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POOL AND SPA NEWS

Pet Friendly Pool Design

page 40



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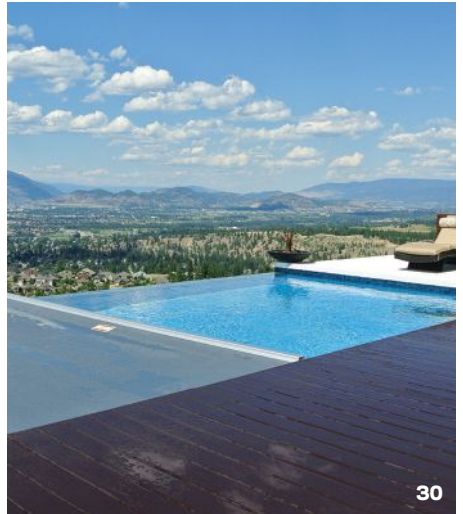
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ABOVE RIGHT: COURTESY POOL PATROL CANADA

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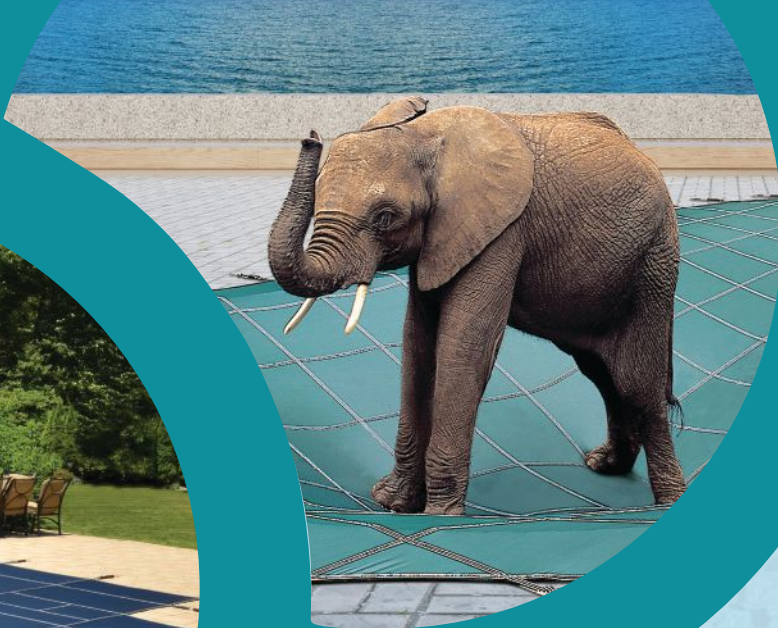


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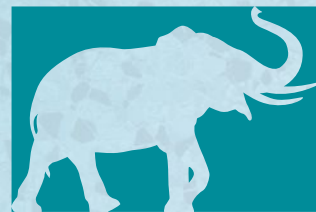
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For the Love of Dogs



Joanne McClain
Editor-in-Chief, PSN

I was never much of a pet person. I was allergic to cats, so feline companionship was a non-starter. Dogs seemed like so much work — my limited childhood experience was based on two puppies that my parents took in but rehomed after several months. Cleaning up after them fell to my reluctant mother despite my and my brothers' loud (and ultimately false) promises that we would care for them. They went on to live long lives with a cousin.

We've had indifferent fish, rambunctious mice, a shy hamster and noisy birds. I found them all to be just fine, but I didn't really have much of a connection to any of them.

And then, about four years ago, my family suffered a catastrophic loss when my stepson suddenly died. We were all having the worst time in our grief. My husband suggested we get an emotional support dog to help our 9-year-old son.

In the four years since, Dino, our Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, turned out to be the best thing for our family. He somehow reflects all the qualities of each of us — he can be stubborn like me, obsessive and athletic in play like my husband, and has an unquenchable desire for treats like our son. But above all else, he is affectionate and sweet tempered, and has given us infinite and unconditional love.

So now I see why people will do anything for their dogs, including thoughtful design touches to make their homes and backyards especially pet friendly. And I'm sure many of you, as pool and spa professionals, have seen this as well.

That's why we've dedicated a feature to pet-friendly pool design in "Man's Best Friend," by Deputy Editor Rebecca Robledo, on page 40. In it, she talks to several noted pool design experts on the various considerations when designing a backyard for a family with pets.

However, dealing with dogs is not always a pool pro's pleasure. Pool service techs have certainly experienced the dangers of working with dogs that can get territorial and aggressive with people in their backyards. To help with that, we've republished a story by former staffer Nate Traylor on how to stay safe in these situations. (No, it doesn't involve keeping steaks in your truck!)

Ultimately, knowing how to sensitively respond to poolowners with pets will garner customer loyalty, and hopefully increase your referral business.


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Cody Pools Extends Florida Reach

With its fourth acquisition, the top firm in the *PSN* Top 50 Builder list enters the Orlando market.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDÓ

Cody Pools, the company that has topped the *PSN* Top 50 Builders list for 11 years in a row, has acquired another firm in Florida.

Last month, the company purchased Orlando-based American Pools & Spas. This introduces Cody to that sizable market.

Cody CEO Mike Church had been considering organic expansion into Orlando when American Pools Founder Ben Evans approached him, seeking a path to retirement, Church said. Evans is expected to serve in a consultant capacity for a couple months.

The location will maintain its brand, with the added tagline: A Cody Pools Company. It now will be managed by Vincent Servantez, president of Cody Pools' Florida Division. He has been heading the Tampa location, about 90 miles away from American Pools. The current staff is expected to remain in place in their current

positions.

Not only does this introduce Cody to a substantial new market, it also eases the way for the company's Florida operations to sell and install the screen enclosures that are prominent in the state, through American's own fabrication shop.

Cody, on the other hand, will integrate at least some of its existing operation and business procedures into the new office.

This is the company's fourth acquisition, with three of those companies being fellow *PSN* Top 50 Builders. In 2018, Cody acquired Challenger Pools of Tampa, Fla., bringing it into the Sunshine State. In 2021, it purchased two Top 50 firms — California Pools and Landscape of Phoenix, and Platinum Pools of Houston.

This latest acquisition adds about another 500 pools per year to Cody's output, which was reported at 2,775 for 2022.



Mike Church



Ben Evans

Change Proposals Taken for Model Aquatic Health Code

The revision cycle has begun for the next edition of the Model Aquatic Health Code. The organization that facilitates its writing — the Council for the Model Aquatic Health Code — will be taking change requests until Friday, Oct. 13, 2023.

The most recent version, the 2023 MAHC (fourth edition), is available for review and use. Change proposals will be considered for the fifth edition. To submit a change request, go to cmahc.org/users/sign_in. An account is required.

Kavanaugh Joins Digital Card Pros

Michelle Kavanaugh, a long-time industry veteran, now serves as chief affiliate officer for Digital Card Pros, a Dallas-based company offering digital business card and integrated marketing platform, the IMPACT System.

In her new role, Kavanaugh will spearhead the affiliate marketing program for the IMPACT System, tailoring the system for pool builders and pool service professionals. She will focus on recruiting and supporting affiliates worldwide.

She also owns consultant firm Michelle Kavanaugh Inc. in Vermillion, S.D. She served as mission development director for the National Swimming Pool Foundation and executive director for the California Pool and Spa Association.



New Laws, Updated Building Code Pass in Florida

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO

The 2023 edition of the Florida Building Code has been finalized, and this year's session ended for the Florida legislature. The year has brought several changes, some directly targeted to pools and the pool industry, others for the construction or leisure industries in general.

FLORIDA BUILDING CODE

The state's building code has finalized its three-year update cycle, with the latest edition going into effect Dec. 31. Major changes, all supported by the Florida Swimming Pool Association (FSPA) include:

*** Elevated pool damp proofing and secondary containment:** Elevated concrete pools and spas — those installed on the second floor of a building or higher — must include damp proofing to resist water intrusion in to the pool shell and secondary containment to mitigate leaks. This applies to new construction and existing installations when they undergo resurfacing. This is meant to prevent leaks and protect the building.

*** Swim-Up Bars:** Resorts and other commercial venues now will be permitted to install swim-up bars after years of lobbying for it.

"It was a long time coming," said Dallas Thiesen, FSPA's Senior Director of Government Affairs.

*** ORP / pH Controllers:**

Beginning Dec. 31, all newly permitted pools and spas will need an ORP/PH controller to help pool contractors and technicians monitor the water chemistry. This modification

was proposed by FSPA and received unanimous support from the Florida Building Commission's Swimming Pool Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

*** Building tolerances:**

Unless the code states a specification for a particular element or feature, construction tolerances for commercial pools and spas must be kept to 3 inches or 5% of a specified dimension, whichever is less. This does not apply to accessibility features. Supported by FSPA, the new language is expected to cut down on needed variance requests.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

While new laws specifically targeted pools or the pool industry, some will have an impact:

*** Plan Review and Permitting:** Moving forward, if a building official or fire marshal seeks to make changes to a building plan after the permit was issued, they

must cite a provision of the Florida Building Code that would require the change or face potential disciplinary action.

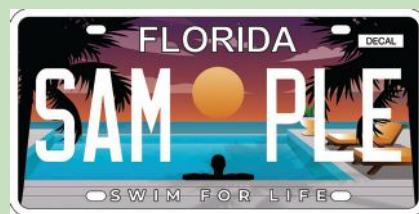
*** Latent Construction Defect Statute of Limitations:** With the 2023 Florida Building Code, the statute of limitations to file a latent construction defect is reduced from 10 years to seven from issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy, Certificate of Completion, or abandonment of the job. This change is expected to reduce frivolous lawsuits, Thiesen said.

*** Summer sales tax holiday:**

With a budget surplus, the state is allowing certain summer-related products to sell without a sales tax between the Memorial and Labor Day holidays. This includes replacement parts, nets, filters, lights, and covers under \$100, as well as retail chemicals under \$150. If the purchase goes over the threshold, the entire amount is taxed.

Florida License Plate Raises Funds for Swim Lessons

Sales of a Florida license plate helps raise funds for swim lessons in the Sunshine State. Pre-orders are being taken for the "Swim for Life" plate. Printing begins once 3,000 pre-orders are placed. The program was initiated by



the Florida Swims Foundation, the nonprofit arm of the Florida Swimming Pool Association. More information can be found at SwimForLifeFlorida.org.

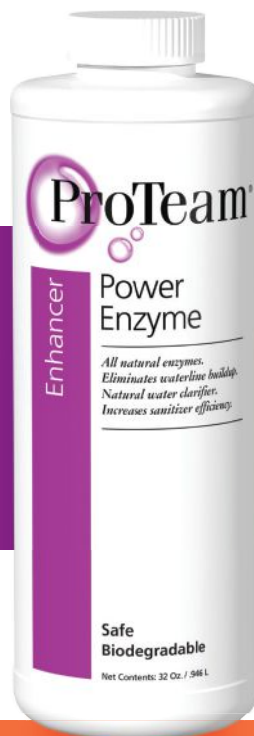
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On the Waterway

The strong lines of this pool reinforce those of the home as well as frame a view of the Intracoastal Waterway.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDÓ



This pool/spa combination cuts a bold form to match accompany this modern home along the Intracoastal Waterway. The statement earned this installation a spot in PebbleTec's annual book, *The World's Greatest Pools*.

