



REFRESH YOURSELF THIS SUMMER IN A SWIMMING POOL DESIGNED TO MATCH YOUR LIFESTYLE

by AMANDA FLATTEN

We're heading into the warm — OK, hot — months, and you might be thinking of the best ways to enjoy them. What better solution than a swimming pool?

“When you build a pool and everything that goes along with it, you are creating an extension of your home and it gives you a reason to go outside,” says Mike Lindley, owner of BMR Pool & Patio.

David Hauk is co-owner of Mirage Custom Pools with brother Tom Hauk. His experience in the pool business goes back to his father who owned a pool business in St. Louis and developed a swimming pool for the testing of deployment of floatation devices and shark repellents for NASA's Mercury Space program in 1958. Hauk says adding a pool to the back yard is really more about creating a whole outdoor experience. “Seventy percent of homeowners that build pools today are building them more for an outdoor environment rather than just swimming,” he says. “With the economy changing and fuel prices what they are, people are staying home more and transforming their back yard into an outdoor oasis.”

When it comes to selling your house, a pool can make all the difference. “If you have a house that is turnkey and it has a pool with a great environment, that is a big plus,” Hauk says. ▶

ABOVE: This Mediterranean style back yard by Natural Stone Pools features a negative edge on the pool, fire bowls on either side of the spillway with imported Italian glass tiles and a coy pond. Oklahoma flagstone was used as the decking surface.

DIVE IN

the facts of the matter

When sitting across the table from your swimming pool designer, remember to ask these basic questions:

What is it actually going to cost, including decking, landscaping and options?

How much work will I have to do to maintain it? What types and quantities of supplies will I need to buy?

How long will it take to build? How soon can we go swimming?

Visit houseandhomeonline.com to view more swimming pools.



jump in! the water's fine

In addition to the traditional chlorine pools, pool owners have options for the water they put in their pools.

Salt Pools

"About 80 percent of the pools we install are salt pools," says Mike Lindley, owner of BMR Pool & Patio. Many people like the way soft saltwater makes their skin feel. "The ease of maintenance is one of the biggest reasons people choose salt systems. Every time you turn on the pool, you are producing chlorine, so you don't have to remember to add chlorine tablets."

There are some pitfalls with salt pools, however. "Some builders have issues with sandstone around the pool deteriorating because of the saltwater," says David Hauk, co-owner of Mirage Custom Pools. "To combat corrosion, you can seal flagstone, and that should be done every three to five years."

Ozonators

These pools use a combination of salt and another sanitizer like chlorine. "An ozonator will remove bacteria that the filter doesn't filter out," Hauk says. "When you add an ozonation system in combination with a low chlorine or a low salt system, that is the best of the best."

ABOVE: Striking blue tiles stand out in this pool by Stephanie Bellinger Landscape Design. The formal lines of the pool match the architecture of the home.

ELEMENTS OF A POOL

Coping, decking, tile and plaster — these are the four main elements of a pool. Coping is the rim around the pool. Natural stone, such as Oklahoma flagstone, is the most common choice in North Texas, says Hauk, adding that his company often uses a multi-colored flagstone that adds a rich look. For the high-end pools Bellinger creates, she says travertine and marble are popular coping choices.

As for the decking, the material that runs from the pool to the house, Lindley says the most popular choice is patterned concrete.

A trend Hauk says the Dallas area will see more of in the future is the use of stone pavers for decks rather than concrete. "In North Texas, we have expansive soils, and it's challenging to build sidewalks, pool decks and driveways on expansive soils without getting hairline cracks in them," he says. Pavers correct this problem.

Tile runs between the coping and the water, usually about 6 inches high. "There are so many tile choices now. It's not just the blue shiny porcelain tiles you used to see," Lindley says. "Today, ceramic tiles come in so many colors and can blend with the coping."

In high-end projects, Hauk says glass tiles are becoming more popular, just like you would see in luxurious bathrooms.

