

# BACK TO NATURE

It's time to strengthen the bond between interior and exterior designs.

*By Madison Duddy*

Open your sliding glass doors and dust off the patio furniture—indoor-outdoor living is finally back. Just as our backyards become an integral part of the home every spring, it's the cohesive design elements that create a necessary flow between interior and exterior spaces. "A seamless connection to our natural environment, both physically and visually, enhances our well-being on a daily basis," says Rina Okawa, director of interior design at ZEN Associates, Inc. ([zenassociates.com](http://zenassociates.com)). "We embrace the power of nature and the use of asymmetry, natural elements, simplicity and balance in our designs to create peaceful environments." Achieve this effortless flow before summer is in full swing thanks to a few tips from Okawa and Peter White, ZEN Associates' president and principal landscape architect.

## CREATE A STRONG VISUAL AND PHYSICAL CONNECTION

"Examine the indoor and outdoor space to frame the windows carefully. For some, maximizing the views of the landscape by extending windows all the way to the floor or incorporating an entire wall of windows enables a stronger connection. For others, it's better to have a smaller opening to frame a specific view. With advances in technology, we now have more options to create the visual connection while maintaining climate, visual control and comfort." —RO

## PROVIDE A DRAMATIC LANDSCAPE SETTING

"When you are in the interior space, the garden you are viewing should be beautiful, sculptural, seasonally interesting and very personal. The garden should be defined with layers of plant material and then punctuated with sculptural elements such as boulders, water features, specimen plants, lighting, and even furniture or built structures. With thoughtful design, the viewing garden should be an inviting, peaceful and memorable extension of the living space." —PW







**PROPER LIGHTING  
EXTENDS THE ENJOYMENT**

"First, you must understand how the natural lighting affects both spaces. Then you can enhance the landscape with additional lighting to highlight design elements and extend the enjoyment of the garden into the evening. When the garden is illuminated at night, it will eliminate the reflection on the interior glass within the home and dissolve the black wall and boundary between indoor and outdoor spaces." -PW



**EXTEND THE INTERIOR SPACE INTO THE LANDSCAPE**

"Creating a transition space which is an extension of the indoor space such as a patio, deck, porch or courtyard, not only helps to connect the spaces but creates more living space as well." -PW



**USE SIMILAR DESIGN  
ELEMENTS AND  
MATERIALS BOTH  
INSIDE AND OUT**

"The use of similar materials such as wood, stone and boulders both inside and out strengthens the connection between both spaces. When natural forms, color palettes and textures, or even an indoor garden that resonate with the outdoors, are brought into the interior as the design elements, it gives a calming, peaceful atmosphere." -RO