Architect Benjamin Schreier of Affiniti Architects in Boca Raton, Fla., gave this home its unquestionably modern styling, with strong lines, light materials and glass walls. He provided a rough sketch of a long, narrow pool centered on the main room and jutting out toward the view of the Waterway to create an instant

visual connection and sense of flow with the home.

To reinforce this vision, landscape architect Steve Parker designed a similarly minimalistic pool/spa combination. Large floating steps, measuring about 4 feet, take individuals from one side of the pool to the other.

"They tie together a sitting area outside the kitchen, to the other side of the pool, with the master bedroom and another sitting area," says Parker, of Parker Yannette Design Group in Jupiter, Fla.

In front of the stepping pads sits a

submerged spa/sunshelf combination. The hot-water vessel sits in the center, surrounded by shallow lounging area. Upon the spa's activation, the water levels lower to separate hot from cold.

The installation is coated with Ocean Blue PebbleSheen, applied by Pool Boy Plastering of Pompano Beach, Fla.

Large-format, white porcelain tiles form the floating step stones, as well as the pool's coping and deck. The tiles are mildly textured to prevent slippage. He uses this material when he can because of its density.

"In Florida if you use anything soft, it will get mildew and require pressure cleaning all the time," Parker says.

Still, he minimized the hardscape, with much of the yard covered in artificial turf. This way, he says, "the pool has a lot of strong definition with just coping and the green around it. It's not lost in a big patio."

Laminar arcs provide water movement and sound, while the recessed nozzles maintained the integrity of the clean lines.

Near the house, two wild date palms bookend the pool's width.

"That rugged texture of the trunk contrasts really well with the real clean, smooth stucco and glass of the house," Parker says. "I felt like I needed two palms there to frame and anchor that end of the pool."

Against the house, Parker kept the plantings very low to preserve the building's strong lines. Several more palms on the other side of the yard screen the pool from the neighbor.

PHOTO: RON ROSENZWEIG

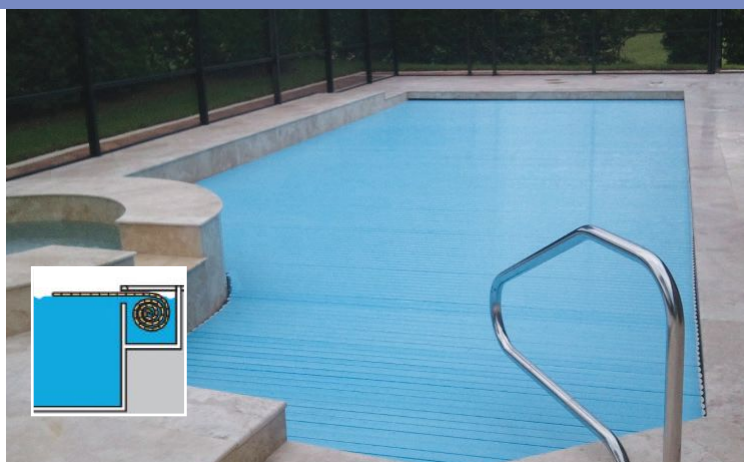
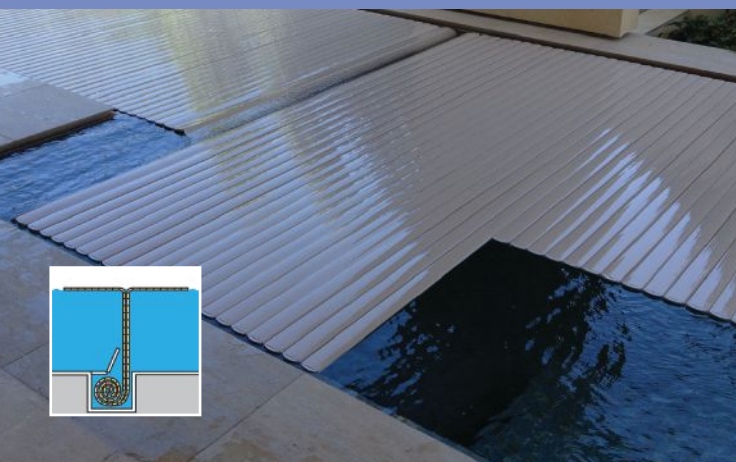


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IMPRESSIVE ENGINEERING

Though simplicity may have been a dominant characteristic of this design from an aesthetic standpoint, the same could not be said for the engineering and construction.

For the perimeter-flow effect to look right, the pool has to stay still, maintaining level weirs and uniform flow around it. Sitting on the waterfront, the soil couldn't support the structure on its own. To secure it, pool builder Almar Jackson Pools installed approximately 30 helical piles. These galvanized steel piles were driven into the ground with a hydraulic screw press until they met an amount of resistance specified by the engineer as an indication of when they'd reached solid-enough ground. The piles are then tied into the pool structure.

Extra support also was required

for the porcelain perimeter-over-flow coping. At only $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch thick, the team figured, it could not support itself. "Normally when we have a perimeter overflow, we install like a 2- or 3-inch-thick coping on the outside," says Drew Nash, vice president of Almar/Jackson Pools in Jupiter, Fla. "Typically if we use a 3-inch stone and it has enough density to support itself, then we would not require that system."

At the pool's edge, Nash and his team installed $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-thick stainless steel pans, custom made by a local steel fabricator. On top of that, they applied a crack-suppression membrane. This thin fiber sheet would separate the pan and the tile so that they could expand and contract at their own rates without impacting the other. The porcelain coping was then installed.

The installation also necessitated

unusually long plumbing runs. The pool's fiberglass holding tank sits approximately 75 feet from the pool on one side, while the equipment pad was placed about 75 feet from the other side. This means water must travel about 150 feet when traveling from the holding tank back to the pump. The plumbing had to run underneath the home's foundation, which was also under construction.

To allow the long runs, plumbing sleeves — essentially 8- or 10-inch pipes — were installed in the ground before the foundation was formed and poured. Then the pool lines could run through the sleeves.

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Reaching Your Target

Strengthening customer relationships and expanding opportunities with CRMs and digital business cards

BY MICHELLE KAVANAUGH



In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, building strong relationships with customers is essential.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems have emerged as powerful tools to streamline and enhance these relationships. When seamlessly integrated with a digital business card, a CRM system becomes even more effective.

Here, we look at what CRMs and digital business cards do.

EFFICIENCY TOOL

At its core, a CRM system is a technology-driven tool that businesses use to manage and analyze customer interactions and data throughout the customer life cycle. It serves as a centralized hub for storing information, tracking customer

interactions, and gaining actionable insights. This system allows companies to better understand their customer base to enhance customer service, manage sales and discover trends.

CRM systems are not just about managing interactions and relationships with existing customers. They provide a wealth of knowledge and insights into customer preferences, behaviors and patterns. This information can unveil new revenue possibilities with existing customers. By reviewing their purchase history, you can identify opportunities for cross-selling and up-selling. Understanding the products or services a customer has bought allows you to make personalized recommendations for complementary products or

premium versions, thereby increasing revenue from existing customers.

In addition, CRM systems help companies recognize trends in customer purchasing patterns and behaviors. This allows you to predict future buying behaviors, letting you create targeted marketing and sales strategies to sell new products or services to the right audience.

With this technology, your business also can devise customer retention strategies by analyzing interactions, feedback and satisfaction levels. This understanding enables you to address grievances and improve customer service. Remember: Retaining a customer is much more cost-effective than acquiring a new one.

Armed with detailed insights from your CRM system, you can design loyalty programs that truly resonate with your clients. These not only reinforce customer loyalty but also encourage repeat purchases.

These systems also can help identify those who haven't engaged with your business in a while, and provide information about past purchases and engagements, so you can tailor a re-engagement strategy to their interest.

MAKING THE CONNECTION

A CRM system becomes even more effective when working in conjunction with a sales funnel that allows prospects to explore your offerings and engage with your brand. This can transform initial contacts into warm leads and nurture them



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This is where a digital business card comes in.

Good digital business cards look something like miniature websites, so you can include more information than on a physical business card. More importantly, they're easily sharable. When you meet potential customers at networking events, trade shows, conferences, or through a friend, simply share your digital business card via a short URL or a QR code. It generally features a button to instantly save the information to their phone. This removes the problem of business cards becoming lost.

Once you open them, a digital card reads like a single web page. At the bare minimum, it should contain your contact information and a way to easily save it to their phones.

But a unique identifier is also very important. A big problem with business

cards is that we collect so many that it's hard to remember each professional or company, what they do, and where we met them. So you should add something that they can remember you by. This could include a descriptor with key words that can be easily searched, or a form with a free download or other giveaway that links directly to your CRM system, for instance.

You can put as much information as you like but, because it all appears on one page, the user must continue scrolling down to read everything. I wouldn't recommend including too much information about all your company's products and services. Less is more here. It should be approached more like a branding tool, with more general information, identifiers, and a call to action to save it to their phones or send you a quick text message.

A digital business card enhances the analytical power of a good CRM

system, allowing you to track the effectiveness of your referrals and measure the impact on your revenue growth.

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Michelle Kavanaugh is president of Michelle Kavanaugh Inc., a consulting company that specializes in helping small businesses become more efficient and financially sustainable. She also serves as chief affiliate officer of Digital Card Pros. She previously served as mission development director of the National Swimming Pool Foundation, as well as executive director of the California Pool & Spa Association. She has more than 35 years of experience in relationship building, growing organizations, leading and managing teams, budgeting and profit and loss management, government relations, contract negotiation, policy and process development, marketing content creation, sales and customer service, and strategic planning.

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Gen X Continues To Play Key Role In Housing Market

Often taking the back seat, this demographic has strong buying power and wealth accumulation.

BY ALI WOLF



In recent articles, we have detailed baby boomers, millennials, and Gen Zers and their respective interactions with the housing market. We now turn our attention to Generation X. Despite being roughly 20% of the U.S. population, this cohort often takes the back seat in the housing discussion as the barbell of demographics, boomers and millennials, take the front.

Facts about the Gen X cohort:

- While the age varies by source, Gen Xers are generally considered those age 40 to late 50s;
- A recent analysis found Gen Xers to be the strongest demographic cohort in terms of ability to buy homes. Their relative strength comes from the generation hitting peak earning years, allowing for better affordability in the move-up and luxury markets; and

- Gen Xers have accumulated substantial wealth over the years, including home equity, trailing just baby boomers in terms of housing wealth.

To understand Gen Xers today, we have to understand where they are coming from. During the mid-2000s' housing boom, homeownership across all ages, including Gen Xers, was trending up. The accompanying housing and economic recession,

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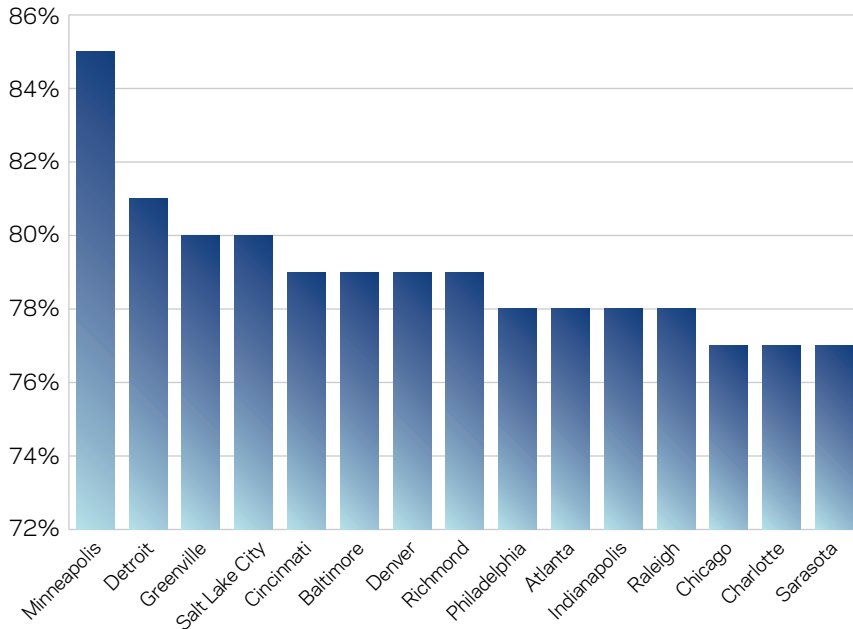
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GEN X % HOMEOWNERS BY METRO AREA, TOP 15



SOURCES: CENSUS PUMS AND ZONDA

however, led to job losses, wealth destruction, and increased foreclosure activity. This resulted in mental and financial scars for years to come.

