



Your transcript
**Roof Design for your
Outdoor Room or Alfresco**

PODCAST EPISODE #211



Undercover
Architect



Hello ...

I'M AMELIA LEE, THE ARCHITECT
BEHIND UNDERCOVER ARCHITECT

New home or renovation on the cards?

Chances are you're worried about what it will cost, if you can afford it, and how you'll avoid a budget blowout.

You're also probably nervous about how much time it will take, and how it's going to fit into your already busy life (#serialjuggler!).

And obviously you don't want to stuff it up, and end up with a home you wish you did differently. Who needs those regrets, hey?

I'm Amelia Lee, and I'm a wife, a mum and an award-winning architect with over 25 years industry experience in over 250 homes (including 3 renovations of our own homes).

I'm here to share the nitty gritty details of how to create a home that feels great, and that you feel great in. From understanding the cost of renovating and building, to insider know-how and step-by-step advice, Undercover Architect will help you get it right, simply and with confidence.

Whoever you're working with, and whatever your dreams, your location or your budget, consider Undercover Architect your secret ally.

Here's to helping you create the perfect home for you and your family ...

- Amelia, UA x

EPISODE #211

Hello! This is Episode #211, and in it, I'm going to be talking about the design of your outdoor entertaining area or alfresco. And specifically, I'll be sharing what to consider when it comes to your roof design over this area, so it doesn't diminish the feeling and functionality of the space, or the interior of the home.

This is a question I get a lot from homeowners. Often it's because they've lived in a home where their outdoor space, and how it was roofed, negatively impacted the way their home worked overall. And they don't want to make the same mistake in their current renovation or new build project.

For some locations, there can be a debate of whether you need or want to roof your outdoor entertaining or alfresco area, or if that roof needs to just be used at certain times of the year, and then disappear at others.

So, we're going to dive into all of this.

Plus, I'll be also talking about the various things to consider if you have an existing alfresco area that you want to enclose, to grow your home's space overall.

Now, let's dive in!

We have a few different names for our outdoor entertaining areas. They can be simply known as outdoor entertaining, or alfrescos, or decks, or verandahs, or outdoor rooms. And what they're called can depend on where you are, the design and style of the home you're building, and the materials you're using.

So, in this podcast episode, I'm going to refer to them as outdoor rooms - because I think that's actually a really apt way to describe that these spaces can actually be a whole other room or rooms added to your home design. And that when you get them right, they seriously enhance the experience of your home year-round.

Now, I've shared a lot of information on outdoor rooms in various ways on Undercover Architect, so I'm going to add all the links to those in the resources for this episode.

This includes a podcast episode in Season 2 on the key things to know when designing

an outdoor room. In it, I share the mistakes to avoid, and the specific things to know and include so you can get it right.

I've also got a hugely popular blog post about ten things you need to make your deck, alfresco or outdoor room great.

And there's a blog post on outdoor fireplaces, which many people are seeking to include in their outdoor room.

Of course, landscape design goes hand-in-hand with the design of your outdoor room, and there's a lot of helpful information on Undercover Architect to assist you with that too.

This episode is going to be specifically about what to consider in how you're roofing the outdoor room itself, so we can get into the nitty gritty of that.

And, I'll also talk about some specific things to consider if you're planning to enclose an existing outdoor room, because that's another question I get quite a lot too. So stay tuned to learn more about that later in this episode.

But first, let's jump into the roofing of the outdoor room, whether it's roofed at all, and the roofing design you'll choose.

How you design the roofing of your outdoor room will require you to understand some specific things that are unique to your site and the home you're building or renovating.

I'm going to run through these items one at a time, and give an explanation on why they can impact your decision making, and the design outcome for your outdoor room.

First, let's look at Climate.

Based on where you live, you'll have specific climatic conditions that will determine how your outdoor room needs to function, in order for it to be useful to your home and everyday life.

This can include how warm it is at different times of the day and year, as to how much of the year you can live and entertain outdoors.

It can also include how much rain you get, how frequent that rain is, and whether that rain is likely to occur at warmer times of the year when you want to be sitting, eating and

living outdoors in an outdoor room.

Make a decision about whether your outdoor room needs to provide shade only, or shade and rain protection. And if it does need rain protection, how much protection is required? Is it a torrential downpour like a tropical storm, or a light shower that happens now and then at the times of year you might be enjoying your outdoor room.

