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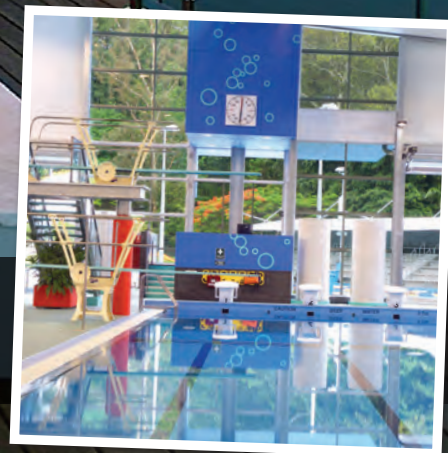
June/July 2010

PERFECT POOLSCAPING

Trends in poolside
landscaping

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Poolscaping trends

What's looking good in landscaping around the pool? We offer some new ideas plus get an indication of consumer trends from the experts.

A pool does not sit in a backyard all by itself. It is placed in an environment which, hopefully, complements the look and feel of the pool, and helps make the pool look as if it belongs in its setting.

Good poolscaping should extend the ambience of the pool to the entire outdoor area of the home, while connecting the wet areas thematically with the house itself. Exactly how that works can vary dramatically, depending on the owners, the property and the pool. Everyone wants something different – and considered poolscaping can help give it to them.

But what are the current trends in poolscaping, and what are some new ideas to help bring that synthesis about?

John Storch of A Total Concept, a Sydney-based landscape architect and swimming pool designer, says the major trends in outdoor design at the moment are the continuation of the fusion movement, with a newer shift towards simplification.



Bringing the indoors outside has its flip-side: bringing the outdoors in. Here, the pool and astounding view are visually brought right into the indoor living area. Peter Glass & Associates

"There is an ongoing trend for a fusion between internal and external entertainment spaces," says Storch. "As the two traditional spaces become one, there is a greater need

to not only enhance the link between the swimming pool area to the house but to develop the outdoor area adjacent to pools as indoor areas.



“Traditionally, the poolscaping takes a lead from the colour of the pool water.”

People want somewhere to sit and enjoy each others' company, both in the pool and in the outdoor space around the pool. Photo courtesy Peter Glass & Associates

“I’m also finding a trend for simplification, possibly as a reflection of what is currently happening financially around the globe. Pool design is becoming less complicated – utilising straight clean lines and mono-chromatic colours, rather than multi-shapes and mixes.”

Storch says people are looking for value and quality; and are happy to find the “wow” factor in the finer detail, rather than in the size of the project.

“We’ve been doing a lot with chunky square edges to create shadowlines around swimming pools, using some unusual coloured micrograin interiors and creating entertainment and relaxation areas around pools with paving alternatives. It needs a lot of thinking outside the square to produce a high quality product more cost efficiently.”

Cabanarama

Storch also says that cabanas are starting to come of age.

“More and more often, we are requested to design cabanas and integrate them with swimming pools,” he says.

“Pool cabanas may be little more than a gazebo, summerhouse or pavilion adjacent to a swimming pool to provide a discreet spot to towel off, change and sit out of the sun. Or it can be an elaborate structure and may incorporate a luxurious bathroom with toilet, shower, bath and basin amenities and kitchenette facilities including fridges, BBQs, stove, cupboards and sinks with day beds for relaxation and poolside wet bar with stools for entertaining purposes.”

Storch believes the trend for pool cabanas has been fuelled by the desire to turn your outdoor space into a personal oasis, an escape from the hectic pace of life separate to the home.

Peter Glass, landscape architect, pool designer and principal of long established company Peter Glass and Associates, says that pool pavilions are increasingly important in the upper end of the market.

“They have reached new levels,” Glass says. “Some pavilions we’ve designed have incorporated almost full kitchens, sound and TV systems, fireplaces so that the space can also be enjoyed during the cooler months, sunken bar areas where they meet up with the pool, plus saunas or steam rooms that share glass walls or windows in common with the pool.”

In general, Glass says that swimming pools, spas and surrounds are far more sophisticated and potentially far more complex now than at any time in history.

“The level of finishes and equipment available is breathtaking, with the demand for high quality materials and automated, low maintenance pool and spa systems fuelling innovation and design development.

“As landscape architects and pool designers who address the often-demanding high end of the market, we have to keep up to date with the very latest in finishes and equipment.”

Sitting pretty

Glass says that from a structural point of view, there is also a large amount of design innovation being undertaken: ideas which might not be new in themselves, but their application to pool design and construction is still fresh and attractive.

One idea that seems to have found considerable favour is niches, or other places in or around the pool where people can recline, mingle and relax.

A niche set above the swimming pool. Photo courtesy A Total Concept

“A popular idea is seating niches recessed back into pools or adjacent retaining walls.”

"A popular idea is seating niches recessed back into pools or adjacent retaining walls," he says. "Or underwater seating and shallow in-pool lounging areas, sunken seating areas, possibly with a central fire pit, or even raised seating areas."

