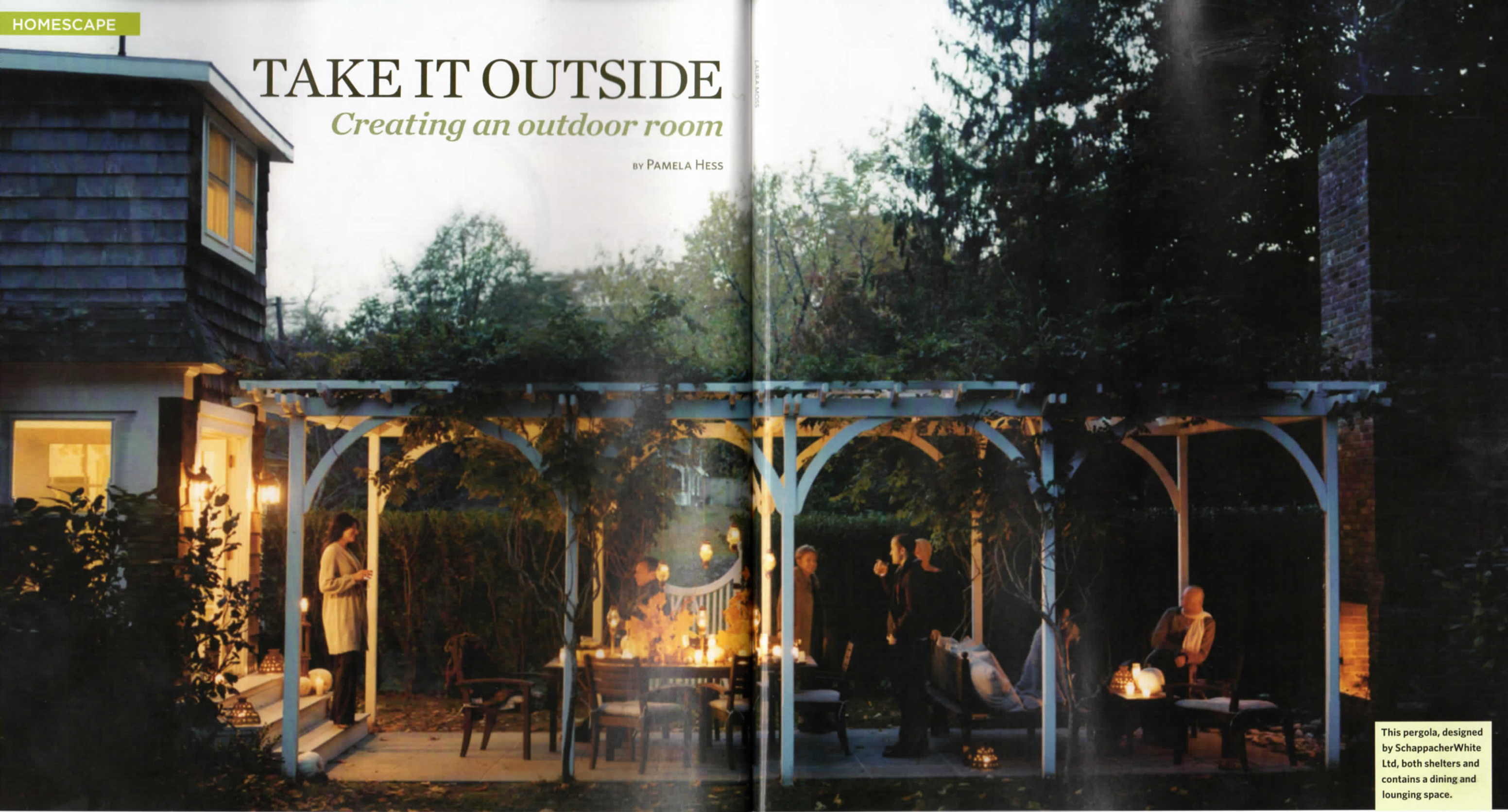


TAKE IT OUTSIDE

Creating an outdoor room

BY PAMELA HESS



This pergola, designed by SchappacherWhite Ltd, both shelters and contains a dining and lounging space.

Virginia is blessed both with four seasons and a relatively mild climate (especially last winter). That means the great outdoors can be as much a part of your home as those rooms contained within four walls.

But we're talking more than a garden with a bench or a deck or a patio. To make the most of your exterior space, create an outdoor room—one with walls (or the suggestion of them), furniture, and decorative accessories.

Outdoor rooms are "a great place for people to

gather, share food, stories, be alone, read, or take a nap," says architect Steve Schappacher of SchappacherWhite Ltd.

Private, shady, relaxed, and contained: these are the elements of an outdoor space that truly hold and inspire you.

The first step is selecting the site. Consider how you are going to use the room: if it will be primarily a space for dining al fresco, put it close to the house to make serving the meal easy.

Next, provide some sense of enclosure—be it private hedge, lattice, or borrowing an exterior wall

from the house. Walls not only provide privacy, they set the room apart from the rest of the yard.

“Instead of an expansive deck with no specific use areas, a desirable outdoor space should have some definition created by the surfacing and a sense of enclosure created by plantings, low walls, fencing or columns,” says Mark Trostle, Willowsford’s executive vice president for development and a landscape planner by training.

And those walls can serve more than one purpose: “At a dining table under a tree we have used a fence as a place to hang wine buckets,” says Schappacher.

You can even create a sense of enclosure by digging down—a step or two into a sunken garden is enough to make it feel separate from the rest of the landscape (but do think about drainage—you don’t want your room to be a pond during rainy season).

And what about the neighbors—can you hear and see them from your proposed site? If so, that might dictate using a water feature to soften the noise, and tall hedges or fences for privacy.

But don’t just plunk a pergola in the yard and call it a day. Make your outdoor room feel like a destination—an intentional place—by building an approach that draws people in.

“Create interesting pathways leading up to it. A curved walkway or a stepping stone path would be an invitation to continue,” says Bridget Rivas of Rivas Design & Landscape, LLC.

Like any room inside, you should carefully consider flooring. Think beyond pavers at the super store.

“Durable, natural surfaces like flagstones or granite cobbles evoke timelessness and connection to natural rhythms. Pea gravel and oyster shells crunch pleasantly underfoot, and seem historic and authentic,” says Trostle.

Lighting is essential. While candle lanterns are romantic, they can’t be depended upon when it’s windy. The experts agree that low-voltage electric lights are the way to go.

“Low voltage lighting is more efficient, cheaper to



LAURA MOSS

RESOURCES

Steve Schappacher
SchappacherWhite Ltd.
 74 Franklin Street #2
 New York NY 10013
 schappacherwhite.com
 212.279.1675

Jeff Minnich
Jeff Minnich Garden Design, Inc.
 Woodland Cottage
 2268 N. Upton
 St., Arlington, VA 22207-4043
 minnichgardendesign.com
 703.525.4540

Bridget Rivas
Rivas Design & Landscaping, LLC
 rivasdesignandlandscaping.com
 703.304.2025

Amanda Rillo, Designer
Busy Bee Homestore and Design Center
 www.busybeephilly.com
 267.809.0964