

Key Measurements for Designing Your Perfect Patio

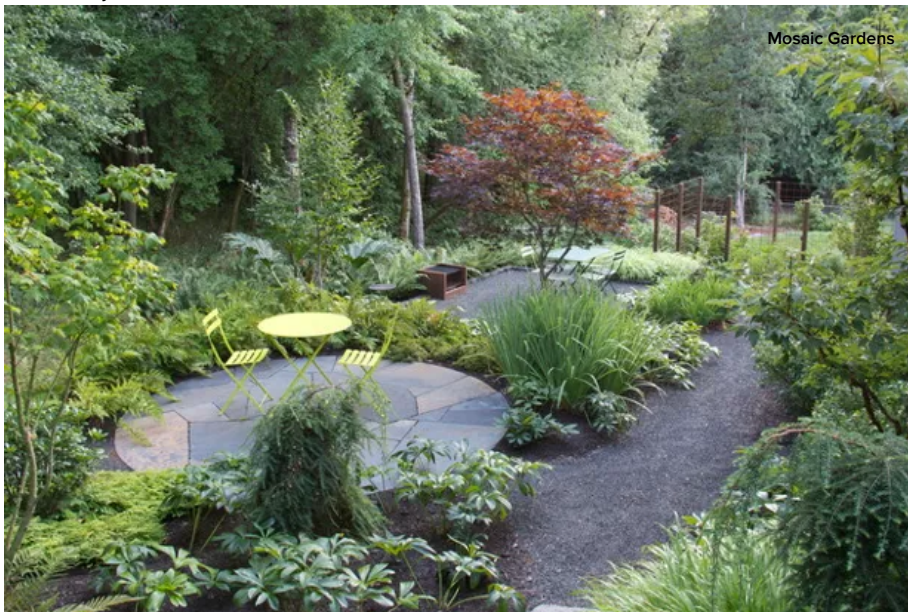
Get the right dimensions to fit your bistro table, dining area, backyard fire pit, grill or outdoor kitchen



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Houzz Contributor. Landscape designer, a former garden editor for Sunset Magazine...More >

If you're installing a new patio, chances are you have a good sense about how you'd like to use it. What you might be less clear on, however, is how large to make your new patio. Although personal preference and your existing site will affect your patio's size, some general sizing rules of thumb can help ensure you get a space that fits your needs and help prevent you from building (and spending) more than you need.



Why patio size matters. On the one hand, patios that are too small feel cramped, and chairs pushed back from a table can skid into garden beds. On the other hand, large patios can be pricey, feel less intimate and take up limited garden real estate. The key is to find the right balance of patio size for your needs and your space without overshooting too much.

Take a look at these general sizing guidelines for a patio designed for a bistro set, dining table for four to six people, fire pit, backyard grill or multiple use areas. Each guideline also includes the details of a patio on Houzz that hit it just right in terms of space planning.

Be sure to check with your local building department before planning a new patio, as permits, setback requirements and other regulations may affect its size and location.



Small Patio for a Bistro Set

Goal: Create a cozy spot for relaxing solo or with one or two other people

Approximate size: 6 to 10 feet by 8 to 12 feet (1.8 to 3 meters by 2.4 to 3.7 meters)

You don't need much space to support a small table and a couple of chairs. Most bistro tables range in width from 2 to 3 feet (0.6 to 0.9 meter), which will fit most patios. In general, you'll want to allow at least 2½ feet (0.8 meter) from the edge of a table to the end of a patio to allow space for a chair and circulation. Working backward from this rule, 6 by 8 feet (1.8 by 2.4 meters) is roughly the minimum patio size you'll want to comfortably fit a bistro set, although you can squeeze one onto a smaller patio.



Patio details: Secluded side yard

Location: Chicago

Dimensions: 10 by 12 feet (3 by 3.7 meters)

Materials: Mixed paving materials of stone, glass, tile and brick salvaged from other projects

Cost: Very low cost given that materials were salvaged

This cozy dining nook next to a home in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood feels intimate and inviting with a bistro table and chairs nestled under the leafy canopy of a redbud tree. "The extension of plants up on the walls and

overhead makes the space feel larger,” says architect Gary Beyerl of Burns + Beyerl Architects.

