



WHAT TYPE OF FIRE PIT SHOULD I INSTALL?

Fire pits have become a central element in high-end outdoor design, and for good reason: they bring people together, create warmth and ambiance, and enhance the usability of your backyard throughout the year. But with so many styles, fuel options, and materials to consider, how do you know which one is right for your space?

As landscape design-build experts, we've helped hundreds of homeowners design fire features that perfectly fit their home's aesthetic, outdoor lifestyle, and functional needs. In this guide, we'll walk you through the key decisions you need to make when choosing a fire pit—and show you stunning examples from both our own portfolio and top-tier manufacturers we trust and recommend.

Whether you're dreaming of a sleek modern fire bowl, a rustic stone pit, or a fully customized feature integrated into your patio layout, the right fire pit should feel like a natural extension of your home. It should complement your existing materials, match your lifestyle, and deliver the performance you expect—whether that's cozy evening ambiance or a bold, centerpiece flame. Let's break down everything you need to know to make the right choice, without the guesswork.

LOCATION: WHERE YOU PLACE THE FIRE PIT MATTERS

Years ago, we frequently designed fire features as backyard "destinations," tucking them into far corners of the yard. But time and experience have shown us that those fire pits often went unused.

Now, we highly recommend placing the fire pit close to the house—right off the main living area—where it can double as a coffee table, a heat source, and gathering space. Proximity encourages frequent use and makes it easy to entertain.



FEATURED: 'SIMPLICITY EDGE FIRE BOWL / FIRE TABLE 48" X15" 8" LIP IN MAHOGANY ACID COLOR
BY CONCRETE CREATIONS

This fire pit by Concrete Creations features the minimum 4-inch rim we recommend for a clean, balanced design. It also uses two-tone fire media—a darker center with lighter outer glass—to create contrast and enhance the flame's appearance.

FUEL SOURCE: NATURAL GAS VS. PROPANE



FEATURED: 'ABBAY BAY 51 INCH SQUARED CONCRETE NATURAL GAS FIRE PIT IN BROWN BY LAKEVIEW OUTDOOR DESIGNS: [BBQGUYS](#)

This is a common question: **We always recommend Natural Gas because it's a seamless, low-maintenance option, making it the ideal starting point for your fire pit planning.**

While propane works in certain situations (like when a gas line isn't available), it comes with drawbacks—bulky tanks, visible hoses, and regular trips to the store for refueling. Natural gas, on the other hand, is low-maintenance, hidden underground, and offers a clean, integrated look.

If you're building or remodeling, it's worth the effort and expense to install natural gas. Usually, a 3-quarter-inch line is all you need from the gas meter. if it's over

FUEL SOURCE: GAS PIPING AND BURNERS

When planning a gas fire pit, understanding the burner type, gas line sizing, and ignition system is essential for safety and performance. Here's what you need to know:

	Burner Type	Best For	Pros	Cons
	Round Burner Ring	Circular fire pits	Even flame, 360° heat distribution	Limited to circular layouts
	Star Burner	Large or dramatic fire effects	Taller flames, great visual effect	Higher gas use, more costly
	H-Burner	Rectangular or linear designs	Balanced flame lines, contemporary look	Less adaptable for odd shapes
	Straight Burner	Narrow or modern fire tables	Clean linear flame, minimalist aesthetic	Less heat coverage for groups

What’s in the Ignition Kit?



- Gas Valve Box – Controls gas flow and ignition via a turn knob and push-button igniter.
- Igniter & Thermocouple – Detects flame presence; shuts off gas if no flame.
- Flexible Gas Hoses – Connects to your gas source (natural gas or propane).
- Gas Thread Tape – Prevents leaks in threaded connections.

This setup is a manual ignition kit—simple, cost-effective, and ideal for residential builds.

Ignition Options: Manual vs. Automatic



Ignition Type	How It Works	When to Use
Manual Igniter (Long Lighter or Push Button)	You open the gas, then spark ignition manually	Best for budget-conscious builds or basic residential installations
Electronic Ignition	Automatic start via remote, wall switch, or app	Ideal for luxury builds, smart homes, or high-end outdoor kitchens

Safety Tip: Always keep fire media like lava rock or fire glass away from the igniter and thermocouple. Obstructing these can cause ignition failure or safety issues.

