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Pool and Spa News

MASTERS OF DESIGN

page 19



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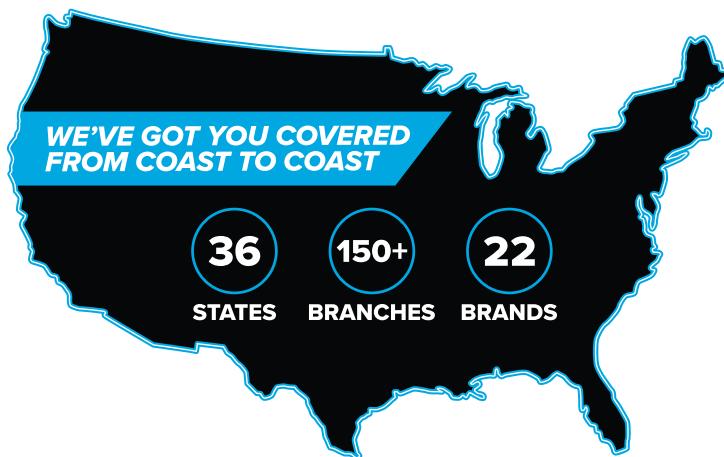


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This Year's Masters of Design Takeaways



Rebecca Robledo
Deputy Editor, PSN

YOU HOLD IN YOUR HANDS (OR click on your screen) one of my favorite issues each year, our annual Masters of Design edition. Here, we honor some of the smartest, most beautiful residential pools, spas and waterfeatures recently constructed, both new builds and renovations.

Among the reasons I love this program: The chance to view design in different ways, or see unique approaches to established principles. Some highlights:

- **Placement makes all the difference.** Every day, pool/spa designers and builders become more skillful at creating complex features such as Lautner edges or see-through acrylic vanishing-edge walls. Meanwhile, vendors make it easier to install once-difficult projects, providing fail-safe systems and equipment, or offering more luxury materials — or believable imitations.

But astute placement and creative plotting of these features can make a space more than the sum of its parts.

The backyard featured in “Ripple Effect” (page 20) is one of several that present proof positive of this. Where a previous designer had specified an ordinary rectangle, the team that took over observed the home architect’s work and picked up where he left off. This didn’t just mean replicating materials and lines used in the home, but plotting each feature to radiate off a single point, just like the casita the architect had designed. Every element serves that overriding objective.

As such, several features bear more of a fan shape, or rest at angles slightly different from what you’d expect.

The layout becomes very obvious in the overhead drone photos (available at poolspace.com). But even on the ground, there’s a sense of cohesion and precision in the space that you can’t miss.

- **A challenge is really an opportuni-**

ty to create something unique. On the property featured in “Fine Lines and Finesse,” (page 45), designer Randy Angell was faced with a home and pool sitting at odd angles to one another. He looked for a way that the path between the two could ease the transition. The effort yielded a striking stone paver pattern set in turf, converting what could have been an awkward area into a unique feature.

That’s a common approach for Angell. “I lean into it,” says the CEO of Randy Angell Designs in Plano, Texas. “If there’s something that’s unexpected or that some would see as a challenge or a negative, I like to use that as a positive and shift the energy around so it becomes one of the key features instead of something you try to hide.”

- **A new way to look at artificial turf.** Artificial turf counts among the “faux” products that have become more realistic and easy to use over the past several years, earning converts among those who previously never would have used it.

That includes one of our honorees — Mike Farley, lead designer with Claffey Pools in Southlake, Texas. “I didn’t like turf for a long time, but I just put 750 square feet of it in my backyard,” he says.

It’s true that these materials have improved, that they remain green all year round, and save water and maintenance. It also can be easier than sod to use around pavers or near the pool where it could be subject to chemically treated splashout, or in tight spaces.

But the tipping point in Farley’s conversion may have been seeing how end users interact with it. “People use turf like carpet — they lay on it and play on it,” he says. “Nobody does that on concrete or limestone deck.”

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Study Compares Equipotential Bonding Methods

FSPA's Pool Industry Council works to forward discussion on what codes should allow.

by **REBECCA ROBLEDO**

THE FLORIDA SWIMMING POOL ASSOCIATION'S RESEARCH AND education nonprofit has conducted a study that it says supports the allowance of a single #8 AWG copper wire loop as an option for the equipotential bonding of pools and spas.

The Pool Industry Council (PIC), an independently run group, studied nine recently built pools to compare the performance of the wires and copper bonding grids. The motivation came from the long-standing debate over whether the National Electrical Code (NEC) should include the wires — the most common method — as an option or require copper or steel grids on every pool. Over the past couple decades, the NEC, upon which many state and municipal codes are based, has gone back and forth on the issue. Once again, the National Fire Pro-

tection Association, which writes the NEC, seems poised to remove the wire option, having published a Tentative Interim Amendment (TIA) saying grids only should be used. While not officially part of the code, TIAs often become adopted at the next code-revision cycle.

"The Pool Industry Council thought it was worth everybody's time and investment to get a complete in-field study of the issue, establish an objective threshold for what bonding is supposed to accomplish, and see how the methods stack up to an objective standard," said Dallas Thiesen, FSPA's chief government relations officer.

PIC commissioned SunSmart Engineering to perform the study on perimeter bonding, meaning bonding in the area within 3 feet of the water's edge. Over the course of nine and a half weeks, the company looked at nine residential pools in Central Florida. Among the pools were three concrete models with the grid and three concrete pools with the wire. Also studied was a fiberglass pool outfitted with a stainless steel plate in the skimmer and a wire (since it has no rebar, making it non-conductive). They were built by three different contractors, all complying with the 2023 NEC.

"This sort of test method, [done] in the wild to real-world pools, was never done before," said John Antonelli, vice president of engineering for SunSmart Engineering, based in Lake Mary, Fla. "A lot of the research into the subject was either done at a single pool that may or may not have had incidence of shock, or in a lab ..."

The researchers concluded that, while the grids performed slightly better than the wire, both fell well within the performance parameters for human safety.

"The bottom line is that both methods of perimeter bonding tested ... work to effectively mitigate equipotential voltage issues and can confidently be used to bond swimming pools and spas when installed properly," Antonelli said.

The Pool & Hot Tub Alliance contributed technical guidance and funding for the study.

Bestway, Intex and Polygroup Perform Recall

A RECALL OF CERTAIN ABOVE ground pools is being performed in cooperation with the Consumer Product Safety Commission and Health Canada.

Some models measuring 48 inches or more in height and sold by Bestway, Intex and Polygroup are deemed a potential hazard. They include compression straps that run around the outside perimeter of each pool, covering the legs. Originally designed to maintain the products' structural integrity, CPSC and the manufacturers said, these straps also could function as a foothold for children to climb in the pool unsupervised.

Bestway and Coleman models being recalled, all sold between 2008 and 2024, include Power Steel, Steel Pro, and Coleman Power Steel. Affected Intex models, all sold between 2002 and 2012, include Metal Frame and Ultra Frame. Intex models sold on Intexcorp.com and Walmart between 2024 to 2025 include Prism Frame and Ultra XTR Frame. Polygroup models, sold from 2006 to 2025, include Summer Waves, Summer Escapes, Funsicle, Sand n Sun, and Blue Wave.

The pools do not meet a standard released by CPSC last May to safeguard against such foothold hazards in abovegrounds. The agency said most aboveground pools 48 inches and taller currently on the market meet the standard.

Customers with pools named in the recall can receive a free repair kit from Bestway, Intex, and Polygroup. The kit includes a rope that attaches to each of the vertical support poles at ground level and wraps around the pool to maintain its structure. This will replace the existing compression strap.

Each of the three manufacturers' websites include dedicated pages addressing the recall.

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KAVANAUGH JOINS WPSS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Industry veteran Michelle Kavanaugh now will serve on the Board of Directors for the Western Pool & Spa Show.

She is founder of consulting firm Michelle Kavanaugh Inc. Previous leadership roles include executive director of the California Pool & Spa Association, as well as serving 14 years with the National Swimming Pool Foundation, where she led mission development, managed the CPO Certification program, and produced its events.

VIKING NAMES NEW PRESIDENT

Viking Spas, a hot tub manufactured based in the city of Wyoming, Mich., has named a new president after the retirement of John Clark in June.