Next consideration is your orientation and what that means for your sun angles.

When you're considering how you'll roof your outdoor room, then it's essential to understand the sun angles and orientation of your outdoor room and the overall design of your home.

The movement of the sun over your property will vary at different times of the year and day. This will impact how the sun is shining into your outdoor room, and also into your home. And the sun's access will also be impacted by your neighbours, any vegetation and anything else that might block or allow that sunlight in.

I have a whole season of the podcast to help you understand more about designing for the movement of the sun, and what to know about the direction, or orientation your site and your home faces.

It's Season 1, and I call it "What Matters Most" because I believe that understanding about the movement of the sun, and designing a home to suit it specifically for your site, is the single most important thing you can do to make your home feel great, and function well. So, listen to those episodes if you haven't already.

Natural light is essential for your wellbeing in your home, so, you don't want to block all sunlight. Ideally you're allowing your home to access lovely natural sunlight, and then managing the heat of that sunlight at different times of the year, according to whether you're wanting to keep your home cool or warm.

Understanding the sun angles becomes critical in considering how you'll roof your outdoor room, because you'll need to determine how and where the roof needs to be so your outdoor room lets in light or provides shade in the way your climate and wishes dictate. And that it also doesn't compromise the natural light getting into your home.

Many make the mistake of adding an outdoor room to the whole rear of their home, without understanding orientation and sun angles, that then buries all their interior living spaces in shadow, keeping them cold and dark.

I also see people mistakenly assuming that a roofed outdoor room on the east or west of their home will provide shade to their home's interior in those mornings or afternoons that they're trying to manage. However, sun from the east and west is usually coming in quite horizontally, and when you review the sun angles, you'll most likely see it shine directly under the roof of your outdoor room, and into your home's interior.

Once you understand the sun angles, orientation and climate, and then make decisions about when you want to provide shade, and when you want to allow the sunlight in, then you can review whether you need vertical shade such as blinds, screens or landscaping. Or whether horizontal shade provided by a covered outdoor room will be beneficial.

Next, let's talk about how the roof itself will be created over the outdoor room

Because this may impact your options with what the roof is or can be, and how it then functions.

It can be really common, particularly in single storey, volume built homes, for the outdoor room roof to be part of the overall roof. You'll see in the floor plan, and this can especially happen with a hip and gable roof, that the design of the roof will extend to cover the outdoor room, and that simplifies the geometry of the overall roof and hip and gable design.

In its worst examples, the outdoor room will be this tiny little space on the corner of the floor plan, or a sliver on the side that's very narrow - but it all sits under the home's main roof.

In the best examples, this is deliberately done to have the outdoor room seem like an integrated part of the overall home design, but not in a way that compromises the functionality and experience of the outdoor room, or the home itself.

For two storey homes, an approach can be to create the roof over your outdoor room with the arrangement of the upper floor. If you're adding a second storey to an existing home, or building a two storey home, then using that upper floor to create the cover over the outdoor room can create cover for that space quite simply.

However, in both of these scenarios, your knowledge of sun angles will come into play.

And that's because the roof itself, and the ceiling height or soffit height of the outdoor room, will be dictated by the overall roof structure in the single storey option, or the floor

level of the upper floor in the two storey option.

And sometimes, depending on your home and its orientation, and the specific sun angles, you may find that that height is too low, or is completely cutting off direct sunlight into your home's interiors, rendering your living spaces dark and cold when you don't want them to be.

And this can be a common problem with outdoor rooms generally. That the roof over them does the job of shading the outdoor room, but denies the home's interior any access to direct natural light, or its warmth in the colder times of the year.

When you understand your sun angles, you can see the angle that the sun is coming in at, and then you can review if your outdoor room roof will completely cut off that angle, or if the angle of the sun still shines in beyond the extent of the roof itself.

In Season 1, I mention the Sunseeker 3D Augmented Reality App, which is a great app for getting information about the sun angles on any day of the year, in any location globally. It's a paid app, but from memory it's under \$10. When you put in your address, you'll be able to see the angle of the sun as it moves across your home in the app.

It's a bit tricky to explain this on an audio platform like a podcast, however, let's give it a shot.

Let's talk with a simple set of angles and measurements.