What Not to Do: Exposed Burners Are a Fire Pit Fail



Notice the burner is clearly visible in this image? That's exactly what you don't want.

This is a common error we see with some DIY or lower-end prefabricated fire pits: the burner is exposed above the media (lava rock or fire glass), and that's not just a design flaw—it's a performance and safety issue.

Why is this a problem?

- Aesthetically unappealing: The burner should be hidden beneath the top layer of media to create a clean, natural-looking flame bed.
- Safety risk: Exposed burners can be damaged by weather or bumped by people sitting nearby. It also increases the chance of hot spots and uneven flames.
- Poor flame distribution: Without proper media coverage, the flame pattern is erratic and may not radiate heat effectively.

Best Practice:

The fire media (lava rock, glass, or balls) should completely cover the burner, but not the igniter or thermocouple. You want the burner to be invisible but the flames to appear floating across the top layer.

If you're not sure how deep your media bed should be, or if you're using the right burner type for your pit's dimensions, we're here to guide you through it.

Fire Pit Without a Fire Pan Using Layered Media



This setup illustrates a fire pit without a fire pan, built directly into a stone enclosure using a layered media system. Lava rock is used as a base filler, providing height, heat dispersion, and support, while a layer of decorative fire glass sits on top for visual appeal.

This approach works well for both natural gas and propane systems and is a great suggestion when you're customizing a fire pit and want a clean look without a visible burner. It also improves safety and aesthetics by evenly distributing flame through the top layer.

Just be sure your gas line and burner are properly installed and that the ignition components remain clear of fire media for reliable operation.

Recommended BTU: Why 75,000 is the Sweet Spot

We recommend using a 75,000 BTU burner for a balanced flame—bright enough for atmosphere and strong enough for warmth, without wasting gas.

Can Your Gas Line Handle It?

Assuming:

- Natural gas
- 0.5 PSI residential pressure
- ¾-inch Schedule 40 black iron pipe

Pipe Length	BTU Capacity (Approx.)
10 feet	151,000 BTU/hr
20 feet	103,000 BTU/hr
30 feet	82,000 BTU/hr 
40 feet	73,000 BTU/hr 
50 feet	65,000 BTU/hr 

Safe Max Distance: 30–35 feet for a ¾-inch pipe delivering 75,000 BTUs.

Solutions for Longer Runs

- Upgrade to 1" gas pipe for higher capacity.
- Use a secondary regulator to increase pressure at the meter.
- If using CSST (flexible gas line), refer to its specific sizing chart.

STYLE & MATERIALS:

MATCH YOUR HOME'S VIBE

One of the biggest questions homeowners ask is, "How do I make sure my fire feature fits my space?" The key is to match your fire pit or fireplace with your home's architectural style and outdoor décor.

Modern homes pair well with sleek concrete or steel designs, think clean lines and neutral tones.

Rustic settings benefit from natural stone, corten steel, or reclaimed materials that add warmth and texture.

Coastal homes call for lighter finishes and open, airy designs that reflect the beachy vibe.

Mediterranean styles shine with cast stone, terracotta, or decorative tile elements.

Choose materials and colors that echo what's already in your space, whether it's your patio stone, furniture, or surrounding landscaping. A well-matched fire feature doesn't just look great, it feels like it truly belongs.

Need help deciding? We're happy to guide you to styles and vendors that align with your vision and home aesthetic.



CUSTOM VS. PREFABRICATED

A common question we get is: "Should I go custom or choose a prefabricated fire pit?" The answer depends on your goals, budget, and timeline.

Custom-built fire features are perfect when you want something one-of-a-kind that's designed to blend into your outdoor living space seamlessly. They allow you to match materials, shapes, and finishes with the rest of your landscape design, giving you complete creative control.

On the other hand, prefabricated fire pits are a great option if you're looking for a faster, cost-effective solution. Many top-tier brands like [Lumacast](#), [BBQGuys](#), and [Concrete Creations](#) offer high-quality, ready-to-install units in a range of styles that still deliver a polished, high-end look.

