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Luxury Pools

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HARDSCAPE DESIGN ESSENTIALS

REIMAGINING OUTDOOR LIVING SPACES

TOP POOL
BUILDERS AND
DESIGNERS
FROM COAST
TO COAST

FEATURES

BASIC INSTINCT

Landscaping and architecture meet luxury pool design to create a perfect outdoor living space.

BY ALEXANDRA PECCI

➔ Imagine lounging in your zero-entry pool beneath the shade of a Medjool palm tree, while overlooking a calming infinity edge that blends seamlessly into an ocean or lake view beyond. Perhaps a stone walkway meanders through the trees away from the pool and into a sunken sitting area, and beyond, toward cabana-covered daybeds that beckon for afternoon naps.

In the past, pool design and landscaping were separate afterthoughts for homeowners. Even beautifully built and meticulously cared for houses had template-design pools, simple decks, and perhaps modest outdoor kitchens and screen enclosures.

“For many years, whether you had a \$200,000 house or a \$2 million dollar house, that was the status quo,” says Ryan Hughes, president of Palm Harbor, Florida-based Ryan Hughes Design/Build.

But for those who want the luxury of their home to extend outside as well as inside, the status quo is a thing of the past, as landscaping and architecture meet luxury pool design to create outdoor living spaces that blend together into a single, perfect vision.

CREATE A MASTER PLAN

According to the experts, achieving an outdoor oasis where the pool and landscape designs blend perfectly together starts by working with designers and builders who can design and execute the entire project, ensuring a single, cohesive vision.

“Our philosophy is that the outdoor living space has to be designed, as a whole, by one designer,” Hughes says. “You cannot have a pool guy and a landscape guy and a hardscape guy and expect to have the ultimate result.”

Christopher Anderson, co-owner of Houston-based Custom Design Pools & Landscaping, agrees. “We try to really deliver a master plan for the client, and try to encourage them to think through the entire space,” Anderson says. “I very much compare it to homebuilding.”

Custom Design Pools & Landscaping takes advantage of the stunning terrain to create a seamless indoor/outdoor retreat.

photograph by Daniel Salazar

The need for a master plan is critical, echoes David Peterson, president and CEO of Watershape Consulting, Inc., in Solana Beach, California, even if the entire project won't be completed all at once. "I always describe the master plan. Even if someone couldn't build it all today, what would they want the final project to look like?" he says. "When there's an integrated team, all the details come together."

CONSIDER YOUR LOCATION

The question of setting is an important one—from where on the map your home is located to its design aesthetic.

"People are starting to realize more and more that the outdoor project needs to be integrated with the house," says Anderson. For instance, a free-form, tropical-looking pool and outdoor living space would look out of place accompanying a very traditional brick home.

"I've seen that story over and over, where it's just the wrong idea for that particular house or yard style," Peterson agrees.

Just as homes have distinct styles—from French country to Tuscan to tropical to formal—so do outdoor living spaces. Different plants can help recreate those looks, even halfway around the world, and Anderson says.

In addition, designing with the natural landscape in mind can create stunning results. For instance, when working with clients whose home overlooked a dramatic wetland with Cyprus trees and a heavily wooded nature preserve, Hughes created an infinity pool on a steep hill. The pool meandered away from the house toward the preserve, creating the illusion of the pool water disappearing into it.

"The trees then reflect back onto the water," he says. "It looks like the water and the surrounding landscape all become one."

Anderson also likes to ask, "What are



the views?" and designs to accommodate—or hide—them. One of his clients had a home overlooking Galveston Bay, but long directed the eye away from those piers and out to the water. "It kind of creates a visual stopping point," Anderson says.

THINK BEYOND THE RECTANGLE

When striving to perfectly blend together pool and landscape design, location and style aren't the only considerations; designers also think beyond the rote, old-standard of rectangle-shaped pools surrounded by an expanse of decking. Pools might meander across the outdoor space, flowing from a shallow zero-entry pool for lounging toward a secluded grotto, and elsewhere, a plunge pool. Different tiers

can also add to the drama of the space.

As with the pool shape, the landscaping trend is also toward a softer, more fluid crete," says Anderson. "When you have a ton of decking you do have to break it up, and that's done with landscaping."

In fact, he suggests that homeowners not put decking all the way around the pool.

"Your pool does not have to be accessible all the way around," he says, especially since people tend to go in and out of the pool in one spot anyhow. Bring that landscaping all the way up to the pool."

Hughes also suggests clever touches to blur the lines between the landscape and the pool, like planters that are half in and half out of the pool, with trees such as palms adding natural shade and ambi-



Artistry of Space

RYAN HUGHES DESIGN/BUILD INC.

➔ Offering an entirely fresh perspective on outdoor living and the spaces that accommodate it, Ryan Hughes Design/Build firm is a second-generation company with a 21st-century vision. Founded in 1972 and rebranded in 2012, the Ryan Hughes team's work can be found in intimate to over-the-top outdoor rooms across both the United States and Canada.

Among the firm's specialties is the ability to capture a client's unique vision. By creating intimate settings that fit beautifully with the surrounding environs, Ryan Hughes has become known for what he terms "artistry of space." Signature design elements include state-of-the-art water and fire features, custom stonework, and sophisticated landscape plantings—all of which blend together to brilliant effect.

Having traveled internationally since childhood, Hughes weaves into his work cultural experiences and architectural influences from around the globe. That worldwide perspective has resulted in diverse and inspired projects that have, in turn, led to multiple industry awards and inclusion in international design books.

Offering the services of a licensed pool contractor, as well as landscape design and architecture expertise, the team specializes in pool engineering, pool construction, and outdoor living space project management. Promising knowledge of the finest outdoor elements, clients can expect harmonious

gathering places that are logical and aesthetically pleasing extensions of interior rooms. The scope of their designs encompasses everything outside the walls of the home, from the hard- and softscapes to the outdoor furnishings. Their highly customized pools and spas are truly marvels to behold. Both the science and art of outdoor design are evidenced in Hughes's work.

With years of collective design-build experience, the firm delivers advanced technical knowledge coupled with top-line automation systems, progressive outdoor lighting, and audio-visual systems. They are also skilled at creating

dynamic outdoor kitchens.

In short, for homeowners looking for the ultimate in outdoor getaway, Ryan Hughes Design/Build is the firm to contact. **PH**

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