

POOL PERFECTION

Words: Natalie Raad



As spring eases into summer, now is the perfect time to consider a backyard pool

With summer just around the corner, now is the time to invest in building a backyard swimming pool or upgrading the one you already have. Perfect for those hot days and balmy nights when you need to cool down, a pool is the desirable complement to any backyard. Not only practical, pools are aesthetically pleasing features and, if you integrate a spa into its design, you can enhance the look of your pool and extend its use well into the cooler months.

Big or small, a pool is a major investment, so proper planning is essential. When planning a pool, it's important to ensure that it's designed as part of the garden — the aim is to achieve an integrated result.

Pools and spas are no longer just places to cool off or relax in; they have become design features in their own right. And with

Australian backyards shrinking in size, in many contemporary outdoor living spaces you will find that the pool and spa are now the centrepieces of the design.

"Rather than being pushed back into the corner of the backyard and just used for practical things like exercise, pools are now being integrated into the home's main outdoor entertaining space where, more often than not, they are the main feature of the garden design," says Aaron Worth of Utopia Landscape Design.

"Pools and spas can be used as a landscape feature by virtue of their positioning as well as the materials used in their construction and the innovative techniques used in their design," he adds.

While all pools are designed today with aesthetic appeal in mind, some will have a

clearly defined theme that sets the pool area apart; others will be designed to mirror the style of the house and achieve that highly sought-after sense of integration between the pool, the landscape and the built environment.

For example, a pool designed to complement a contemporary home may be in a very minimalist style. Its stark coping and tiled surrounds, strategically positioned planters with architectural plants and frameless glass pool fencing work in harmony with the home, rather than draw attention away from it. On the other hand, a pool designed with a tropical theme, which might include natural stone tiling, timber decking and lush tropical plantings, may pick up on the colours and materials used for the house but not reflect its architectural style.

There are many new design features and trends being explored when it comes to backyard swimming pools. "Many pools are now being integrated into the design of the house so as to have a seamless transition

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from the internal living space to the external water space," says Dan Gayfer of Out of the Blue. "The use of windows into pools and spas also gives the water a new dynamic influence on its surroundings."

In terms of popularity, Aaron believes geometric pools with clean lines are here to stay, as they offer greater design flexibility (that is, they complement a broader range of house styles and are easier to upgrade as

1. The design of this pool and spa by Award Pools has been integrated with the home and covered outdoor living area.

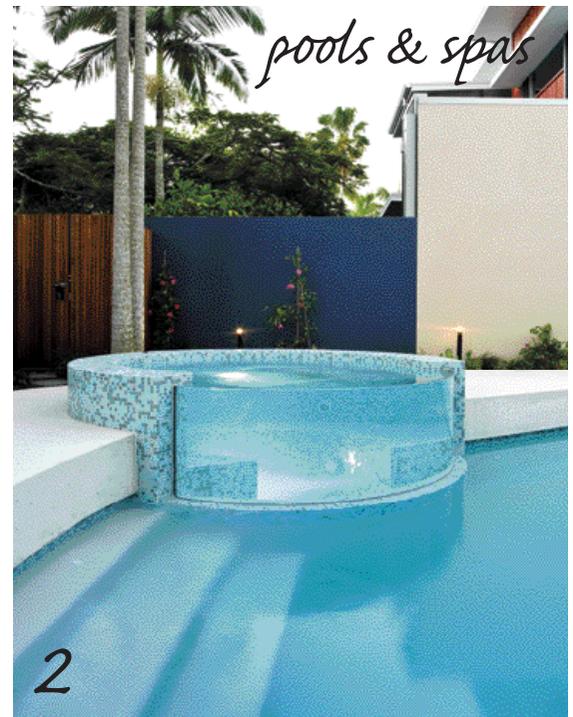
2. The elevated spa in this pool project by 4 Blue Pools features a glass window, turning it into a design focal point.