Taking the helm is A.J. Gallagher, the firm's previous COO, who brings more than 25 years of spa-industry experience.

"I'm honored to lead Viking Spas into this next chapter," Gallagher said. "This company means a lot to me — it's part of my family."

Clark worked at Viking since 2006, when he joined as CFO. The company credits him with guiding it to achieve two decades of steady growth. "I'm incredibly proud of the team we've built and all we've accomplished together," he said. "I'm confident that Viking is in the best possible hands moving forward."

EASTON SELECT NAMES VP OF SALES AND TRAINING

Easton Select Group has named Roy Harrison as its vice president of sales and training.

Harrison will oversee sales strategy, training programs, and growth initiatives for the Easton, Mass.-based firm's expanding Plunge Plus pool and service divisions.

He brings more than 25 years of experience in sales and field training leadership, including a decade and a half at Pentair Aquatic Systems and Hayward Industries.

"Roy brings the perfect blend of technical depth, sales leadership, and industry credibility to Easton Select Group," said CEO Tim Dooling. "... As we expand our national presence, Roy's leadership will strengthen our ability to support local professionals and scale our impact ..."

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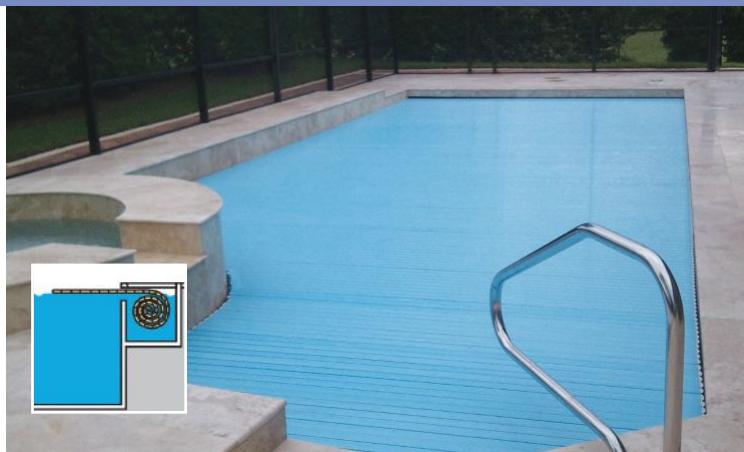
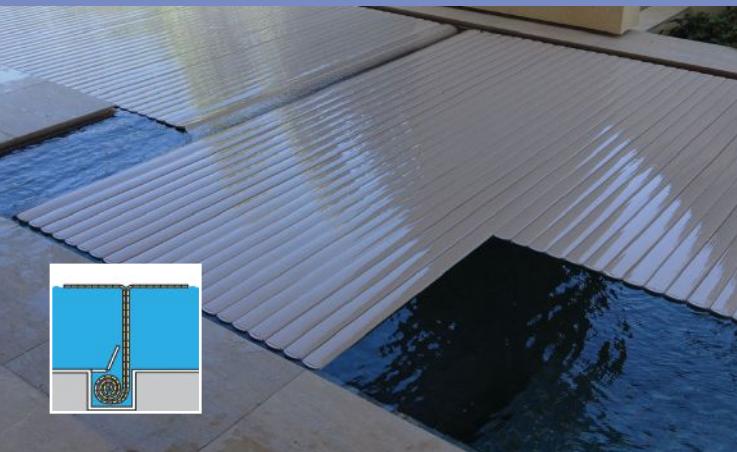


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Glowing Examples

The 2025 *PSN* Masters of Design honorees show what can be achieved with the right combination of intention, innovation and instinct.

by *Rebecca Robledo*



JOSE SERRATO PHOTOGRAPHY



CONCRETE

Ripple Effect

Following the architecture's cue, this backyard and waterscape radiate off a single point like ripples from a raindrop.



PATRICK CLOONAN, Founder/Landscape Architect
Cloonan Design Services
Willoughby, Ohio

JEFF HAMMERSCHMIDT, President/Co-owner
JERRY HAMMERSCHMIDT, Operations Manager/
Co-owner
High-Tech Pools
North Olmstead, Ohio

Nothing can replace the power of collaboration, especially when it spans decades. See this project as concrete proof.

High-Tech Pools of North Olmstead, Ohio, has been partnering with Cloonan Design Services of Willoughby, Ohio for 32 years. Here, they joined forces on a riverside property with a home and casita designed by George Clemens Architecture of Chagrin Falls, Ohio.

While the home and casita face different directions, Clemens oriented the two structures to radiate off the same center point. Combined, they form a perfect arc. In designing the backyard, Pat Cloonan continued the thought.

It didn't start like that, explains the founder and a landscape architect with the company that bears his name.

"When I first became involved, there was a rectangular pool just like every other pool," he recalls. "I said, 'No, that's not going to work.' The inspiration for the pool and backyard was the architect — I really wanted to play off the different radial patterns."

Just as the home is designed in a layered approach with multiple roofs, this outdoor living space uses elevation change, with borders radiating from that same center point as the casita.

FRONT TO BACK

The pool has different usage zones. Nearest the casita and to one side sits the children's play pool, with a climbing wall and a slide that wraps around from behind. Its orientation, along with the tan materials, make the slide as inconspicuous as possible, so it doesn't intrude on the design.

The fan-shaped vanishing-edge main pool, placed directly in front of the casita, provides more of a draw for adults. Near the overhang, people can sit on one of the swim-up stools and chat with those finding shelter there. A deck finished in wood-like porcelain tile accommodates furniture for dry lounging, while a shallow, 6-inch wading pool enables wet lounging to the side. Sweeping from one side to the



other — from the wood deck to the center pool to the tanning ledge — they combine to form an arc similar to that found on the roof of the home.

Throughout this backyard, elements such as the planter and stepping pads are plotted to continue the movement of lines radiating from the center point. But the stepping pads didn't just reinforce that rhythm, Cloonan says. "[They] allow you to have a really dramatic experience, like pulling you out of the casita into the fire pit area," he says. "It feels almost like you're able to walk across the water."

VIEW FROM HERE

The scene was made all the more dramatic by the 36-foot-long, see-through acrylic vanishing-edge wall. Besides adding to the sleek, modern look of the space, the team at High-Tech suggested a clear wall to preserve as much of the view as possible of the Chagrin River, 125 feet below.

"If you're standing in the casita, you're looking at the long portion of a Z bend in the river out in the distance," says Jerry Hammerschmidt, operations manager and co-owner with High-Tech Pools. "If there was no acrylic panel, you'd be able to [visually] connect the water at the weir in the distance to the river, but ... you omit the long portion of the Z in the view."

Laminar arcs shoot from behind the vanishing edge and into the pool, making for a fun feature. "The laminars create like a tunnel," Cloonan says. "You can walk through them, which creates an amazing space and ambient feel."

Color-changing lights on the laminar jets and vertical sprays in the wading pool add another sensory layer.

"Every step you take, you're walking toward a destination, and ... every different angle is creating a completely different experience," Cloonan says.

The child's pool includes a climbing wall, seen to the left. More adult-leaning features include underwater barstools by the casita and plenty of wet and dry lounging.

At night, the spa with fire-and-water feature takes the spotlight. Though perhaps not obvious to the naked eye, the spa isn't a perfect rectangle. Conforming with the same plot of radiated lines, it has a fan shape like the other main elements, with the back wall slightly wider than the front portion.

High-Tech pulled off an effect rarely seen in backyards, physically combining the fire and water. The team did this by submerging the fire ring under water and introducing gas bubbles under the surface, and installing an igniter just above it. As the gas bubbles float up to the surface, they are lit by the igniter to create the fire.

To provide proper setbacks for the fire ring and install the glass mosaic tile around the slight curves with fewer cuts than you could count on both hands, the team needed to show extreme precision.

"We were down to about 1/16-inch in terms of tolerance," says High-Tech president/co-owner Jeff Hammerschmidt.

