

Heated debate awaits patio gatherings

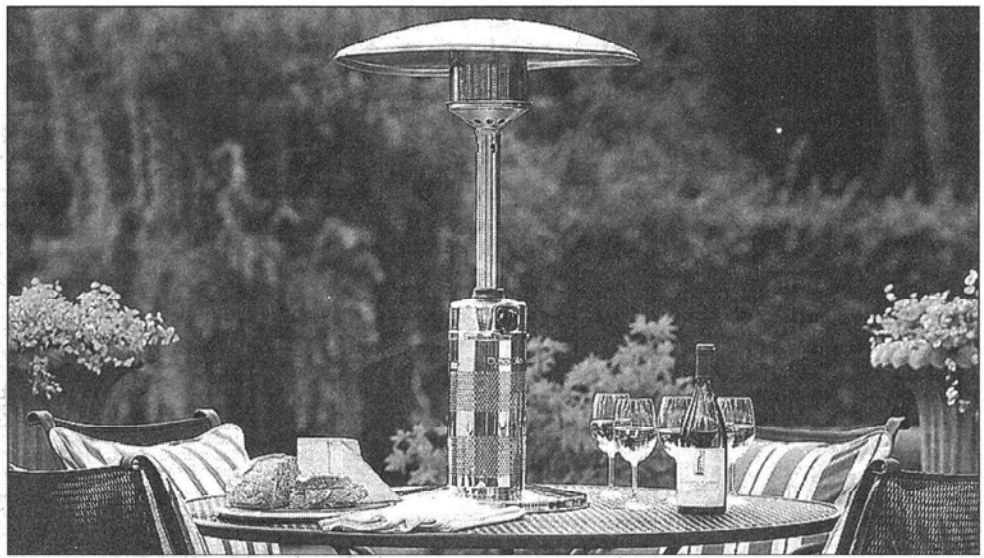
By Jeani Read
Staff Reporter

It's a new trend all over — heating the outdoors. And since global warming just seems to make the weather more unpredictable, it can only get hotter.

Patio heaters were first used by restaurants, but the growing garden-decorating trend has fuelled their popularity with homeowners, making them THE garden accessory of the year. Not only do they stretch the outdoor season out indefinitely, they can deal with quick dips in temperature with style.

We researched locally for the availability of gas and propane patio heaters and their funkier cousin, the outdoor fireplace (check with your municipality for by-laws regarding outdoor fires.) Some heaters are tabletop, some freestanding, some to be mounted on the walls of the outdoor area. Prices range, as usual, according to quality and design.

Restoration Hardware's stainless al fres-



Restoration Hardware's tabletop heater will take the chill off those cool nights.

co propane deck and patio heater is a tabletop dome with adjustable heat, \$205, while at **Canadian Tire** \$169 will buy you a green-painted stainless model with bare stainless base. For \$174.99, you can get a porcelain enamel-finished outdoor fireplace, which is now on sale for \$139.99. At the other end of the spectrum, **Vancouver Gas Fireplaces** has eight-foot-plus state-of-the-art propane or gas heaters in stainless or a variety of colours with three-foot reflectors for \$1,000 to \$1,350, and oblong mounted models for \$1,170 to \$1,400. At

Home Depot, eight-foot Sunrise patio heaters run \$338, while **Costco** has tabletop models for \$125.99. **Revy's** outdoor fireplaces are \$178 and \$229. Also check at garden centres — **Mandeville Garden Centre** has cast iron and aluminum firepots that range from \$310 to \$485. The original terra cotta versions came to grief during our long wet winters, cracking and falling apart. Any doubt of the popularity of the trend? Even food retailers such as **Safeway** have tabletop patio heaters at \$149.99 and stand-alones for \$299.99.