We offer both options because each client's needs are different. Whether you're designing from scratch or choosing a prefabricated unit, we'll help you find the right fit for your space, style, and schedule.



FUNCTIONAL DESIGN: HEIGHT, DISTANCE & USABILITY

The details matter. We've learned that 18" to 12" tall fire pits are ideal—they allow heat to radiate toward seated guests and serve as an ergonomic footrest.

We also recommend placing your fire pit no more than 14"–20" from seating, ensuring guests feel the warmth.

And the top rim? Go thick. A flat ledge at least 4 to 12 inches wide makes it sturdy enough to rest drinks or small plates, functional as well as beautiful.

Pro Tip: Buy a lid to cover the burner. When the fire's off, it becomes a usable coffee table.



FIRE MEDIA: LAVA ROCK, LAVA BALLS & GLASS

What goes on top of the burner matters just as much as the fire pit itself. Choose a media that enhances your design style:

Black lava rock – Natural, dramatic, and heat-retaining.



Lava balls – Sleek and sculptural for a modern edge.



✦ PHOTO BY [LUMACAST](#)

Fire glass – Perfect for contemporary spaces that need a touch of sparkle.



✦ FEATURED: [BBQGUYS SIGNATURE WESTFALEN 18-INCH SQUARE NATURAL CAMEROON](#) / [UBUY](#)

SAME FIRE PIT, TWO WAYS: COVERED AND UNCOVERED

This featured fire pit shows off the versatility of custom design. What you're seeing in these two images is the same unit—just with and without its custom-fitted cover.



Covered Fire Pit

This sleek fire pit comes with a marble-style solid cover. When the flame is off, the pit doubles as an elegant coffee table—perfect for hosting, setting drinks, or adding a center focal point to your patio. Ideal for clients who value multi-functional design and a clean, modern aesthetic.



Uncovered Fire Pit

When the cover comes off, this fire pit becomes a vibrant fire feature with shimmering fire glass media. The blue hues reflect beautifully in natural light, creating a stunning focal point and an instant gathering spot during cooler evenings.

Customization Note:

This dual-purpose fire pit showcases how our custom builds combine form and function, designed to suit your space, lifestyle, and design vision.

HOW DO I MAINTAIN A GAS FIRE PIT YEAR-ROUND?



Gas fire pits are low-maintenance by design, but a few seasonal habits can keep them in peak condition:

- Cover it when not in use: Use a solid, fitted cover to protect the burner and media from rain, leaves, and debris.
- Inspect the gas lines annually: Check for any signs of corrosion or leaks, especially before high-use seasons.
- Clean the burner ports: Use compressed air or a soft brush to clear soot or dust buildup.
- Keep fire media clear of the igniter: Make sure lava rock, fire glass, or lava balls aren't covering the spark igniter or thermocouple. Obstructed ignition components are one of the most common causes of malfunction.
- Wipe down the exterior: Whether concrete or metal, a gentle soap and water solution helps preserve the finish.

Bonus: Installing a shutoff valve gives you control and safety when not in use for extended periods.

HOW MUCH DOES A FIRE PIT COST?

We believe in being upfront about costs because it's one of the most important questions homeowners ask.

Prefab Fire Pits:

Expect to spend between \$250 (<https://www.wayfair.com/>) and \$10,000 (<https://rh.com/>), depending on the size, materials, design, and manufacturer.

Custom Fire Pits:

Typically range from \$5,000 to \$15,000+, depending on complexity, finishes, and integration with surrounding hardscape.

Gas Line Installation: Costs \$500 to \$2500, depending on the distance

Installation Costs:

Labor varies based on factors like site access, gas line extension, grading, and surrounding materials. We provide a detailed quote during your consultation so you know exactly what to expect.

Our goal is to help you invest wisely in a fire feature that fits your lifestyle, complements your home, and adds long-term value to your outdoor space.

Ready to Design Your Dream Fire Feature?

We're here to help you bring your vision to life—from style selection to installation. [Browse our gallery](#) of past projects and explore some of the products we trust from the vendors listed above.

Want help deciding what fire feature is right for your space? Call **310.853.0332** or [schedule a design consultation now](#).