Outdoor Rooms and Paths
If you live in a hospitable climate, a well-designed outdoor space can be the best “room” in your house. In nice weather you can use the outdoors for reading, recreation, dining, and cooking. Function and aesthetics should guide the design of exterior spaces. For wheelchair users, this means accessible transitions from inside to outside and accessible paths between outdoor locations.

Although today they are associated with power and wealth, outdoor rooms have humble origins. The first known example is a Sumerian domestic garden built in the 13th century B.C. In Pompeii, first-century Roman architects converted a traditional Etruscan rural home into a sophisticated townhouse for wealthy officials by adding an outdoor atrium. Roman atriums were located in the home’s center, with one side connected to a formal garden. Atriums often included decorative fountain basins that enhanced the space and collected rainwater for domestic use.