



Fun in the Sun

Text by Kim Lilley

Images by Coastal Design, Domo, Mokum Textiles



We use our outdoor areas as another room – an extension of the home or superyacht – and tend to furnish them in much the same way. The garden and outdoor area often reflect the home's architecture; likewise our choice of outdoor furniture often reflects the style of indoor furnishings we have. My own small outdoor courtyard is testimony to this. I have an eclectic interior style and what I call "fusion gardening" outside. (The experts would probably call it "not knowing what she's doing".) When it came to deciding on outdoor furniture, I was very particular and wanted an aged look. I chose a marble mosaic top table and accompanying iron chairs – so heavy no one will want to help me move, but gosh it's stylish! In my opinion it was well worth the time and money spent as I get tons of enjoyment from my purchase.

A couple of decades ago the standard and most commonly purchased outdoor chair was probably the canvas director's chair, in a limited range of colours, with accompanying teak table. Rust red and bottle green seemed to be everywhere. Moving on a decade or so, we saw the explosion of the white or green plastic stackable chair. Sales must have truly astounded the inventor, who at this point is probably sitting under a palm tree sipping cocktails while tallying the zeros on their bank statement. Not exactly stimulating design, but you have to admit that this chair has had an affect on a global scale.

Now every taste and style is catered for. The Italian Villa on Lake Como can be easily replicated at the holiday home on the coast by simply choosing a large concrete banquet table with large plinth legs. Add a matching bench seat and a good deal of ageing and the look is starting to take shape. There really is no excuse not to have well-designed, quality outdoor furniture which suits your style and taste.

Tucked away on Waiheke Island in Auckland's Hauraki gulf is an innovative company called Coastal Design Co. Director Jo Eddington-Smith says she became frustrated at the lack of stylish, quality (and affordable) outdoor furniture on offer in New Zealand so decided to improve the situation by developing their own range. Coastal Design deals directly with the public through their website (www.coastaldesign.co.nz) with online purchasing. They are passionate

about their product and their Summer 07 range is testimony to this. The range consists of six impressive styles, but if this isn't enough and you have a specific style or design in mind Coastal Design can help. All their furniture is made using a unique natural look fibre made of durable polyethylene, which is also commonly referred to as synthetic rattan or PR rattan, hand-woven onto powder coated non-rust aluminum frames and specially designed with protectors against UV, oxidation, heat, humidity, mould and mildew. It is highly durable, resistant to splintering, cracking, peeling and corrosion. In short, it's built to last in our great outdoors. Their range goes from slick contemporary, such as the "Big Bay" corner suite with accompanying armchair and coffee table, to the classic and compact "Coco Swivel" which would be perfect on my small deck. Hmmmm, maybe that's my next purchase!

Marine specialists Geneico carry a range of very smart director's chairs and coffee tables that folds incredibly flat, and is therefore easily stowed. There are a variety of finishes: handmade light-weight aluminium, handmade teak, and a combination of teak and stainless steel. I have clients who have purchased this furniture specifically for their practicality and they continue to get enjoyment from their furniture year after year.

Even the good old bean bag has transformed itself into "cool" outdoor furniture.

Coast New Zealand locally manufactures a stylish outdoor bean bag called the Marine Bean, the ideal alternative to rigid outdoor furniture and generous in portion allowing for greater comfort. Made from Sunbrella fabric, the bean bags will withstand prolonged exposure to the sun, sea and sand. Plus they look just as smart on the deck at a holiday home or even brought inside for casual lounging.

Domo Collections' showroom displays an extensive range of outstanding high quality furniture. Domo represents world-class brands such as Dedon, Ligne Roset, Lusty's Lloyd Loom, Natura and Le Jardin. In particular, the Dedon range of furniture, designed for the outdoors, is exceedingly long lasting. Dedon employs three full-time designers that produce new collections every two years. Each piece is hand-woven and the comfort is found in the design.



The sturdy frames are made of powder-coated aluminium with each individual piece pressure tested for strength. The wickerwork consists of exclusively original Dedon fibre – a synthetic material developed in-house and produced in their factory in Lunesburg, Germany. Dedon fibre is tear proof, colourfast, weatherproof, resistant to UV light and suntan lotion, and is environmentally friendly while also tremendously versatile in colour and shape. All Dedon designs are registered and copyrighted worldwide and their products carry an unconditional warranty on material and workmanship on each piece. It's hard to choose a favourite piece from this range as there are a variety of stunning designs, but the "Leaf" has always caught my eye - a very clever design, molded to fit the body. The "Orbit" is another favourite with its woven round base and sunshade canopy ideal for a cosy afternoon read. Probably the most innovative design in my opinion has to be the "Obelisk" - practical and stylish, the seats stack to form a true work of art.

We are probably all familiar with the style and grace of Lusty's Lloyd Loom furniture. Although not recommended for outdoors it does work nicely in a setting such as a conservatory or loggia. Made using a technique invented by American Marshall Burns Lloyd in 1907 who invented a special loom that could weave twisted craft paper into a

woven fabric, partly reinforced with steel wire. The woven fibre furniture became popular worldwide and could be seen on ocean liners, in hotels and in the Royal boxes at Wimbledon, Henley and Twickenham.

An important component in outdoor furniture is the selection of an appropriate upholstery fabric. Sunbrella fabric is a trusted and well-known brand. Traditionally known for plain and striped fabric, it is solution-dyed to give excellent fade and weather resistance. For a considerable time there was an oblivious gap in the market, but this is now being filled with interesting patterns and designs as more and more local textile houses add outdoor fabrics to their ranges. For instance, Mokum Textiles carries the Meridian range of fabrics, "Aitutaki Outdoor", a collection of bold striped textiles with a coordinating plain weave. Aitutaki Outdoor is woven using the latest technology in solution-dyed acrylic and offers excellent fade-resistance in a soft canvas construction. The colour palette is eye-catchingly tropical with strong neutral shades that reflect its island inspiration.

Well enough said. I'm going out into my garden to enjoy my outdoor furniture while the last of the summer is still with us. Hopefully this has given you inspiration to go forth and furnish your outdoors in a style that reflects your personality and your lifestyle with quality pieces that will withstand the test of time. ■



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