3. Even in the smallest backyard there is always room for a swimming pool as this East Coast Pools project proves.

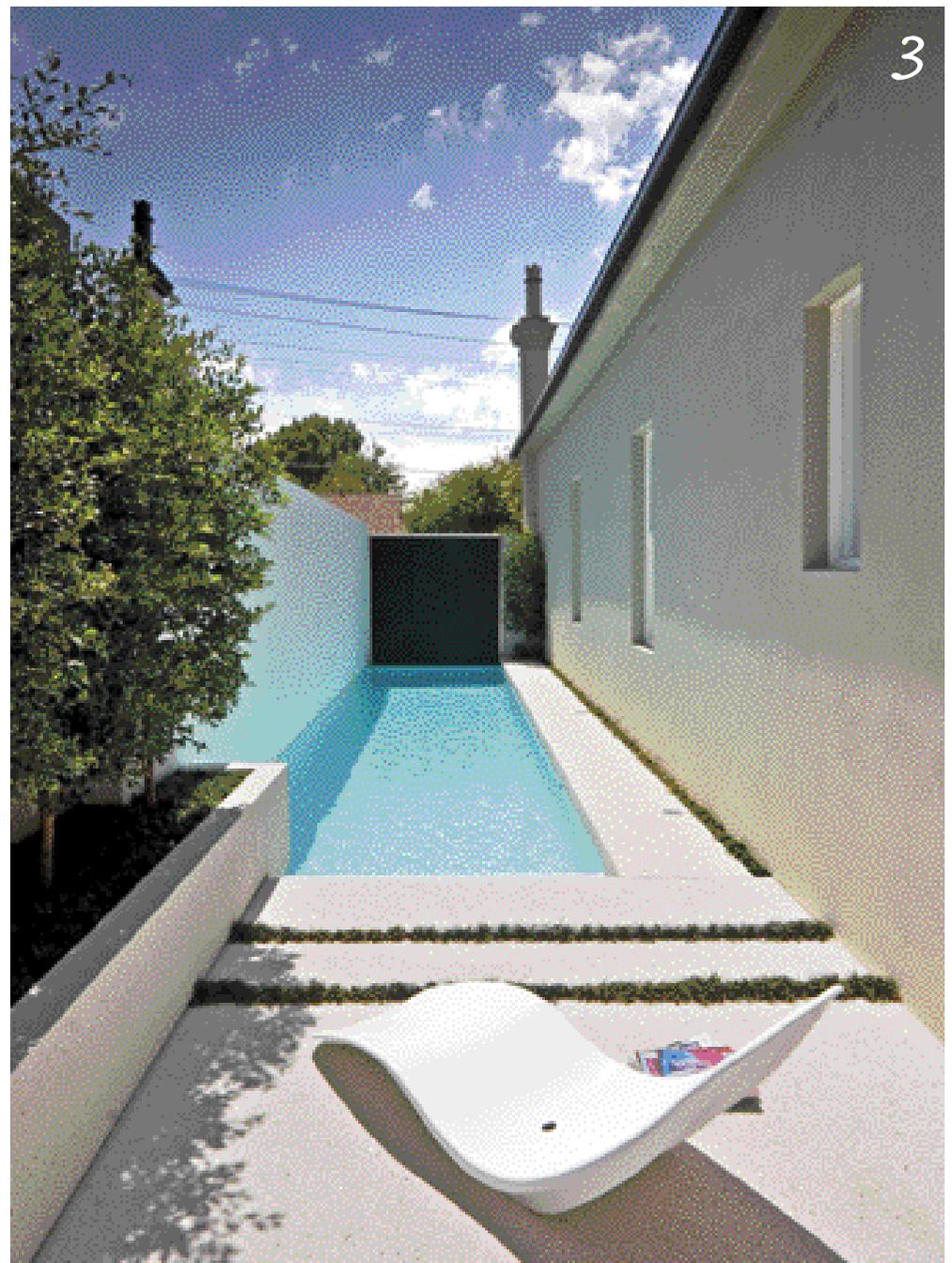
tastes change) and space-saving advantages. Negative-edge pools, which have been popular for some time, also continue to be very much in vogue, as does the integration of water walls, water spouts or sheer-descent water features into the design of the pool.

When it comes to the design of your outdoor space, the placement of a pool is of critical importance. Generally, pools should be positioned parallel to the back of the house. Placement in full sun is not advisable. You should aim to situate 70 per cent of the pool in full sun and have a small portion in a shaded area. This will give respite from the heat and glare on a hot day.

It's important to get the right advice regarding the location and orientation of the pool or spa, says Aaron. "This includes advice about the pool's proximity to the house and other living areas and neighbours, as well as advice about privacy issues and exposure to the elements." →



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“Pools and spas can be used as a design feature”



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A pool is also the ultimate water feature, so where possible position it so its most spectacular aspect can be seen from inside the house and your outdoor entertaining area. That way, even when you're not using the pool, you'll still be able to enjoy the beauty of the water.