The roughly circular patio layout works well around a round bistro table and helps break up the corridor of the side yard. Beyerl constructed the patio using salvaged materials from other projects to create a mosaic-like floor of mixed stone, glass, tile and brick. Low stone walls protect surrounding garden beds from chairs that might be pushed back onto plantings in the narrow space.

Tip: You can pick up salvaged materials for paving and other construction materials, often at very reduced rates, from local salvage yards.



Medium-Size Patio for Outdoor Dining

Goal: Build an outdoor dining space for a group of four to six people

Approximate size: 10 to 16 feet (3 to 4.9 meters) long and wide

In general, both round and square tables for four can fit comfortably on patios that are at least 10 by 10 feet (3 by 3 meters). Round tables that seat six require at least 10½ by 10½ feet (3.2 by 3.2 meters), and ideally 12 by 12 feet (3.7 by 3.7 meters) or larger. Rectangular dining tables that seat six can fit comfortably on patios that are 10 by 12½ feet (3 by 3.8 meters).

Suk Design Group LLP



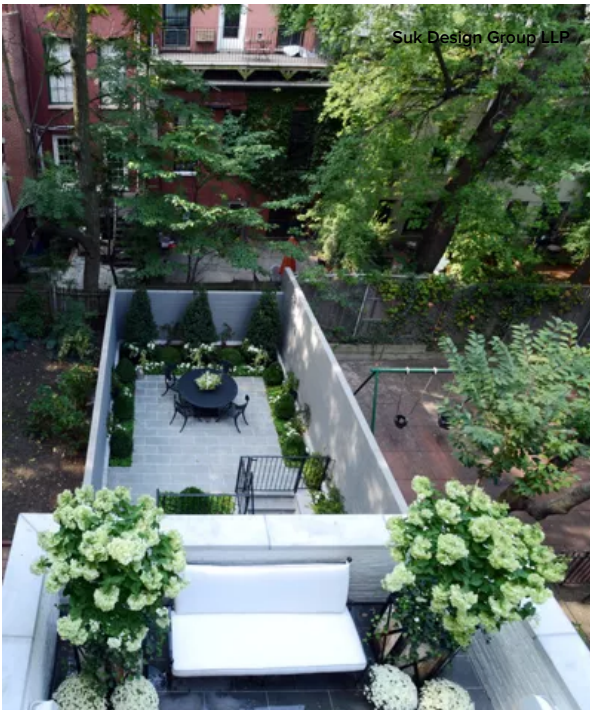
Patio details: Walled urban dining

Location: West Chelsea neighborhood of New York City

Dimensions: The backyard is about 16 by 20 feet (4.9 by 6.1 meters), including the planted areas; the patio is a little less than 12 by 16 feet (3.7 by 4.9 meters)

Material: Bluestone pavers

Cost: \$35 per square foot, including materials and installation



This bluestone patio, surrounded by slatted fencing for privacy and serene green and white plantings, looks like a relaxing spot for a private dinner.

To ensure that your patio will be large enough for an outdoor table, architect William Suk of Suk Design Group recommends leaving at least 2½ feet (0.8 meter) behind seating for circulation. “Make sure to prepare the subsurface properly for the pavers, and make sure the soil conditions are suitable for

plantings to thrive,” Suk adds.

Alderwood Landscape Architecture and Construction



Patio Around a Fire Pit

Goal: Design a lounge area for hosting a group around an outdoor fire pit

Approximate size: 15 to 20 feet (4.6 to 6.1 meters) long and wide or larger

Most fire pits, besides the small movable models, are 3 to 6 feet (0.9 meter to 1.8 meters) across. Whether you're using outdoor furniture or a built-in seating arrangement, you'll want to keep 2 to 2½ feet (0.6 to 0.8 meter) as a comfortable distance between the edge of the fire pit and the surrounding seats. If you leave room for chairs and 2½ feet (0.8 meter) of circulation behind the chairs, you need a patio that's at least about 15 by 15 feet (4.6 by 4.6 meters) to accommodate a fire pit and chairs. Larger fire pit models will require more space.