Nearly 15 years later, however, many Gen Xers are thriving. As mentioned, this group is at their peak earning years while also benefiting from growth in both the stock market and home prices.

In fact, Gen Xers have the second highest homeownership rate today behind baby boomers:

- Homeownership is highest in more affordable markets. The homeownership rate among Gen Xers is particularly high in places like Minneapolis; Detroit; Greenville, South Carolina; Salt Lake City; and Cincinnati (see Gen X % Homeowners by Metro Area, Top 15 chart);

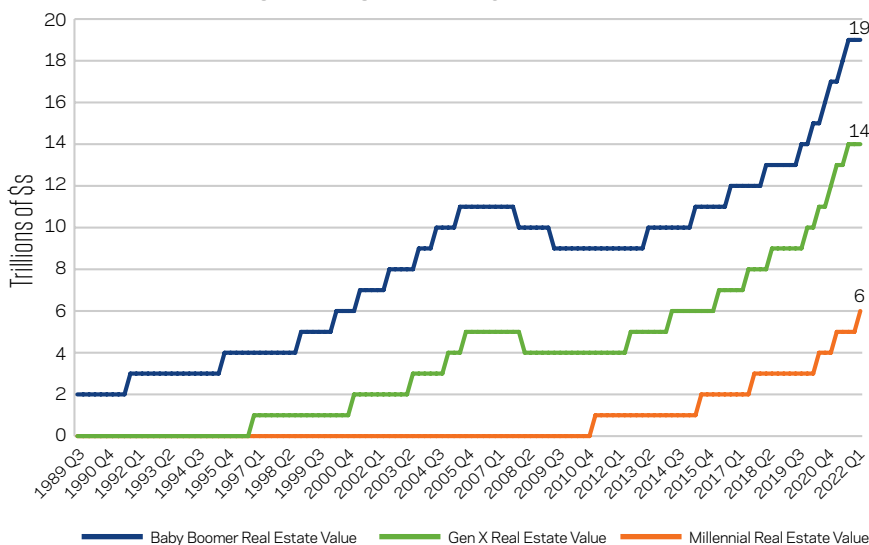
- Limits on housing supply and affordability hold back larger markets. More populous lifestyle markets like Los Angeles/Orange County, New York City, and San Diego have the lowest rates given the higher barriers to entry for homeownership; and

- Real estate is a key driver in wealth accumulation. The high homeownership rate has allowed many of those in the cohort to build up substantial housing wealth (see Generational Real Estate Wealth chart).

Notice that Gen Xers endured a significant drop in real estate wealth through the Great Recession but have since strongly recovered. Gen X real estate wealth of \$14 trillion is even catching up with the baby boomers at \$19 trillion.

When looking at the generational share of total net worth, Gen X is slowly gaining on the baby boomers as well. In fact, boomers' peak wealth share was 55.9% in the third quarter of 2016 and has declined to 52.3% since then. If current trends continue, Gen X could overtake the baby boomers as the wealthiest generation by the mid- to late-2030s. Baby boomers are

GENERATIONAL REAL ESTATE WEALTH



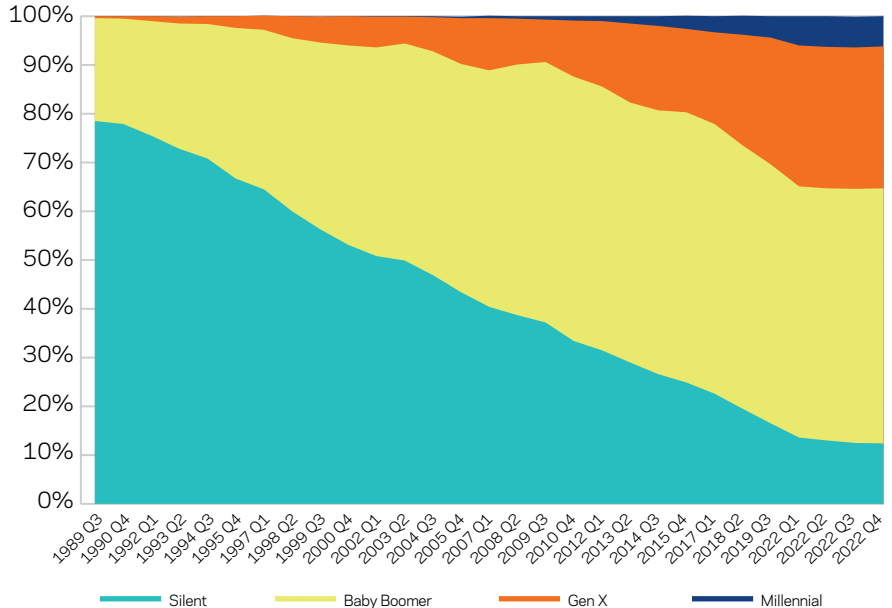
SOURCE: FEDERAL RESERVE DFA; ZONDA

expected to follow the same pattern seen from the Silent Generation where they spend their savings in retirement and/or give away wealth to descendants (see Generational Shares of Net Worth chart).

The high homeownership rate among Gen Xers is important when you think specifically about the new-home market. Home builders surveyed by Zonda report that move-up buyers represent the largest share of their overall shopper pool. While baby boomers have the highest homeownership rate, they are likely to pursue move-down housing options rather than move-up.

The lock-in effect, the idea that one does not want to move because they don't want to reset their current interest rate, does apply exclusively to existing homeowners, but there are other considerations.

GENERATIONAL SHARES OF NET WORTH



SOURCE: FEDERAL RESERVE DFA; ZONDA



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Move-up buyers ranking first suggests some people are moving for lifestyle or life stage reasons versus simply financial. Further, we know that homeowners are sitting on a record level of home equity, which when tapped, can help soften the blow of a higher mortgage rate, especially when combined with builder-paid mortgage rate buydowns.

When we consider a move from the Gen X population, it's important to know what matters most to them. A survey by the National Association of Realtors highlights the generation's desire for a nice neighborhood within a reasonable distance to employment

centers and relatively large but affordable homes (see Factors Influencing Neighborhood Choice chart).

Since Gen Xers represent top buyers today, it's important to understand what they want and where they want to live, especially since they finally have the financial backing to support their homeownership decisions.

Ali Wolf is the chief economist for Zonda, the largest home building prop tech company in North America. As head of the economics department, Ali manages and analyzes the content for Zonda, runs special research projects, acts as

a go-to advisor for the nation's largest home builders, and presents nationwide covering topics across the housing market and wider economy. Ali is the creator of Zonda's proprietary indices, including the New Home Pending Sales Index and the New Home Lot Supply Index. Prior to joining the Zonda team, Ali worked for another consultancy firm and was a researcher for both the Canadian and UK Parliaments. Ali holds a Bachelor's Degree from The Ohio State University in Economics and a Master's Degree from the London School of Economics in Real Estate Economics and Finance. This article previously appeared in sister publication Builder.

Factors Influencing Neighborhood Choice

	All Buyers	Age of Home Buyer						
		18-23	24-32	33-42	43-57	58-67	68-76	77-97
Quality of the neighborhood	49%	39%	56%	55%	46%	47%	48%	45%
Convenient to friends/family	37	57	48	40	23	35	38	48
Overall affordability of homes	37	31	53	38	31	37	38	23
Convenient to jobs	33	29	64	47	45	18	6	3
Availability of larger lots or acreage	28	10	33	32	29	28	28	11
Convenient to shopping	21	25	19	15	15	23	34	26
Design of neighborhood	19	10	19	19	18	17	25	18
Convenient to vet/outdoor space for pet	19	25	29	20	16	17	21	9
Convenient to parks/recreational facilities	18	11	23	19	14	20	21	11
Walkability	16	17	16	16	14	16	18	16
Convenient to schools	16	10	25	32	25	4	2	1
Convenient to entertainment/leisure activities	15	10	15	16	12	17	19	12
Quality of the school district	15	7	22	30	23	4	2	2
Convenient to health facilities	15	16	7	6	8	20	26	36
Access to bike paths	6	3	5	9	5	7	4	3
Convenient to airport	5	*	4	4	4	6	11	2
Home in planned community	4	12	4	3	3	4	5	4
Convenient to public transportation	2	*	3	3	3	2	1	*
Other	10	13	6	5	10	13	11	18

*Less than 1 percent

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LEARN THE KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL POOL COVER INSTALLATION

Whether installing automatic covers or safety covers, you can ensure
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BY REBECCA ROBLED0

PHOTO COURTESY COVER CARE



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Few products offer the range of benefits that can be gained from pool covers of both the automatic and safety varieties.

Safety, along with savings in energy, water and chemicals await those who make this investment.

To ensure that pool owners enjoy these advantages hassle-free, follow these tips for properly installing this technology.

AUTOMATIC COVERS

When it comes to these intricate systems, precision and communication between the pool builder and cover installer are key.

Remember that it starts with the pool.

Even though the vessel may form a rectangle, they rarely are perfect. It's not uncommon to find rectangles 2- to 3 inches out of square from one end to the other. Cover installer John Moss, area

manager serving San Diego County for Poolsafe, has even seen pools that are up to 1 foot narrower on one end than the other.

Unfortunately, that won't work for an automatic cover. For these installations, make sure the sides are perfectly parallel so the cover can glide smoothly through the tracks.

You also may need to adjust the waterline to suit the cover. Some builders like to keep a higher waterline to create a sleeker look. But if an automatic cover is involved, you may need a larger gap for the leading edge.

Also avoid cantilevering the coping too much, advises Shawn Unger, vice president of Pool Cover Pros in Chebanse, Ill. He prefers that the stones only cantilever up to 1½ inches past the retainer. The glider and leading edge, which stick up vertically from the track, need clearance to roll unobstructed.

"If the coping stone is hanging

too much, there are bolts on the glider that will rub on that coping stone," Unger says. "It's a big issue that we seem to run into quite a bit."

Consult the manufacturer or cover installer about the cover box dimensions and wiring.

One of the most common mistakes Moss sees is cover housings that are mis-sized. They could be too narrow, wide or shallow.

"I'll hear from contractors, 'We formed up for the pool cover housing. Bigger is better, right?'"

Not necessarily. If the cover box is too wide, the mechanism won't stretch.

"Other times, they'll say, 'We needed to make it tight, so we made it 12 inches,'" Moss continues. "But if it's a 50-foot pool, then all that fabric won't fit."