The colour of the interior of a pool will greatly influence the colour of the water and the ambience created, so it's important to select a suitable product. Navy blue and dark green interiors will provide a classic look, while black will result in a sleek, dramatic appearance. White will enable the water to take on a soft, subtle look. Black, white and baby blue are fashionable choices at the moment.

In terms of the product used for the interior, Dan recommends tiles. "Not only is it the most aesthetically pleasing, it is also the easiest to clean and the most durable," he says.

Other pool interiors include traditional Marblesheen (a mix of cement and marble

chips), Pebblecrete (a mix of cement and fine pebbles), and Quartzon (a mix of cement and fine quartz).

There's a variety of finishing materials to choose from to add the overall look of your pool and backyard. You can buy pre-moulded pool copings or use a concrete or natural stone tile. Poured concrete is another option, as is treated hardwood timber. "Natural stone, concrete and timber are still the coping and pool surround materials of choice," says Aaron.

Being water-wise while enjoying the beauty of a pool is easy and it's something today's pool designers take into consideration. Pool covers, either manual or automatic, are recommended as a means of minimising evaporation, especially during the hotter months. "There are many pool cover products available, including automated rolling pool shutters that can be walked on," says Aaron.

And you don't need to compromise on the

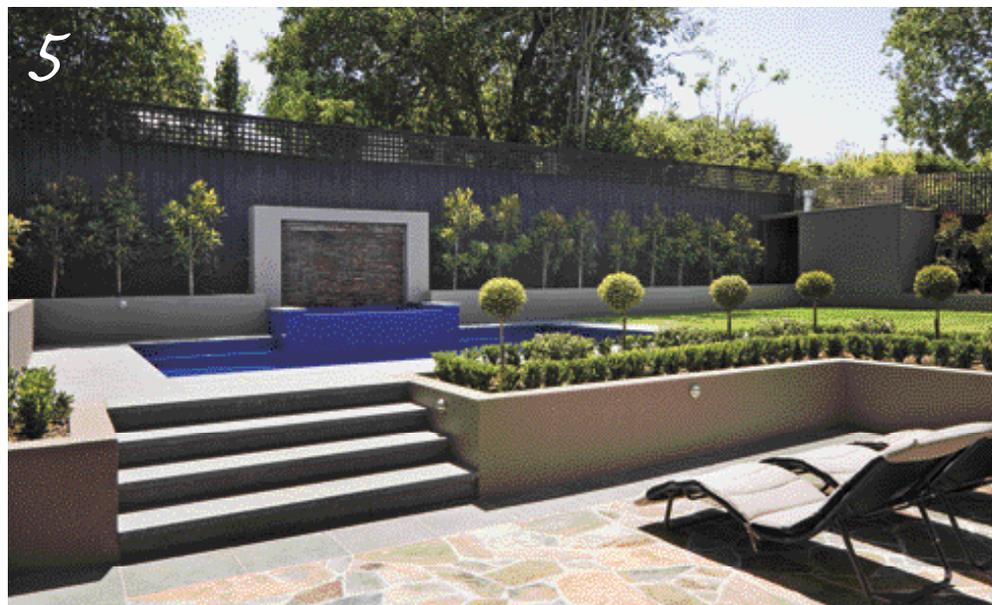
look of your pool, either. "Pool cover design is quickly evolving to ensure they don't look out of place in residential outdoor design," says Dan.

In addition to pool covers, there are other ways to be water-wise and minimise evaporation in pools, such as connecting a water tank to the auto refill system of a pool rather than the water mains, suggests Dan.

Safety is of paramount importance, so a pool fence is a must. "Swimming pools, outside spas and above-ground pools lower than 1200mm and with more than 300mm of water in them must have safety fencing to prevent direct access to the water," says Anne-Marie Day of Prestige Pool Fencing. The fence must be non-climbable with a finished height of 1200mm from the ground, and the gate must open away from the pool or spa area.

Traditionally, standard metal fences have been used around pools. Today, however, glass fencing is proving very popular. "Glass pool fencing will open up your backyard and provide a seamless solution to pool fencing requirements," says Anne-Marie. "Pool fencing is no longer just a practical, safety measure; it adds to the whole ambience of an outdoor area."

No matter how big or small your outdoor space, you're sure to find a pool to suit your unique area. And with summer at our doorsteps, what better way to enjoy those long, hot days and nights than in the comfort of your very own swimming pool? ■



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6. This negative-edge pool by Australian Pool Company is suspended over an embankment and enjoys breathtaking views.

7. Poolscape Projects has cleverly positioned the pool so it can be viewed from the house or outdoor living area.

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