



Planning a pool?

Story by Christina Sweeney] [Photography by Sarah Bradbury

swimming pool n. A pool constructed for swimming

Dive right in!



The definition noted by Webster's is straightforward and to the point. A 16-foot by 32-foot plaster rectangle, light blue in color, comes to mind. Steps in the three-foot shallow end and a diving board or slide at the 10-foot deep end complete the picture of the pools built 20 years ago. Let the mind wander from these standards, add a touch of imagination, some technology advances and construction innovations, and you have the diverse range of today's water features.



Once known strictly for their recreational purposes, the swimming pool has expanded its possibilities with landscape design. To narrow down the possibilities and wind up with the pool that will suit your lifestyle, there are many questions that only you, the end user, can answer before a plan for installation can proceed.

A landscape designer may have already posed the following questions to you, but if you go directly to the swimming pool contractor, be prepared to respond to the following: the physical location of the pool structure, the shape, safety issues (especially if there are children in the household), the aesthetic setting you are ultimately trying to achieve and how the pool is intended to be used.

A majority of new pool projects are built intending to be used for a refreshing swim. Other uses for your backyard as an outdoor living space, however, may lead your pool design into fresh new directions.

The design aspect of the project starts with you, the homeowner. Depending upon your budget and how hands-on you want to be with this project, you may or may not bring a landscape architect or designer into your project. A pool building contractor can typically offer a wealth of advice, including design services.

Gary and Rose Latham soon found out that the pencil sketch on a notepad done by their pool builder, Sonoma Pools, was much more in sync with their backyard vision than the plan presented by the landscape designer who charged an upfront fee.

The Latham's sloped backyard on a Healdsburg neighborhood lot presented its own challenges from the beginning, but with careful planning and attention to detail by these homeowners, they have achieved a relaxing and functional outdoor space that is an extension of their beautiful home.

Jess Janssen, owner of Janssen Pools, specializes in the "unusual and exceptional" pool construction. Janssen Pools works primarily with landscape designers, but they also offer design services for clients who contact them directly. If the only factor that you are certain of when you undertake a pool project is the fact that you want a pool, then contracting with a professional is the best route for you.

A good designer will become familiar with their client and be able to translate that client's vision into a plan. Depending upon the client, the available space and the budget, that plan might only include the pool structure or it might be so detailed that it includes the texture of the patio

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and the _____ of every last flower border.

Once _____ decided whether you are going to hire a designer or plan the project yourself, you can move forward accordingly. Colors, finishes and the surrounding patio area all represent decisions that must be made. The light blue plaster pool is no longer your only option.

The question of color only comes after you have answered the question about finish. Plaster is still prevalent, but now consider fiberglass or even a stone-like surface finish. A tropically-styled setting could even include a sand bar edge which leads directly into the pool water.

Waterfalls, multiple levels and vanishing edges are just a few more of the endless possibilities. Of course, all of these extra options mean more money. It is important to prioritize your options when building a pool so that the project stays within your budgetary limits.

The area surrounding the pool can make or break the setting that you are trying to achieve. Building materials and a design style that meld in an aesthetically pleasing fashion ultimately will make your space more enjoyable.

The proximity of the pool area to the actual home also must be taken into consideration. A limited space only means that the patio design should be more of an extension of the home. When geographical space is not an issue, the area can be divided into designated zones. These areas might include an outdoor kitchen, dining or conversation spaces, a play area, pathways, a horticultural wonderland for exploration and—don't forget—the pool, which is our centerpiece. Who wouldn't want to relax and entertain in a beautiful and functional patio area?

Lighting is an essential aspect of the pool and patio area. Convenience and safety are the two most obvious reasons.

Accents, highlights, and creating a certain ambience in the evening hours is the fun stuff. Pathway and directional lighting can easily be hidden so that all one sees is the pathway of light. Uplights provide a dramatic effect with very little intrusion. They are installed at ground level and point up to a specific area of interest, a tree or fountain for example, illuminating the surrounding area while maintaining a focal point.


Matt Sweeney, proprietor of Sweeney Electrical Contracting, has completed outdoor lighting projects for some homeowners who wanted to light a specific outdoor event. Once the occasion is over, the owners are left with a fabulous lighting package that will be around for the next party. "Outdoor lighting provides unlimited opportunities," says Sweeney. Installations can take place on structures (such as the home, pool house, gazebo, trellises or a pergola), in the ground, on deck or lawn area, or even in trees. With the use of dimmers or other lighting controls, you can create a multitude of atmospheric lighting scenes.

Storage areas for pool toys and floats, towels and outdoor games is an extra feature that most of us don't think of until after the fact. It's a simple but necessary concept that can be achieved with a little extra effort in your planning. An outdoor shower is another idea that would be wholly appreciated. Not to say that either of these features couldn't be added at a later time, but by considering these options with your original design, you can easily build them in at a much lower cost.

Where do you find the right builder for your project? Advertisements within your hometown newspapers, locally produced magazines or logos on vehicles create name familiarity and most likely will lead you to a local business. That local business should then be able to produce local references. An excellent source of



reference for any pool builder is a pool service company. John Camilleri, owner of Healdsburg Pool Service, has been in this business for over 30 years. "We see these pools week after week. It is our job to be completely familiar and knowledgeable about each pool structure, the equipment and the surrounding area of each customer's pool." Should any problems arise, a good builder will work hand-in-hand with the service company because they know that the service company is their best form of recommendation.

Installing a pool as a permanent fixture to your property is most definitely a project. The lengths that you, as the homeowner, take to complete this project can range from simple and straight forward to outright excessive. Your vision, not to mention your budget, will set the stage. It is, however, your outdoor stage to set. Take the plunge! 

Photos —

[Pages 10 and 11] Two Healdsburg pools reflect different styles and lifestyles. [Page 12] A waterfall flows from the edge of the spa wall. [Page 14] Top: an outdoor shower built into a monolith wall; bottom: a pool deck offers comfy seating options.

In the Swim

Janssen Pool Construction

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Healdsburg Pool Service

John Camilleri
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Healdsburg, CA 95448
707.433.6451

Caldwell Trouette
General Contractors, Inc.
Healdsburg; 433-8425

Johnson Pools
9650 Old Redwood Hwy., Windsor
837-0866; johnsonpoolandspa.com

Sweeney Electrical Contracting
Matt Sweeney
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"Grace is very knowledgeable about the entire real estate process. She provided excellent tips about the market, pricing and advised on how to make my property show well. Professional, honest, experienced, and a great communicator, I recommend Grace wholeheartedly."

– Chris Piehl


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