Cover width also factors into the sizing of the vault: Wider pools require bigger equipment, so a bigger vault is needed. The motor and mechanism are offset in the installation, which also requires additional — and asymmetrical — spacing. For instance, if the cover vault needs to be 4 feet wider than the cover itself, it may need to be 3 feet wider on one side, but only 1 foot wider on the other.

Don't guess, and don't base sizing on past installations — ask the cover professional. "Things change over the years, so don't assume it's the same dimensions for everything," Moss says.

The same holds true for the electrical components. Some controllers use low-voltage wires, while others work on high voltage. And the number and placement of the wires varies by brand. Clear this up before installing your pool's electrical system.

Provide adequate drainage.

While the motor may be considered watertight or waterproof, it's still

COVER SPOTLIGHT



Challenge accepted: This cover installation, by Integrity Pool Pros of Spartanburg, S.C., is exceptional due to the size, shape and unique features of the pool. The pool is a 20x40 freeform with a raised wall spa and a narrow deck along one side. A cable system was used to secure Tara Pool's Tan HD Mesh cover around the raised wall spa. The cable is anchored on one end of the wall and runs through eyebolts secured in the wall. The cable is tightened with a turnbuckle to draw it tight against the wall. A debris flap prevents anything from entering the pool. The cover also uses lawn stakes on a portion of one end to anchor the cover in the area where there is not enough deck to use traditional masonry anchors.

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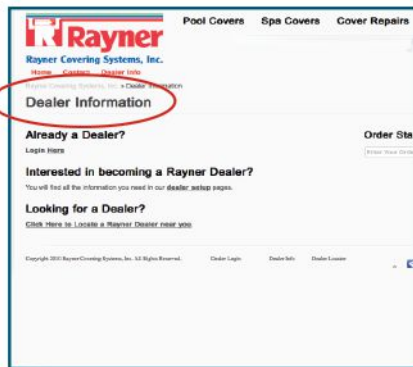


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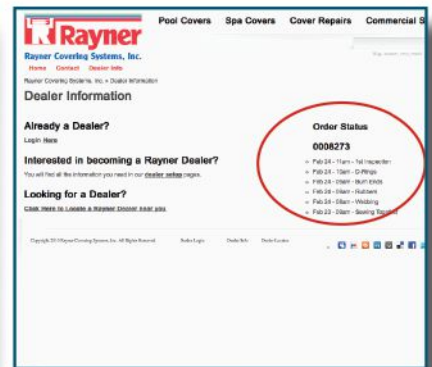
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not a good idea for the contents of the cover vault to sit underwater indefinitely.

“Most of the components are waterproof or water resistant, but there’s still electrical in the box, so there’s corrosion at that point,” Under says. “So you want to keep water away from the box.”

Additionally, the combination of chemicals and dirt can gum up the drive gears. “We don’t want chemical water flooding the mechanisms,” Moss adds.

To prevent this, generous drainage should be provided. Moss generally prefers a 3-inch drain that runs out to open air so large volumes of water can escape after a rainstorm.

Some builders prefer to install a sump pump or French drain, but doing so requires certain precautions. For instance, only install French drains in sand or other well-draining soil, make them large, and test them to make sure they can handle plenty of water.

“I had one job recently where they dug a hole about 2 feet deep and 12 inches around,” Moss says. “That’s not sufficient — it only holds a couple of gallons.”

If choosing a sump pump, explain that it will need to be tested from time to time to make sure it works.

Be careful with custom-made vault lids.

The aesthetics of cover boxes have come a long way. While prefabricated vaults with aluminum lids are still available, shotcrete pool contractors often build their own vaults with a custom lid matched to the surrounding coping and deck. A system of brackets and trays makes this possible by accommodating stone, pavers and other materials.

When choosing this route, be sure to work out the elevations so the top of the lid sits flush with the

deck and coping. Also consider how heavy the material will be and ensure the brackets and trays will support it.

Another factor to consider: Long-term serviceability. While it may be tempting to place large stones, pavers or slabs over the lid for a clean look, these will be difficult for technicians to lift for maintenance and repairs. “We have a number of [maintenance customers] where our files say, ‘Two-man job’ because they have lids that are 24-by-24 inches and 3½-inches thick,” Moss says. “That’s not something a person can easily lift up.”

Some clients have wanted to use

custom stones as big as 4-by-2 feet. “Oftentimes in that situation we’ll say, ‘We’re going to cut it into 2-by-2’s so it’s manageable,’” Moss says.

Here again, consult with the cover specialists to make sure everyone is on the same page regarding elevations and serviceability.

SAFETY COVERS

When working with these products, pool builders and cover installers must adapt to the project.

Consider the new apps to make measuring easier.

Measuring safety covers has always



When installing custom stone cover-box lids, make sure the stone can be lifted by service technicians.

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A safety cover extends over a vanishing-edge wall.

been the toughest part of working with this product category. The traditional A-B measuring process, a relatively lengthy affair that requires taking measurements from several different points in the site, then handwriting all the data — left plenty of room for error. While veterans no doubt have it mastered, even small things like poor penmanship or inadvertently transposing numbers can throw everything off.

Fortunately, manufacturers and some third parties have developed apps to simplify this process. These apps allow the on-site tech to enter the measurements on the keyboard, eliminating the penmanship issues.

And if something doesn't seem to add up, based on photos and other information entered into the app, it will detect errors.

"It might say, 'Please check point A-36 — it doesn't match,'" says Isaac Keselman, president of The Aqua Doctor in East Hanover, N.J. "A lot of problems can be identified right in the field during the measurement process."

With these miscalculations immediately pointed out, installers avoid the need to make return trips to remeasure.

Use the correct anchors.

The type of deck will determine what anchors are needed for the

cover, so that they'll stay in place inside the deck material. If you've combined deck surfaces, you may need a combination of different anchors.

In standard concrete decks, manufacturers generally recommend a brass anchor set into a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch hole. Wood decks require a different type of anchor that will screw in place. Lawn installations require another type of anchor.

The appropriate anchor becomes especially crucial when the pool is surrounded by pavers that are set in sand or dirt. Without a hard material such as concrete, the cover will need something more heavy-duty to stay in place. Installers generally drill a hole 18 inches into the surface, place a sleeve and set the anchor in the sleeve.

Using the wrong anchor in these applications can prove disastrous in cold-weather areas. As snow piles up on the cover, it pulls down. This, in turn, tugs on the straps and anchors. If the anchors aren't set firmly enough into the ground, they can pull out. In the worst cases, the strap can serve as a slingshot, taking a paver with it and flinging it into the air.

"It's basically like a slingshot ... People have had them go through windows before," Keselman says.

Don't cheat on strap spacing and length.

Homeowners will prefer fewer anchors in their decks, so they'd probably want the straps set 5 feet apart rather than 3 feet. Additionally, they might want the longest straps available, hoping they'll stretch past the deck and can be anchored in the grass.

While these options may seem less obtrusive, they also can compromise the cover's effectiveness. The straps need to be spaced close enough to form a grid across the



Super Mesh - Tan

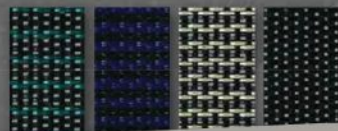


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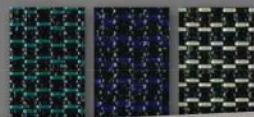
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To get this cover just right around the spa, Keselman came back and added more padding after the first season of use.

cover that provides adequate support. On freeform pools, the straps will probably need the 3-foot spacing to account for the curves. While many rectangular pools can use 5-foot spacing, larger ones shouldn't, as the many square feet of fabric add up to plenty of weight to support.

And extended straps don't pull on the fabric as tightly and securely as shorter ones, so they should be used sparingly — say, to help pull the cover over planters or waterfalls. If you use too many, the cover can be compromised, so consult with the manufacturer to avoid reaching this point.

Know where to start the installation — especially with freeforms.

When fitting safety covers to rectangular pools, installers can follow a relatively intuitive succession of steps, often starting with the corners. With freeforms, crews need to work a little more carefully.

When fitting a curvy cover over the pool, find the center points, both lengthwise and widthwise. Match the cover's center points with those of the pool, then extend the fabric out around the vessel, covering the features and bump-outs around the perimeter.

"You have to start with some sort of fixed point, then from there you can get your length and width ... then keep pulling taut on everything else," Keselman says.

Remember that even veterans need help from time to time. And expect to adjust as you go.

In the rush to get work done, professionals may not take time to review the directions or consult their manufacturers for help.

But even pros like Keselman, who has worked with covers for more than 30 years, need support from time to time. A recent project with an elevated spa proved tricky. He had to decide how much padding was needed over the spa so the corners and edges wouldn't rub against the fabric and tear it prematurely. After the cover went through its first winter, Keselman and a manufacturer's tech decided to add extra padding in time for its second winter.

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Ways to make pools friendlier and safer for our favorite four-legged family members.

BY REBECCA ROBLEDO

Homeowners in general are placing greater importance on pet-friendly design — and it looks as if that trend will continue.

A recent study for the real-estate website Zillow showed that 60% of Generation Z considers pet-friendly features to be essential in a home they would buy. Conducted online by The Harris Poll, the study also indicated that consumers between the ages of 18 and 26 place more importance on pet-friendly design than kid-friendly design, with 55% placing the priority on a pet-friendly home and 45% on a child-friendly home.

Additionally, Zillow's Consuming Housing Trends Report showed a significant climb in ownership since the COVID pandemic: Currently, 73% of home buyers have at least one pet, compared with 64% in 2020.

Hands down, dogs are the most likely to interact with a swimming pool. By taking certain measures, you can create pools that can be safely enjoyed by dogs — or securely isolated from them, if that's what the homeowner wants.

OFF TO THE RIGHT START

In many cases, homeowners will initiate a conversation about their pets during the design discussion. Still, builders and designers should be ready to bring up the topic, especially if they see dogs in the yard.

"Usually if I see pets, I'll ask," says Paolo Benedetti, CEO and principal with Aquatic Technology Pool & Spa in Morgan Hill, Calif., and an instructor for Watershape University. "If I'm designing a pool without going to the job site, that's one of the things I have on my interview questions: Are there any animals that will be in the pool? Do they have any concerns about the dogs being in the pool when they're not there? Are they in the pool when the kids are? Some dogs only go in the pool when there are family members in there."

Each breed — and even each individual dog — is unique. Some are drawn to the water, while others would rather stay away. So while more homeowners may have dogs, they will have different concerns when they

discuss the design of their pools. Some will want ways to allow their dogs to use their pools safely and enjoyably, while others want to keep their dogs out. Still others hope to control access, so their dogs can only swim when they're present.

While certain breeds are more likely to enjoy the water, always ask to find out what is best for that particular dog and family.

"Don't ever make assumptions," says Randy Angell, CEO of Randy Angell Designs in Plano, Texas. "I've seen breeds that are supposed to be water dogs, and the client will tell me, 'No, he hates it, doesn't go anywhere near it.' Then you see another dog that you really wouldn't expect to be much of a water dog, but they love it. Like mine — it's his life; he would be in that pool 24 hours a day if he could."

SAFE ACCESS/ESCAPE ROUTE

Whether or not a particular dog is expected to enjoy the pool, it helps to include some form of easy access and exit.

This way, those that like to swim can easily enter and exit, while dogs that accidentally fall in the pool have an escape route.

