

Outdoor Materials Buying Guide

Learn more about furniture materials, the benefits of each material, and how to care for the material itself.



The material used for your patio determines your furniture set's functionality, durability, and longevity. From chaise lounges to patio dining tables, outdoor furniture is designed to withstand the harsh elements of the outdoors. We take a look at the most common outdoor materials used in outdoor furniture to help you find what you need in order to create your own personal outdoor oasis.

Types of Outdoor Materials



Aluminum

Good to Know: Aluminum outdoor furniture simply refers to aluminum that has gone through the process of extrusion, which is when a piece of metal is forced through a machine that shapes it into a hollow round or square frame. Because of this process, aluminum can also be referred to as tubular or hollow aluminum. Aluminum is natural conductor of heat, so it is important to look for a powder-coating finish that will make it UV-resistant and rust-proof

Benefits: Aluminum is extremely lightweight making it easily portable. It is also very durable and resistant to corrosion and change in temperature making it a low maintenance product. Aluminum outdoor furniture is an affordable option and is available in many styles and colors.

Care: Wash any aluminum outdoor furniture with soapy water in order to remove dirt and debris. To protect the surface, we suggest using car wax and mineral oil.

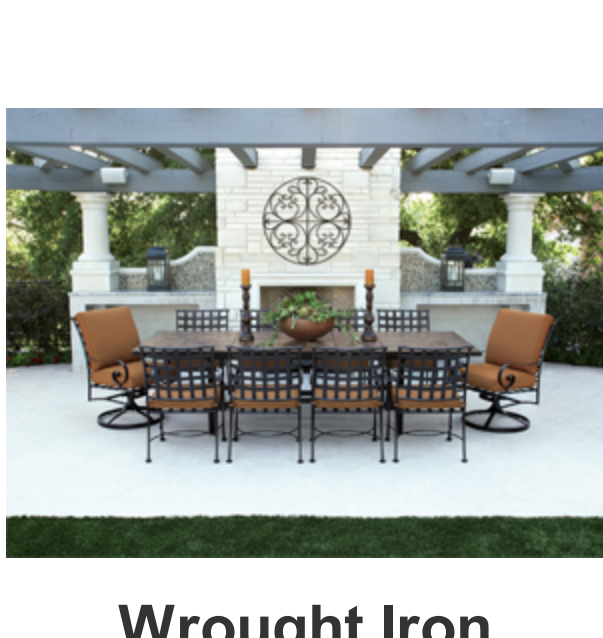


Cast Aluminum

Good to Know: Cast aluminum outdoor furniture is constructed from solid aluminum by casting metal from molds where molten metal is poured in order to create detailed forms. Since it is completely solid, it is considerably heavier than aluminum outdoor furniture. Cast aluminum furniture usually feature traditional design elements along with classic, ornate styles.

Benefits: Cast aluminum is extremely durable and rust resistant. It can usually last a minimum of 15 years. It is also very stable due to its weight, making this a smart option for people living in windy conditions.

Care: Wash any cast aluminum outdoor furniture with soapy water in order to remove dirt and debris before rinsing off with water.



Wrought Iron

Good to Know: Wrought iron is made up of low carbon iron that is mixed with fibrous slag inclusions. Some wrought iron furniture is a mix of cast iron, "machine wrought iron", and low carbon steel that is created into the frames, usually featuring intricate detailing. It is prone to rusting, but that can be prevented by using a powder coating finish that should help protect wrought iron from corrosion.

Benefits: Wrought iron is extremely strong, sturdy, and durable.

Care: Create a solution of equal parts water and milk dishwashing detergent. Using a damp cloth covered in the solution, clean any wrought iron outdoor furniture. Apply a rust protectant to prevent any rusting and touch up with paint for any chips and cracks.



Stainless and Galvanized Steel

Good to Know: Stainless and galvanized steel tend to be heavier than aluminum outdoor furniture but does not splinter. Recycled plastic is similar but has a different feel. Both are made from high-density polyethylene and can be made to resemble many types of material.

Benefits: Stainless and galvanized steel are sturdy and durable. It also tends to be more comfortable than furniture made from iron.

Care: Wash any stainless and galvanized steel outdoor furniture with soapy water to remove dirt and debris before rinsing off with water. A protective finish should be applied to non-stainless outdoor furniture in order to prevent rusting and corrosion.

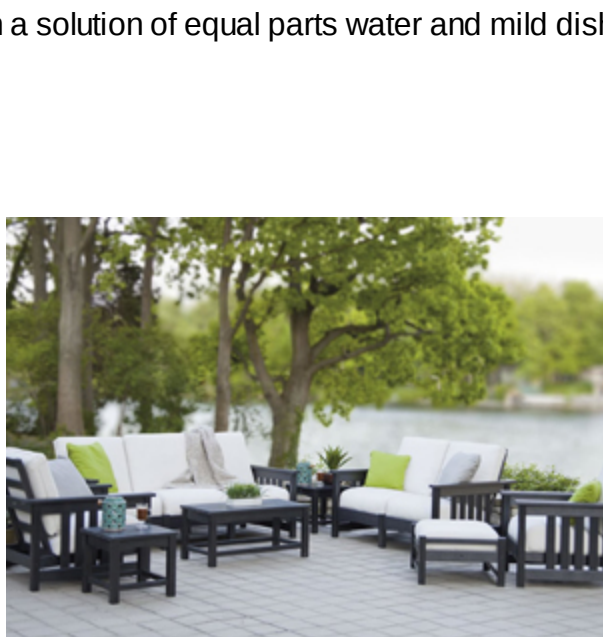


Wicker and Rattan

Good to Know: Wicker furniture is made from natural fibers. The advancement of natural looking synthetics and vinyl reproductions bring a "wicker look" that is able to withstand outdoor conditions. Rattan is very strong and durable, yet still flexible. Synthetic wicker is made from resin with dyes mixed in to ensure the color runs all the way through the material and is durable outdoors. The synthetic material is cut into thin strips, woven, and wrapped over a metal frame.