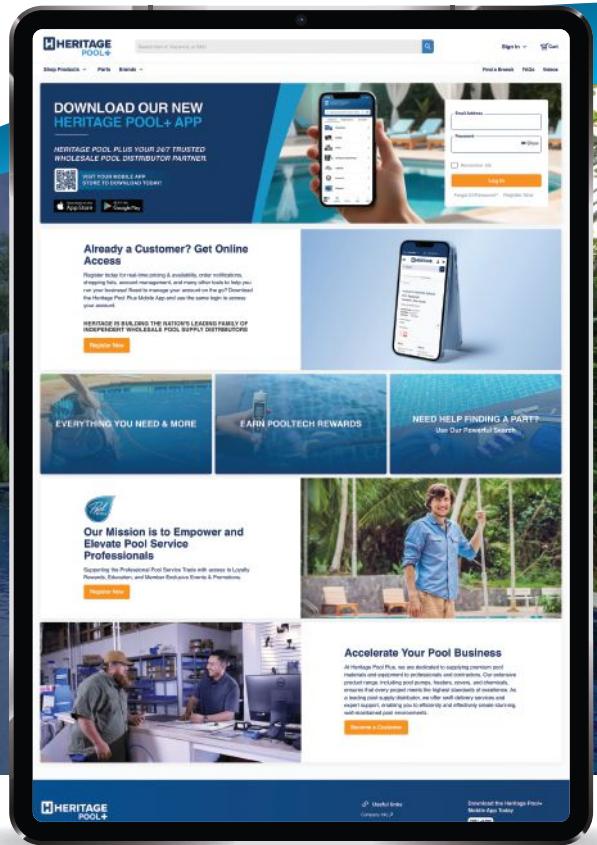
The spa includes what the collaborating firms have come to call a "king seat." Developed on their mutual projects over the years, these custom seats are sculpted based on the clients' measurements and include jets behind the back and calves and under the feet.

"The evolution of the king seat was 25 years or so ago," Jeff Hammerschmidt explains. "We started doing that for Pat Cloonan, when he said, 'I was at a [resort] where they had calf jets, why don't we put those in the seat?' Then our construction manager said, 'I was in Mexico and they had jets right on the soles of your feet,' so the king seat developed even further. So it was really an evolution, and now we're putting them in all over the place."

To preserve the acrylic panel and fire feature through winter, the pool and spa are both designed to run year-round with the water at 65 degrees Fahrenheit year round to make sure the acrylic doesn't get below its lowest tolerance point.



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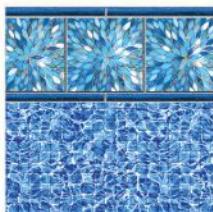


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CONCRETE

Circular Logic

Thanks to a perceptive designer, a client's unarticulated love for the eternal shape inspired this geometric study.

CB STANLEY, Principle Designer

BRIAN DRURY-SPIRES, Owner/Operator

MARCUS TIPTON, Owner/Operator
Tipton Spires Design | Build

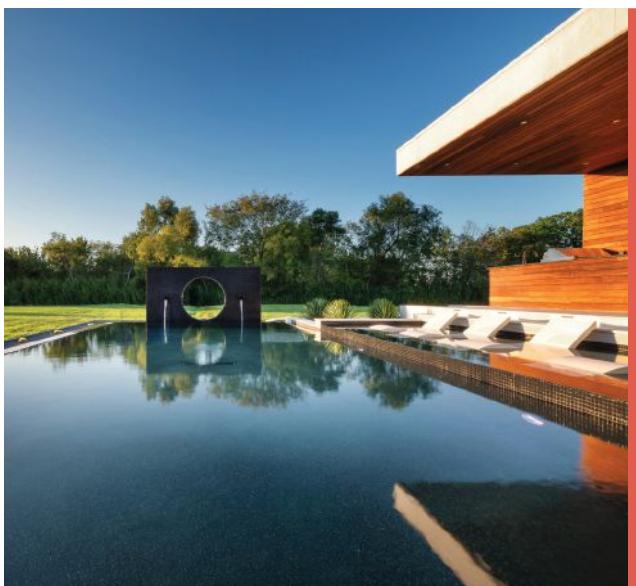
Seabrook, Texas

Every now and then, something a client didn't even think was worth mentioning can guide the completed design.

Assessing this property, set in a rural area, started by observing the architecture — all bold geometry clad in stucco accented by crystal-laced, black onyx Lueders stone and porcelain tile made to look like wood. One thing disrupted the horizontal lines — a rounded rotunda that features a 500-gallon built-in aquarium.

In addition to noticing the contrast the rotunda introduced, the design team also picked up on something that one of the clients hadn't thought to share.

"She loves circles," says CB Stanley, principal designer with Tipton Spires Design | Build in Seabrook, Texas. "She never specifically said she liked



circles, but ... I assumed that because she was wearing a shirt with circles on it, and there were circles all over the house, like architectural elements.”

In addition to the rotunda, major examples included a roundabout at the motor court and a portico cover featuring a large circle. Right away, he knew he'd use the primary form to provide contrast and drama to an otherwise linear yard and water design.

He accomplished this to beautiful effect in the backyard, which also marries long horizontal lines with bold

material contrasts to reflect the home architecture.

DRAMATIC CONTRASTS

Most of the backyard is completely linear. White limestone serves as the primary finish material, covering the horizontal surfaces, while black glass tile blankets the vertical surfaces throughout.

This applies to the true show stopper in the yard — an 8-foot-tall, 14-foot-wide moon gate finished in black mosaic tile, amidst the light limestone. The large round cutout not only added a bold contrast but framed the views in the client's favorite shape. Stanley placed the architectural element in view of the front door to draw people through the home.

On the back side, drama is layered upon drama as a rectangle, white limestone fire pit sits perpendicular to the moon gate.

Stanley provided more circular disruption by introducing a raised perimeter-overflow spa to the poolscape. Seeming to rise from three floating square concrete deck pads, the spa is finished in black mosaic, like the raised walls of the pool. It features lighting in the catch basin, under the floating pads, to add more depth at night

“I used the two circles as anchors — the hot tub is at the front of the pool, and the moon gate is at the back,” Stanley explains.

The waterscape is layered in terms of elevation, as the spa perches at home level, while the moon gate, vanishing-edge catch basin and fire pit lounging area drop 24 inches down, and the main pool and sun shelf hover at different elevations in between.

When all was said and done, the client appreciated Stanley's keen perception.

“After I did the design and we gave the presentation, she asked, ‘How did you know I loved circles?’” Stanley says. “I joked, ‘Well you're wearing circles right now!’”

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CONCRETE

Organic Flow

Strategic elevation changes, unexpected angles, and an attention-grabbing radius work to showcase the natural and manmade wonders in this backyard.

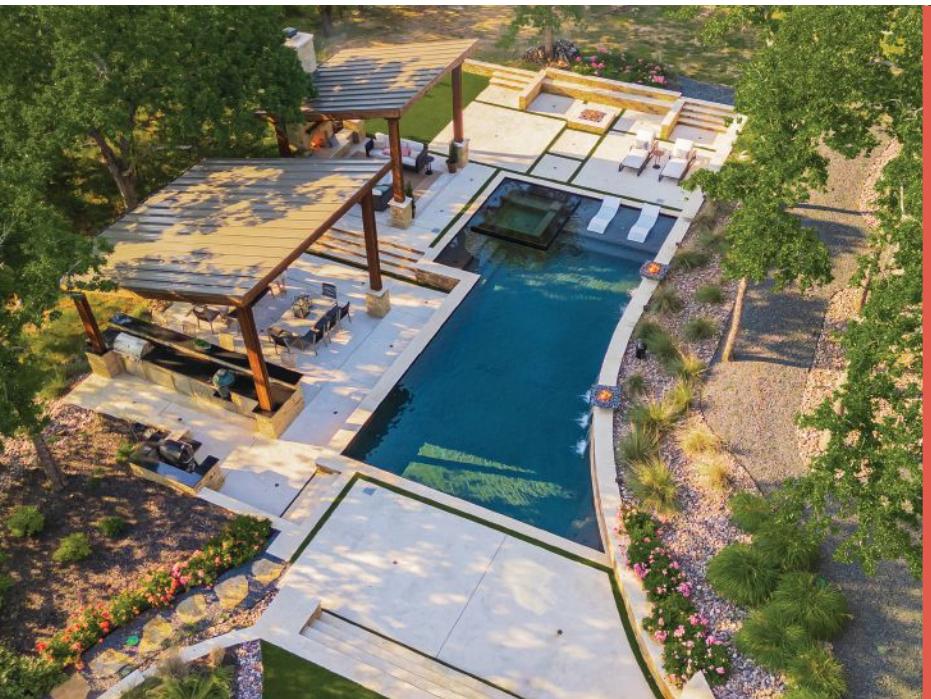
MIKE FARLEY, Lead Designer
Claffey Pools
Southlake, Texas

In the design credits, Mother Nature deserves a nod when it comes to this organic modern backyard.