As for plaster, the interior of the pool, the options range from the least expensive white plaster to a more costly finish like Pebble Tec. "A pebble finish, like Pebble Tec, is exposed rock mixed with plaster. It has longer warranty and lifespan than just plaster," Lindley says. ▶

DIVE IN



ABOVE: A large pool with shallow step-in section at one end and adjoining spa at the other creates a great swimming and relaxing retreat for the entire family. Photo of Pebble Tec pool finish in "Black Marble" courtesy Pebble Technology Inc.



Depending on the style of the pool, Hauk says there are several great choices for the pool's interior. In freeform pools, his company uses StoneScapes for a pebble finish. "If a homeowner is willing to spend more money and still wants a pebble look, Beadcrete is a premier option," he says. "Rather than aggregate, which can be bumpy on your feet, ►

LEFT: This outdoor space, created by BMR Pool & Patio, features patterned rock skin concrete and Oklahoma flagstone coping around the pool, Pebble Tec finish on the pool and a trickle down spill way as a water feature. Other highlights are a fire pit, fireplace and bar/grill area and brick columns to tie in with the house.



ABOVE: Mirage Custom Pools built this natural style pool with spa in Lantana, a Denton County development. A table rock waterfall and natural weeping water wall on back side of the pool are special water features. Because of the slope in the yard, the pool was built with a 3 foot raised beam. The result is a one-of-a-kind pool space. The pool is surrounded with stamped concrete decking.

Beadcrete has glass spheres. It's a dynamic and durable surface, and when the sun shines, it looks like diamonds are scattered across the pool."

Bellinger prefers the look and feel of Durazzo, a polished marble finish. "I like the smoothness and the look," she says. "It's the one material you can sand down and bring it back up in color. It's luxurious and durable at the same time."

By the way, all these materials can be used to modernize an old pool. "There are tons of pools that were built in the 1970s and 1980s that need updating, and we can do a complete renovation," Hauk says.

HOW TO PICK A POOL DESIGNER

When choosing a pool builder and designer, you should consider the following, according to Hauk:

- Look at the quality of design and make sure the contractor has an actual showroom. "We have a showroom and bring clients in," he says. "We do all of our designs in a 3D program, so they know exactly what it's going to look like and how much room they will have."
- Ask to see completed projects. "You have to walk into a back yard and see what a finished product looks like," he says.

- Check references and the Better Business Bureau. "If a builder isn't willing to give you multiple references of existing pools already built and clients currently building pools, you should take a step back and reconsider hiring them for your project," he says.

Hauk, who is pushing for licensing for Texas pool contractors, also recommends homeowners look at no more than three builders because the process can become too overwhelming.

JUST FOR PLEASURE

For the folks who own a swimming pool only to discover they're not swimming like they thought they would, Lindley says a pool can add ambiance to the outdoor experience.

"Homeowners usually spend 90 percent of their time on the deck and 10 percent in the water," Lindley adds. "Whether it's just to visualize the pool, to hear the water movement or an outdoor place to dine, a pool offers so much more than just a place to swim."

resources

AMERICAN PACIFIC POOL
972.988.6833
www.american-pacific.org

INDEPENDENT POOL & SPA SERVICE ASSOCIATION INC.
www.ipssatexas.com

STEPHANIE BELLINGER LANDSCAPE DESIGN AND INSTALLATION
214.384.6602
www.stephaniebellingerlandscapedesigns.com

BMR POOL & PATIO
1706 Justin Rd., Lewisville
972.221.3959
www.bmrpoolandpatio.com

MASTERCRAFT POOLS & PATIO
18546 Vista Del Sol, Dallas
214.244.2544
www.mymastercraftpool.com

MIRAGE CUSTOM POOLS
2920 Justin Road, Ste. 500
Highland Village
972.221.7665
www.miragedfw.com

NATURAL STONE POOLS
469.742.0366
www.naturalstonepools.com

REFLECTION POOLS & SPAS
3100 Independence Pkwy., Ste. 311, Plano, 214.536.6831
www.reflectionpoolsandspas.com