[Browse fire pits and bowls](#)



Patio details: Backyard gathering area

Location: Manhattan Beach, California

Dimensions: About 16 by 16 feet (4.9 by 4.9 meters)

Material: Decomposed granite

Cost: \$35 to \$50 per cubic yard for materials

In this Southern California backyard, a patio that's roughly 256 square feet (23.8 square meters) provides the floor for a smoke-free fire pit and a set of teak furniture.



Using movable chairs and a love seat, rather than a built-in furniture arrangement, keeps the seating flexible. Guests can pull their chairs up closer to the fire pit for extra warmth or push them back to cool off.

[See similar teak furniture on Houzz](#)



Julie McMahon and her husband, Greg Fontana, the owners of the Manhattan Beach home, say that their outdoor fire pit adds to the evening enjoyment of their backyard. "It's wonderful to open up the French doors on a beautiful night and light the fire pit," McMahon says. "It really draws us outside."

[Read more about this landscape renovation](#)

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Patio Under a Grill or Outdoor Kitchen

Goal: Make a space for cooking outside and hosting guests

Approximate size: 8 to 10 feet (2.4 to 3 meters) long and wide or larger, depending on outdoor kitchen arrangement

When determining the size of a patio for an outdoor kitchen, you'll need to consider the size of your outdoor grill or outdoor kitchen, as well as how many people you'd like to be able to host. Except for the smaller movable models, most outdoor grills start at about 2½ feet (0.8 meter) across and go up from there.

Elizabeth Przygoda-Montgomery of Boxhill Design recommends allowing at least 2 feet (0.6 meter), and ideally 3½ feet (1.1 meters), around the grill for circulation. At a minimum, a patio with a grill should be roughly 8 feet wide and 10 feet long (2.4 meters wide and 3 meters long), with the grill positioned at least 4 feet (1.2 meters) away from buildings.



Patio details: Stylish grilling and entertaining patio

Location: Tucson, Arizona

Dimensions: About 14 by 20 feet (4.3 by 6.1 meters)

Material: Poured concrete, stained and etched

Cost: Roughly \$12 per square foot, including materials and installation

At 280 square feet (26 square meters), this sleek poured concrete patio provides enough room for a grill station with bar seating and a dining table for six people, separated from the grill by a comfortable walkway that's 3 feet (0.9 meter) wide.

[See more midcentury modern-style patio furniture](#)



Przygoda-Montgomery, who designed this patio, recommends orienting the grill so that the griller looks into the patio, rather than away from it. “Give the person who is grilling a view,” she says. Orienting a grill toward the patio and garden, rather than positioning it against a wall, makes for a much more social experience for the person cooking. “This way, they can talk and cook and keep an eye on everything, plus be a part of the party.”

Przygoda-Montgomery also suggests adding at least 1½ to 2 feet (0.5 to 0.6 meter) on each side of the grill to rest pans and other cooking gear. You can also extend the countertop to create bar seating or a buffet area, if space and the budget allow.

Westover Landscape Design



Larger Patio for Multiple Uses

Goal: Create a patio big enough to have a spot for dining and a second use area, such as a lounge, outdoor grill or fire pit

Approximate size: 25 by 30 feet (7.6 by 9.1 meters) or larger

Patio details: Spacious bluestone terrace

Location: Tarrytown, New York

Dimensions: About 25 by 30 feet (7.6 by 9.1 meters)