So, if your ground plan is at 0 degrees, and your roof structure is parallel to the ground, also at zero degrees.

When the sun is 90 degrees, it's directly overhead. Vertically, straight up, and that 90 degree angle is between the vertical line up to the sun directly overhead, and the horizontal plane of the ground at 0 degrees.

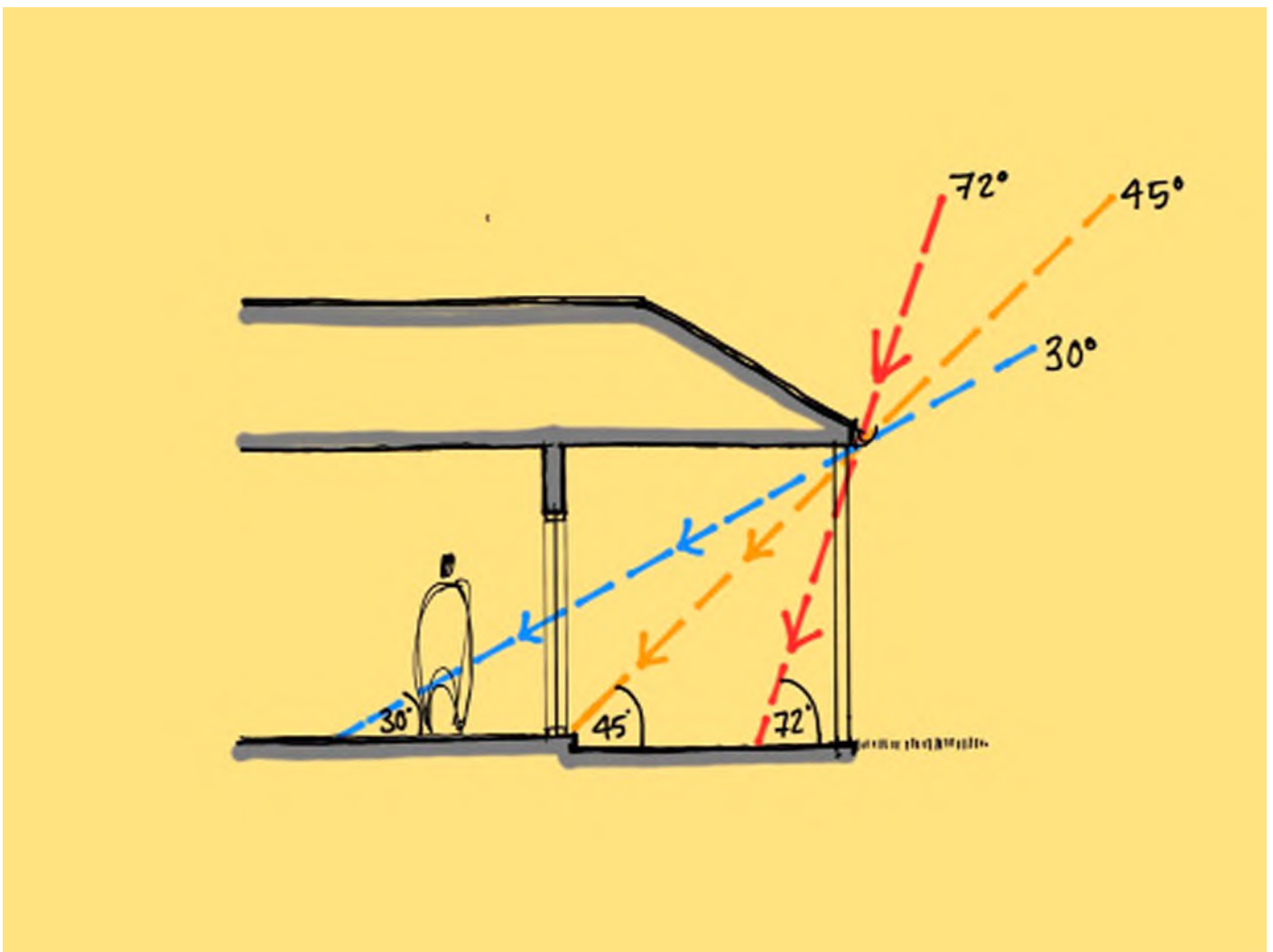
Now, let's think about it being at 45 degrees, sitting at an angle halfway between the horizontal ground plane and directly overhead. So, when the sun is at 45 degrees, the horizontal and the vertical will be equal.

