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Volume 23, Issue 8



Blinds, Shade and Shutter Factory

Providing homeowners with windows of opportunities *page 19*

These fine service providers sponsor our 24th Anniversary Edition:

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Hard Choices

A closer look at the latest trends in stone and tile

Perfect Pools

The bells and whistles that will enhance your swimming experience

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Scott Payne Custom Pools

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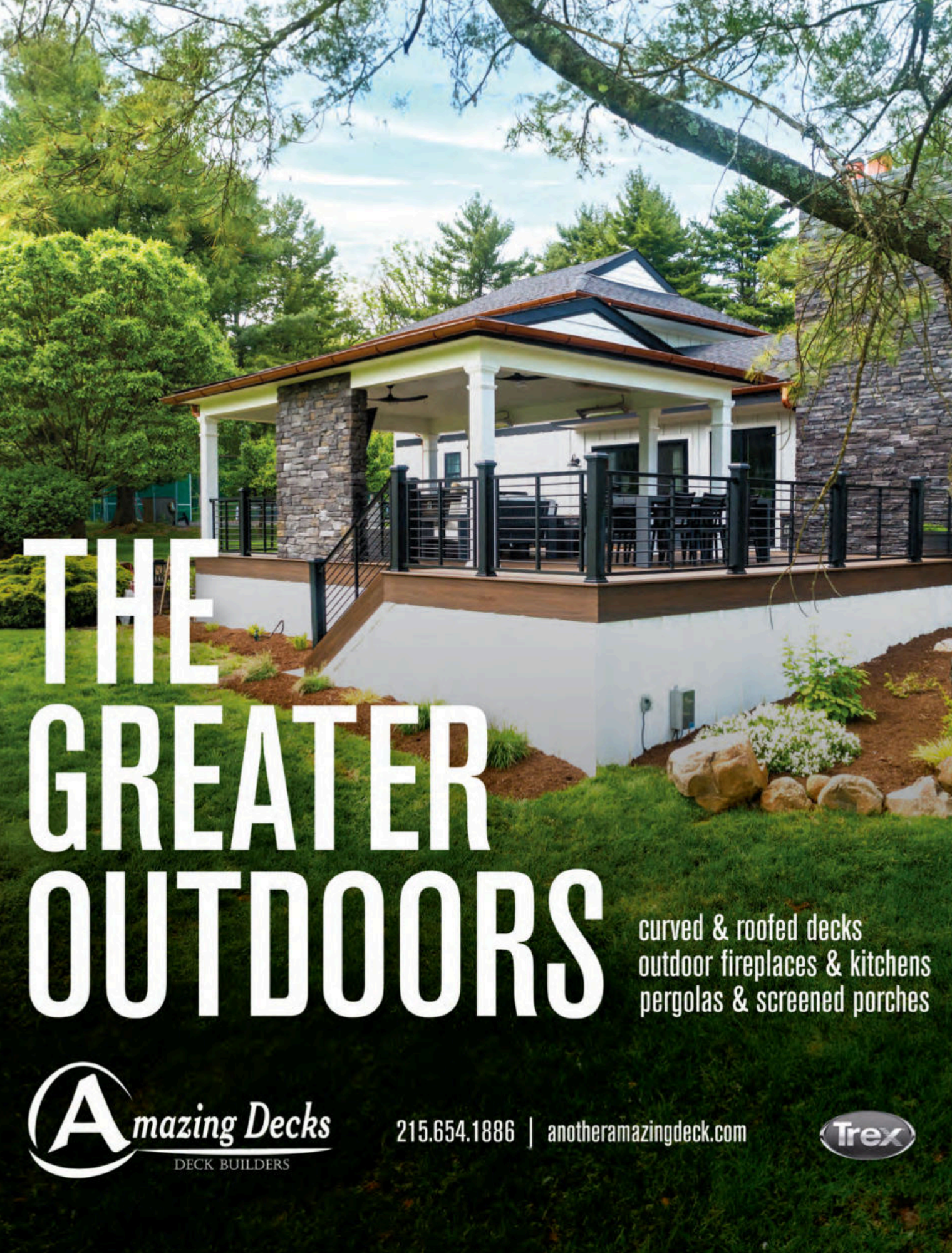
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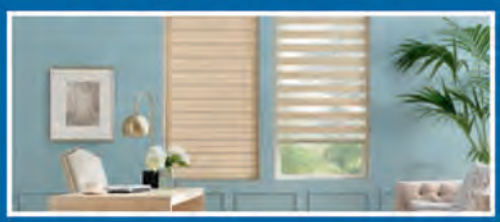
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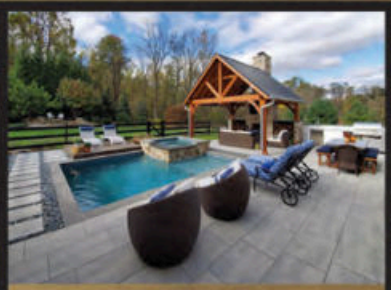
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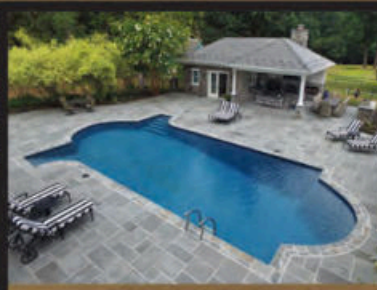
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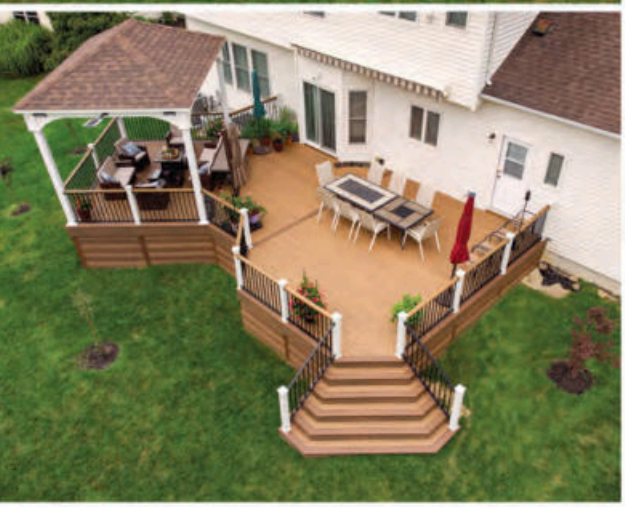
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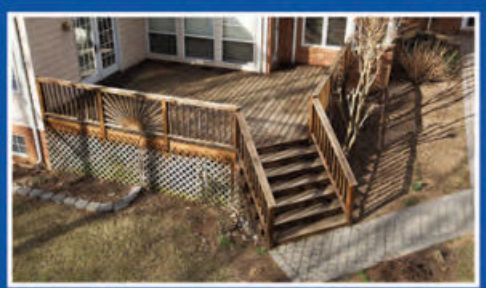