For the human designer, Mike Farley, plotting this backyard was largely an exercise in responsiveness, accommodating the plot's topography and vegetation, as well as the homeowner's wishes and Farley's own standards.

The homeowners wanted to preserve as many trees as possible on the wooden hillside lot. In addition, Farley had to design around a somewhat complex topography.

"The grade was very unique in that it went down then back up," says Farley, elite design consultant with Claffey Pools in Southlake, Texas. "Then there was a cross slope that went across it, and that dropped down. So there was almost like a gully in the middle of it. We had to work with all these eleva-



tions to keep as many trees as possible.”

Farley used strategic elevation changes, unexpected angles, and an eye-catching sweeping radius to properly showcase the waterscape and expansive vista while preserving the woods as much as possible.

MAINTAINING PERSPECTIVE

Even with all the twists, turns and folding contours, of course, Farley wanted to frame the water and view of the valley below in the best way possible from the home’s key view corridors.

The goal of preserving trees ruled out the possibility of placing the pool directly next to the home, let alone raising it to the same level with the use of fill and retaining walls. Farley had to set it kitty-corner to the house, about 25 feet lower.

So Farley used the pool’s lines to position main features in view of the living room. By bending one side with a sweeping radius, for instance, the designer set the first trio of sheet waterfalls in view from the living room. He paired the two groups of sheet falls with a water bowl.

“When we came in with this sweeping curve, it created a false perspective, because the pool is wider, then tapers,” Farley adds. “So it plays with the vista.” Farley says.

It’s a strategy Farley likes when working with geometric shapes, to get away from the repetition of straight rectangles. “When clients are talking about clean and tailored looks, I’ll ask if they’re interested in using a curve,” he says.

The sweeping arc of the pool’s wall brings the first trio of sheet waterfalls into view of the living room and provides an alternative to a straight rectangle.

“A curve can be very dramatic and lead the eye. This is one of my most effective ones: The curve draws your eye down the space farther, so you’re looking down the length of it.”

Two cabanas were carefully placed where they don’t interrupt the view of the valley or require tree removal. One shelters an outdoor living room, with a fireplace, couch and chairs. This was oriented so that you could look straight at the fireplace from the perimeter-overflow spa in the back of the pool. The spa is elevated only 2 inches above the pool’s waterline so it would inconspicuously fit within the pool’s footprint.

Then, 24 inches lower than the living room cabana, the other covers a kitchen area with two tables, a full bar and appliances. Farley split the space in two cabanas rather than one to follow the contours of the property.

The 20-foot-wide steps between the cabanas eases circulation. During parties, for instance, revellers can stop and chat while still allowing others to walk past. “There’s not a tunneled pattern of circulation,” Farley explains.

Angling the roofs up from back to front provides tighter shelter in the back, particularly shielding the kitchen appliances from rain when it falls. The roof angle also offers a bigger view when looking out the front. Farley also saw it as a better alternative for the modern design than a gable or hip roof.

For architectural interest, the cabana columns are made of three 2-by-12 pieces of lumber, set with 2-inch gaps in between. Masonry wraps around the columns at the bottom 3 feet. Underneath the stonework, there is no gap between boards, but rather five boards sandwiched together. This was all signed off by an engineer to make sure that the unique column structure would provide proper support.

Farley was able to design the 5-acre wooded property, which he estimated to start with about 100 trees, by removing only six.



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CONCRETE

Window to Usonia

A design team helps homeowners in their quest to convert their home and backyard into a Frank Lloyd Wright homage.

RANDY ANGELL, CEO
Randy Angell Designs
Plano, Texas

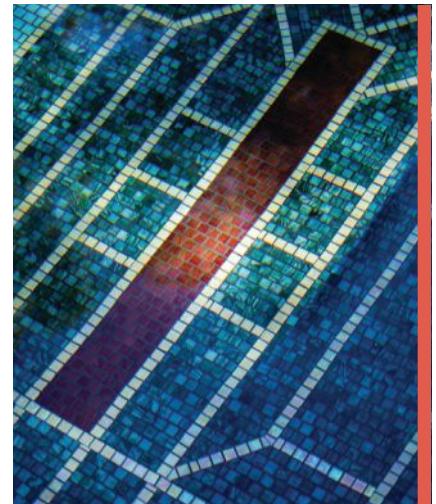
RAY CORRAL, Founder/CEO
Mosaicist
Miami

Randy Angell has always been a fan of Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian style.

Homes under that category, named by Wright, were mostly built between the 1930s and 1950s and were meant to offer a more affordable version of his trademark Prairie School architecture. It still emphasized forming a connection with nature, but also employed more simplicity. The homes often featured low, flat roofs with large overhangs, strong horizontal elements, and natural materials including brick, stone, wood and steel. Wright also designed stained glass windows and tile patterns for some of these homes.

On this project, Angell found a client whose love of Wright rivaled his own.

"Usonian style has been a major influence in my overall design aesthetic," says the CEO of Randy Angell Designs,



based in Plano, Texas. “So it was really fun to have this client come to me who is also very much a lover of that style.”

STYLISTIC DEDICATION

Incorporating the Usonian style wouldn’t be as straightforward as one might hope.

The home exterior bore no Wright influence. However, the homeowners had spent years modifying the interior. “When you walk through the front door, suddenly you’re transformed into this Usonian world,” Angell says. “They stripped down the whole interior of the house and brought in all wood elements and stained glass elements.”

They also added stone floors, custom tile work, and detailing in copper, brass and bronze. They even had a Wright-influenced tile custom created for their elevator.

“The final piece in the puzzle was to continue this feel out in the back,” Angell says.

Fortunately, the lay of the land meshed perfectly with the Wright aesthetic, with expansive, heavily wooded acreage and a natural pond and creek. “He always liked his homes to feel like they grew out of the land,” Angell says. “A lot of that influence played a role in the vision for this backyard.”

The existing pool was basic, with concrete paver deck and coping, and a white plaster interior. But the geometric shape didn’t quite qualify as a rectangle. Narrower at the deep end, it flares out significantly at the shallow end, where the corners are beveled. It has no parallel or perpendicular lines, and no 90-degree angles. “It is one of the most bizarre shapes I’ve ever seen,” Angell says.

But as he saw it, the pool shape fit. “It plays into how Frank Lloyd Wright always experimented with different an-

An existing stacked-stone fireplace was refurbished and sheltered in one of three new shade structures, left. Seen above right, a detail of the Wright-inspired mosaic commissioned for the pool floor.

gles,” Angell says. “He used 30-degree and 60-degree angles a lot.

So he kept the shape as it was. For the pool interior, he adopted Wright’s practice of creating patterns that would be repeated throughout a home, whether it be on a stained-glass window, carpet, tile or stone work. He commissioned tile artist Ray Corral of Miami-based Mosaicist to recreate a pattern from inside the house for a pool mosaic.

The backyard included another existing element that worked in the redesign — a substantial stacked-stone fireplace. Angell not only kept it but sheltered it in one of three flat-roofed shade structures. “Following the Usonian style, I wanted to do the layered look as opposed to one big, flat roof,” Angell says. “Sometimes Wright staggered and overlapped roofs and had them at different heights.”

The tallest structure shelters the seating area, which as a soft and chairs. The mid level covers the fireplace, with its intricate screen work. Then the smallest and lowest structure, behind the fireplace, covers the outdoor kitchen.

“The shade structure is similar to the shape of the pool,” Angell explains. “There might be right angles, but the shade structures are narrow at one end and wide at the other, then set at different angles from one another.”

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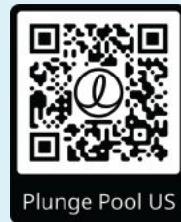
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CONCRETE

Tropical Retreat

This Florida residence received the resort treatment.

CAROLINA MONTEIRO, Principal
CLAD
Miami

JEREMY GUILLEN, Vice President
CPS Outdoors
Miami

The clients asked the design team to create a resort in their backyard, one at home in its lush, tropical environs and bayside view on Star Island, an exclusive luxury neighborhood. They wanted to enjoy a space that could support the whole energy spectrum — from the noisier vibe of entertaining guests to a more calming, grounding atmosphere for wellness and relaxation.

