



SUMMER, PEARL STYLE



THOMAS ADKISSON

Looking around the Pearl District for assistance in throwing a superb summer party is like hollering “Help!” at a lifeguards’ convention. Help — that is, design help — comes from every direction.

The neighborhood is replete with designer expertise. Just about every little shop on every street has an authority on staff, someone who knows almost instinctively what it takes to transform a room into something inviting and special.

“The Pearl District offers more than 60 home-furnishings stores,” says Rence Russo, who owns two of them — **EastWest Fusion** and **EWf Modern**. “And each one is dedicated to helping customers fill their homes with discerning furnishings of fabulous design.”

In this case, the space to fill was outdoors, on a cozy Pearl District terrace with decidedly urban views. And the experts — Julie Johnson from **Lux Lighting** and Thomas Adkisson from **Dig Garden Shop** — gladly took up the challenge: Gather furniture and accessories and set the scene for a memorable alfresco meal on a balmy summer evening.

Adkisson was a professional landscape architect with a dozen years of experience before he bought Dig four years

ago. Johnson got hooked on lighting during her interior design studies and has been at it eight years, the past two and a half at Lux. Both say they enjoy infusing their work with an urban edginess that fits the character of the neighborhood they now call home.

“There is a Pearl edginess that is not afraid of using bold color and style,” Johnson says. “There is also a certain relaxed pleasure in mixing ethnic pieces or furniture from different eras and cultures. I think it is an outward reflection of the people who live and work in the Pearl. It’s a cultural, urban and easy-going mix.”

Outdoor living areas in the Pearl are usually surrounded by hard surfaces and sharp edges, Johnson says, so she and Adkisson concentrated first on softening the space. “Using fabrics, lighting, plants and pillows on the balcony makes it more comfortable and inviting,” she says.

Because space is often at a premium, “less is more,” Adkisson adds. “Plantings tend to be simpler and more formal, designed in harmony with the inherent rhythms of the architecture.”

Adkisson says he wasn’t bothered, for example, by the condo towers that loomed over the Park Place terrace that would host the summer soiree. “It wasn’t about the view as much as demarking the space,” he says. He placed a Bloodgood Japanese maple in a 30-inch cube planter (\$900 each, with tree) at either outside corner of the terrace. The trees anchored the corners while creating the borders of the event’s own private world.

For visual interest and to maintain attention within the party environment, he strategically placed a 7-foot-tall neon-orange metal sculpture by Hood River artist Chris Rench (\$800). Other touches from Dig — planters in bright orange, yellow and green (\$16), a pebble mat (\$23) and a half-moon balancing metal wine holder from Vietnam (\$32) — were added once the furniture was in place.