Benedetti likes to place some type of step or shelf at each end of the pool, often in a corner. For his own pool, these shelves are only 12 inches deep, rather than Benedetti's standard 18 inches.

When Angell knows dogs will be present around a vanishing-edge pool, he will add the same ledges — ideally, one on either end — to the catch basin. He does this whether or not the human owners plan to ever go in the basin.

Often, he likes to include an interim step between the deck and sunshelf elevations. This especially makes sense for smaller dogs, older

canines or those with mobility issues.

"We're adding that extra step between the coping level and the tanning ledge level so that the dog can get in and out easier," he says.

If space allows, he will make these first steps 18 inches wide rather than the typical 12 inches, "just to give them a little bit more leeway when they're coming down off the coping."

Explain to your clients that they will need to train their dogs where to find these ledges and how to use them, advises Scott Cohen, president of The Green Scene, an outdoor design/build firm in Chatsworth, Calif., and co-author with pet trainer Carolyn Doherty of the book *Petscaping: Training and Landscaping With Your Pet in Mind*.

"That's a two-person project," he

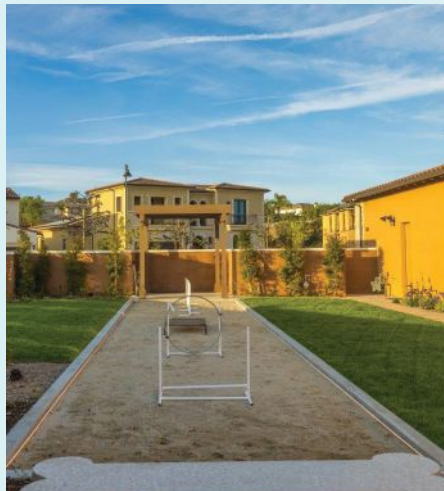
explains. "One person is in the pool, and one person is at the steps. "So you get the dog into the pool, and then you call them over to where that exit is, so that they know how to get out."

CANINE FUN

A couple of Angell's clients wanted a separate section of the pool just for the dogs, so he designed a sunshelf area, about 8 inches deep. But this was separated from the rest of the pool by floating stepper pads.

"It looks like any wet deck area, just separated from the main body of the pool," Angell says. "We did it to keep the dog off to that one area and not into the deeper area of the pool."

Designers have noticed that dogs seem to particularly like bubblers placed on the sunshelves.



If you're designing the whole backyard for a client with dogs, consider developing special areas that engage the breed's natural abilities. For highly active dogs, you can include an agility course such as the one pictured above. Other dogs are more prone to dig, so they'd benefit from a sandbox-type area with hidden treats to encourage digging. Others are patrol dogs. For them, provide space around the yard's perimeter where they can walk and guard.

"We've trained these dogs to be certain ways for certain traits for hundreds of years or longer, and we've bred this into them," says Scott Cohen, president of The Green Scene, an outdoor design/build firm in Chatsworth, Calif., and co-author with pet trainer Carolyn Doherty of the book *Petscaping: Training and Landscaping With Your Pet in Mind*. "So that's what they need to do."

“My dog goes crazy over the bubblers on my wet deck,” Angell says. “Anytime I turn those on, he’s jumping all over them and trying to make the water stop. Just that water movement for some dogs really attracts them, and they play in it like a kid would.”

He typically favors the telescoping bubblers, which are recessed in the ground. So do the dogs, he adds.

“My dog likes to play with that and push it up and down,” Angell says. “He figured out when he pushes down on it, it forces more water out and it sprays him in the face. So he really likes that interactive play.”

Be aware of the dogs’ nails, which are smaller than human fingers. Try to make sure openings are too small for nails to get caught.

KEEPING SAFE

Pets may need to be isolated from the pool or certain features.

If the installation will include fire, for instance, you may want to elevate it out of reach. In one case, Angell had planned a fire feature at pool level until the homeowners worried the dog would interact with it. So he placed the fire on a raised wall.

More likely you’ll have homeowners who want the ability to limit when their dogs can use the pool, or isolate it from it altogether.

Of course, fences and covers work for this, just as they would for children. If the client wants to allow their dogs to go outside without accessing the pools, devise a plan.

Cohen did this for his own pets. One day, after coming home from work, he found so much water in the house, he thought a main line had burst. Instead, he realized his dog had spent the day alternately taking dips in the pool, then going back inside to take a soaking-wet nap.

“Now we let the dogs have access to the side yard; or the backyard; or



Left: While Scott Cohen’s old English bulldog, Belvedere, didn’t like to swim, he loved to drink from the pool. So Cohen and his family trained the dog to safely enter and exit the pool via the shallow end steps. Above: A dog-themed accent is added to the yard.

the house and sideyard — but never the backyard pool area and the house at the same time,” he says.

MAINTENANCE AND WATER QUALITY

Just as one dog year equals seven human years, a single canine will compare to multiple human bathers when it comes to their impact on the circulation system and water quality.

In one case, Benedetti designed a pool knowing the homeowners’ seven golden retrievers would be swimming. And that breed sheds. With this amount of hair anticipated, he doubled up on the filtration and skimmers that would have been sufficient without the pets. The homeowner also devised a way to keep the pet hair in the skimmer and prevent it from traveling to the pump or filter. She took a bag made of netting ma-

terial, the kind used on some in-floor cleaners, and cut it to fit the skimmer. She then added a drawstring. This way, the hair would be trapped and could be easily removed manually as often as necessary.

While this is a drastic case, builders should consider boosting filtration and skimmers when introducing a pet to the pool.

To keep humans safe when sharing a pool with their dogs, also plan on extra sanitation measures.

“I’ve always treated dogs like the equivalent of 15 people, as far as water chemistry goes,” Cohen says. “So the bather load of one dog equals 15 people. So your sanitation has to be in place to counter that.”

On his own pool, he included ozonation and a UV light system in addition to the chemistry. He seeks to do this whenever dogs will factor into a project.





BEWARE OF DOG

Experts advise how pool professionals
can stay canine-safe.

BY NATE TRAYLOR

It was like a scene from a gripping courtroom drama: The victim, bandaged and animated as he described how he was viciously attacked by the perpetrator; the perpetrator's family, sitting in disbelief as grisly details came forth.

Only this wasn't a courtroom, not in the traditional sense. This hearing took place October 2014 at the Riverside County Department of Animal Services in San Jacinto, Calif. The victim was a longtime pool maintenance pro whose near-fatal run-in with the alleged perpetrator — a pit bull/Labrador mix — was a graphic reminder that man's best friend isn't always the pool man's.

Here, PSN recounts several real-life canine encounters gone horribly wrong. Consider them cautionary tales — then take to heart the advice from

an expert who trains field workers to defend themselves against four-legged threats.

DOG DAY AFTERNOON

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2014 was just another day on the job for Andrew Ortiz, until it ended with the tech undergoing emergency plastic surgery at the Temecula Valley Hospital.

Ortiz was cleaning a pool at a rental property when Pigbert, the dog he'd reportedly warned the tenants to keep restrained while he was on site, appeared behind him. The tech was startled, he stumbled, and then Pigbert struck. The attack lasted about a minute before Ortiz managed to break free. He escaped over a fence, falling 8 feet to an embankment. The pool man managed to drive himself to the hospital with a torn forearm, punctured thigh and a lacerated face.

The animal services department received word of the attack the following day from a nurse at the hospital where Ortiz was being treated. When authorities went to retrieve Pigbert, they had to use control sticks to corral him into a quarantine area.

Given the severity of Ortiz's injuries, animal control officers recommended that the adult male canine be humanely euthanized, even though this was Pigbert's only recorded offense. But first there would have to be a trial.

In situations such as these, the Riverside County Department of Animal Services hires a third-party hearings officer to determine the fate of the animal in question. In Pigbert's case, the judge ruled that the dog could be returned to his owners under strict parameters. However, the county animal services department planned to appeal the

The dog was technically under the pool pro's custody while on site, so he was responsible for both restraining the dog and keeping the public safe from it.

decision, taking the case to Superior Court, explained department spokesman John Welsh.

For Ortiz, there still remains a long road to both physical and financial recovery. Supporters donated money via *gofundme.com*, a crowdfunding website, to help offset his medical expenses.

"Our heart goes out to him," Welsh says of the victim, noting that it was one of the worst maulings he'd ever seen. "We hope he recovers."

WHO LET THE DOG OUT?

Perhaps a problem pet doesn't cause the tech physical harm. But it can hurt somebody else, and affect the professional in the process.

A German shepherd, unbeknownst to the pool tech, had an aggressive streak. In fact, translated from Mayan, the dog's name was Demon. Had the professional been aware of the dog's history, he might have thought twice about leaving the gate unlatched.

This turned out to be a very expensive mistake.

It was too late by the time the San Diego service pro realized the dog that had greeted him at the gate was nowhere to be found. Then he heard screaming.

It was a jogger who had discovered Demon in a neighbor's yard. Concerned that the German shepherd would run out into a busy road, she approached Demon, hoping to

return the dog to his rightful owner. But the 89-pound canine lunged and got hold of her ear.

The jogger's attorney, Angela Jae Chun, said repairing the ear was meticulous work. "The doctor said it was like putting a jigsaw puzzle back together," says Chun, an associate attorney with CaseyGerry, who declined to identify the tech because the case was settled out of court.

The San Diego law firm hired a certified animal behaviorist who categorized the mauling as an "unprovoked Level 5 attack." In the hierarchy of dog attacks, that's one step below a fatality.

Chun and partner Robert Francavilla successfully argued that the pool tech violated two city codes. The dog was technically under his custody while on site, they said, so he was responsible for both restraining the dog and keeping the public safe from it.

The homeowner and pool tech were sued for negligence, netting a \$456,000 settlement for the plaintiffs, a scientist in her 30s left with permanent scarring, and the Good Samaritan who also was attacked while coming to the jogger's aid.

Moral of the story? Latch the gate.

ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK

While the two abovementioned scenarios are indeed extreme, most pool pros can expect some sort of Fido fiasco during their careers.

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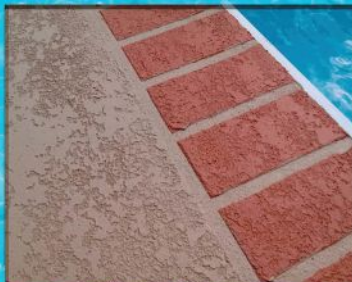


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from a cantankerous
canine. Assert
yourself. Stomp
your feet. Be loud.
Raise your arms and
step toward — that's
right — toward the
threat.

Arrow Insurance, the Westlake Village, Calif.-based firm that covers pool and spa service contractors, processes four to five animal-related claims each year, estimates its president, Ray Arouesty. Most are minor incidences involving a nip, but there have been some truly horrible mishaps, such as when a pool tech accidentally backed his truck over a pooch that slipped past him at the gate.

While most maintenance pros are diligent about explaining the need for homeowners to keep their pets locked up, accidents still happen. In Arouesty's experience, the homeowner usually is at fault. He's seen situations where guests, house sitting perhaps, left the back door open, leaving the tech vulnerable to a canine confrontation.

"It usually comes down to what the homeowner is going to do to safeguard the dog," Arouesty says.

But what can a tech do when faced with a frothing-at-the-mouth Rottweiler or ticked-off Doberman Pinscher? Expert Mitzi Robinson's advice is to listen to your instincts ...

...And then do the complete opposite.