So, if the outdoor room roof sat 3m above the ground over the outdoor room, then direct sunlight would be able to come 3m into that outdoor room. If you have an outdoor room sitting in front of your living space, and your outdoor room is deeper than 3m (which it

most likely will need to be to fit an outdoor dining table), then the direct sunlight at that time won't reach your living room.

If the sun is higher than 45% in the sky, then it will penetrate less than 3m into the outdoor room. If it's lower than 45%, then it will come further in than 3m. The exact distances will depend on the angle of the sun.

You can work this out manually, if you're so inclined, by using a protractor and ruler over sections that are to scale, and seeing where the sun angle gets cut off by your outdoor room's roof.



Sketch showing how sun angles can be used to identify what sun will reach into your alfresco and home's interior. (Refer to Sunseeker 3D Augmented reality app for sun angles on your site).

Or, if you're working with a designer or architect, ideally they work in three dimensional CAD software and can geolocate your home in the software, and run some sun studies for you so you can see exactly what the sun is doing across the course of the day and year.

Now, depending on your climatic conditions, you'll know how much direct sunlight you want, unfiltered into your outdoor room and home. In a lot of locations, you'll want to ensure that you're still getting direct sunlight (and its warmth) into your outdoor room and home's interior in the colder months, to warm those spaces up. However, there are some hotter parts of the world, such as Far North Queensland, where that shade is desired for most if not all of the year.

Remember that sunlight is good. It's the heat that comes with sunlight that needs to be managed based on your climate. So, don't fall for the trap, especially in these warmer climates, that you don't need to worry about the sun's movement at all. Still look to capture the sunlight based on its movement so you can enrich the feeling and functionality of your home's spaces - and then manage its heat as needed across the year.

So, what if the roof is blocking the sunlight you want to be getting into your outdoor room, and / or your home's interior?

Then, you'll need to consider the permanence of the roof, shape of the roof, the height of the roof and the materials that the roof is constructed from.

If the roof is being created by your home's upper floor, then you may not be able to do anything about it - so it's important to be examining sun angles and understanding this as you design the home. Once the second storey is built, there's not a lot you can do to change what it's doing to sunlight access into the lower floor and outdoor room.

If the roof is being created as part of your home's overall roof, then it will be permanently in place, but you may have some options with the materials you use, and select something that allows more light through, into the outdoor room and home.

So, let's look at what options are available if you can manipulate the materials of the outdoor room's roof.

To do this, one of the questions you'll need to ask yourself is, does the roof need to be solid, and provide shade and rain protection? Or is rain protection not a big priority?

This can be dependent on a few things.

A solid roof will obviously provide better rain protection than a pergola or battened roof, and if you live in a climate where you want to be sitting outside even when it's raining,

then a solid roof will be preferable.

However, if you live in a location where the weather is usually dry at the times of year you want to be sitting outside, or the rain you get when you're using your outdoor room are only light showers, then perhaps a solid roof isn't necessary for the functionality.

When I say solid roof, most people will be picturing a standard roof, with roofing material and a solid ceiling. That ceiling may be flat like the interior of your home, or it could be raked if you're constructing the outdoor room's roof separate to the home's roof, or if you're using rafters externally instead of trusses.

However, there are other ways to create the roof to an outdoor room in a solid way that provides rain protection and shade as well.

And these can usually be used whether your outdoor room's roof is part of your home's overall roof design, or a separately attached roof of its own design.

One option for the roof is to use a sandwich panel type material. An example of this is Bondor by Solarspan, but there are various products available like this. They're often used for coolroom construction, but I've also seen entire homes built from them, and they can have great insulative properties, and be super speedy to install.

I've used it in outdoor room roofs a few times, and I'll share an image in the resources for you to check out a renovation my husband and I did of our own home, where we used Bondor Solarspan to create the roof of the deck area.

A product like Bondor Solarspan has a metal roof profile on one side, which you can get in a custom orb corrugated profile, or a flatter pan style like Trimdeck for when your roof pitch is lower, and then on the underside, is flat, powder coated aluminium, and in between is a polystyrene core.

