look at your parameters. This includes all limitations and practical considerations, from budget to topography to the amount of space you have to work with.

- Keep in mind the principle of captured views. Windows reveal what is closest to the house. Give swimming pools, flower beds, fountains and terrace seating areas a chance to perform dual roles as functional spaces and as beautiful, visual compositions framed by windows and doors. Enjoy gardens from inside as well as outside the house. As much as possible, keep grills, play equipment and cars out of sight from interior rooms.



Tulips accent the walkway linkage to the Charlotte pavilion. This site specific design, with columns printed to match the house trim and a sturdy beam roof, handily seats twelve at a dinner party. Furniture was custom-made by Florentine Craftsmen for the owners.

## Terraces

There are many regional variations when it comes to perimeter spaces. For example, in the mountains, a few large stepping-stones set in grass and some rustic garden furniture around an outdoor grill can be all that it takes to create a much-loved outdoor living space that intrudes upon nature as little as possible.

**F**or most properties, paving is required to enable the perimeter to deliver on its potential as an outdoor living area. How much or how little is determined by the all-important perimeter wish list developed by the people who will use it, and the equally important budget.

The most important design treatment for adding paved surface and multifunctionality to the perimeter is a terrace. The terrace, or patio, is the paved area abutting the house no matter how modest or large the

space. A terrace might be elevated above the rest of the garden or flat on the ground.

Well-designed terraces conform to the unique combination of a house and its grounds. They are completely site-specific. Creating a terrace that endures the test of time requires technical expertise. If contemplating the addition of a terrace to your house, you need to be conversant with issues influencing size, shape and materials.

The terrace's intended function determines its shape. Will it surround a pool and need an area for seating or a

## The Anatomy of a Perimeter

1. Perimeter spaces expand the function of the nearest adjoining room or rooms.
2. A multipurpose, or linked, perimeter consists of a series of spaces that wrap around a substantial portion of the house.
3. A perimeter functions twenty-four hours a day—for a morning beverage, a working luncheon or an elegant dinner party.
4. How do you use and enjoy the outdoor areas adjoining your house? Define the functions of your perimeter.
5. Captured views seen from windows and doors relate the hub to the perimeter. Do your views work to extend the interior of the house effectively to the outside areas?



LEFT: Looking off an upper porch or deck into the surrounding land is a great way to gain a perspective of your linked perimeter spaces.

BELOW: This multipurpose perimeter in Sea Island, Georgia, links a small, grassed pet garden with a terrace paved with beige Crab Orchard cobblestones. Both are separated from the lap lane pool by a 36" planting border.



pavilion? If a grill will be on the terrace, it should have a place out of the traffic flow. A retreat for reading might need a shady outdoor alcove. A terrace that includes a fountain will need a special place for that feature. In addition, the scale of a terrace corresponds to the proportions of the house. There's a relationship between the height of the house and the width of the terrace. A three-story Georgian house needs a wider terrace than a one-story ranch.

When a terrace is at ground level, our favorite design treatment is to add a bow or semicircular shape. Strict squares and rectangles are confining and impose their form on the curves of nature. With a curved edge, the terrace reaches out into the garden and into nature; it also adds functional space since many people use round dining tables. In addition, the bow shape makes a graceful curve when a grass lawn abuts its edge.

Think of a terrace as an outdoor room with a carpet of paving. The choice of paving materials is subjective and should harmonize with the architecture, predominant materials and color of the house. Textures are a huge factor. The rough surface of a stucco house is complemented by the use of smooth, square-cut stones on a terrace. A gray or pink stucco house harmonizes beautifully with limestone with a contrasting edge of stone. From a dis-



ABOVE: In the Dowden garden, an unpaved perimeter is a wonderful place for a swing where a child can be away but still see or be seen.

LEFT: The paving, planting areas and lawn fit together like a hand and glove to provide a terrace that seems large but has minimal paving.

## Perimeter Functions

**P**erimeters, the living areas associated with the exterior of your house, work well for dining, reading, napping, sunning, cooking, swimming, playing, working alfresco, entertaining on a large or small scale and gardening. As a result, these areas are easily customized and may include an arbor, grill, pool, fountain, sculpture, pots, chairs and tables, benches, seating walls and swings.

# Dimensions of Terraces

**T**he Small Terrace: A cozy terrace for two includes a bistro table and two chairs with a minimum paved area of 6' x 6'. Alternately, off a dining room, a small terrace for two 48" round tables to seat four people measures 12' x 12'.

The Medium Terrace: This measures 12' x 18' and allows for versatility when entertaining. Two 60" round tables can each seat six to eight people.

The Large Terrace: An entertainment terrace of 24' x 36' comfortably accommodates three sixty-inch round tables seating eight to twelve guests each.



SMALL TERRACE



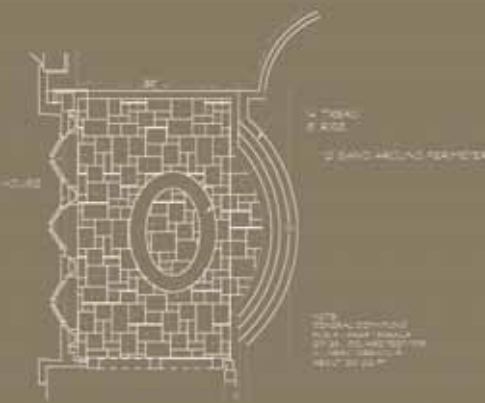
ABOVE RIGHT: A small terrace floored with Crab Orchard stone seats two comfortably.

