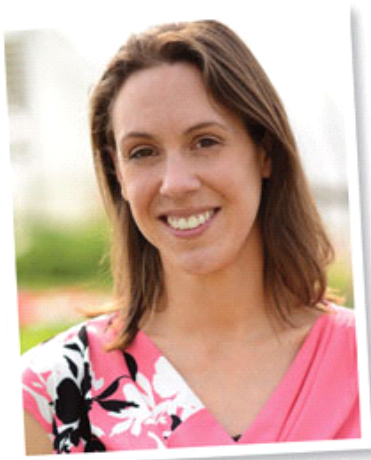


## Columns

5/31/2017

### Living Life Outdoors

Jennifer Polanz



*Jennifer Polanz*

Ah, the great outdoors. I've only recently appreciated the finer points of camping (and it's really more like glamping if we're being honest) via overnight campouts with my Girl Scout troop. There really is nothing like a good fire, some camp songs (sung at the top of their lungs, since our girls know of no other way) and a gooey s'more to finish off the night.

I'm certainly no aficionado of true camping like my colleague and outdoor enthusiast John Friel (you have to check out his column on page 46 about the MOAT to see what I mean. He would laugh at what I consider "camping").

What I'm getting at is "outside" means different things to different people. Outside for some could mean a hoppin' patio at the local eatery

complete with big screens and a well-stocked bar. For others, it means solitude in the woods contemplating the beautiful mystery that is Mother Nature. And then there's the in-between: our extension of our homes outdoors on patios, porches and garden hideaways. For me, it's a delightful porch (on the front of the house—I live in a neighborhood straight out of 1960) full of blooming plants and lush, green foliage mixed with bird (okay, squirrel) feeders, hummingbird feeders and a couple of chairs that someday soon will be rocking chairs.

Because that's also what outdoor spaces are about—dreaming. As John says in his column, outdoor spaces are less about need than about want. It's how HGTV and DIY network, along with countless magazines, make their dough. People love to dream about their outdoor spaces.

So how do you turn that dream into a reality? Well, that's what sites like Pinterest, Instagram and even Facebook do: they show how those dreams can become a reality. That's what garden retailers can do, too. If we make it accessible and show outdoor situations for different tastes, then we can convert that dream to a reality (and into cash). And they can't do it without the plants; that's what's so great about outdoor rooms. That's why we had one of our favorite freelancers, Katie Elzer-Peters, dive into plants for the porches and patios.

It's interesting; according to the National Association of Home Builders, in most parts of the country, more than half of new home builds included a patio (only the Mid-Atlantic fell below that at 46%). However, the statistics for decks being built with new homes is falling in most areas of the country. The NAHB noted, however, that contractors report patios and decks being added on after the home purchase, so it may be a case of builders leaving that up to the homeowner to add that rather expensive choice in a customized fashion after the fact.

I enlisted the help of Editor Chris Beytes, too, to get a good look at lighting options for retailers to include in their product mix. People love to illuminate their patios and porches with fun lighting and that trend isn't dying any time soon. Hear about that trend and what Chris saw at National Hardware Show this year.

And finally, on the topic of illumination, but of a different kind, read the essays from this year's *Green Profit/Dümmen Orange* Young Retailer nominees. Our judges have their work cut out for them again this year—it's going to be a tough choice!

Hopefully, you get a chance to read this magazine in an outdoor oasis of your choice—you deserve to live the dream, too. **GP**