It comes in panels that are around 1m wide, and various thicknesses based on how far you want it to span. And because of this, you can often span it between two points, and not need intermediate structure. You'll see this in the image I share in the resources.



View through the outdoor room where you can see the underside of the Bondor roofing material. It is supported between the house and the outer deck edge. Also note the sunshade blinds on the outer edge of the deck.

[[Art Deco Queenslander Renovation](#) designed by Undercover Architect]



View of the deck with its roofed area. The Bondor was used to cover part of the deck and provide rain and shade protection over the outdoor dining.

[[Art Deco Queenslander Renovation](#) designed by Undercover Architect]

The deck was 3.5m width, and we supported the roof at the house, and then on the outdoor edge. The Bondor Solarspan was 50mm thick, and its ceiling, insulation and roof all in one. It went up super fast, and the minute it was up, it was immediately cooler underneath it, thanks to the insulation.

As a product, it can be more costly to purchase, however when you compare it to the labour and materials to build separate structure, roofing, insulation and ceiling, I've always found it to be cost comparative.

You can run conduit between the panels to then be able to surface mount lighting or ceiling fans. I've always preferred to uplight it with wall lights, and leave the underside of it undisrupted. And I love that its underside is aluminium, because you can literally hose down the underside when cleaning around the outside of the house.

Another option, and this is particularly useful if you find that the roof to your outdoor room is going to block too much sunlight to your home's interior, is to choose a roof material and structure that provides weather protection, but still allows some sunlight through.

An economical way to do this is to use a polycarbonate sheeting product as the roofing materials for your outdoor room. Many people have a bad association with polycarbonate, as that plastic corrugated, cheap and nasty material. However there are some other options available on the market these days that can look a lot better on your home.

You can still choose those corrugated polycarbonates, but now you can get them in various different thicknesses, and also different colours and tints, which will impact the level of sun protection and shade they'll provide.

If you want something a bit more sophisticated, you can choose a twinwall polycarbonate. That's two sheets of flat polycarbonate around a core, which is usually in a rib or honeycomb pattern. Having the double layer provides some insulative properties and can increase the sun and heat protection, and again, these are available in different colours and tints.

I've used this type of product in several projects. One of the things I do to improve the look of the polycarbonate is I'll batten the underside of the roof structure. So what I mean by this is:

- you'll have the rafters or trusses as the structure of the outdoor room's roof

- the polycarbonate goes on top as the roofing material
- and on the underside of the rafters or trusses, you'll add some closely spaced battens, which can be in timber or a metal

Doing this means that you'll get a lovely, patterned shade in your outdoor room.

The battens will also increase the amount of shade the outdoor room roof provides. And if there's any leaf litter or gunk sitting on the top of the polycarbonate roof, the battens can help conceal that view from the underside. Because polycarbonate has some transparency, you'll see anything that's on the top side of it: bird poo, leaf litter, etc.

Check out the image I've shared below and you'll see how the battening can totally deal with this, whilst still allowing filtered light to come through.

Of course, you can also do a combo of these things too - and you'll see that in the image I share.

Half the roof is done as solid with a ceiling, and the other half is done as battened with polycarbonate twinwall.

It enabled us to create different shaded experiences in the outdoor room, and also ensure the home's interior got natural light in the way we wanted.



View of the underside of the outdoor room roof showing battening to the underside.
Roof over this area is twin wall polycarbonate.

[[Anderson Home](#) designed by Undercover Architect, Photography by Villa Styling]



This battening and polycarbonate was done for the area of outdoor room in front of the kitchen.
In front of the living area, the outdoor room roof is solid.

[\[Anderson Home\]](#) designed by Undercover Architect, Photography by Villa Styling]

So, this polycarbonate roof option is a good one to consider when wanting to get more natural light into your outdoor room, and into the home's interior spaces as well.

Another way to ensure your outdoor room roof doesn't bury the interior of your home in darkness, is to raise the height of the outdoor room roof itself. If you recall me talking about sun angles, then depending on your orientation, raising the roof height can enable greater exposure for sunlight.

However, if you raise the roof too high, you may make the outdoor room unable to shade itself at the times of year you want it to. And, you may find that the higher roof exposes the outdoor room to driving rain, that means you'll get wet when sitting outside in a downpour.

