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Outdoor living areas are growing in popularity throughout the United States. One of the most desired features in an outdoor living area is an outdoor fireplace. This article provides an overview of outdoor fireplace kits, and answers some of the most commonly asked questions about these products so that you can choose an outdoor fireplace solution that is right for you.

Contact Us:
FireRock Products, LLC
3620 Avenue C
Birmingham, AL 35064
Phone: (888) 876-1025
Web: www.firerock.us



An Introduction: Outdoor Fireplaces 101

What is an outdoor fireplace kit?

An outdoor fireplace kit is a set of manufactured pieces that are assembled in a pre-designed format to create the underlying structure of a fireplace. A good analogy is that an outdoor fireplace kit is to a fireplace what framing is to a house. The kits typically are made out of either metal or masonry. Masonry outdoor fireplace kits are appropriate for wood burning or gas logs, and will last for a long time. Metal box fireplaces are most appropriate for gas logs even though, at times, wood may also be able to be burned.. Since most people prefer wood burning fireplaces, this article will focus on masonry outdoor fireplace kits.

FireRock Fireplaces is a leading manufacturer of outdoor masonry fireplace and chimney systems.

What are the benefits of an outdoor fireplace kit?

The primary benefits of using a FireRock outdoor fireplace kit are **cost savings** and **improved performance**.

Cost Savings:

A masonry outdoor fireplace kit from FireRock provides the look, feel, and durability of a traditional brick and mortar fireplace built by a mason; however, a FireRock kit can be installed in a few days by anyone that is relatively handy. A traditional brick and mortar fireplace takes a few weeks to complete, and an experienced mason must perform the work. Accordingly, significant **cost savings** (typically 50-65%) are achieved by using a FireRock outdoor fireplace kit due to fewer labor hours performed by less skilled installers.

Improved Performance:

There is a fair amount of design technique and science that must be built into a fireplace for the smoke to go up the chimney, and for heat to be reflected in front of the firebox. Because our outdoor fireplace kits are pre-engineered, the design of the product incorporates extensive science and research to ensure **optimal performance**. Every traditional brick and mortar fireplace is a custom job, and the performance of the fireplace depends upon the knowledge and experience of the mason. While there are still some very good masons across the country, every custom built fireplace carries greater performance risk when compared to a FireRock kit.



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How long does it take to install a FireRock outdoor fireplace kit?

From start to finish, a complete outdoor fireplace can be installed in 2-4 days using an outdoor fireplace kit.

For more information about installation, visit FireRock's Installation FAQ page.

What is the approximate cost of an outdoor fireplace using an outdoor fireplace kit?

This depends upon a number of your choices from the decision outlined above. For example, a 42" fireplace veneered with natural stone, on a raised hearth, with woodboxes, and a split herringbone brick pattern will certainly cost more than a 30" firebox with a stucco finish and a running bond brick pattern. But, as a general rule of thumb, the installed cost should be \$3,000-\$6,000.

Let FireRock help you design an outdoor fireplace system that is right for you.

What decisions need to be made when building an outdoor fireplace?

Location of fireplace:

Always check and comply with your local building codes. That being said, an outdoor fireplace should be located at least 10 feet from your house or any other structures, including trees.

Support for fireplace:

It is recommended that an outdoor fireplace kit be constructed on a concrete pad (4'-6' thick), or a footer. It is not a good idea to construct a fireplace kit on the sand base that is placed under pavers.

Size of fireplace:

This primary factor to consider is how much space you have. Outdoor fireplace kits are sold in different sizes that refer to the width of the firebox opening. Typical sizes are 30", 36", 42", and 48". A good general rule of thumb is that a 30" would work in a smaller setting (for example, 100-150 square feet). A 36" or 42" would work in most settings, and a 48" would be appropriate in a very large outdoor living area.

Firebrick pattern/color:

The inside of the outdoor fireplace kit is lined with firebrick. The color and pattern selection, again, are a matter of preference by the homeowner. The most popular colors are buff and red, and the most popular patterns are running bond, herringbone and split herringbone. Running bond is the most popular and least expensive to install, while split herringbone is the most desired but more expensive due to the cuts and additional labor.

Veneer:

Outdoor fireplace kits are compatible with any veneer, so this becomes a matter of preference for the homeowner. The most commonly used veneers are natural stone, brick, manufactured stone, and stucco. One design tip is to select a veneer that matches your home's veneer.

Hearth:

Outdoor fireplaces can be constructed without a raised hearth (on ground level), or with a raised hearth (elevated ~16 inches; example pictured below). A raised hearth typically is made by stacking up two layers on concrete block. A raised hearth provides a place to sit, and also elevates the fireplace so that heat is reflected at a seating height level.

Additional Outdoor Living Features:

With the growing popularity of outdoor living, homeowners commonly are building entire outdoor living areas that incorporate cooking, grilling, and storage areas in addition to the fireplace. If these items are planned and built at the same time, a homeowner can experience great savings compared to building these items in phases. FireRock offers complete outdoor living packages for these purposes.