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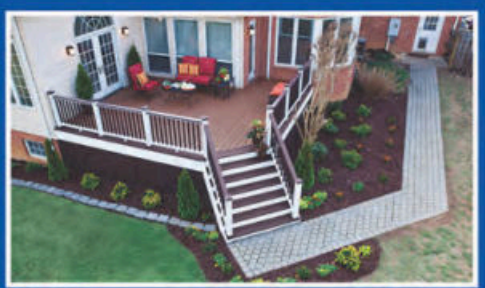
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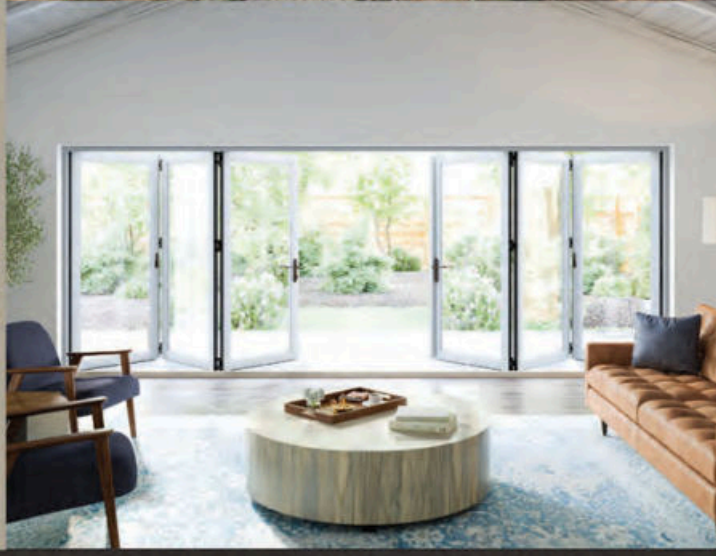
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HARD CHOICES