"Most of the time people say, 'Don't stare at the dog, don't look at the dog, stay passive, turn to the side,'" Robinson says. "We say you need to maintain direct eye contact. You need to get aggressive with that animal. Someone needs to take the alpha position, and it's either going to be you or the dog."

Robinson is the president and founder of Bulli Ray, an occupational dog bite safety program that trains utility workers, cable installers, property assessors and the like to avoid on-the-job animal entanglements. Her Ocala, Fla.-based company got its start with a \$1.2 million contract with the United States Post-

al Service in 1996, the year that two letter carriers were fatally mauled.

WHEN POOCH COMES TO SHOVE

If such a tragedy can happen to a postal worker, then service techs are not immune. However, Robinson suggests a few tactics to keep the threat at bay.

As the saying goes, your best defense is a good offense. Don't shrink back from a cantankerous canine. Assert yourself. Stomp your feet. Be loud. Raise your arms and step toward — that's right — toward the threat.

"They have to train themselves to go forward because, I guarantee you, your brain will take over and send you backward. And that's the last thing you want a dog to see," Robinson warns. "Most dogs are submissive. They will back down."

Put something between yourself and your four-legged opponent — a trash can, for example.

But don't think you can effectively fend Fido off with a telepole. The dog will bite on it once and then look for something more ... fleshy. Instead, give it something it can really sink its teeth into, such as a cushion from a nearby piece of lawn furniture. Don't be afraid to offer the hound a few rowdy words of encouragement to keep it occupied while you chart a path toward safety.

In a worst-case scenario where the pet latches onto a limb, get an arm around the animal and lift up. This robs the dog of its ability to pull you down with its weight. Then tug its collar to unhinge its jaw.

Once you've escaped Rover's wrath, you have a decision to make.

"I know it's a competitive business, so it would be difficult to take a [hardline] stance," Robinson says. "But if you're fearing for your safety, it might be an account worth giving up."

Membership for Entrepreneurs

The Pool & Hot Tub Alliance is a growing network with programs geared to support entrepreneurs and business owners to grow and crush any challenges that lie ahead. Together we elevate, educate, and advocate for our livelihood with an array of certifications, on-demand classes, and in-person courses. When we stand together, our strong voices are heard at the federal and local levels.

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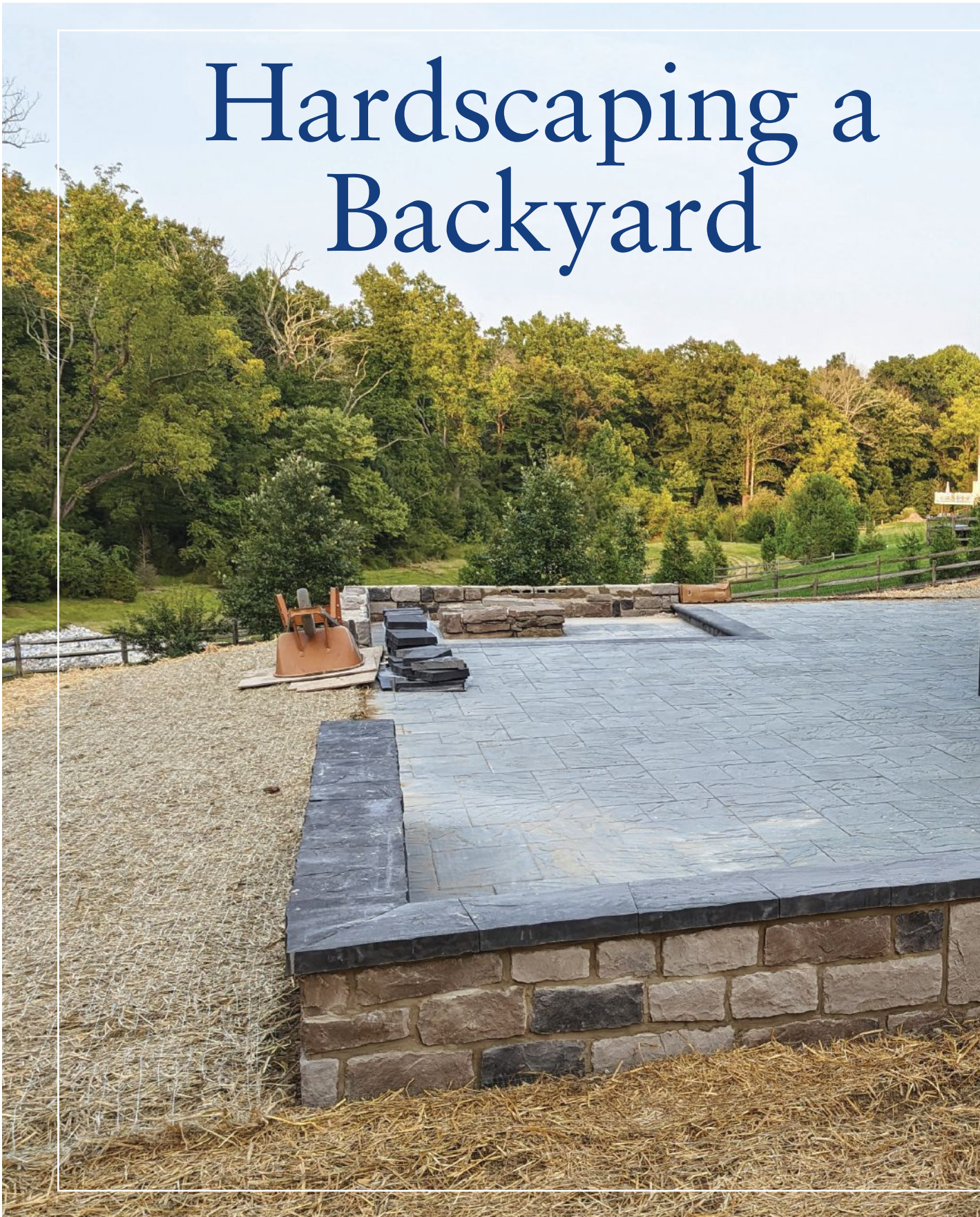


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Hardscaping a Backyard





You already have most of the skills
needed to pour concrete slabs and build
patios and retaining walls.

BY MATTHEW BREYER

PHOTOS BY MATTHEW BREYER



With a walk-out basement and a sliding door on the main level, this Pennsylvania home was the perfect candidate for a multi-level outdoor living space incorporating an elevated deck, patio and walkways, a firepit, and an enclosed storage area.

Over the past few years, my company has been aggressively adding hardscape features such as patios and retaining walls to our deck projects. This is partly in response to our clients' expectations, which have been influenced by what they've seen done by their neighbors or on YouTube and TV, and partly due to the rolling hills of our area and the need to get creative with maximizing backyard spaces. Not only has this kept us busy, especially during the early stages of the COVID-19-related shutdown as we were deemed to be an "essential service," but it has also added a growing repertoire of tools and building techniques to our formerly deck-centric construction company.

The project featured in this article offers up a good example of our approach. Our client's home, which sits at the back corner of a development, has a yard that slopes in every direction. While that is fine for letting the dog run around, it's not so great when there isn't anywhere level to set a few chairs for family time or social events.

The core of our design was an elevated deck on the back of the house that would provide usable living space easily accessed from the main level via a 6-foot sliding door. But the home also had a fully finished walk-out basement with another 6-foot slider leading to the backyard, so we designed an outdoor living space that would allow our clients to entertain on multiple levels with maximum accessibility and functionality. Incorporating hardscaping elements into the design ensured that our clients' needs would be met and that the elements would work together cohesively, not just during the construction phase, but long-term as well.

SITE WORK

On a project like this, erosion and sediment (E&S) controls are typically dictated by local township regulations. E&S regs, in both their interpretation and engineering/paperwork requirements, depend on the municipality, ground-coverage rules, and overall project size. Generally, over the course of

50 to 100 projects a year, we may have two or three that require outside engineering or E&S documents, and maybe five to 10 more that can be handled by a discussion with the building code official or a clarifying in-house drawing while applying for the building permit.

The first stage was to clear out all of the unneeded dirt, or spoils, from the work area. Though when we quickly glance at a backyard to assess a job, it typically doesn't look like much dirt will need to be moved, we've learned that it's worth taking measurements and running a few calculations on larger projects. This one generated about six tri-axle dump-truck loads, or about 90 cubic yards of "junk dirt," of which we retained about two loads on site to help reshape the yard around the new spaces.

The junk dirt created some logistical concerns because it needed to be stockpiled outside the work area without risking runoff into a protected reserve and without blocking access from the driveway to the jobsite. In addition, as specified in the E&S drawing for this project, we had to install a silt fence.

Once the area was cleared, we used a Kubota KX040 mini-excavator to dig a 4-by-4-foot footing for the deck post that would support the corner of the deck. While there is a second support post, it is integrated into the front framed wall of an under-deck storage room that was part of the project, and we incorporated the below-grade footing for that post into the footings for that wall.

The soil on site was primarily a mix of rock and clay, which meant that we were able to dig a simple rectangular hole into the hillside for the storage room. To protect workers in other types of soils and deeper excavation depths, we often have to step back the excavation a couple of feet for every 4 to 6 feet of dig depth to prevent the sides of the excavation from collapsing.



The author's company owns a bulldozer, Kubota SSV65 and SCL1000 skidloaders, Boxer mini-skidloaders, a GMC Kodiak 6500 dump truck, a small tractor, and a Kubota KX040 compact excavator, which he uses for the site work on his projects.



After the site was leveled, the author used his Kubota excavator to dig for the footings for the deck and storage-room walls, and for the sitting walls at the corners of the patio.



Shown here is the formwork for the footings that will support an engineered block retaining wall needed to partially enclose a dry storage area underneath the deck.



Here, the block retaining wall is under construction. To reinforce the wall, the cores will be filled with concrete and rebar.

CONCRETE

Most of our jobs don't require a lot of concrete; for example, a typical 12x12 patio slab requires only about 2 yards of concrete. While that's too much to mix by hand, to avoid short load fees we generally order from metered concrete service providers that mix up exactly what we need on site, rather than ordering by the yard from a ready-mix plant. This eliminates most of the clean-out waste on site and makes ordering more accurate and efficient, since there are no wasted overages.

On this project, we ordered 6 yards of concrete to pour the deck footing, the storage-room wall footings, and the footings for two sitting walls on the patio all at the same time. Because the concrete company shipped us a "stump," which was left over from a prior government-building pour, this concrete had a pink color. While this was acceptable for the buried footers, it showed up "hot" and set up almost immediately once placed in the trenches, requiring substantial effort to get it to properly fill the forms.

Per the engineered plans for the storage-room footings and block walls, vertical and horizontal rebar reinforces the footing and wall, as well as the connection between the wall and the slab floor. As we laid up the block work for the storage-room wall—which acts as a retaining wall—to bring it up past grade, we carefully backfilled with clean, crushed stone. On the exterior, the crushed stone around the footing drain and between the block wall and the dirt facilitates drainage and limits freeze/thaw pressure against the blockwork. On the interior, we used the crushed stone to provide a sub-base for the concrete slab floor.

After we built the block walls, we filled the cores with concrete at the same time we poured the interior floor slab for the storage room.

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After the retaining wall was built, the author used his Kubota SSV65 skid loader to lift the heavy deck beam into position, so that the crew could begin framing the deck.



Workers poured the concrete slab floor for the storage room while the rest of the crew worked on the deck framing.

