

START WITH SOME PLANNING

How do you see yourself using your outdoor space? Coffee in the morning with the papers. Apéritifs in the evenings. Lounging on weekends. Friends over for drinks and dinner. This will help you decide on dining or lounging or a mix and seating requirements. What are the colour schemes going on in your outdoor space? Plan to spend time to go and 'touch and feel' products and try to avoid buying online where you can't examine the quality.

Next up, what are the key material choices out there? There are several categories to consider, each one with their pros and cons. And each one fits particular spaces, decors and tastes. Some are low maintenance, others not. Lets go through the material options.

MATERIAL CHOICES & MAINTENANCE

TEAK

Designs available are typically very traditional. Teak will soon 'patina' (go greyish and not look very premium). Requires a lot of maintenance (and chemicals) to restore its colour. But it does fit some spaces e.g. a garden area in a black and white house.

Stainless steel is not stainless and will 'tea stain' in the Singapore climate with the humidity. The frame will get extremely hot in direct sunlight. Works well in a very modern environment and gives that industrial polished look. High maintenance though.

STAINLESS STEEL

MESH & ALUMINIUM

Mesh and powder coated aluminium give a light and airy feel. Designs are usually clean, modern and very rectilinear. The mesh is not so robust and difficult to replace outside a factory environment. Over time, mesh attracts mould in our humid climate and tends to sag. Fairly low maintenance.

Beware there is a lot of bad woven out there. But if you invest in well built woven, you will have a product that will give you many years of service. And good woven is beautiful. Combined with the choice of fibre colours you can customise elements to work with the décor in your outdoor space. A simple quality test is to turn the item over and look underneath at the finishing and frame. Clean or messy? Check the brand of synthetic rattan and also look how tight and well finished the weave is. The German brand Rehau is the world leader. The best woven is made by the Cebuano weavers in the Philippines. A little known secret.

SYNTHETIC RATTAN

CUSHIONS FABRICS & FOAM

Acrylic fabrics perform the best. They are not waterproof but highly water resistant and exceptionally stain resistant. Sunbrella is the world leader. Avoid polyester, it will fade and stain quickly. You want a high density foam (nothing to do with softness or firmness - it's the amount of actual 'foam' in the foam). Low density foam (less foam) will sag in a short period of time. Ask the question. There is also 'quick dry foam' available. But it's not quick dry and in our climate will develop black mould within a short period of time.

Check out the warranty period and what exactly it covers. A 1 year warranty is worthless. 2 years is not much better. Beware of the warranty trick of 'x' years on the rattan or mesh and 'y' years on the frame. If the rattan or mesh fails, the whole product fails and you have wasted your money. 3 years and you are getting into good territory. 5 years and you know the company stands behind their brand and their build quality - giving you peace of mind.

QUESTION THE WARRANTY

TIMELESS DESIGNS & MOTHER EARTH

Buying trendy designs that go out of fashion quickly or cheap products that we end up throwing away after a short period doesn't make sense and can cost money for disposal. Consider timeless designs and quality for many years of enjoyment. Good for Mother Earth too. Important.