Bringing a vertical element in on the outside face of the outdoor room may help with managing both sunlight issues and driving rain. You could look to include a battened

screen, or an external blind, to deal with those times you need extra shade and weather protection.

Another option to increasing the roof height of the outdoor room to get more sunlight into your home's interior, is to leave the roof where it is, and then introduce some high level glazing in the home's facade above the roof, where sunlight can shine in over the top of the roof.

For this to work, the ceiling height inside your home will need to be taller than the ceiling height outside of your outdoor room. I'll share an image in the resources so you can see what I'm referring to if you're having trouble picturing it. However, if you're going to use this option, be careful that the high level glazing is designed for orientation and shaded when it needs to be, so you don't bake your interiors.



You'll see here that the roof over the outdoor room fixes to the facade between the exterior glass doors and the clerestory or high level glazing over. This enables sunlight to shine in over the top of the outdoor room's roof.

[Laneway House by 9point9 Architects, Photography by Matthew Gianoulis Photography. [Source](#)]



You'll see here that the roof over the outdoor room fixes to the facade between the exterior glass doors and the clerestory or high level glazing over. This enables sunlight to shine in over the top of the outdoor room's roof.

[Laneway House by 9point9 Architects, Photography by Matthew Gianoulis Photography. [Source](#)]



The view here from the inside shows how the clerestory / high level glazing is bringing natural light into the kitchen and living areas, whilst the outdoor room is covered well.

[Laneway House by 9point9 Architects, Photography by Matthew Gianoulis Photography.]



Close up view of the outdoor room from outside. Note the ply used on the outdoor room ceiling. [Laneway House by 9point9 Architects, Photography by Matthew Gianoulis Photography. [Source](#)]

And of course, the design of your floor plan can also work to deal with how your outdoor room might change the sunlight access to your interiors. I know of some architects who always aim to bring the primary living area to the exterior edge of the home, and have the outdoor room adjacent to it, rather than directly outside it.

That way, the primary living space has an immediate connection with the outside that's not via the outdoor room, and it has direct access to natural light that's not buried in behind the outdoor room. Your ability to do this may depend on the width of your site and the overall design you're doing, but pay attention to this idea when you're looking at project inspiration and thinking about your home design, to see if it's something you want to do as well.

Of course, there are temporary options available in terms of motorised or manual foldable awnings, vergola type structures and a range of other options. These can be horizontal roofs that open and close within a fixed structure, or an awning type roof that folds out from the face of the building as required. With all of these, check costs, construction requirements, maintenance requirements, durability, electrical requirements and how it works with your local planning rules and any restrictions you might have.

And if rain protection is not a priority in your outdoor room, then that opens up a whole

world of possibilities in how you could cover your outdoor room.

You could do an open pergola with battening or metal or timber laser cut screens to provide the shade you need, and a lovely light pattern. There's so many different options available these days of off-the-shelf panels of battens, or laser cut metal and timber screens of all sorts of designs, from a simple perforation to ornate patterns, that can really change the aesthetic and feel when used well.

I remember being at a home show and seeing a pergola on display that had a laser cut powder coated metal screen with a leafy pattern as the roof. Looking up was like looking up into foliage, and it was casting the most lovely shadow on the ground.

Or you could do an open pergola that has a very simple structure, or even some steel cabling, that enables you to grow a deciduous vine over it, and that vine will give shade and light rain protection in Summer, and then drop its leaves in Winter to let the sunshine through.



This simple pergola structure with stainless steel cabling creates a structure to grow the deciduous vine over, and results in a leafy, lush cover in Summer, and an open one in Winter that sunlight can stream through.

[Jenny Edwards own home, from Lighthouse Architecture + Science. [Source](#)]

Glass as an outdoor room roof is also an option, but if it's used in residential, it's generally in very high end homes.

OK, so let's just summarise the specific things I've spoken about when considering how you'll roof your outdoor room.

I've talked about:

- Thinking about your climate and what it determines in terms of your outdoor room use, and what that will mean for roof design and type
- Then, understand your orientation and what that means for the sun angles at different times of the day and year
- Look at how the roof itself will be created over the outdoor room, and whether it will be part of your overall home's structure or overall roof, or if it will be a separately constructed element
- Will it have a flat ceiling or a raked one?
- And as part of that, think about whether the roof needs to be solid, and provide shade and rain protection, or if rain protection is not a big priority
- And then whether the roof will need to be permanently fixed in place, or a temporary, adjustable element.
- And if it's going to be a high space with a taller ceiling, will you need to do anything additional so it still provides shade and weather protection.