When it comes to choosing the right **stone for your project,** experts can help you navigate the many options.

By Carly Murray

CUSTOMIZED STONE RENOVATIONS AND ADDITIONS DO NOT HAVE TO COME AT THE EXTRA EXPENSE OF STRESS. With the plethora of options available in design and functionality, the most difficult step can be deciding what works best for the consumer's ideal space and lifestyle. However, local design experts are there to help from the beginning of template creation to the finished product.

Choosing the right style

This year, complements of blue and green are trending in kitchens and bathrooms to add a pop of color. For instance, blue or green cabinets or backsplash can be brought out by a material with patterns or textures that match. In contrast, natural choices like soapstone and granite can achieve a more traditional and classic look. Ultimately, it comes down to individual taste, and what fits with the ideal finished product.

"Whether someone is looking for colorful granite from Brazil, white marble from Italy, or white, gray or gold quartz countertops, we have something for everyone," says Kristine Kzelian, a sales representative and designer at Imperial Marble & Granite.

Online visualizers can assist in planning, and serve as tools for determining a color palette while experimenting with elements such as countertops, backsplash, floors



HARD CHOICES

and cabinets. That way, remodels don't have to be a risk—and the result doesn't have to be a surprise.

"Since we sell only quality cabinetry and countertops, any materials from inexpensive to expensive that customers select will be durable and attractive. While customers selecting the most expensive custom cabinetry we carry can be startlingly beautiful, the greatest impact making a kitchen renovation valuable is always the design first and the materials second," says Paul McAlary, president of Main Line Kitchen Design.

What's more, stone installation isn't limited to a bathroom or a kitchen, and can be a charming addition to outdoor bars, fireplaces and laundry rooms.

"We have state-of-the-art machinery that allows us to create intricate fireplace surrounds and mitered countertops," says Dino Vogia, president of Stone Tech Fabrication.





Choosing the right functionality

Design professionals can recommend materials to match visual and practical preferences. While quartz countertops remain the most popular choice in material, quartzite is gaining traction for its natural patterns and colors. No matter the preference, every material has its own set of advantages that, when combined with a favored visual aesthetic, can create the best possible result.

"Quartzite is a material that can kind of give you the same aesthetic look of a marble and that kind of soft pattern, but it has the density and durability that lends itself more towards granite. So it's kind of one of those materials that's the best of both worlds," says Mike Werner, sales manager at AAA Hellenic Marble.

As each individual is different, so is each material. Granite kitchen countertops are known to be great for people who like to cook because of their durability and heat resistance. Quartz, however, is easy to clean, and won't stain from oils or spices. And for a household with children, quartz can be favored because of its resistance to spills.

"Granite and quartzite are very popular choices for countertops due to their durability. Like all natural stones, they have to be sealed to prevent stains, which is always done by our team. Natural stones should be resealed once a year to make sure stone is protected from stains. Since quartz [countertops] are man-made materials, they do not require sealing. They are ideal for homeowners with busy lifestyles," says Vogia.

Each material has its own advantages, and there are always solutions to any potential issues. Ultimately, it's about proper research and education provided by professionals.

"Within design, educating clients is extremely important. They may find a product that they absolutely love, but if you don't have the experience to say, 'This product will fail or deteriorate or discolor or have an adverse reaction due to heat' … and then a year later it looks awful, you just killed the job. I always urge any person looking to do a kitchen or bath to seek out a true experienced individual that has been either accredited, or has been in the industry for a period of time and actually is familiar with installations," says David Cerami, president of HomeTech Renovations.