LEFT: A medium-size terrace can serve many functions and has room for plantings as well as seating for a small group.



MEDIUM TERRACE

RIGHT: This large terrace is banded in brick with a bluestone field. Sixteen to twenty-four guests could be seated for dinner, or a stand-up party of that many could be accommodated.



LARGE TERRACE



Exquisite jointing and cutting of Texas cream shell stone, New York bluestone and gray Crab Orchard stone.

While there are no formulas for choosing and combining materials, consider the following:

- Brick and stucco houses respond to stone rather than brick as the predominate material on the terrace. Larger slabs of ashlar stone (square cut) honor the sleek lines of stucco. A gray or pink stucco house often looks good with a limestone field banded with beige Crab Orchard stone. We often add an accent note with limestone, such as a banding of Crab Orchard or gray cobblestone due to the high reflectivity of limestone. Even a small amount of another stone added to limestone adds depth. When limestone is used on its own, without any additional materials, it produces a very elegant, refined look.

- Wooden houses probably take the broadest range and combination of materials. Our office is a light green frame structure with every imaginable combination of materials used throughout the property. A limestone terrace is banded by tumbled granite cobbles. The front landing leads off curved steps that use a mixture of plum bluestone rectangles set next to buff Crab Orchard stone.

In a nutshell, the art of terrace design is to blend the materials, colors, scale and shape of the terrace with the dominant materials, colors, scale and architectural style of the house. The entire terrace composition needs to honor the contours and spirit of the landscape and natural setting. If it is done well, the terrace will simply look like it has always been there; it will just look right.

tance, the house and terrace read as a seamless whole.

The two basic paving materials for terraces are brick and stone. The predominant stone used to cover an area such as the floor of a terrace is the "field." The edging, or "banding," that finishes off the outer edges can be of the same material or a different one. A stone field banded in brick is a typical example. Banding lends sophistication and finish. The number of possible combinations of field and banding is extensive; this selection contributes greatly to establishing the terrace's character.

Contrasts in color and texture enliven any paved area, and this is especially true of a terrace. If you want a subtle, calm and quiet effect, keep to a monochromatic palette. Don't give the impression of stopping and starting; maintain one harmonious flow.

There are countless regional varieties of materials. They can be used singularly or in combination with one another or with brick:

- Pennsylvania bluestone. It is cut in squares, rectangles and irregular shapes in large and small sizes. The hue of this stone spans a full range of blue-toned colors from green to blue to warm plumb to slate gray to

a warm brownish gray. Because of the way it's quarried, stones of the same size in a given lot tend to be the same color.

- Crab Orchard stone (from the town of Crab Orchard, Tennessee). One type is a warm, peachy beige hue; it also comes in gray. When honed, this lovely stone resembles marble. Like bluestone, it is quarried in squares, rectangles and irregular shapes.

- Limestone. Compared to Pennsylvania bluestone and Crab Orchard stone, limestone has the palest and most homogenous hue, ranging from light gray to buff. It is quarried in squares, rectangles and custom shapes. Our favorite is Texas cream limestone, which creates a creamy, buff look. Indiana limestone, also an outstanding material, is white.

- Patina stone, made by Belgard with tumbled or chiseled edges, gives a warm look to normal manufactured brick.

- Old Charleston brick (4 1/2" x 9") is made to look old. It is hand-cast in oversized, sand-dusted "antique reproduction" wood molds to look like original clay bricks and edges are chipped. For some older properties that are architecturally important, this is a good alternative when antique bricks cannot be found.

# Masonry

**N**ames of types and shapes of stones are very specific. For instance, *flagstone* is a generic term for irregularly shaped, flat pieces of stone. It is not a type of stone but a style. Far better to call a spade a spade, so here are a few terms to set you up as a knowledgeable expert.

Stone that is cut into squares or rectangular shapes is called ashlar. One of the more formal ways of using ashlar is to lay the squares in a regular pattern that looks something like tiles.

Random ashlar refers to a paving style that combines square and rectangular stones in an irregular pattern that avoids the perfectly aligned look. This leads to a more informal pattern than the squares matching edge to edge and has many applications in irregularly shaped terraces.

Similarly, brick can be laid in a variety of patterns, such as herringbone, running bond, basket weave or even pinwheels—all affecting the mood of the final outcome.

We recommend butt joints or narrow mortar joints. This shows off the stone rather than the mortar between the stones and creates a smoother surface. Also, the color of mortar, usually either buff or gray, depends on the material adjacent. Normally, we prefer to make the mortar disappear as much as possible.

Natural stones that are set as “flags,” or stepping-stones, should be at least three inches thick to support the weight of foot traffic, especially when laid directly on the soil.



**LEFT:** Irregular Crab Orchard stone is finished with a buff mortar. Shades of buff and peachy beige were chosen to complement the warm tones of the house.

**RIGHT:** A brick field with irregular blue-stone edging is contained by a brick sailor hedge.



**FACING:** Limestone set in random ashlar pattern.

**ABOVE:** Jumbled Crab Orchard cobblestones provide a sailor edge to the lawn, set with stepping stones

of PN bluestone

**RIGHT:** A random ashlar, Pennsylvania bluestone terrace in variable tones with brick header banding.