Now before I move onto talking about enclosing existing outdoor rooms, there's a few last things to remember:

- Don't punch the structural support of your outdoor room's roof through your existing roof. This often happens in renovations, when a new outdoor room roof is added as its own element, and the structural posts are run through the existing roof to connect. It can create waterproofing issues, and it's just not a great looking detail. Make the outdoor room roof a free standing structure that overlaps with your home's existing roof instead.
- If joining a new outdoor room roof to an existing roof, ensure the design and detailing sets up a good process for managing rainwater so you don't have water leaking through those connection points over internal areas in your home.
- Don't forget lighting. If your outdoor room's roof design doesn't allow for downlights, then an option can be to use wall lights to uplight the space.
- You can also consider a ceiling fan to promote ventilation. Your outdoor room is actually a great cooling zone for your home, where the shade and breezes can cool air before it travels into your home. Promoting ventilation in that outdoor room can be a great addition, especially in warmer and more humid climates.

OK, before we wrap up, let's quickly go through some of the things to consider when planning to enclose your existing alfresco or outdoor room.

Many people do this as a means of gaining extra interior living space in their home. And equally, homeowners can also design an outdoor room in a new home or renovation that can be closed in seasonally, so they can use it year round as a space, regardless of the weather or conditions outside.

I'll list out some things to consider when enclosing an existing outdoor room. This isn't an exhaustive list, but it'll give you some pointers to start with.

And, to be frank, a lot of the information I've previously mentioned also applies here. It's important to understand your orientation, the sun angles, and whether enclosing the space will darken the interior spaces behind it.

So, it's always worthwhile doing a check of the local planning rules to see if there are any specific conditions related to this. Some people do this as a quick fix to gain more space, but it can still trigger town planning approvals and a raft of other conditions for your existing home that could be more costly and time consuming than you realise.

The construction of the space will matter too. You may need to refinish the flooring, or add new flooring, for it to be suitable as an interior space, and the existing structure will impact whether that's possible. The same goes with the roof structure, and how it will work as an internal ceiling finish.

You'll also need to look at your local building regulations, because sometimes these outdoor rooms may have a structure that's separate to the house itself, or the slab was poured separately. And so, whatever that junction between the house and the outdoor room is construction-wise, may impact if you'll have issues with waterproofing, termite protection or other building regulation issues if it becomes an internal space.

Also check building regulations for requirements of sizes and layouts for rooms to be considered habitable. This can relate to the ceiling height, which needs to be a minimum of 2.4m. It can also relate to spaces having access to natural light and ventilation.

If by enclosing an outdoor room, you're going to take the interior space, which previously had an external wall on it, and close in those openings, you may be internalising that room with no access to natural light or ventilation. All those theatre spaces you see in the middle of home floor plans these days, with no windows in them, are generally not seen as habitable spaces. They're actually big store rooms.

You may be planning to create an open plan space between the enclosed outdoor room and the living space that previously opened out onto it. Still review whether you'll be able to access sufficient natural light and ventilation, otherwise you'll be creating a stuffy dark core in your home's floor plan.

Queenslander homes are notorious for this, as people over the years enclosed verandah spaces. So many of them have ended up with core areas that are dark and stuffy, surrounded by a perimeter of spaces, and don't work as liveable spaces.

I've done so many renovation designs on old Queenslanders that started because the owners were sick of having this dark core to their home, and wanted to work out how they could open it up to more light and breezes.

Oftentimes, you're either reinstating old verandah spaces to move where the external line of the house is. Or you're reconfiguring the floor plan to use those core spaces as stairs, storage areas or bathrooms, and then looking at adding skylights to get natural light and ventilation.

The last thing I'll mention is that the way the outdoor room connects with the ground around it may impact what's required to enclose it, so you can appropriately construct walls on the outer edge of the outdoor room, and have those walls meet building code for drainage and termite inspection if applicable.

OK, and that's it!

Now, I know that was a big episode, and also a super nitty gritty one.