Other structural ideas for top end pools include glass or acrylic walls to pools and spas, including the option for complete "transparent" construction; and lighting niches, maybe incorporating mirrors in the back to reflect the light as well as to create interesting visual effects during the day.

Glass also makes a point of mentioning the new style of sanitisation that is quickly becoming a trend – bio-filtration.

"There is also a lot of excitement with regard to bio-filtration pools, which we are designing more and more frequently," he



Stone steppers and coping designed to match the Gemtex interior. For more information see www.ipave.com.au

Fusion of the indoors and the outdoors helps improve the enjoyment of the pool and the great Australian climate. Peter Glass & Associates

says. "These pools are virtually chemical-free. Not only is the water considered 'drinkable' quality (if that's what you want to do!) but it is even suitable if you want to share your pool with fish and frogs, as well as aquatic plants – which can look spectacular."

Going natural

Reg Carter, director of iPave innovative paving solutions, says he has noticed that customers currently have a very strong desire for natural stone paving and coping, moving away from the traditional clay and concrete options.

Other paving trends he has noticed are an interest in large format, French (ashlar) pattern and crazy paving, as well as square edge, rustic tumbled and larger profile bullnoses.

"Dense hardwearing stones like limestone, travertine and granite are some of the most popular stones of all," he says. "They are great around both salt and chlorine pools and have amazing variations and patterns that you can only see in natural stone."

"Still incredibly popular is natural Himalayan sandstone, but we are seeing more requests for the larger sizing. Light colours are definitely the most popular as they make areas look bigger and they stay cool under bare feet on hot summer days."

"There is an ongoing trend for a fusion between internal and external entertainment spaces."

residential feature

“Pool pavilions are increasingly important in the upper end of the market.”

When you have a poolscape this beautiful, you want to spend as much time in it as possible, even sleeping there.
Peter Glass & Associates

Carter says that traditionally, the poolscaping takes a lead from the colour of the pool water. He says iPave developed their own range of pool interiors called Gemtex using high quality glass beads in vibrant colours such as turquoise, emerald, ebony, crimson, topaz, reflective mirror chip and glow-in-the-dark bead. He says this provides more options for pool surroundings by providing customers with an alternative to the traditional pale blue quartz pool interiors.

What the designers have been saying about an increase in the desire for indoor/outdoor flow has been borne out at the retail coalface. Carter says his clients are choosing to use their outdoor areas as an extension of their indoor living areas, and are taking a more formal approach to landscaping.

“Outdoor entertaining is incredibly popular and people are entertaining friends and family all year round. Running the elements from inside the home out to the garden can give a harmonious, cohesive look.

“For feature walls, clients are steering away from traditional stackstone which has been overused in the past, to more interesting textural options including glass panels and stacked glass, mirror panels incorporated into cladding, marble, pebbles and metallic elements. The focus is on texture, colour and movement to create interest and a striking feature.”

Another change Carter has seen lately is the increased emphasis on low maintenance paving options.

“No one wants to be a slave to his or her backyard,” he says. “There are now ranges of products on the market that never fade, never stain and never require sealing.

“The same can be said for decking with the increased request for low maintenance eco-woods, which are part recycled plastics and wood fibres that look just like the real thing. They are UV-, weather-, moisture- and termite-resistant, come in a range of colours and finishes and are easy to install.”



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Beautiful sealed sandstone has an unmistakable character

“Light colours are definitely the most popular as they make areas look bigger and they stay cool under bare feet on hot summer days.”

Salt-free paving

Another form of paving and coping is reconstituted sandstone. One company, Maison, manufactures reconstituted sandstone pavers, coping, columns and other hard landscaping material using natural spring water instead of normal water. According to Maison, this water has no salt content and so avoids the efflorescence, fading and bleaching that occurs with some products.

Maison has different profiles in the coping: 50mm bullnose, 50mm bullnose pencil lip, 70mm bullnose scotia, 50mm square edge and 85mm square edge rebated. As well, they can do custom coping. Other products include tables and boutique landscape accessories.

For more information go to www.maisondesign.com.au.

Algae-free sandstone

WHILE stone is attractive, hardy and soft on feet, it does have a few drawbacks – the main one being its permeability.

Long established supplier Gosford Quarries knows a thing or two about sandstone, and has released a new product to help protect the precious stone from all sorts of stains that can befall it.

Stone Shield Impregnator is a colourless, penetrating, high-performance impregnator which helps protect against oil, grease and water-based pollution.

This product develops a strong oil and water protection and becomes fully effective approximately 24 hours after application (depending on temperature) without any visible change of surface colour or texture.

One of its main benefits is that it will minimise mould formation in stone pores.

Each litre will cover between 8m² to 18m², depending on type of surface material and finish. Of course, it performs exceptionally well on sandstone; the effect on other surfaces may be limited and therefore not recommended. It is recommended always to apply on a small test surface before treating a larger area.

For more information go to www.gosfordquarries.com.au.

Sealed sandstone on the right; unsealed on the left, showing signs of algae





Striking landscapes aren't created solely on the horizontal plane – vertical elements can add tremendously to the look while directing the eye to particular aspects of the overall picture.

Photo courtesy Peter Glass.