Choosing the best for each budget

Just because a preferred material may not be within one's budget, it does not mean that their dream kitchen or bathroom is no longer obtainable. With all of the choices available, there are always alternatives that are more beneficial toward each individual's lifestyle. Aside from materials, pricing will depend on the level of customization. "The investment that many people don't make to get a great kitchen is often not money, but their own time," says McAlary. He also advises that the key to smooth kitchen renovation is to "plan, plan and plan some more." Part of planning and budgeting is to figure out exact measurements so there aren't extra charges for excess material.

"We have a couple of suppliers that we've been dealing with for a couple of decades [and] we have a great relationship with them. They give us great pricing and great availability, so we have a whole list of colors that we get a square foot pricing on, as opposed to the requirement of buying a whole slab," says Lorraine Farkas at Sterl Kitchens.

Pricing can also depend on the source of the material, its appearance and its rarity. Quartz, for instance, can differ in cost for attributes like pattern and color. This is where options come in handy yet again, with local, national and international stones that vary in visual effect and lifestyle practicality. "If a stone's coming from halfway around the world—from Madagascar—that's going to be more pricey than something mined in Vermont," says Cerami.

Design experts can often help to recommend similar alternatives that achieve the same look and feel without causing the price of a project to skyrocket.

Choosing everything else

While in a home renovation mindset, additional services and products can be both tempting and seem like an extra hassle, especially if the project is "do-it-yourself." However, several businesses offer either recommendations or in-store products to further streamline the process.

Top image courtesy of Sterl Kitchens. Image below courtesy of AAA Hellenic Marble

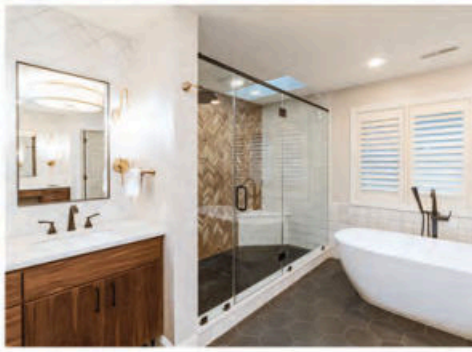
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HARD CHOICES



"Usually if there's a general contractor involved, they have the ability to have everything coordinated through that person. If they don't have that luxury, then we can help assist with plumbing services, removal and disposal of the countertops," says Werner.

It's also about knowing what products work together, and which do not.

"We also have sinks, so when they are getting their countertop, they can get their sink and their faucet. …Sometimes people don't realize they need to get a new sink just because they're getting a quartz or granite countertop, and they say, ' I have a sink already.' But it was a drop-in sink for Formica. They'll need to get an undermount sink to use with granite or quartz," says Farkas.

Compared to the limited options available in the recent past, stone renovations have been greatly innovated in the last decade. It may seem daunting to begin a room renovation, but the wide variety of both products and design experts can turn an idea into a reality. And for customers who prefer to be as "hands-on" as possible, there are stone fabricators that will allow a customer to make specific decisions every step of the way.

"Most clients have a vision for their remodel and our sales representatives offer our services to find the right countertop to bring our client's vision to life. When choosing Imperial for countertop services, we request clients to be present at both the field measurement and installation in the event questions arise from our technicians and to sign off at the time of our services," says Kzelian.

So whether you're ready to renovate the kitchen, add some modern elements to a bathroom or beyond, there's no shortage of stone and industry experts to help you create a functional space with tremendous aesthetic appeal based on your style, preference and budget. H&H

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Blinds, Shade and Shutter Factory invites you to visit their state-of-the-art showroom, featuring the area's most extensive collection of window coverings from Hunter Douglas and other industry-leading brands. Conveniently located at 404 Easton Road,Warrington in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, customers can browse through a wide variety of working models, styles and patterns alongside an expert design team.

"We have the best of the best," says Owner & Operator Bob Silver, who has spent his career building and maintaining the family business set by his great-grandfather, now in its fourth generation with his son, Jordan. "Until you've been here, you haven't seen anything! There are so many various display options that you really have to come into the showroom to see all of the different physical working samples, how they operate with the different lift systems, and the latest in motorization and home automation."