DECK

The storage-room walls needed to be completed before we could finish framing the deck. Because we weren't subcontracting either aspect of the job, we were able to partially build the deck's frame as the block walls were being built. In addition, having our excavation equipment on site allowed us to easily lift the deck's heavy engineered laminated beam into position, with one end supported by the block wall. This

in turn allowed us to quickly finalize the deck frame shortly after the block walls were finished, which helped move our project schedule along. After we framed the deck, we installed an EPDM rubber under-deck drainage system to protect both the storage room and the open-air living space below the deck. For spaces that are sealed, such as the storage room, it's essential to water-test the drainage membrane and provide good ventilation.

PATIO

Because of the overall size of the patio and the slope of the yard, we opted to partially build the outside sitting walls at the corners of the patio prior to finalizing the patio elevation and installing the pavers. This allowed us to adjust the wall heights as needed for uniform and consistent seating. While this approach required more patio protection in the form of drop cloths to limit mortar and foot-traffic dirt and added post-project clean-up, such as a heavy scrubbing of the masonry dust that is inevitable on a project like this, these extra efforts kept us from having to redo any work.

Visually, our goal was to have the sitting walls to appear parallel with the patio (which has a slight slope away from the house for drainage), but the walls also need to appear level from the outside as well. For L-shaped walls that extend around corners (as the ones on both sides of this patio do), this requires a little fudging both during the patio installation and while establishing the wall heights; a 12-foot-long sitting wall next to a patio with a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-per-foot slope would generate a 3-inch seat-height difference, which is noticeable.

Generally, we can absorb an inch of height difference in a sitting wall over 10 to 12 feet of length, as long as we stay between 16 to 18 inches in height—any higher or lower, and we've found that people will notice the difference when they sit down. We can also adjust the patio grade so the patio stops pitching out toward the yard, and is installed level along the wall, and then pitches toward the center of the patio, before pitching back to the front yard edge. Basically, it's a multipitched patio that still drains, rather than a flat, single-slope patio.

The block sitting walls are supported by poured concrete footings below frostline and finished with manufactured stone veneer. The walls are



The block sitting walls at the corners of the cast-stone-paver patio are supported by full below-frostline footings.



The corner footings prevent heaves and cracks in the sitting walls and stabilize the edges of the patio.



The block walls are finished with manufactured stone veneer.



The sitting walls are capped with manufactured pavers that match the edging around the sunken fire pit. A layer of straw helps protect the newly graded and re-seeded lawn from erosion while the grass takes root.

capped with manufactured pavers that match the step edge and cap used along the sunken fire-pit area. For the patio, we used oversized Cambridge cast-stone bluestone-blend pavers in a three-piece pattern.

We installed a built-in fire pit using natural stone that our clients had selected from a local quarry. To provide access from the patio area in front of the storage room to the side yard, we installed stone steps using manufactured stone treads. These steps also help to retain the hillside and let us adjust the ground height between the deck and

the steps, and then from the steps out to the yard, for a more natural look.

The final grading around a project like this is extremely important. Bringing the dirt up high enough to properly support the patio and walls while gently grading it away from the project helps to divert rainwater away. Having extra dirt on site allowed us to finesse the grading; once we were finished, we removed one final load of spoils and debris.

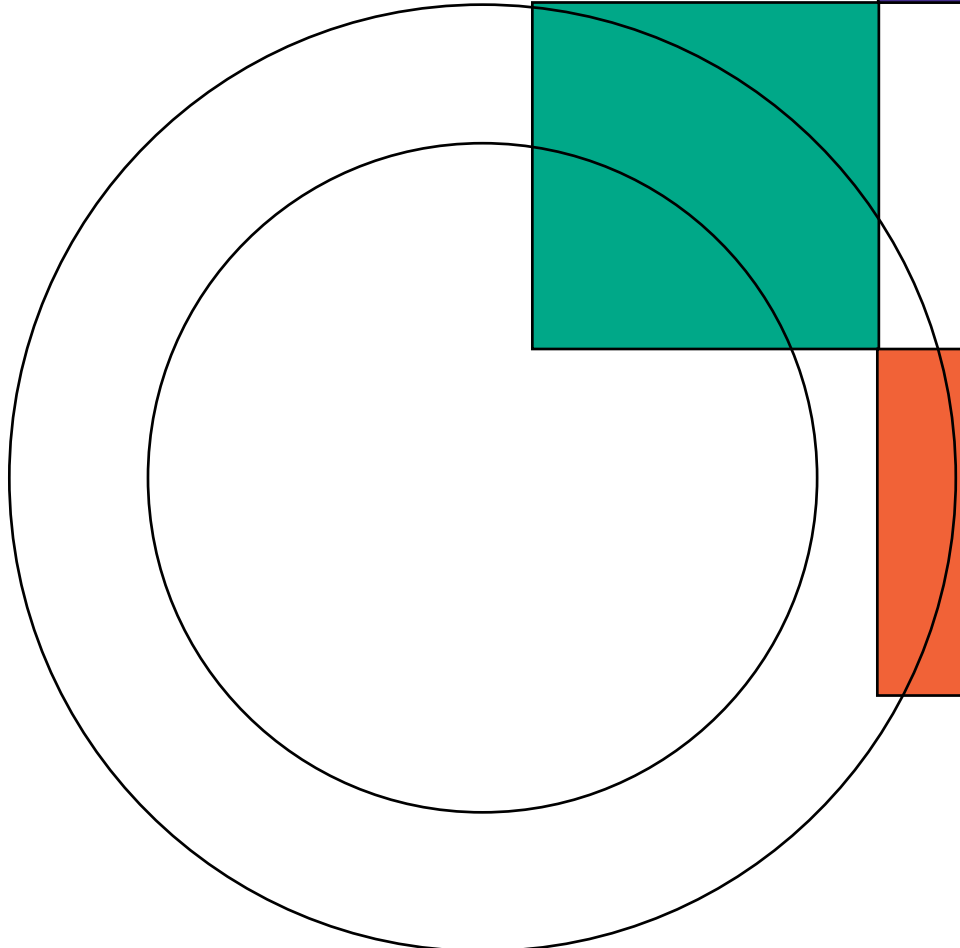
Finally, we raked out the site, first by machine and then by hand, adding top-dressing soil as needed. To prevent

the newly seeded dirt from washing away in heavy rain, we used a mixture of straw bales broken down and spread by hand, finely-chopped straw with a tackifier added to keep it from blowing away, and rolls of straw netting.

Matthew Breyer is president of Breyer Construction and Landscape, in Reading, Pa., and current president of the North American Deck and Railing Association (NADRA). He's also a former chairman of NADRA's Education & Codes Committee. This article previously appeared in sister publication Professional Deck Builder.

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Heritage Pool Plus is an upgraded website designed for the Heritage Pool Supply Group customer. It allows users to buy local from trusted brands using time-saving features and faster page loads for a quicker and smoother online experience. The site is optimized for mobile, giving users the ability to order on the go.

The in-stock filter narrows product results down to what's available at a local branch. Color-coded product availability indicators provide quick visibility across branches.

Users can create their own reorder pads: simply search items and add to pad. Or copy items from open orders, invoices, or shopping cart then import/export item lists in Excel. The website also allows users to share saved pads across their company.

In addition, Heritage Parts+ has a full digital catalog of interactive parts schematics for many popular manufacturers across multiple product lines.

Contact: Heritage Pool Supply Group | heritagepoolplus.com



BufferZone Service Scheduling & Water Test Software

The new BufferZone software can schedule and keep track of service jobs, repairs and weekly cleaning routes. Water testing can be done in the field by blue tooth connection using the LaMotte Spin Lab to smart phone or tablet.

The in-store version can save time and money by incorporating two water labs. The Wave Test Strip Scanner and the Spin Lab. Either lab can be run by a click of the mouse.

Fast and cost effective, The Wave provides six water test in about 20 seconds, and costs about 18 cents. For a more comprehensive test, the Spin Lab provides up to ten tests in 1 minute.

"Our customers love the ease of the Wave Scanner and low cost per test," Richard DeLeo, Home Port's partner. "With the ability to run the Spin Lab they love the full spectrum of pool/spa water analysis needed for troubled pools."

Contact: Home Port Water Testing Systems | homeportcomputer.com



Mirage Pool Visualizer

Mirage Pool Visualizer, offered exclusively from Loop-Loc, is designed to provide users with an easy way to visualize Loop-Loc's luxury designer in-ground pool liners and safety pool covers. It gives a detailed preview of what any given pool liner or cover would look like.

Users can choose the shape, paver color, liner pattern or cover colors in as many variations as they like. Mirage also allows users to share their project images on social media.

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The company stays with both the homeowner and builder until the project is complete, ensuring that the pool builder is paid on time and in full. There are no consulting fees or prepayment penalties for homeowners, and there are never any costs for industry professionals.

In addition, Lyon Financial is a veteran-owned company and offers special military loan options.

Contact: Lyon Financial | lyonfinancial.net



Pool Pro Office

Pool Pro Office is the pool industry's premier all-in-one project management software developed specifically for pool builders and service companies, says Mark Richter, vice president of Pool Pro Office.

The software specializes in lead management, pricing, proposals, marketing, digital project folder, project scheduling in "The Ultimate Project Calendar", and customer communications. It also handles service and warranty, including routes, service calls, and more.

The easy-to-use software is customizable to the users' needs, and affordable for small or large organizations with options by monthly subscription. It includes unlimited projects, data, images, document storage, and support and training by someone that has been in the pool industry for almost four decades.

"We simplify pool builders' lives by putting everything all in ONE place," says Richter.

Contact: Pool Pro Office | poolprooffice.com



The Attendant

The Attendant is designed to control and monitor any pool equipment from existing manufacturers in the industry.

The cloud-based automation system continually monitors equipment, water quality and temperature to determine energy efficiency, and helps poolowners save money and lower their overall environmental impact.

Contact: Poolside Tech | poolside.tech

Product Profiles: Renovation & Repair



Mobile Live Retail & Service

RB's Mobile Live feature is specifically designed to help pool and spa retail and service businesses.

RB Mobile Live Retail provides better and faster service to customers with the retail Line Buster feature, mobile inventory look-ups and instant access to customer history and profiles. Retailers can use a tablet, integrated magnetic strip reader, and pocket barcode scanner to complete sales transactions, process credit cards and email receipts from any spot on the retail floor or in the parking lot.

Mobile Live Service allows service techs to easily view Scheduled Jobs along with the Customer's Information including equipment profiles, job notes, directions and pictures on record. All updates are immediately accessible. Mobile Live eliminates service forms, allows techs to record water test results, take payments at the job site, look up inventory and do physical inventory on their truck.

Contact: RB Retail & Service Solutions Software | rbretailandservicesolutions.com



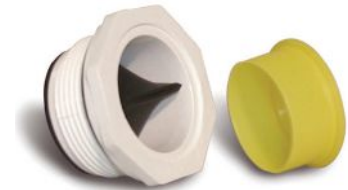
Tara Envision AR App

The Envision AR app is designed to give your customers a dynamic visual representation of their dream pool.

It offers extensive customization options to tailor each pool design to your client's preferences. Choose a pool shape and showcase the wide variety of Tara's liner patterns. Enhance the design by experimenting with deck colors, materials, safety covers, and sun shades. Effortlessly move and rotate the pool within their backyard to find the ideal placement. The app allows you to show the pool liner with or without water.