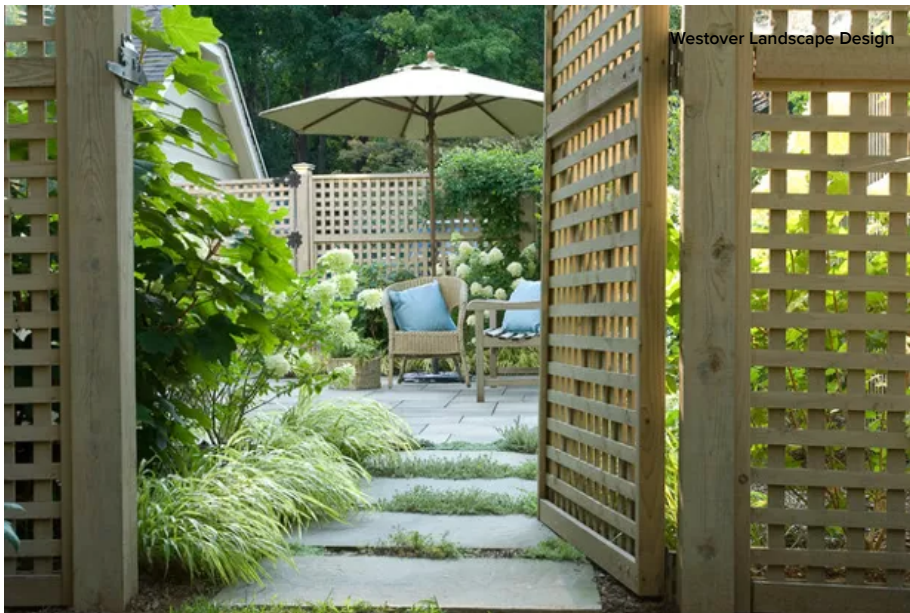
Material: Laser-cut bluestone pavers

Cost: About \$24 per square foot, including materials and installation

Landscape designer Robert Welsch of Westover Landscape Design designed this backyard to include a spacious bluestone patio with room for a dining table for four and a small seating area for two or three people. Although the patio is on the large side at 750 square feet (69.7 square meters), it still feels intimate, thanks to the pleasant feeling of enclosure from the lattice fences and soft border plantings.

Westover Landscape Design

In general, Welsch recommends budgeting 3 by 3 feet (0.9 by 0.9 meter) for each chair placed around an outdoor table. If you're mapping out your patio size around existing furniture (or a set you're planning on purchasing), Welsch recommends mocking up a quick paper model. "Space-plan the furniture placement ahead of time using graph paper and paper cutouts of each piece of furniture to move around the patio layout on paper," he says.



When selecting plants and materials to surround a patio, Welsch advises that you keep it simple and repeat them. Clients love intimate spaces that feel private and calm, he says. “Keep plant and materials selections simple for a clean, elegant and calming oasis.” Here, he used a tight planting palette of white hydrangeas, Japanese forest grass and climbing roses, plus a few potted flowers for seasonal color.

Julie Zeldin Landscape and Garden Design



Other sizing considerations:

- **Scale:** Make sure that your patio size fits with the scale of your home and garden. If you have a small- to medium-size lot, you may decide to go with a smaller patio that still suits your needs but leaves room for perimeter planting or a shade structure. For larger lots, you have more flexibility to choose patio size, but it can still make sense to not make it too big so that the patio visually works with other elements in the yard.
- **Location:** Where you choose to position your patio on the lot will also affect the patio size. Patios just off the house — a handy spot for bringing plates from the kitchen to an outdoor table or grill — tend to be a little bit larger than those set farther back in the garden. For patios set back into the garden, existing features such as plantings, pathways, retaining walls or other garden features may dictate their size.
- **Patio cover:** Adding some type of shade cover is often high on the list of priorities for a new patio. The type of cover can affect how you plan for patio size. Movable umbrellas and natural shade from a tree canopy do not take up much, if any, floor space for your patio and don't really need to be factored in to patio sizing. Conversely, if you'd like to add a wooden pergola or mounts for shade sails for your patio, you may need to budget more patio space to accommodate the posts or expand the shade structure's size.
- **Permeability:** When selecting your patio size and patio materials, keep in mind that some regions regulate the amount of permeable versus impermeable surfaces in residential yards. Check with your local building department on size regulations and which paving materials fall into either category. Often times, decomposed granite and gravel will qualify as permeable, while most cut stone, if finished without planting gaps between slabs, counts as impermeable.

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