

SPLASH! HAVING FUN WITH YOUR POOL



It is easy to take your swimming pool for granted. I look at my pool as the ultimate relaxation tool in a stressful world. The hours spent working on my patio and back yard to create a fun, and magical setting are innumerable, and to me, great therapy.

With inexpensive family vacations a thing of the past, why not invest some money into your back yard and turn it into a tropical paradise? Today, there is an endless assortment of patio furniture, cabanas, bamboo bars and a multitude of products to enhance your backyard. New technology has created patio furniture out of high quality polyurethane that prevents sun-bleaching or damage by extreme weather conditions.

Here are some very unique products I saw at the 2007 international pool show guaranteed to enhance your pool and backyard experience.

3D Underwater Graphics - 3D underwater vinyl graphics - www.3dunderwatergraphics.com

Automated Fire & Water Effects, Inc. - Water & Fire Effects - www.automatedfireandwater.com

Baltic Leisure - Planters & benches - www.balticleisure.com

Bottega, Inc. Very unique lawn chair design - www.botteganinc.com

Cabana Village - Pool cabana kits: www.cabanavillage.com

Dolphin Water Slides - Water slides - www.dolphinwaterslides.net

GAME - Rainbow fountains and underwater light shows - www.game-group.com

Inter-Fab - Extreme Slides - www.inter-fab.com

Patio Palm - outdoor heater in the shape of a palm tree - www.coolheatinc.com

Safari Thatch, Inc - Thatch Huts & more - www.safarithatch.com

Tropical Backyards: Cabanas & gazebos - www.tropicalbackyards.com

Unique Arts - unique furniture and fountains - www.uniquearts.com

The Pool Shower - Outdoor pool shower - www.poolshower.com

HAVING FUN WITH MOTHER NATURE



Do you like the sound of chirping birds? Find out what kind of food attracts songbirds indicative of your area and put out a feeder. Keep the feeder elevated on a pole or hung from an overhang as they tend to attract squirrels and other critters if in a tree. Birds will make a mess however when they break open the seeds with their beaks so be sure to keep the feeders away from the pool area. Many of the seeds will fall into the ground below the feeders causing a variety of plants and weeds to grow.



How about a butterfly or hummingbird garden? Every geographical area has specific plants that attract these magnificent creatures. Research and plan a simple, or extravagant garden. It doesn't take much to draw them to an area with plants they like. A hummingbird feeder or two placed outside your bedroom or living room window can provide hours of entertainment. If your window has a reflective coating on it, you may be able to watch the hummingbirds checking out their reflections.

Garden departments at Home Depot and Loew's have an amazing array of plants and complementary fountains, rock and waterfalls. Be creative! Is your yard large enough to build a trail of bricks or tiles? Both stores have a wide variety of ground stones available. While in the garden department of these stores, look into the future and think how your pool area will look in time after planting a flower garden that blooms in spring and summer.

If you are in a more tropical setting, consider bushes, palms or unique foliage and create a magical oasis over the years with an intimate pathway to walk down at night. A romantic bench or gazebo, strategically placed make for wonderful kissing spots. Does night blooming jasmine grow in your area? I visited a B&B in north Florida one summer with a gazebo covered with this jasmine, which was in full bloom that night. With a full moon above and a glass of champagne in hand, this was a moment in time never to be forgotten. Does your yard have a fence and privacy from the neighbors. If, so, an outdoor shower is a wonderful experience while a massage under the shade is a must!



What not to put around your pool

Palm trees are filthy and leave a variety of messes over the course of a year. Bamboo trees are your pools worst enemy as they are constantly dropping leaves into your pool which jam the skimmer basket and pool pump. If you want to incorporate these trees around your pool, plan on investing in a floor vac and in-line strainer.

Boston Ferns make a mess also! In Florida, there is a similar plant called a Macho Fern which has hearty leaves and don't shed. Other parts of the country will probably have similar plants. If your plants are potted, be sure you understand the commitment to watering them. If you use fertilizer, under no circumstances should fertilizer be near the pool as a strong wind will blow the granules into the pool and stain the walls and bottom. (I've seen this, it isn't pretty!) Any time you use fertilizer near a pool, water it down immediately so the ground absorbs the granules.

Creating A Magical Rock Setting

Artificial rocks and waterfalls have come a long way the past few years! Today, the cost factor of building a waterfall and concrete rock formations are greatly reduced by these unique products. They are designed to easily re-configure around any pool... and they look so real!



Custom rock structures and waterfalls are constructed as individual modules using a light weight metal framework. Textured rock panels are then formed around them. Made of a composite polymer that has been used at major theme parks for nearly two decades, these durable structures are tolerant to any weather climate.



If you really want to turn your pool area into a tropical paradise, this is a backyard addition you shouldn't overlook. I have seen an assortment of stunning rock formations around pools that leave me breathless, especially at night when lit by subtle lighting.

Rock formation companies: Replications Unlimited: www.replicationsunlimited.com - 314.524.2040 • Rico Rock: www.ricorock.com • Boulder Formations: www.boulderformations.com

Photos courtesy of: Replications Unlimited



Pets and pools

There is nothing that warms my heart more than watching a dog swimming in a pool! Throw a tennis ball into the picture and most dogs are in heaven! Sadie, one of my clients, is a golden retriever who gets extremely excited when I come to service her pool. As I have never been much of a thrower, I discovered a great throwing toy at the local pet store. About 18" long, this device has a long handle and a cup to hold a tennis ball. And boy can you throw a ball a long way!



There are however, safety issues you must consider: Although many dogs love water, don't assume they can swim. Never throw a dog into the pool as he may panic and might not be able to climb out. Even excellent swimmers gradually lose their ability as they age and become weaker. Senior dogs are more prone to slipping and falling into a pool also. There is a pet safety product called Skamper Ramp which sits on the edge of your pool with a ramp that lies in the water. A trapped animal will be able to climb out of the pool. What a great idea!
• www.skamper-ramp.com



When it comes to pool safety, pets should be treated the same as children. Visit the Pool Safety chapter on page 69 for more information. Heat and sunlight are more intense around a pool and your dog cannot stay as cool as you, so watch for signs of overheating. An injury to the skin, even something as small as an abrasion, are the perfect place for flies to lay eggs which hatch and become maggots.



Don't let your dog drink from the pool as the chlorine may make him sick and/or irritate their eyes. Your pet can get sick if he drinks water with algae in it. I have dealt with some pool service techs who feel that if a dog is in the pool, the chlorine needs to be higher. Your chlorine levels should be no different than normal. You may have to clean your filter twice a month because of dog hair so keep an eye on your water pressure valve on your pool pump. If it rises 10 PSI after cleaning over the course of a week or two, clean your filter, and skimmer twice a month. And of course, when your dog is finished playing in the pool, hose him down with fresh water to get the chlorine out. Have Fun!