Whether you are shopping for a single window treatment, purchasing a new home, or seeking a solution to a complex design challenge, Blinds, Shade and Shutter Factory has certified professionals with the right knowledge and expertise to help you put it all together.

"New home construction is actually the perfect time to visit and plan your designs, especially if you are considering motorization," says Silver. "There's also the concern with privacy. We have so many customers come in worried about having little or no privacy in their new home. To help combat this, we provide FREE temporary shades for every window in your order. These white, light-filtering shades easily attach to your glass and can deliver the privacy you need until permanent treatments are installed. In addition to your free temporary shades, we are also offering a $200 voucher for all new home construction orders."

Just stop in with some ballpark measurements and a photo or two, and the company's team of experienced consultants will make shopping for your new window treatments an exciting and pleasurable experience. The company will bring the selected samples to your home, professionally measure your windows, and firm up pricing before their certified master installers arrive to transform your space.

After nearly a century of serving the community's window covering needs, Silver and his staff take great pride in being the best at what they do. With competitive pricing and excellent value, this longtime local business is constantly satisfying new and returning customers, earning top honors in the Interior Design and Window Treatment Store categories among the region's "Best of" awards for almost a decade.

More information about Blinds, Shade and Shutter Factory is available online at BlindsShadeAndShutterFactory.com or by calling (215) 398-6886. Plan your trip to the showroom today! H&H

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With a custom-designed pool, your backyard can soon become a personal oasis.

Get Ready to Make a Splash

by Lindsey Getz

FEW THINGS HAVE THE POWER TO TRANSFORM A BACKYARD INTO A VACATION PARADISE LIKE A POOL. But if you're thinking about adding one, you probably don't want a boring cookie-cutter design: You're looking for something that is truly your own. That's where Scott Payne Custom Pools comes in. They're known for building the dream pools their clients are seeking.

"We're a hands-on pool company where you're not dealing with commissioned salespeople—you're dealing with the owner," says owner and president Scott Payne, who sees the projects through from the sales stage to design and build. "Every project is approached as a fresh canvas so that we can create a one-of-a-kind backyard escape."

The company can also handle pool renovations for homeowners who have an existing pool in need of a makeover. Whether it is a mini facelift or perhaps a complete overhaul, Payne and his team have the experience to complete a renovation that will help transform your outdated pool into a modern escape.

While the company's focus is on highly custom pools, Payne says that their ability to customize a solution that's right for each homeowner also allows them to work with a variety of budgets.

"We do have some various options here so that we have something even for the customer who thinks their only option is to get in with the big box builders," Payne explains. "We stay in tune with options that we can offer homeowners who might be on more of a budget."

Scott Payne Custom Pools also offers affordable financing options for homeowners who are looking to pay for their pool over time.

A One-Stop Experience

While the pool is at the heart of a backyard vacation space, these days, a lot of homeowners are also looking for the "complete package" that has it all. This is not an option that companies can always offer. In fact, many larger pool builders have tunnel vision in that they're only focused on the pool itself. Once that's completed, they're on to the next project—leaving plenty of work to be done for the rest of the property.



But in addition to pools, Payne says that they also design and build total outdoor living areas so that they can be the one-stop-shop many homeowners are seeking. This means after your pool is completed, you won't have to go and hire another company to create the backyard you've always envisioned.

"We're obviously very pool focused, but we also understand that outdoor living is a huge trend that grows every year," he says. "We're able to design and build complete spaces where homeowners can spend more time outside."

Oftentimes, folks are looking to enhance areas around the pool so they can further enjoy their time outdoors. Decks, outdoor kitchens and pool houses are some of the more popular choices as a finishing touch where homeowners can sit and entertain family and friends, cook meals and make lasting memories.

A Cut Above

While there are a lot of pool companies out there, when it comes to something as important as your custom project, you want to make sure you're partnering with someone trustworthy to design and build your custom pool.

In terms of what separates Scott Payne Custom Pools from other companies, a lot of it comes down to the education and experience they bring to the table. Payne is an "IWI" (International Watershape Institute) certified builder, which is credentialing that comes after meeting extensive qualifications and vetting. He is also part of the Master Pools Guild, an elite pool builders' association spanning the globe.



