



Luxury pools

NEW DESIGNS AND LOOKS MAKE A SPLASH

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TODAY'S LUXURY POOLS SERVE A DUAL PURPOSE: PROVIDING A PLACE TO COOL OFF AS WELL AS VISUAL BEAUTY. PHOTO COURTESY OF RED ROCK POOLS AND SPAS.

Pools are a lot of work. They're expensive, and homeowners never use them as much as they think they're going to. Savvy homebuilders and remodelers can go beyond the "hole in the ground" approach by offering luxurious designs that blend with the existing architecture and surrounding environment and create new spaces for the homeowner to entertain.

"People only use the pool 5% to 10% of the time it's there," says Rick Chafey, Red Rock Pools and Spas. "You have to try to create pools that utilize the space the other 90% to 95% of the time. You have to create something

visually stimulating, not just a puddle you jump in to cool off when it gets hot."

But what makes a luxury pool? In Chafey's opinion, it isn't only price. "What makes it luxury is when you get into a unique project and build something that is second to none, basically something that no one has ever seen or built. That is luxury."

While in the past, many people viewed anything that was large and held a lot of water as luxury, pool builders have stepped up their game to include a variety of different edge treatments, such as vanishing water lines or parameter overflows where the pool is filled

to the brim. Another new trend is water in transit, making water move instead of having it remain stagnate.

Chafey, taking a page from the spa playbook, has also begun putting benches that take into account the shape of the human body and can be tailored to form-fit the client into his pools.

Designing luxury pools is only one step of the puzzle; building them is a skill all in itself, according to Skip Phillips of Questar Pools in Los Angeles. Phillips travels internationally designing and building luxury pools. He credits himself for tackling the myth

that vanishing edges are only fit for water-to-water transitions or a water transition to a big elevation change.

“To have a truly luxury pool, it has to be designed in a seamless way. It has to mirror the architecture of what’s around it,” Phillips said. “It has to meet the design constraints of the site. A luxury pool is a combination of the vessel itself and how it fits in what’s around it. There has to be a seamless transition between the vessel and the house.”

Phillips cautions against having just any designer plan a luxury pool.

“If we’re going to use the term ‘design,’ bring in someone that understands design,” Phillips said...and “someone that knows color, texture, rhythm and scale. If they don’t understand all of the components of creating this vessel, they shouldn’t be the one you’re talking to about design.”

Phillips agrees that water in transit, a vanishing edge (which is what his company specializes in) and slot overflows are all great ideas among design elements of luxury pools,

but he’s quick to point out that a pool can quickly become overdone.

“Luxury doesn’t mean water fountains shooting everywhere,” Phillips said. “This creates white noise, white noise is distracting. You want the pool to be a tranquil place. There are three components that drive people to exterior space: fire, food and/or water. People are drawn to them, so we incorporate those when we create a destination.”

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LUXURIOUS AND GREEN?

Many homeowners may shy away from the idea of a pool because of the amount of water used and associated energy costs. There are some solutions for builders to offer customers the vaunted luxury of pools while lessening the impact of water usage.

Pentair Water Pool and Spa, a manufacturer of swimming pool equipment,

has created some of the only energy-efficient products on the market.

The main cost of energy with pools is filtering and cleaning the water by taking it out of the pool and running it through a filter and then back again. This process happens at least once a day. Pentair says it has an answer for

this energy-draining process: the variable speed pump. The industry standard is to use a 1.5 horsepower pump, which uses roughly 2,000 watts of electricity to run. By using the variable speed pump, the homeowner can cut the electricity usage down to 300 watts.

“The variable speed pump is 30% more efficient than any other pump, even at the same speed,” Chafey says. “By using the variable speeds, it allows us to use one pump on a job when we used to need three.”

“It’s like driving your car, you have the ability to drive at different speeds,” said Steve Barnes, safety and compliance manager for Pentair. “You only use the power to run the filter, when you need it. The rest of the time you can run the pump at a lower speed.”

The other concern with pools is water costs. A lot of those costs again come with the act of cleaning and filtering the pool water. There are three kinds of filters: sand, which was the first filter; diatomaceous earth; or Pentair’s cartridge filters. Both sand and diatomaceous earth filters clean the pool by backwashing the water, which can take 100 to 200 gallons of water a week and require running the pool pump for longer hours at the fastest speed. The cartridges don’t use any water and act like furnace filters; the water is cleaned by passing through the filter. They



VANISHING WATER LINES CONTINUE TO BE A MAJOR DESIGN TREND IN LUXURY POOLS. PHOTO COURTESY OF PENTAIR WATER POOL AND SPA.



have a large surface area, which water can run through easily, thus saving water by not having to backwash, and energy by not having to run the pump at a higher speed.

Barnes also claims that by installing larger water pipes, which may run \$200 to \$300 more, will save the customers money in the long term by helping control the flow of water.

“It can trim down the cost of running the pool down to a \$1 a day instead of several dollars a day,” says Barnes, who points

out that using such techniques are already required in California to save energy.

If your customer lives in an area of the country that will require heating their pool, Barnes claims that heat pumps are much more energy-efficient than gas heaters.

“Heat pumps use the same technology as air conditioning for homes,” Barnes says. “They take the heat out of the air and pump it in the water.”

The technology, in fact, works much the

same way as a heat recovery ventilator. Barnes says many clients have put their heat pump adjacent to their garages and ducted the airflow into a workshop. This heat pump pulls all of the heat from the air and then blows the cold air out of the heat exchanger into the workshop. By placing the heat pumps on the south side of a home or shop you can help your customer pull in even more heat, even more easily, to warm their pool.

If your clients are still concerned about the water used to fill the pool each year, tell them that, depending on where they are located in the country, if their water is irrigated, swimming pools consume less water than it takes to water their grass.

Pools are a lot of work and they are expensive to design and install. But if done properly, they can make a statement and offer a home more value. Though still not exactly earth-friendly, new techniques and products on the market can help mitigate some of the water usage. **b**



[UPPER LEFT] LANDSCAPING PLAYS AN IMPORTANT PART IN THE DESIGN PROCESS FOR LUXURY POOLS. PHOTO COURTESY OF RED ROCK POOLS AND SPAS.

[UPPER RIGHT] VANISHING WATER LINES WORK FOR SPAS AS WELL AND HELP INTEGRATE THE WATER FEATURES INTO A HOME'S EXISTING EXTERIORS. PHOTO COURTESY OF RED ROCK POOLS AND SPAS.

[BOTTOM] MANY MODERN POOLS ARE DESIGNED NOT ONLY FOR COMFORT BUT AS SPACES TO ENTERTAIN. PHOTO COURTESY OF PENTAIR WATER POOL AND SPA.