As for specific features, they gravitated toward having a vanishing-edge pool, floating stepping stones, spa, and an outdoor kitchen with a wrap-around waterfeature nearby.

And, of course, the outdoor living space would need to fit the home's modern architecture and borrow from its palette of earthy neutrals. That included natural materials such as wood, stone, and stucco. The home was built



Generous lounging opportunities provide the resort feel, while the green stone tile in the pool adds to the tropical flavor.

to foster a strong indoor-outdoor connection, so the designers needed to take full advantage.

To meet the clients' needs, the team developed this residential resort.

SLEEK LINES

Landscape architect Carolina Monteiro, principal of Miami-based CLAD, interwove the space's geometry into that of the home by placing it in the corner where the two wings of the building meet.

Anchoring the yard is a two-sided vanishing-edge pool, built by CPS Outdoors, also based in Miami. The designer aligned the long rectangle with the home's major view corridors to properly frame the bay beyond.

The resort vibe is strong, with plenty of lounging spots. A spa sits tucked away near the home wall, offering a quiet spot to soak. It sits in proximity to the pool's entry steps, which span the full width of the vessel and has a top tread wide enough for people to sit and socialize with those in the spa. Another, separate, sunshelf with loungers and tables spans nearly the entire length of the pool.

Two floating islands, each with its own daybed and umbrella, sit directly next to each other, precisely lit underneath to enhance the illusion. The basin underneath the islands extends around an adjacent structure and wraps around the outdoor kitchen for a similar effect.

For the decks, textured stone pavers in neutral tones and warm woods were chosen to add warmth. The waterscape is lined in green Sukabumi porcelain tile to extend the tropical feel.

Generous tropical plantings tie in with the local environment, while foliage-covered green living walls add to that sense of calm and elegance.





Taking Stock

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This year, more than ever, having tight control of inventory is essential for pool and spa businesses to ensure they have a profitable, successful, and stress-free season. Up to the minute, accurate inventory management will help prevent over- or understocking, improve cash flow, reduce shrinkage, and gives pool and spa business owners the ability to quickly make marketing decisions and promotions. With so many new technologies available, there are several essentials to look for when determining the best inventory tracking system for your business.

Must haves for good inventory management program

The best inventory management software provides tools to improve logistics, manage cycle counts, and ensure you have control over inventory. Here are several must-have features to ensure success:

Seamless integration: Software that integrates seamlessly with your other business applications (such as accounting and selling tools) reduces error and saves time.

Integration with pool industry vendors: Having immediate access to all pool and spa industry vendor orders, status, and inventory availability before placing orders avoids costly delays.

Inventory search options and reporting: Allowing users to easily search inventory by department, category, vendor, description, or any combination improves efficiency and may lead to higher sales. The ability to generate reports on inventory helps management make smarter business decisions based on real-time data.

The importance of real-time tracking vs. Excel

While there are many in our industry who use Excel as an inventory management program, Excel doesn't provide real-time tracking. In addition, Excel is cumbersome and can impede business growth. Spreadsheets require human input, which can be delayed and error-prone, especially in the busy summer months. Using industry-specific pool and spa business software that is integrated with pool and spa vendors will make inventory much easier and will also do the following:

Ensure stock availability: By keeping track of inventory in real-time, you ensure that popular products, such as pool chemicals,



Courtesy of Underwater Pool Masters, Massachusetts

pumps, or accessories, are always in stock. Running out of these items can lead to lost sales and frustrated customers.

Prevent over- and understocking: Proper inventory management helps you strike the right balance between having enough stock to meet demand without overstocking, which ties up cash flow and storage space. It helps avoid situations where you're stuck with slow-moving items while running out of essential products.

Improve cash flow: Tracking in real-time helps optimize inventory levels to improve overall cash flow.

Reduce shrinkage: Tracking inventory helps identify discrepancies between physical stock and what's recorded in your system. This helps identify if there's any theft, damage, or mistakes in the ordering or stocking process.

Supports promotions and discounts: Inventory management is key to running effective sales promotions. You can track which items are overstocked and plan discounts to clear out old inventory. Conversely, it helps you avoid discounting items that are in high demand.

Tracking inventory ultimately enhances customer satisfaction

By knowing exactly what's available in stock, you can provide better service. Customers appreciate knowing when items are available or if certain products need to be ordered. It also helps in offering alternatives when their first choice is out of stock.

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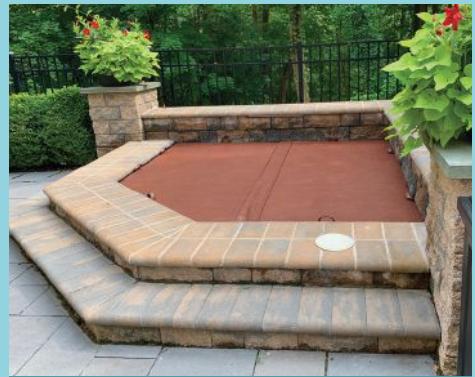
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CONCRETE

Crystalline Masterpiece

A clear acrylic spa provides the focal point in this progression of optical illusions.

LANCE DICKINSON, Principal/
Landscape Architect
DDLA Design
Dallas

NICK HAUKE, President/Founder
Pure Design
Frisco, Texas

SCOTT BEVERLY, CEO/Founder
Signature Illumination Designs,
Carrollton, Texas

GLENN PUDDY, Vice President
of Sales
Marlin Landscape
Dallas

The home on this property somewhat straddles styles. While its peaked roofs read as traditional chateau, the straight lines and materials lean on the modern side. When the homeowners approached the backyard-design team, they said they preferred to veer toward modern, having already completely outfitted the home interiors with furnishings and décor to match.

The designers decided to take advantage of the setting, lean into their modern design chops and, in the process, show off their skills at working with acrylic panels. They crafted a long, lean rectangular pool whose raised perimeter-overflow spa looks like a block of ice raised from the dark water. That effect comes courtesy of the four acrylic panels that form the spa's borders above water.



Looking like a crystal artwork, it also ties in with a modern glass greenhouse that Pure Design installed.

Under the water, the spa's shell is crafted of shotcrete and finished in black pebble. The top of the shotcrete spa walls sit just underwater and also serve as the rebate for the acrylic panels — or that ledge into which the panels were inserted.

To enhance the illusion, installers painted the bottoms of the acrylic panels gray. Painting only the part that would slot into the concrete, this would prevent somebody from looking down into the acrylic and seeing the concrete underneath. On either side of the acrylic panels, the rebate is capped with gray tiles.

Users enter the spa from either side via floating stepping pads, partially positioned on the rebate and sit about 1/8 inch higher than the water.

The homeowners asked for a unique lounging area, and the Pure Design team answered with a turf island on the end of the pool opposite the spa. Completely covered in artificial turf and sheltered with an arbor, it accommodates seating to enjoy the ultimate view of the yard. The louvered arbor top can be controlled remotely for a slatted feel or more solid coverage.

This island required the creation of two perimeter-overflow slot systems right next to each other. One goes around the pool's outline, while the other borders the island itself. The builder constructed a Lautner edge detail around the pool. But shooting two perfect edge details in such a tight space seemed impossible, so the team opted for a system manufactured specifically to create slots by turf, determining it more feasible to install the tray system in the cramped space.

On the other side of the island, the team placed a massive marble-finished fire and waterfeature, with flaming cannonballs at the top and sheet fall spilling out of the wall into another perimeter-overflow vessel.

Top, users enter the clear acrylic spa via the stepping pads that appear suspended on either side. Above, the floating island with double slot overflow.

EMERGING JEWEL

An 80-foot-long rectangular pool, with black pebble interior and perimeter-overflow design, provides the ultimate reflective surface to anchor the modern look.

The showcase of the yard sits at one end of the long pool — the clear spa emerging 18 inches out of the water.

“We knew the focal point of that project was the acrylic spa in the front,” says Nick Hauk, president and founder of Pure Design, a pool design and construction firm based in Frisco, Texas. “We wanted that to be the crown gem, so that when you walk in the front door you get that incredible shot with the spa front and center.”