Payne says that he keeps up with training and education in order to always offer his clients the best. It's easy to become stagnant in the design-build realm if no effort is made to keep up with what's new or to think outside the box. But Payne says that he wants every client to feel confident about getting the pool of their dreams. As he says, "our scope is only limited to our customers' imagination."

The hands-on experience coupled with the company's high level of expertise are a winning combination that help ensure homeowners are thrilled with the end results. **H&H**

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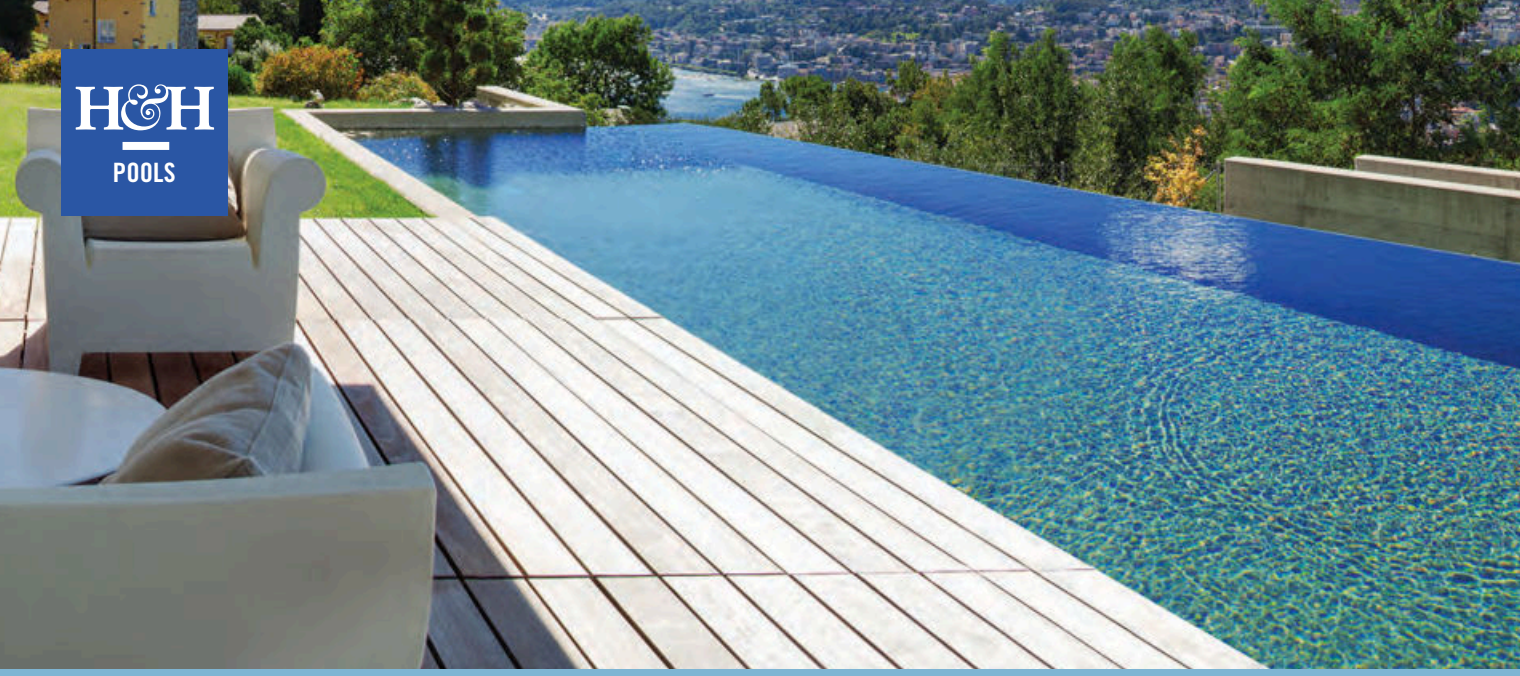
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DIVE INTO THE EXTRAORDINARY:

Exploring the World of Extreme Pools

by **Kristen Jorgensen**

When it comes to swimming pools, most people envision a rectangular body of water surrounded by deck chairs, a place to relax and cool off during hot summer days. However, there is a breed of swimming pools that transcends the ordinary, pushing the boundaries of design, engineering and imagination. These extraordinary marvels are known as extreme pools. Join us as we dive into the world of extreme pools, where creativity knows no limits and aquatic adventures await.