However, these are questions I receive a lot, and particularly in Australia, when we have such a great climate in most locations, the design of your outdoor room becomes really critical to the functionality of your overall home. It's this beautiful space that sits between the interior of your home, and the landscape around it.

When done right, it can add such amazing benefits to your home year-round, and also be a way to save space in your home's floor plan too. I've known homeowners to invest in a fantastic outdoor room in lieu of creating a second living space inside their home, so they could get their budget to work overall, and keep their home compact in size.

And of course, part of making all of that work as well as it can, is getting the roof design right so it enhances that functionality. Don't leave it as an afterthought, or let it happen

unintentionally in the home's overall design process. Start paying attention to the roof of outdoor rooms you see in homes you like, and what they're doing to promote light, ventilation, and shade when needed, and weather protection if that's needed too.

You can be creative with the design of your outdoor room. I'm not talking about all the things you'll fit it out with. Outdoor rooms have really gone next level with the kitchens and bars and TVs and fireplaces and the other things people are including. That's not what I'm talking about.

What I'm talking about is how you define the space, and how it feels as a result.

Some of my favourite outdoor rooms I designed were on some riverfront homes in Brisbane, where we had some really tight constraints with the required setback from the river.

There was a riverwalk right in front of the homes, so pedestrians could look back up to the house and the outdoor room was on display, so privacy was an issue.

And the homes faced west to the river, so dealing with the hot afternoon sun whilst making the most of the view was part of the design approach.

For those outdoor rooms, we didn't have sufficient space with the setbacks to attach the roof structure to the home, because it was then considered part of the building and needed to meet the building setbacks to the river.

However, council conditions allowed for a roofed, free standing pavilion that would be considered a garden structure if we kept it under a certain height and area - and those dimensions were workable for a great outdoor dining area.

We sat it as a freestanding outdoor structure about 1m off the facade of the home, and then a small roof extended back to the house to overlap with a small projection from the home, so weather protection was provided between the two spaces.

Then, on the three exposed sides, we added motorised sun shading blinds, in a dark colour. The dark colour sunshade blinds are easier to see through than the light coloured ones, so the view could be maintained, and they also provide great sun protection. Motorised blinds have wind sensors installed on them, so they'll automatically raise when it gets to a certain wind level, to protect the blind.

The idea with this design outcome was that someone could drop all three blinds based on how much privacy and sun protection they needed - and in fact, they could drop them right to the ground, and have an external pavilion that was totally private. This means you can sit out with a coffee in your PJs, watch the world go by on the river, and not have your privacy compromised by someone on their walk with a dog.

And they work really well as these beautiful pavilion spaces that sit between the house's interior and the garden, and are a room all of their own.



Riverfront homes at Waterline Bulimba (I was Project Architect on this project when at Mirvac Design, Queensland). These images show the free-standing outdoor pavilions that create the covered area for the outdoor rooms in front of each of these homes. [\[Source\]](#)



Riverfront homes at Waterline Bulimba (I was Project Architect on this project when at Mirvac Design, Queensland). These images show the free-standing outdoor pavilions that create the covered area for the outdoor rooms in front of each of these homes. [\[Source\]](#)

This is what's possible when you really consider how you'll design your outdoor room, and not simply have it as an afterthought on the overall floor plan, or the leftover space at the edge or corner.

As with any other space in your home's design, the quality of space is really important - and that's achieved through the design decisions you make to help support the way the space will feel and function.

I hope you found all of that information really helpful, and enjoyed me going into so much detail on this topic. Please shoot me a message on Instagram DMs or over email at hello@undercoverarchitect.com, and let me know if it was helpful for you.

EXTRA RESOURCES

Podcast episode "How to create great outdoor living spaces, decks, alfresco areas and pools" >>> <https://undercoverarchitect.com/outdoor-living-area-swimming-pool/>

10 things you need to make your deck, alfresco or outdoor room great >>> <https://undercoverarchitect.com/10-things-to-make-your-deck-alfresco-or-outdoor-room-great/>

Outdoor Fireplaces: how to enjoy outdoor living year-round in your home >>> <https://undercoverarchitect.com/outdoor-fireplaces/>

Landscape design blog posts and podcasts >>> <https://undercoverarchitect.com/?s=landscape>

Season 1 podcast season "What Matters Most" >>> <https://undercoverarchitect.com/podcast/season-1/>

END OF TRANSCRIPT

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