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CONCRETE

Fine Lines and Finesse

Careful plotting turns what could have been an awkward space into an entertainer's paradise.

RANDY ANGELL, CEO
Randy Angell Designs
Plano, Texas

This backyard, accompanying a modern farmhouse in Texas, shows how, with mindful placement, a great space is more than the sum of its parts.

The components are beautiful. The long pool spans the back wall, complete with a tiled sunshelf, perimeter-overflow spa, stepping pads and plenty of lounging space on the accompanying decks. A covered outdoor living area includes kitchen and living room areas designed to provide interaction with the elements all year long.

One corner of the pool is dedicated to lounging, with a perimeter-overflow spa and sun shelf. The area incorporates a monochromatic look, with white lounges and stone stepper pads, and black tile underneath. This not only mimics the black-and-white contrast on the home, but also adds depth



and shadow to the water, especially under the stepping pads.

The outdoor-living structure shelters a kitchen and living room area. The latter contains a fireplace, ceiling fans and infrared heaters for climate control among the elements. The fireplace is veneered in a birch ledge stone honed smooth so its pattern fits in the modern milieu. The kitchen features a sliding window that allows users to pass items back and forth between the indoor to outdoor kitchens. A double beer tap adds to the festivities. A metal roof ensures low maintenance.

The feat in developing this backyard doesn't end with the stunning features and materials. It's their placement that takes the design to the next level.

PLOT DEVELOPMENT

The home sits at an odd angle — about 45 degrees from the back fence of the irregularly shaped lot. To direct the yard's flow, Angell used the back fence as a guide, running the pool parallel to it, as well as aligning a spa, outdoor living area structure, fire pit area and basketball court with it.

This presented a challenge for bridging the home and backyard.

"We're more accustomed to the pool being aligned with the house," Angell explains. "In this case, you walk out, and the pool is at this catawampus angle. It kind of blocks the flow — visually it takes a second to adjust to this other angle."

To smooth the transition, Angell placed a patio immediately off the home's back door. Its sides line up with the back and side fences to bring them in line with the rest of the yard. From there, a series of paver strips, set parallel to the back wall, seem to randomly stagger through a field of turf toward the pool, providing access.

The designer needed to give the space a sense of flow and direction despite the odd-shaped yard. He did this by aligning the pool and entertainment spaces with the back wall, which left the home at about a 45-degree angle to the features. A series of rectangular stepper pads from home to pool smooth the transition between the differently oriented structures.

"As soon as you walk out that back door, with the paver being at an angle, your brain shifts to the new angle," Angell says. "It created a new feel in what could otherwise be kind of an awkward space."

While Angell recognized this little hitch in flow as a challenge, he wasn't interested in covering it up or playing it down. Instead, it became one of the most interesting aspects of the design.

"I wanted to create this soft scattered connection to the new pool house," he says. "I wanted to include a lot of green between the main house and pool house, but I wanted it to be this visual draw and connection. ... I wanted to highlight this angle but create a visual connection that's drawing your eye out without it becoming a sea of concrete."

Interspersed in that scattered collection of stepping stones is a seating wall of roughly the same dimensions and veneered in the same porcelain paver material. A potted agave next to the bench adds to that connection.

That composition was anything but random. To create the balance he wanted between the turf and pavers, Angell drew the deck with solid pavers, then filled them in with green, one by one, erasing when he didn't like it colored in. He did that until the right composition materialized, with the green representing turf and the white indicating paver placement.

"It was kind of like a coloring book," Angell says. "I would fill one in with grass and say, 'No, I need that one light.' I played with it until I got the balance."

The home already had more than one gabled roof, so he gave the outdoor living room a flat roof. "If we added another gable roof, it would have made it too massive and imposing in the space," Angell says. "Altogether, it's more than 2,000 square feet of covered space that we added, and that can be kind of imposing in a backyard."

A side benefit to this decision? The flat roof made the perfect spot for the solar panels.

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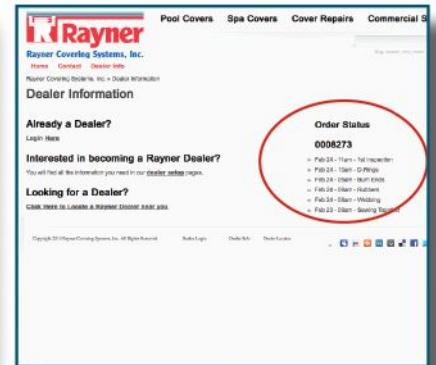
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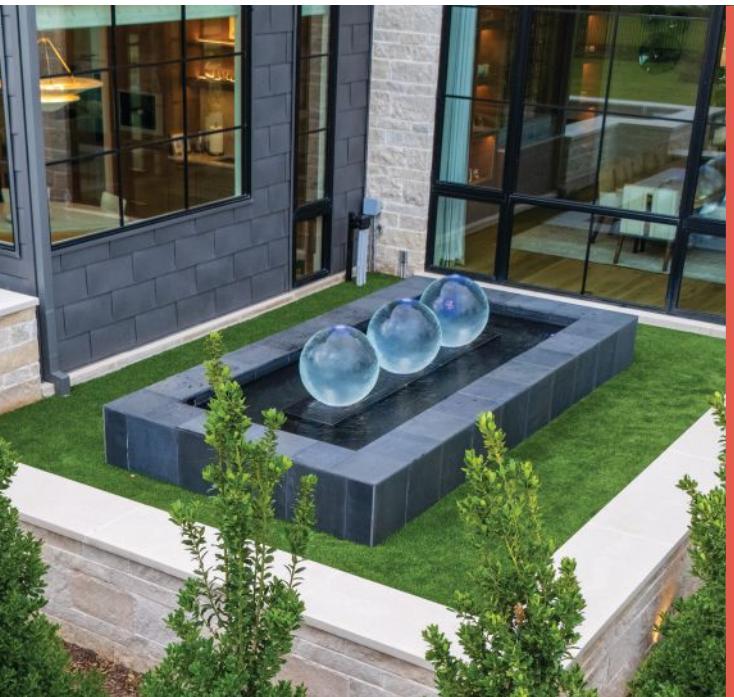
TIFFANY MCKINZIE, Owner
Tiffany McKinzie Interior Design
Sunset, S.C.

JASON OSTERBERGER,
Founder/Principal Designer
Osterberger Design Group
Coppell, Texas

A lot of responsibility is placed on this glowing waterfeature.

Part of an expansive new home, it needed to provide a view for the two rooms that wrap around it. With the property set immediately after the entrance to the gated community, the homeowners also wanted something to greet visitors. As if that weren't enough, the designers knew that the feature also would fall in view of the master suite door. This meant it would be one of the first things the homeowners see in the morning, and the last at night.

To perform all these functions, the waterfeature needed to look good day and night, and fit within the modern architecture. And it had to do all this in a small space dictated by the criss-crossing sight lines of the rooms, as well as the combination steel planter



The glowing water orbs were chosen to attract the attention of passersby any time of day, while providing a serene influence to the homeowners as they turn in for the day.

and stone wall that made it possible to grade the area 4 feet to make it level with the home.

This narrow water trough crested with three glowing

clear water spheres fit the bill.

STAGING A SCENE

To align with the dining room's window, designer Mike Farley needed a narrow footprint, and the falling water would have to be elevated to fall in view of the home interior, and people on the street.

Farley, lead designer with Claffey Pools in Southlake, Texas, took a cue from the black framed windows and gray metal siding at the breakfast nook window, using a simple granite-clad basin with a black pebble interior so the water's reflection would properly showcase the orbs.

The glass orbs were not part of the original plan. While Farley had wished for something like that, he couldn't find an option that fit within budget. So he planned to place three water bowls. In just the nick of time, manufacturer PAL Lighting came out with these waterfeatures. Fortunately, they came in the 24-inch size he needed.

"I only had so much room," Farley says. "If we got too big, I think they would have looked like an ice cream sundae all sandwiched together."

The retaining wall surrounding the waterfeature was set 18 inches above grade to serve as a seat wall. Artificial turf fills the rest of the space. Practically speaking, this would provide a soft surface to walk on when accessing the seat walls. Aesthetically, it added an organic touch without introducing new plants. Pyramid-shaped holly around the retaining wall allows some visibility for those who pass by on foot or by car.