Take the Plunge

Since living in a post-COVID era, homeowners are still finding the appeal in investing in home projects and creating escapism right in their own backyards. According to industry professionals, pool installations and custom design projects have increased over the last five years. "We have seen a vast range of projects over the past few years," explains Sam Waddell from SLS Landscaping. "We've designed and installed pools as small as 10 feet by 10 feet and as large as miniature water parks. It really comes down to the interest and budget of the client."

Bryan Hull from Del Val Pools & Spas concurs. "There are many new amenities from sun decks to swim-up bar tables that can be shared with people out of the pool, to gas-driven creative fire illumination. Waterfalls and fountains are long-lasting staples. It's about how to get the most out of your pool oasis."

A unique style of pool that seems to be growing in popularity is the plunge pool.









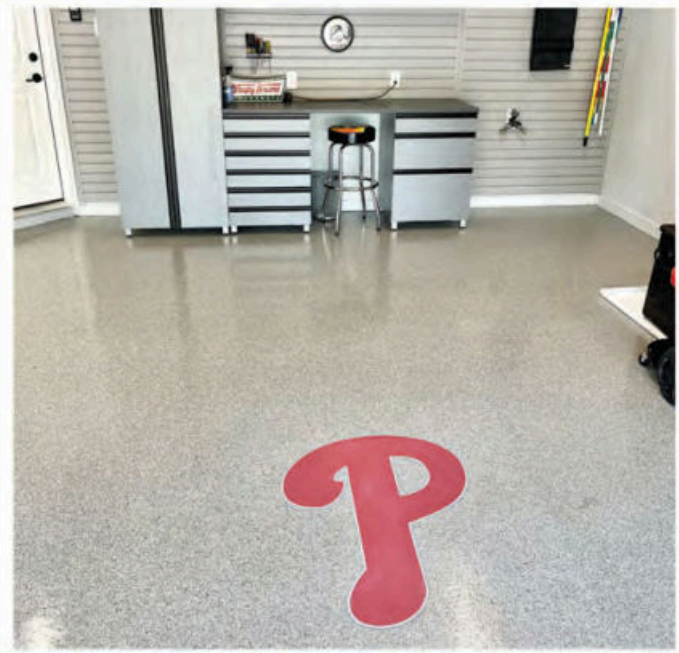
While traditional backyard pools are typically 15 feet wide and 30 feet long, plunge pools tend to be no larger than 10 by 20 feet. They are also flat-bottomed and shallow, usually around five feet deep, and less expensive to maintain and easier to build. "A plunge design allows for a pool to fit snugly into a sloped backyard without interfering with a 100-year-old live oak on the property," Waddell explains. "I think people that are drawn to plunge pools are looking for a smaller footprint because maybe they have more functional areas in their yard, which is also a more modern look."

Larger swimming pools don't allow for much else in the typical backyard, Waddell adds, while plunge pools leave space for dining and play areas. They can also "make your yard look and feel like a staycation spot."

Tanning Ledges

Don't let the name fool you, the shallow entry design of a tanning

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H&H POOLS

ledge, or often referred to as a sun shelf, offers plenty of entertainment and options for adults, as well as kids too. So while you can use this feature as a spot to relax and to work on your tan, the benefits of a tanning ledge go beyond just catching a few rays.

For families with young children, tanning ledges offer babies and toddlers a place to splash and play without having to be fully submerged in the pool. It also gives little ones an easier entryway since pool steps can be difficult for young swimmers.

