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Luxury Pools

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SPRING/SUMMER 2015

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SPLASH

25 TOP POOL BUILDERS
AND DESIGNERS FROM
COAST TO COAST



The vertical elements in this Alka Pool Construction LTD. design turn the pool's infinity edge into a stunning water feature with perfect plantings below.

Opposite, this infinity pool by Rainbow Pools & Living Art Design blends perfectly with the landscape around it, reflecting the sky and surrounding trees for beautiful scenic view.





IMAGINATIVE LANDSCAPES

Industry experts share tips on how to get the ultimate backyard poolscape.

BY DEBRA MAURER

➔ When you step outside your back door or look out your kitchen window, you want to see a beautiful and inviting space in your backyard where you can relax, entertain, and enjoy the view. With the right designer, your custom swimming pool and outdoor living area can be a seamless extension of your home, while still having a wow factor that's both dramatic and luxurious. So, what type of space do you imagine for your luxury poolscape?

From landscaping and lighting to special features, seating areas, and furniture, there's a world of options to consider

for your backyard. We spoke to top pool builders and a leading outdoor furniture manufacturer to get their tips and expertise on how these elements will help you create your ultimate poolscape.

One essential design element is having a pool style to match your home and its surroundings. "It's important that the pool looks like it belongs in the backyard and part of the home," says Carla Sovernigo, president/CFO of Alka Pool of Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada. "You want to flow in and out [of the house] and not feel like the two spaces are detached."

Mike Todd, president of Rainbow Pools and Living Art Design in New York shares one of his key design tips: "We love to design with grade and height changes. The vertical elements in a design are often overlooked. This helps in spatial orientation as well."

Designing a beautiful softscape around the pool is significant as well. "We are big believers in landscaping," says Blake French, founder of Millennium Pools in Austin, Texas. "Without [landscaping], the hardscape would be less than expected." French advises planting evergreens and perennials and then adding seasonal color.

Todd also notes the importance of landscaping to breathe life into the setting. "Once the plants are in, the clients begin to verbalize how their backyard has 'come to life.'" Todd advises keeping the plantings simple: "They must be zone hardy and properly located according to sun exposure. The plantings should be neat, and we avoid things that attract insects."

Of course, landscape lighting is necessary to appreciate the beauty of the pool and its surrounding landscape once night falls. "For us, lighting is imperative," says Kelly Caviness, president/CEO of Caviness Landscape Design in Edmond, Oklahoma. "Most people that we create designs for work during the day, so it needs to look amazing during the day and incredible at night. LED lighting creates a whole different mood setting from daytime as well."

When it comes to special features for the pool itself, French says star floors are one of his most popular features. Fiber-optic lights are installed on the pool floor, creating a stunning starry night effect. "They can have different intensities and can be made to twinkle," says French.

Sovernigo shares other striking features for pool owners to consider: "Zero edge, infinity edge, and fire are a few elements that really give a poolscape the wow factor. They are elements of style that elevate any yard."

Top to bottom, the dramatic waterfalls and grottoes in this Millennium Pools design come to life at night thanks to strategic pool and landscape lighting; The ledge patio in this Stone Mason of Spring poolscape creates a unique seating area that also adds to the design.

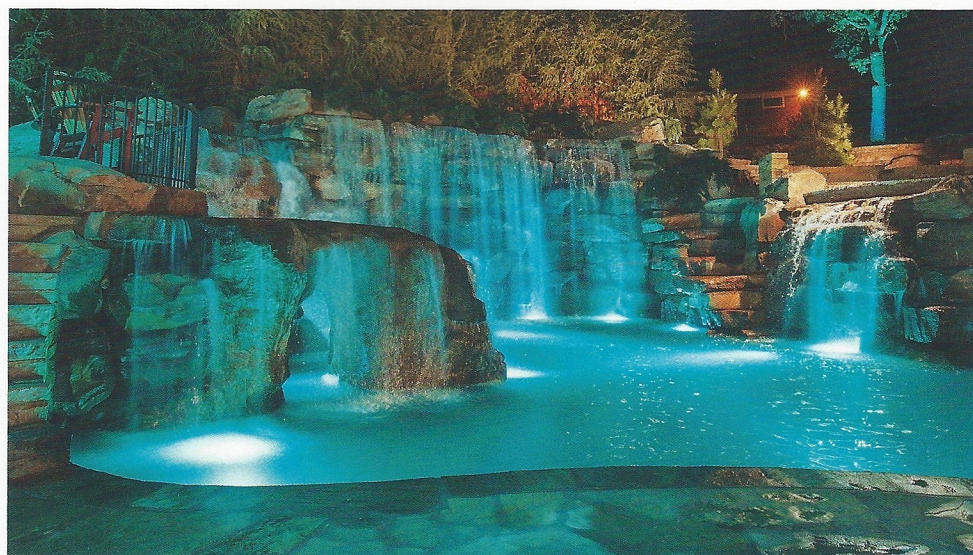
To create fun for the whole family, Cavi-ness notes some popular pool features in his designs: “People want the best of both worlds, a shallow end for young ones to play and adults to sunbathe, as well as a deep end for jumping. We do get requests to create some really amazing grottos, but not every budget can accommodate that. We find that people want a pool/landscape that they can interact with, not just float in.”

For poolside entertaining, seating areas are key. One way to combine special features with outdoor seating areas is through an elevated patio. “Recently we have been building a lot of elevated patio features that are 8 to 10 feet above the pool, [which] also provide an entry to a slide and diving rock,” says Joe DiPaulo, president of Stone Mason of Spring, Montgomery, Texas. “They also give a lookout or a different visual perspective of the poolscape.”

And don’t forget—you need to furnish your outdoor seating area, too. Mal Haddad, vice president of Westminster Teak, USA shares some key features for creating a welcoming seating area around the pool: “[Create a] seating arrangement [that’s] conducive for conversational interaction for a small group of four or more.” Haddad also stresses the importance of comfort in seating for lounging and/or dining over extended periods of time.

The look of your outdoor furniture is just as important as its functionality. “Materials play an integral role in ultimate comfort and visual appeal,” says Haddad. This makes teak furniture a great option because of its longevity and resistance to the elements. It’s ideal for sitting or lounging poolside because even in the blistering sun, it’s cool to the touch.

Teak also looks beautiful in any backyard pool setting. “Untreated, natural teak will weather to a handsome soft-silvery patina within a year or so, depending on the amount of sun and weathering to which it is exposed,” Haddad explains. “Of course, a teak protector can be ap-



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plied on the furniture if the golden hues of new teak is preferred.”

No matter what types of seating areas, special features, landscaping, and other unique elements you imagine for your pool and backyard, you’ll be able to

achieve your vision with the help of an experienced luxury pool builder. For ideas and inspiration, check out the work of the pool builders featured in this article as well as those throughout the rest of this issue and at luxurypools.com. **LE**