The waterfeature is supported by steel piers, since the 4 feet of fill could not provide proper stability.

The finished product nobly performs all its duties. But one, in particular, is held near and dear to the clients' hearts. "They were surprised by the impact of the fountain and the tranquil feeling they got from it," Farley says.



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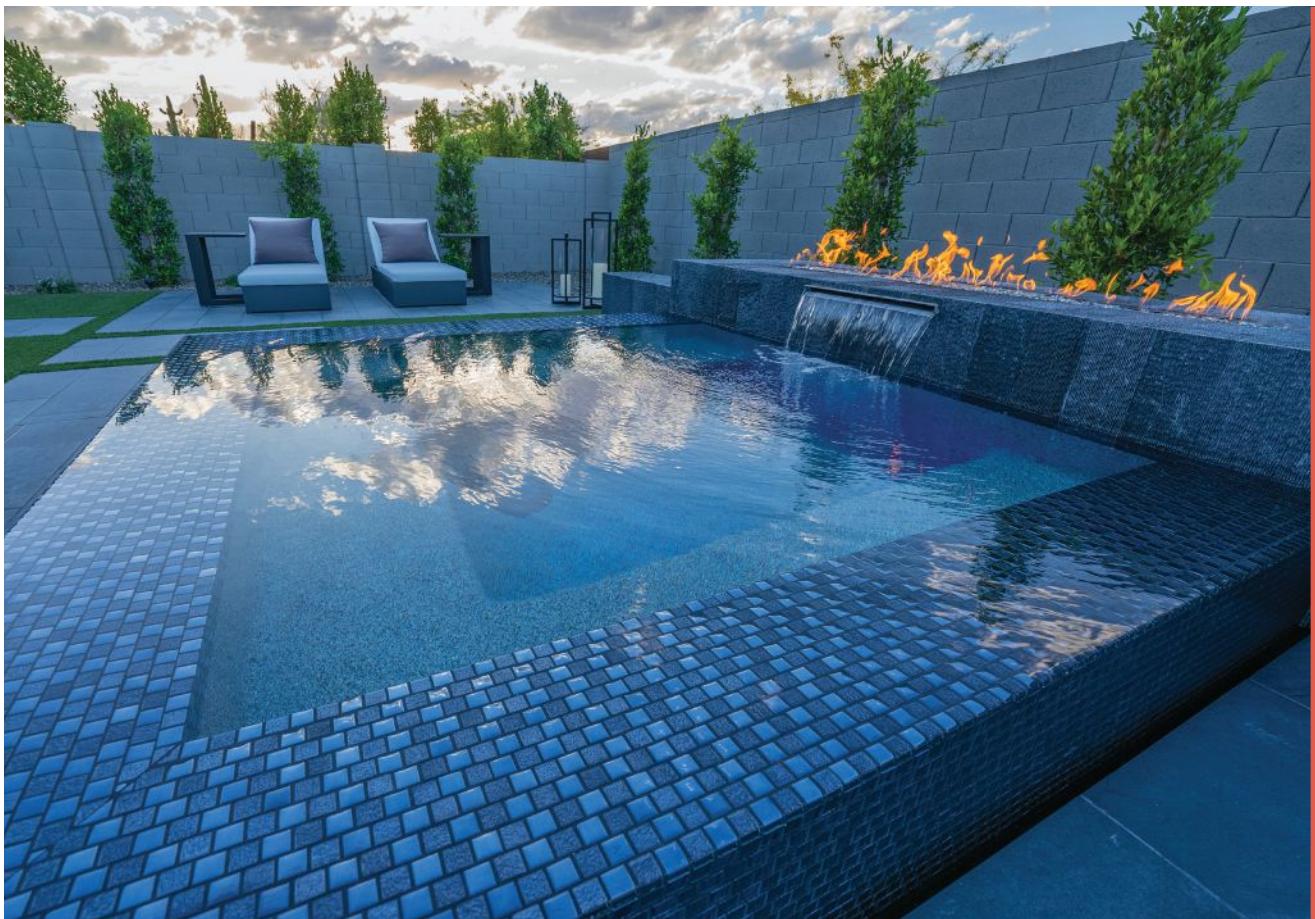
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SPA

Diminutive Respite

The custom perimeter-overflow spa falls in scale with a tight lot without compromising on impact.

PAUL SWIRSKI, designer/project manager
California Pool & Landscape
Phoenix

Yards are continually getting smaller, especially in fast-growing areas such as the Phoenix metro.

“Many of the lots are 30-by-60 feet,” says Paul Swirski, designer and project manager for Phoenix-based California Pool & Landscape. “That doesn’t give you a lot of room for a backyard space.”

Such was the case on this property, where building a pool would have meant eating up all the square footage in the backyard. Fortunately, California Pool & Landscape had recently built a pool for the client’s brother, who lived nearby. So she decided to stick with a spa.

“Her brother didn’t have a spa but he had a pool,” Swirski says. “So it worked out for both families — she could use his pool, and he could use

PHOTOS: CALIFORNIA POOLS & LANDSCAPE

her spa.”

The combination spa and fire feature that resulted not only fit the space constraints but also provided a stunning destination more than worth the car ride.

SHINE AND TEXTURE

The spa and fire feature provided an opportunity to introduce interesting texture elements into the backyard.

On the spa itself, the exterior of the raised overflow wall is finished in iridescent glass mosaic tile. Combined with the dark pebble and glass bead interior, Swirski was aiming for a very reflective surface.

“I wanted something dark,” he says. “You can see that, when there are clouds, the tile kind of disappears, so you only see the water.”

But, rather than using the standard 1-by-1-inch glass, Swirski opted for a 2-by-1-inch variety in a blue mix. For one thing, it made sense with the large-format deck tile.

“I’m a fan of the 1-by-2 tile — it has a subway look to it,” Swirski says.

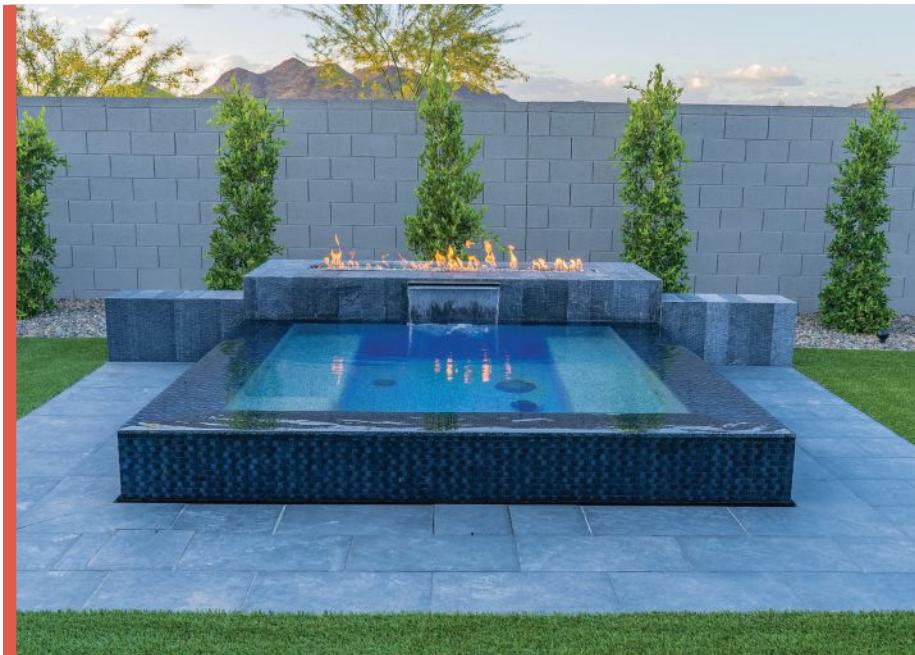
But he also has a practical reason for the preference — namely their adherence to the substrate.

“They’re twice the size of a 1-by-1-inch, so they seem to do a much better job staying attached,” he says. “And I like fewer grout lines. All it takes is one spot of grout to come loose and the water gets in there and its going to spread.”

The raised fire feature and wall, meanwhile, is clad in a porcelain tile that has been stressed with cut lines. The concentrated grooves provide a rough texture. The 12-by-24-inch tiles are set vertically, with the grain of the cut lines going in the same direction. This way, the grout joints are harder to spot and it looks like a monolithic finish with color variegation.