Benefits: Wicker and rattan are very lightweight and flexible. It also creates a rather comfortable piece of furniture and can be made in a range of colors.

Care: Use a cloth dampened in a solution of equal parts water and mild dishwashing detergent. Rinse off with regular water.



Recycled Plastic (MGP)

Good to Know: Marine grade polymer is similar in density and performance to natural wood, except that it does not splinter. Recycled plastic is similar but has a different feel. Both are made from high-density polyethylene and can be made to resemble many types of material.

Benefits: Recycled plastic and MGP are weather-, fade-, and rust resistance. They're also lightweight and low maintenance while still durable.

Care: Use cleaners that are meant to prevent mildew and rinse off with regular water.

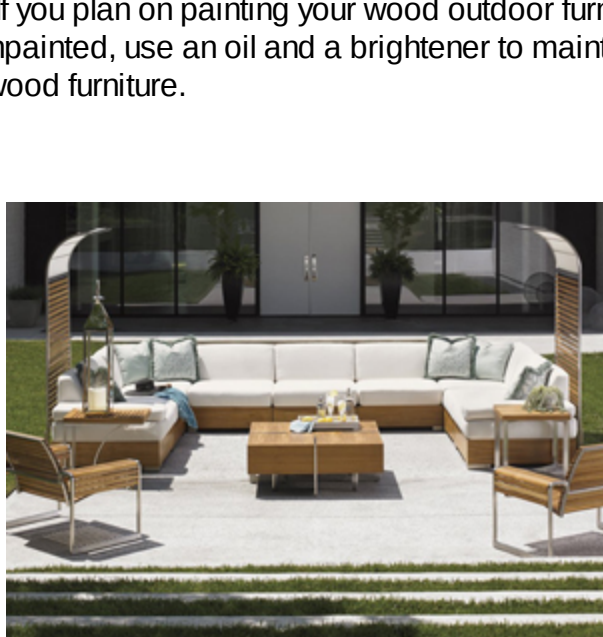


Natural Wood

Good to Know: Wood is one of the most common material for outdoor furniture and can be made from a variety of wood, including teak, cedar, oak, and eucalyptus. Wood that is left unsealed or unfinished will naturally age over time while exposed to the elements. The furniture pieces are made up of multiple pieces of wood that are attached to each other and can be carved into with different designs. Depending on the type of wood used, it can become an expensive option.

Benefits: Natural wood does not absorb heat like aluminum and steel, but it is still strong and sturdy. If cared for correctly, it can last many years.

Care: To keep wood furniture water-, insect, and mold resistant, use a sealant and preservative, otherwise the wood will just age naturally. If you plan on painting your wood outdoor furniture, use a paint containing UV filters to prevent any fading. If unpainted, use an oil and a brightener to maintain its natural appearance. Keep a lookout for splinters in wood furniture.



Teak

Good to Know: Teak is a dense-grained tropical hardwood that has an abundance of natural oil and rubber in its core. These protective oils give teak its natural weather-resistant and insect-repellant properties. Teak is an extremely durable wood that naturally requires little maintenance or care. Outdoor teak furniture is typically sold in one of two conditions: in its natural form, which carries a warm, golden-honey patina that is treated with teak oil. When left untreated, teak will age to a silver-gray tone, which some people prefer. Weather-resistant teak outdoor furniture is ideal for year-round use. Its high oil content levels contribute to its long-lasting nature. A well-made teak outdoor set will feature quality wood craftsmanship such as dowel joints and mortise-and-tenon joinery. If hardware is used instead, check that it is made from stainless steel or brass to prevent rust and corrosion which will wear out your set faster. Also check the thickness of the lumber used. Teak outdoor table legs should measure at least 1.5 inches on all sides (unless the pieces are sculpted). Teak outdoor furniture is typically more expensive than other materials.

Benefits: Naturally mold-, rot-, and insect-resistant, extremely durable, strong, natural attractive appearance

Care: Regular maintenance will help prevent discoloration on both treated and untreated teak wood.

- **To clean teak furniture-** Use a combination of mild soap, some bleach or vinegar, and water to prevent disinfest and clean teak outdoor furniture. Never use metal brushes, as the bristles may scratch and damage the wood's surface. Instead, use a soft plastic brush to scrub. Harder to clean stains will benefit from the use of teak cleaner. Always start with the mildest cleaning solution, then apply higher concentrations slowly. When washing teak furniture, start from the bottom and your way up to prevent streak marks from dripping water.

- **To oil teak furniture-** Some people prefer the golden color of teak furniture. Oiling teak furniture is a way to retain and enhance teak's natural golden-honey patina. Oiling is not a method for protecting wood. If you prefer the natural teak color, outdoor teak furniture should be oiled every 2-3 months, and be placed out of direct sunlight. Only oil teak furniture after it has been thoroughly cleaned. Cleaning removes natural oil build up, while applying a new layer of oil will restore its teak's natural character. Tung oil is preferred by most professionals, but Linseed oil may be used as well. Specialized teak oils use additives such as UV blockers and mildew retardants for enhanced protection. Apply teak oil with a paint brush. It should be applied with smooth, even strokes. Paint on the oil until the wood can no longer soak it in. Wipe up excess oil with a cloth dampened with mineral spirits. If oil drips onto painted wood or fiberglass, immediately wipe away to avoid staining.