



Screen Porches

The lure of a screen porch is different for everyone. Some like to start their day with coffee on the porch, others choose to end their hectic day there with a drink as they relax. Still others say the time they spend sitting in the screen porch is like being up north on vacation. The real lure seems to be that a screen porch provides a place to get away from it all and still enjoy the outdoors.

“With everyone’s busy schedule these days, people are looking for a place to relax and enjoy a few minutes together or alone. A screen porch offers that and more. Who can’t envision themselves sitting in a screen porch with a drink and watching the sunset?”

– Carol Samsa, Bayer Homes, Inc.

In Wisconsin, the time we have to enjoy the outdoors is limited, which is one of the many reasons fireplaces have been incorporated in screen porches. The benefit of no bugs and no mosquito spray makes the fireplace in the screen porch an amenity that many are drawn to.

While screen porches are all about relaxing and simplicity, they are not invulnerable to Wisconsin weather. Rain doesn’t fall from the sky in straight lines; it comes from all angles, driven by the wind. Windows provide a great barrier to the rain; screens don’t. That’s why it is imperative that your builder considers an efficient means of water removal if you don’t want standing water in the porch after a rainstorm. A floor drain is an often overlooked item that can make yesterday’s rainstorm a distant memory.

“Screen porches are a hybrid of indoor and outdoor space where you want to maintain protection from bugs and rain, but let as much fresh air and light into the space as possible.”

– Mark Henry, Lifestyle Homes of WI, LLC

Thanks to new technology, in homes with an exposed lower level, it is possible to include a screen room under a first floor deck. The key is utilizing a system that redirects water over a waterproof ceiling to the outside with a gutter system. When an exposure is available under a first floor screen porch, the footprint of the porch can be maximized with a fully enclosed weather proof storage area below for seasonal storage of patio furniture and lawn equipment. Talk to your builder about the many options available to you.

Today’s screen porches most often flow off of entertainment areas such as the kitchen or great room. Sometimes, private screen porches are also located off the master bedroom. While they are most often positioned at the rear or on the side of the home, the layout is dependent on the size of the lot, the natural views or features of the lot, and the relationship to adjacent homes. Challenges in screen porch design include not obstructing views from within the home to the outdoors, and making sure the screen porch doesn’t block sunlight from entering not only the main living area, but also rooms in exposed lower levels.

Builders have gone to great lengths to make sure today’s screen porches are everything homeowners are looking for and more. In fact, you can now enjoy three seasons of living in your screen porch. Some builders use windows with screens so you can bring the breeze in or keep it out by just opening and closing the window. Others offer full view glass panels or storm doors so you can pull out the screens and protect the room from the elements during colder weather or when you are expecting driving rain storms.

When planning for your screen porch it is also best to consider how it will function in Wisconsin winters. The screen porch makes a great walk-in freezer in the winter (especially this past one) or can serve as a place for you to store the extra food at Thanksgiving. Obviously, if you use the fireplace, you’ll want to move any frozen food to a more controlled environment. And speaking of fireplaces, some homeowners use a portion of the screen porch as a place to store firewood during the winter months.

Pat Seegers from Ascent Building Solutions, Carol Samsa from Bayer Homes, Inc., Mark Henry from Lifestyle Homes of WI, LLC, and Al Eckhart from Woodhaven Homes & Realty, Inc. shared their expertise for this article.



Look for these Unique Features
in Today's Screen Porches:

- Vaulted Wood Ceilings
- TV and Sound Systems
- Flat Screen TVs
- Fireplaces
- Tile or Stained Concrete Floors
- Electronically Controlled Screens
- Composite Tongue and Groove Decking
- Water Features
- Under Deck Drainage Systems
- Skylights
- Ceiling Fans
- Screens that Can Be Replaced with Glass
- Unique Lighting
- Computer Ports



Double Deck-er

Entertaining at home is more popular than ever. Many homeowners are choosing to install ceiling systems during the construction of their decks to waterproof the space below.



Opposite page: ceiling photo courtesy of Woodhaven Homes & Realty, Inc.

Photos above courtesy of (from top to bottom): Bayer Homes, Inc., Lifestyle Homes of WI, LLC, Joseph Douglas Homes, and Victory Homes of Wisconsin, Inc.

Photos at right courtesy of Woodhaven Homes & Realty, Inc.