



Clockwise from top left: Adding “indoor” items like fibreglass Eames bucket chairs and table helps connect the outdoor room with the rest of the condo; Use lots of colour for year-round appeal; Beds at various heights add visual interest to the overall space, making it appear larger. Opposite page: The comfortable living room has space for all of Jane and Steven’s treasures, especially baby Jasper.



in the zone

When do two professional designers
decide to call in the professionals?

By **Laurel Wellman** Photographs by **Martin Tessler**

When two designers decide to buy an 840 square-foot, one-bedroom-plus-den condominium, you know they're going to make some smart choices about use of space. And when their outdoor area—a deck with a view that sweeps from Burnaby Mountain to the North Shore to nearby Main Street Heritage Hall—is actually bigger than their main living room, you can bet they'll turn it into a textbook example of how to maximize function too.

The condo's open-plan living room, dining room and kitchen reflect owners Jane and Steven Cox's taste for funky vintage finds and modern classics like Tolomeo lamps and a Coconut chair. But it also makes room for new baby Jasper and features family treasures such as watercolours by Steve's father, artist Michael Cox, and a framed silk fabric panel inherited from Jane's grandmother. "We like things that are very modern and slick mixed with things that are warm and vintage," explains Jane.

Still, deciding how to make the most of the outdoor living space was a job for which neither designer Jane nor Steven felt qualified, despite his architecture background and the fact that the two are founders of Vancouver design firm Cause + Affect. Instead, they created a space both modern and warm and hired certified landscape designer Kari Renaud of Lily Design to select the plants. "I'd probably plant things that would die," says Jane. "This way, I'm going to pay once for her expertise and do it right."



SPATIAL REASONING

The box you buy doesn't have to remain a box: here are some new ways to think outside it.

Create distinct areas Designers know that this makes a space appear larger.

Preserve unity Parts of the space can be hidden, but the whole should remain visible. For example: an area rug, placed so the underlying floor shows around its edges, creates a distinct area.

Get leggy Furniture that is elevated on legs lets flooring show, visually expanding the room. Glass and other see-through furniture materials lend the same effect.

Step up (or down) If your indoor or outdoor space allows for changes in level, it will create a separate area without blocking sightlines.

Keep paths clear Your space will feel smaller if you have to pick your way around furniture to get from one side of the room to the other.



Interflor rug tiles are cosy, colourful and “green”: the company will recycle and replace tiles as they wear. Opposite: Frosted glass lets light in, but keeps things private.



Above and right: A small space pulls double duty as work place and entertainment centre when lines are clean and simple.

The custom deck, built by Bret Clooten of Spaceform along with the planters, consists of three distinct zones: a barbecue and outdoor living area, a herb garden, and a vegetable garden, with a change of level helping to separate the first from the latter. Of course, as Jane points out, this isn't what most people do with a deck. "The typical deck solution is a table in the middle with planters around the edges," she says. Paradoxically, that treatment actually makes a space look smaller: "If you can see everything from one spot, it feels like one space."

A large planter designed for the western boundary features shrubs and vines chosen both for their colourful foliage and their scents: *Clematis armandii*, with its almond-perfumed white blossoms, will scale the wall while a Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum* 'Sango-Kaku') adds shapely branches and golden leaves. Sweet box (*Sarcococca ruscifolia*) will provide glossy evergreen leaves and sweet fragrance in midwinter.

The vegetable garden, which will occupy another raised planter, is another ambitious project, this one inspired by Jasper. "By the time he's six months old I want to be able to take the veggies out of the garden and purée them for him," says Jane. 🍷



EXPERT OPINIONS

Take it from us (or from professional designers like the Coxes): it will save you money and stress to get professional advice before launching into costly work.

Find a designer Study magazines, ask friends who are home-reno veterans for referrals, and visit show suites and designer show homes to collect names of designers whose work you admire.

Interview Build a short-list of designers and arrange consultations before hiring, to ensure your general ideas and working style are compatible.

Get a referral The Interior Designers Institute of British Columbia can supply a list of members, idibc.org; consult Interior Design Canada for pointers, interiordesigncanada.org.