“It gives a little more life and a three-dimensional feel,” Swirski says of the texture.

The fire feature, made from a base of CMU block, was kept narrow — between 3 and 4 feet wide — to conserve



The large-format porcelain tile on the fire feature was stressed with cut lines, giving it a rougher texture. Setting the tile vertically helped obscure grout joints. The team used 1-by-2-inch glass mosaic set like subway tile.



space and help ensure safety.

“I wanted to keep it away from the trees,” Swirski explains. “The trees are going to be 4 to 5 feet in diameter when they grow out. I didn’t want to push the spa further in the yard because it was already 4 to 5 feet away from the walls.”

The falling water comes courtesy of a stainless steel scupper.

Stepping pads set in artificial turf soften the space so it doesn’t feel eaten up by hardscape.



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FIBERGLASS

Graduated Outlook

With a subtly multi-layered approach, this team could optimize views from all levels while providing privacy.

RICH FENWICK, Senior Vice President
Concord Pools & Spas
Latham, N.Y.

MATT BAKER, Owner
GSL Landscaping & Nursery
Duanesburg, N.Y.

This waterfront property sloped down to New York's Crooked Lake, so the team needed to take full advantage.

"We wanted to make sure that we could accomplish two things," says Jon Foshee, president and chief vision officer with Concord Pools & Spas in Latham, N.Y. "That the upper deck had a completely unobstructed view of the lake; and that the lower patio also could have an unobstructed view, as well as privacy for the swimmers."

The team took a multi-layered approach in accomplishing this, using elevation changes to properly position the pool and classic gray paver decking and set it up for success.

SETTING THE STAGE

To do this, the designers created a



The backyard's multi-layered approach preserved visibility where it was wanted, and provided privacy where it was needed.

lower deck, set 24 inches below the home's patio. Not only did this conform with the slope of the yard, but it helped the team accomplish one of its primary objectives.

"We wanted to maintain clear lines of sight no matter where you're sitting," Foshee says. "If we would have kept that [pool deck] at the same level as the patio, you'd almost be looking through the hedgerow to get to the water."

On that level, they placed a 14-by-31-foot rectangular fiberglass pool with a blue finish. The model boasted features such as a deep-end bench, a ledge to serve as a toe-hold, and corner entry steps that leave plenty of open space for lap-swimming along the length.

A variety of gray pavers meet the aesthetic of this classic upstate New York lakeside retreat, with a variegated type used throughout the field of the deck, a darker band behind the coping, then the medium gray coping stone. Using a tray system, installers continued the paver deck over the automatic-cover box.

There originally existed a 4-to-5-foot drop between the home patio and where the back of the pool deck would go, so the team had to fill and shore. To accomplish that, they built a retaining wall comprising 80 to 90 tons of locally quarried stone. Between the stone retaining wall and the row of catmint hedges behind it, the team built enough height to screen swimmers without hindering the view of the lake from the pool deck.

"In keeping with the natural lakeside theme, we went with a limestone boulder rather than using a cement paver-type retaining wall, which would have looked a little more manufactured," Foshee says.

A wooden slat wall provides an organic barrier to conceal the pool equipment.



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Ripple Effect

High-Tech Pools, p. 20

PUMP/FILTER/HEATER/CHEMICAL FEEDER/ WATERFEATURES: Pentair

CONTROLLER: Poolside Tech

TILE: Noble Tile, Artistry in Mosaics

COPING/DECK FINISHES: Valdeer Stone

INTERIOR FINISH: Pebble Technology

FIRE FEATURE: Fire by Design

AUTOMATIC CLEANER/DRAIN

COVERS/FITTINGS/SKIMMERS: A&A

LIGHTS: PAL Lighting

JETS/SWIM CURRENTS/SPA

COMPONENTS: Waterway

AUTOFILL: Zodiac

HANDRAILS/SLIDES/DIVING

BOARDS: Dolphin Waterslides

OTHER: OceanEars Underwater

Speakers; ASI Acrylic Pool Wall;

Aquaclimb Climbing Wall

Circular Logic

Tipton Spires Design Build, p. 25

PUMP/FILTER/HEATER/ CONTROLLER/CHEMICAL FEEDER/ WATERFEATURES/LIGHTS/DRAIN COVERS/FITTINGS/AUTOFILL/

SKIMMERS: Pentair

TILE/COPING/DECK FINISH: Keystone

WATERPROOFING: Basecrete

INTERIOR FINISH/FIRE FEATURES:

Pebble Technology

OUTDOOR ELEMENTS: Ledge Lounger;

Tucci

Organic Flow

Claffey Pools, p. 29

PUMP/FILTER/HEATER/ CONTROLLER/WATERFEATURES/

LIGHTS: Jandy

CHEMICAL FEEDER: Del Ozone ECI;

Nature 2; Jandy

TILE: Stone Venture

WATERPROOFING: Basecrete

INTERIOR FINISH: Pebble Technology

FIRE FEATURE: Pebble Technology; Grand Effects

AUTOMATIC CLEANER/DRAIN

COVERS/FITTINGS/AUTOFILL/

SKIMMER: Pentair A&A

JETS/SWIM CURRENTS/SPA

COMPONENTS: Waterway

OTHER: AOG Grill, Summit Refrigeration

Window to Usonia

Randy Angell Designs, p. 33

COPING/DECK FINISHES: Crossville Studios

Tropical Retreat

CPS Outdoors, p. 37

PUMP/FILTER/HEATER/ CONTROLLER/CHEMICAL FEEDER/ AUTOFILL: Jandy

TILE/INTERIOR FINISH/

WATERFEATURE: Sukabumi

WATERPROOFING: Basecrete

LIGHTS/SKIMMERS: Pentair

DRAIN COVER/FITTINGS: CMP

Crystalline Masterpiece

Pure Design, p. 41

PUMP/FILTER/HEATER/AUTOFILL: Jandy

CONTROLLER: Poolside Tech

CHEMICAL FEEDER: Clearwater Tech

WATERPROOFING: Laticrete

INTERIOR FINISH: Pebble Technology

WATERFEATURE: Great American

Waterfall

AUTOMATIC CLEANER/DRAIN

COVERS/FITTINGS: PUL

LIGHTS: PAL Lighting

OUTDOOR ELEMENTS: Elemental

Acrylic; Equinox

Fine Lines and Finesse

Randy Angell Designs, p. 45

PUMP/FILTER/HEATER/ CONTROLLER: Pentair

TILE: Crossville Studios

COPING/DECK FINISH: QDI

INTERIOR FINISH: Wet Edge

WATERFEATURE: Great American

Waterfalls

FIRE FEATURE/PLANTERS: Archpot

LIGHTS: PAL Lighting

DRAIN COVERS/FITTINGS: HIDE

Skimmers

OTHER: Realstone; Ledge Loungers

Ethereal Lumenarias

Claffey Pools, p. 49

PUMP/FILTER/CONTROLLER: Jandy

CHEMICAL FEEDER: Rainbox

Chlorinator

TILE/COPING: Stone Venture

WATERPROOFING: Basecrete

INTERIOR FINISH: Pebble Technology

WATERFEATURE: PAL Lighting

AUTOMATIC CLEANER/DRAIN

COVERS/FITTINGS/AUTOFILL/

SKIMMER: Pentair A&A

LIGHTS: Jandy

Diminutive Respite

California Pools & Landscape, p. 52

PUMP/FILTER/HEATER/ CONTROLLER/LIGHTS: Hayward

TILE: Artistry in Mosaics

COPING/DECK FINISHES: Frontier

INTERIOR FINISH: Pebble Technology

WATER AND FIRE FEATURES: Grand

Effects

DRAIN COVERS/FITTINGS/

AUTOFILL/SKIMMERS: Paramount

OUTDOOR ELEMENTS: Cal Select

Artificial Turf

Graduated Outlook

Concord Pools & Spas, p. 55

PUMP/FILTER/CONTROLLER/ CHEMICAL FEEDER/LIGHTS: Pentair

HEATER: AquaCal

COPING/DECK FINISH: Cambridge

Ledgestone

DRAIN COVERS/FITTINGS: Hayward

SKIMMERS: Waterway

POOL COVER: Coverstar

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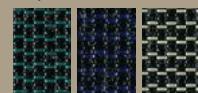
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