



Far left Eight-person dining set, *Domaine & Demeure*, £2,500
Above Monaco modular collection, *Armadillo Sun*, from £445
Left Weber Summit Kamado S6 barbecue with unit, £1,888.95

Everything in the garden's lovely

We have all learnt to love our gardens and other outside spaces in the past year – and perhaps reinvented them as an extra living room. **Anthea Gerrie** highlights the new must-haves for outdoor lounging

Al fresco entertaining was once strictly a summer pursuit, but it's worth wrapping up warmly and beginning a bit earlier this year, as the winter of our discontent gives way to a spring of hope. For the social life we've missed so much during the pandemic is likely to re-start in the nation's private gardens.

No need to shiver, though – the winter entertaining space can be a place of warmth and cheer, thanks to weatherproof garden furniture made cosy with colourful throws, low- and hi-tech heating devices, new al fresco cooking appliances and lighting solutions to keep the party bright and safe.

While rain can always threaten to stop play, it no longer rules out a year-round seating set-up on the deck and beyond.

Good-quality teak dining furniture will endure the storm – though it may lose its handsome warm wood-grain hue and need refinishing – and teak is now being joined by other elegant solutions.

From *Domaine & Demeure*, which furnishes chateaux in the south of France, comes a water-resistant faux-rattan range, woven from resin fibres over an aluminium frame and designed to be left outside. There are armchairs for sitting around in after dinner and, better yet, modular lounge seating with durable outdoor cushions. Side tables, footstools and coffee tables complete this handsome entertaining kit in the French grey which complements greenery so well.

If you are supplementing an existing teak dining set with lounging furniture, all-fabric

solutions may be more successful than mixing wood with rattan.

Armadillo Sun offers a five-year weathering guarantee for its own range using water-resistant fabric which will dry quickly and not rot in the rain or fade from the sun. It's available not only in grey but also an ocean blue which blends in well with planting and navy for a striking but harmonious contrast.

For reconditioning teak, Peter Tyrrie (whose firm, *Barlow Tyrrie*, has made a new range with elegant, weather-resistant black cord seating), urges hope and a light touch: "With its high oil content, teak resists rotting and warping even when exposed to climatic extremes," he says. It does, however, take elbow grease, he admits, to remove dirt, moss and lichen with soapy



Above Assorted double-face lambswool throws, Johnstons of Elgin, £195 and £245
Right Lily Pond tent, Raj Tent Club, from £3,100

water before sanding — at which point the silver surface patina may disappear. “Resist any temptation to use strong chemicals, as this will damage the finish of the wood,” adds Tyrie.

Whatever the materials set out for dining and relaxing, do invest in throws in warm shades to add a pop of colour as well as keeping diners warm — three-figure lambswool is luxurious, but colourful cotton can be had for less than £15.

Warming the space as well as the guests is a prime consideration for the British garden at any time of year. Floor-standing patio heaters are an effective, if pricey solution, while outdoor wood-burning stoves and inexpensive fire baskets offering the primal appeal of visible flames are a more elemental and cost-effective alternative.

While many fire baskets come with grilles so they can double as barbecues, it’s hard to beat a Weber for charcoal-grilling. Its new Summit Kamado model comes with a special heat-regulating lid and the S6 version incorporates a gas-booster, steel worktop and basket, all trolley-mounted.

Perhaps the item that has really revolutionised outdoor entertaining is the affordable pizza oven. Lakeland reports sales of the handsome and easy-to-use Oony Fyra soaring by 166 per cent over two months this winter.

It’s worth buying the special pack which includes a hardback recipe book and step-by-step instructions as well as a starter bag of wood pellets; also consider the separate soft cover to keep the oven snug and dry when not in use.

Surprisingly versatile, the Ooni can also be used to bake salmon or sardines or produce wood-fired ciabatta and flatbreads to serve with barbecued meats.

On grey days, which may not feed solar lighting the rays they need to illuminate the night garden, wall lights attached to the house are a vital safety measure, to throw a long beam across the garden.

They can be supplemented with portable, battery-operated electric lanterns or glass-walled versions containing candles.

Finally, don’t forget to plan for cover at short notice when entertaining without an overhead awning.

Small marquees and huge umbrellas are two solutions for gathering beneath during a shower — and they will be solid investments when small spring gatherings give way to the longed-for summer of proper garden parties.

