

A Design Element  
with Purpose

# Pergolas

WRITER | KIM HYTINEN

From simple to sleek to techno-savvy, today's pergolas offer more options for customization than ever before. In their most basic form, these structures are often made of wood or vinyl and are designed to offer protection from the weather. They add value by maximizing outdoor space that is ideal for moonlit alfresco dining, daytime hammock-lounging, or entertaining guests anytime. Whether custom made or built from a kit, the styling options are limited only by budget.

Pergolas with louvered ceilings and retractable shades are increasingly popular. These structures can be freestanding or attached to a deck or building and are engineered to operate by wireless

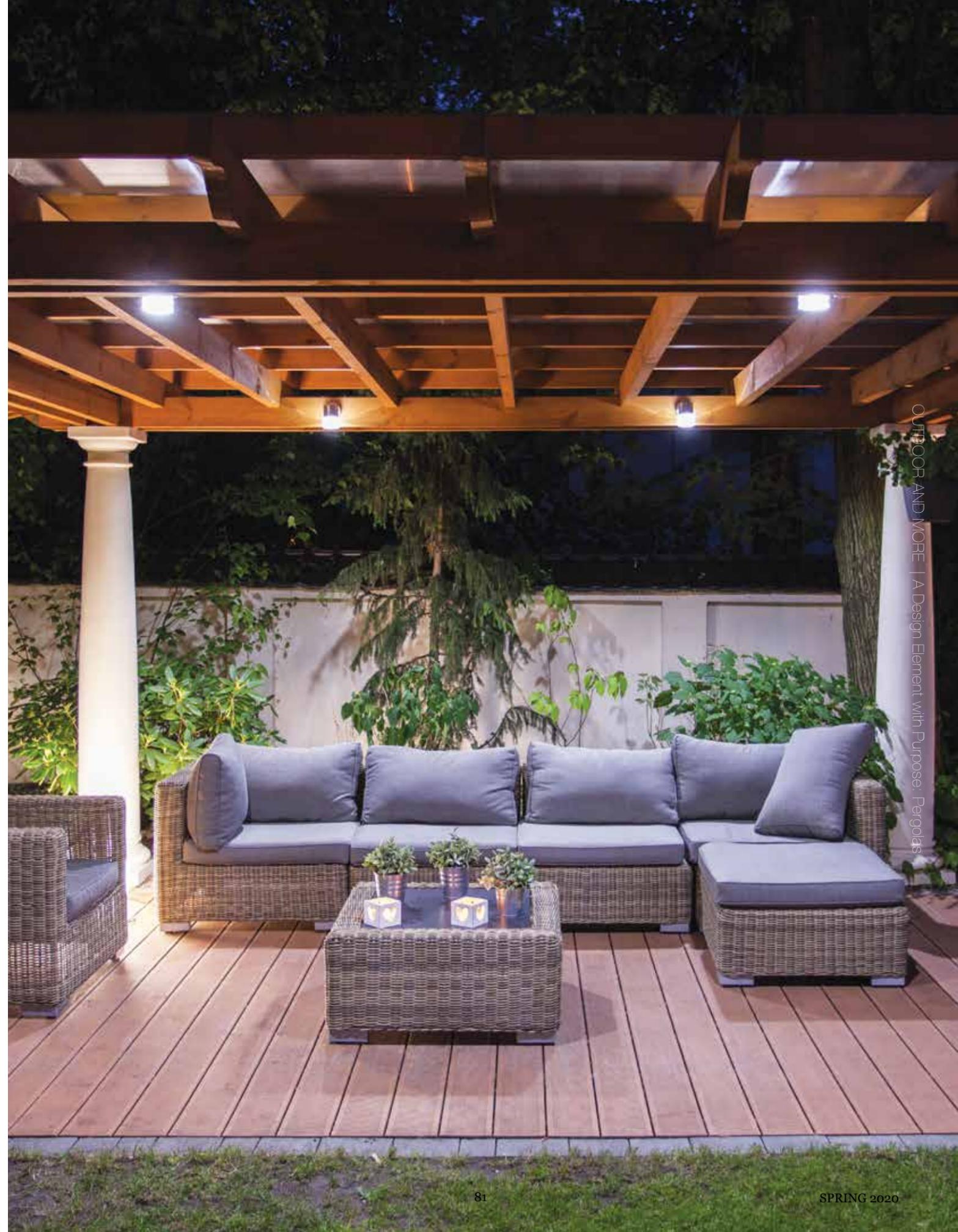
remote or cell phone. Some use patented smart technology to respond to weather changes automatically.

Carlton T. Ashbourne, a design solutions company based in Douglas, specializes in luxury pergolas featuring advanced technology, including an automated louvered roof with an internal gutter system, stunning architecture, and high-end finishes as well as installation. The company's founder, Robin Bauer, has more than 50 years' experience in innovation and design and was classically trained in England.

"The StruXure™ louvered roof pergola is designed and manufactured to provide shelter from



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the heat of the sun and the rain," according to Bauer. "And when incorporating insect, solar, and/or clear vinyl Phantom® retractable screening, the indoor living experience is extended outdoors."

A pergola need not be high end or expensive to add value to a property. For the crafty DIY enthusiast, pergola plans and kits are readily available. Even so, there are things to consider before buying material and beginning the project. Consider the landscape, the design of the structure, whether it will be freestanding or attached, the types of wood or other materials best for the region, your own construction know-how, and any permits that might be required.

Many professional landscaping and construction companies offer pergola building and design services. Going with a custom design gives you the freedom to create a truly unique pergola that fits your needs. Benefits of a prefab pergola are that the pieces are all cut and notched at the factory, and everything needed for construction can be shipped right to your location. Some common materials used for construction include cedarwood, vinyl, fiberglass, and pressure-treated wood, but there are other options. Kits are designed by experts in the field trained to create beautiful blueprints and instructions, making assembly fairly quick.

As with an arbor, a pergola can be dressed with vines, plants, and other accessories. A popular pergola trend is to decorate with a chandelier, ceiling fan, or drapes. Using fabric woven through the roof slats or along the open sides is another. Be creative and make the space work for you by choosing fun elements that bring you joy. □

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