"The Envision AR app gives your customers a comprehensive understanding of their personalized pool oasis," says Thomas Kennedy, Tara's marketing director. "It is a user-friendly tool that will enhance the sales process by providing homeowners with an excellent understanding of how their new pool liner will look in their own backyard."

Contact: Tara Pool & Outdoor Products | tarapools.com



Winter Duck Plugs

Winter Duck Plugs are an essential product for "no drain" pool closings — they allow plumbing lines to be blown out while the pool water level remains above returns, says Brad Madison, technical sales manager at Anderson Manufacturing Co.

The unique "duck bill" valve design of the Duck Plug allows for high amounts of water flow with minimal resistance so lines can be cleared fast and with less strain on the blower. The heavy-duty rubber seals tight when water back pressure is applied and will not allow water back into the plumbing. This design eliminates the need for "burping" lines and makes blowing out plumbing lines into a fast, one-man job.

"This method of winterizing pools supports automatic covers and walls and conserves water," Madison says. "Winter Duck Plugs have been trusted to protect pools through the toughest winters for more than 10 years."

Contact: Anderson Mfg Co. | leaktools.com



Hydramatic Automatic Safety Cover

The motors of Aquamatic's Hydramatic covers run on hydraulic pressure rather than electricity. That means one-fourth the moving parts, no lubrication, and ropes that self-adjust, says Tom Dankel, cocreator of the AI-camera safety system built just for the pool industry. It takes only four bolts to assemble, making installation simple. Another time-saver is Aquamatic's patented cable compensator, which automatically aligns both sides of the cover as it extends and retracts. "Technicians are constantly telling us, 'I started your system up, and it worked right away with no fuss,'" Dankel says.

Every Aquamatic cover meets the ASTM F1346-91 safety standard and is custom-fitted down to the half-inch. Consumers can choose from 11 standard colors and six designer colors.

Contact: Aquamatic Cover Systems | aquamatic.com



REMORA XR1600 Portable Pool Vacuum

The REMORA XR1600 portable pool vacuum is designed for DIY or limited-access cleaning and features a wearable lithium battery pack, two-speed Smart Switch, short power cord, battery charger, debris bag, and carry handle.

Its run-time is approximately 50-75 minutes.

Contact: Hammerhead Patented Performance | hammerheadvac.com/remora



RuggedMesh

RuggedMesh offers the best of both worlds — the flexibility of a light-weight mesh cover plus the durability of a solid cover, says Meyco's Director of Sales Phil Saltzman.

RuggedMesh covers weigh just 6 ounces per square yard, almost 50% less than typical solid safety covers. RuggedMesh is designed to have greater tear and tensile strength than standard mesh covers and is perfect for pools up to 2,500 square feet. Its tight weave allows water to drain from the surface while filtering out finer particles.

"Its light weight makes RuggedMesh easy to install and remove between swim seasons," says Saltzman. "Our customers also have been really impressed with the excellent fit and durability."

All Meyco covers have thick straps and double perimeter webbing for increased tensile (break) strength. All covers also come with a 12-year limited warranty.

Contact: Meyco Pool Covers | meycocovert.com



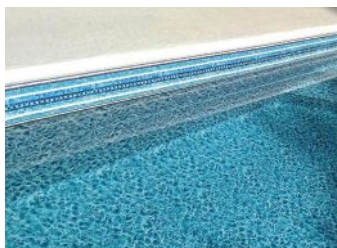
Ultrapen PT4 FCE Pocket Tester

The Ultrapen PT4 Free Chlorine Equivalent (FCE) Pocket Tester provides one-button, instantaneous, reagent-free pH, ORP and FCE testing in a rugged aluminum field tester.

Daniel Robinson, North American sales manager for Myron L Co., explains how it came about: The firm took decades of industry knowledge and combined that with years of pocket tester user feedback to design and build “the benchmark in accuracy, reliability and simplicity — the PT Series Ultrapens. By fully potting this product line in an aircraft aluminum tubular enclosure, it provides the toughest, most reliable pocket tester on the market.”

A quick-start guide, product data sheet/brochure and posters are available for the PT Series Ultrapens. They come with a manufacturer’s warranty.

Contact: Myron L Co. | myronl.com



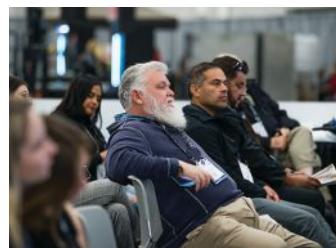
Pegasus Inground and Aboveground Vinyl Liners

Pegasus’ experienced engineers and products can accommodate a more comprehensive range of needs. “The quality of our product is second to none,” says Frank Patel, owner/president. “We have high standards that we adhere to, from raw goods to the finished products.” Patel cites the unique variety of patterns with a realistic appearance as being among the key features of his company’s products.

The material for the liners is made using virgin-grade vinyl that contains ultraviolet inhibitors as well as fungicide and biocide protectors. Using the latest in computer-aided design and cutting, Pegasus can customize its liners to fit its customers’ pools perfectly.

Technical support is available at the company’s toll-free number. A variety of marketing materials, including brochures, banners, fliers and liner material samples, are available upon request.

Contact: Pegasus Products | pegasus-products.com



C201: GENESIS Construction School: Concrete Pools

Attendees spend three days learning all of the necessary disciplines for building a structurally sound water vessel. Topics covered include site analysis, introductory fluid engineering, geotechnical and structural engineering that includes a review of difficult sites, shotcrete, waterproofing, tile, interior finishes, coping, and concrete decking. The course concludes with an interactive walkthrough of a complex project from start to finish.

“This program is designed to move each student through all phases of concrete pool construction in great detail, unlike anything else offered in the industry,” says Rocky Wisely, construction chairperson at PHTA. “Attendees have the opportunity to learn from top experts in their field, ask questions, and begin a relationship with the faculty that doesn’t end when the class is over.”

Contact: PHTA | genesis.phta.org



Carrousel Pump and U-Blend Mixer

The Carrousel Pump and U-Blend Mixer are designed to pump/spray and mix aggregated cement formulas with and without reinforcement fibers for the construction of manufactured rocks or artificial rocks, pools, waterfalls, faux rock sculptures and landscaping features.

"This equipment is being used worldwide because of its simplicity, dependability, ease of maintenance and operation," says Leah Barker, who handles sales and marketing for Quikspray. "It's recommended by many material manufacturers and contractors who are also spraying fireproofing, stucco, shotcrete, cement/plaster interior and exterior coatings, acoustics, waterproofing, texture coatings, and more."

The U-Blend Mixer has the ability to adjust the height of the legs to allow lower or higher dumping heights for a variety of containers as well as removable mixing blades for easy cleaning.

Contact: Quikspray Inc. | quikspray.com



Pool Safety Cover

Rayner Covering Systems manufactures duplicate and custom covers for residential and commercial pools.

The company uses materials such as mighty mesh, which offers 98% UVA/UVB protection; standard mesh, which offers 93% UVA/UVB protection; or solid vinyl, which provide 100% UVA/UVB protection.

All covers are webbed on top and bottom with 1-inch web that is double stitched with UVA/UVB-protected thread for durability.

Rayner offers free measuring and install (for fee) programs for pools as well as a repair program for existing covers.

"Individual attention is given to each customer for every order," says Richard Rayner, president. "Customers are very pleased with Rayner's ability to successfully cover very difficult or elaborate pools that other companies have turned down."

Contact: Rayner Covering Systems | raynercovering.com



Roll-On Cement Pool Plaster — Sider-Proof FF-PR

A cement-based, swimming pool plaster and resurfacing coating gunite and shotcrete pools, existing plaster and marcite, concrete and ICF swimming pools. It is packaged as a kit and easy-to-apply with a standard paint roller and smoothed with a MagicTrowel. It is suitable for residential, commercial, hot tubs, chlorine and salt water system application. This coating is also designed to coat and waterproof waterfalls, fountains and concrete ponds. This product is NOT a pool paint but a true cement-based swimming pool plaster and resurfacing coating.

The manufacturer describes the application as "easy as roll-it-on and blade-it-smooth!"

It comes in several standard pre-blended colors and custom colors, and also is available with premixed colored quartz.

A new instrumental video is now available on YouTube and sider-crete.com.

Contact: Sider-Crete Inc. | sider-crete.com



HS-1 SL

Deck-O-Seal HS-1 SL is a one-part, self-leveling hybrid sealant, developed with silyl-modified polymer (SMP) technology. It cures under the influence of atmospheric moisture to form a medium modulus sealant with excellent adhesive properties and resistance to ageing and weathering.

HS-1 SL is designed for horizontal expansion joints in swimming pool decks, patios, and sidewalks. HS-1 SL is self-leveling and does not need to be tooled.

It is packaged in a convenient easy-to-use 32-ounce pouch, which eliminates the need of a caulking gun that is required when using cartridges. The pouch comfortably fits in the hand for easy application.

"The HS-1 SL has become a fan favorite very quickly," says Jim Dill, the company's division manager. "This new innovated pouch really makes a difference in the ease of application."

Contact: W.R. Meadows Deck-O-Seal | deckoseal.com

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New Products

BY PSN STAFF

PRODUCT NEWS



SUPER PUMP® VS 700
VARIABLE-SPEED PUMP SERIES

Hayward

Hayward has announced that all of its full-featured variable-speed pumps are now ENERGY STAR certified. The full suite of variable-speed pumps includes four models: TriStar XL, TriStar 950/900, MaxFlo VS 500 and now Super Pump VS 700.

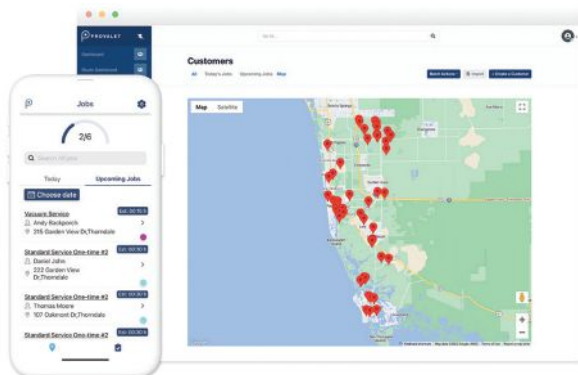
Contact: hayward.com



Millboard

The new, multi-use 126mm Enhanced Grain Slim Board features a strong polymer core which provides structure while also resisting the elements. They require minimal maintenance, are slip resistant, and won't warp or rot from moisture decay, algae, or harbor insects, say company officials.

Contact: outlive.info



Pure Coastal Technologies

An enhanced version of ProValet.io field service management software now offers an Integrated Service Request Module for instant communication; Interactive Real Time Calendar to help manage field technician scheduling; and enhanced Offline Mode to secure data and fully operate while offline.

Contact: provalet.io

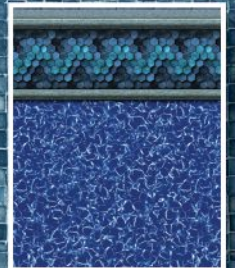


RENOLIT

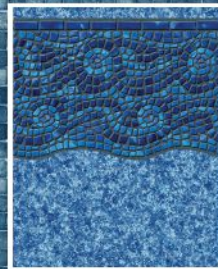
RENOLIT's new designer PVC interior finish, ALKORPLAN TOUCH-Prestige, is a textured, reinforced PVC membrane inspired by natural elements and imitates the look and feel of volcanic stone. This 80mil-thick reinforced PVC is ideal for modern or traditional pool décor.

Contact: renolit.com/pool

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