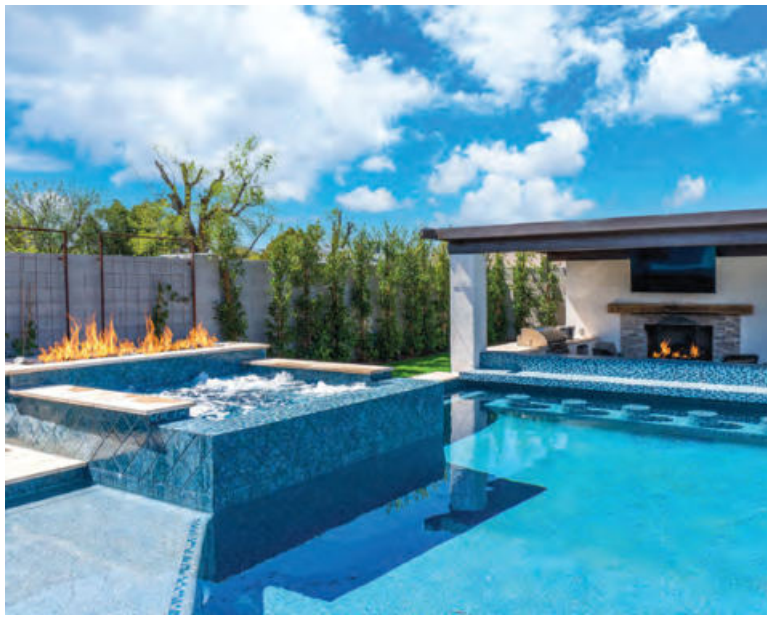
Tanning ledges can also be large enough for several pool-friendly lounge chairs to be partially submerged in the water, and umbrella stands can be incorporated into the design. It's like having a resort in your backyard.

Pools That Are Making a Splash

Freeform pools have also skyrocketed in popularity over the last few decades, and for good reason—they are a beautiful pool design concept. The freeform pool design is meant to mimic a natural body of water and to blend in with its surroundings, contributing to a more peaceful and natural backyard landscape.

"The benefit of freeform pools is the overall design flexibility. It doesn't matter what shape your backyard is, how much space you're working with, or whatever other unique requirements you have—a freeform design is a blank canvas, and you can make just about anything work," explains Andrew McFarlane of California Pools.

Another benefit of a freeform-style pool is all of the additional features you can add to the design. "We build a lot of freeform pools that feature everything from a classic large water slide to more unique additions like grottos. We also completed a project which was a freeform pool with a vanishing edge that looked off the top of the hill into the hillsides: A really stunning design and one of my favorite builds," says McFarlane.



Fire and Water Features

While outdoor fire features, like fireplaces and different varieties of fire pits, tend to be located on patios and decks, the latest pool design trends blend fire and water together. Both elements add drama that can elevate the look and feel of your pool. Whether you are looking for some added ambiance, warmth and lighting for nighttime swims, or a place to roast a few s'mores, there are plenty of ways to incorporate both fire and water features into your overall design.

"Rectangular pools with entertaining spaces, sunken bars, or fire pit areas, seem to be popular



and are also creating those social spaces homeowners are looking to gain when designing their pool," McFarlane adds.

Walk-in Pools

One of the most obvious upsides to a walk-in pool is the fact that you can just walk right in—it's right there in the name! You're replacing corner stairs with a long, wide slope. The slope in these types of pools means that it will get gradually deeper as you go. It's a lot like a wave pool you might see at an amusement park, minus the waves.

There's also no denying that walk-in pools can be aesthetically pleasing. Depending on what sort of patio you choose, you could make the whole space look just like a beach in your backyard.

The Spool

By blending the words spa and pool, you get a "spool." In recent years, pool builders have increased business with homeowners with tighter budgets and smaller properties who request water features that are smaller than traditional swimming pools but larger than standard spas. Many homeowners use a spool mostly for relaxation and entertaining—a place to soak and cool off on hot days or to enjoy drinks with friends on pleasant evenings. Spools may even have directional jets against which you can swim.

"Depending on how you outfit your spool, this type of pool will cost significantly less than a standard pool installation. Maintenance is also usually easier than with larger pools, but you will still have water chemistry and filter equipment to manage," explains Wadell.

Classic is Still Cool

With a world filled with architectural aquatic marvels, the classics have also had a resurgence according to Mike McCool from Swim-Mor Pools.

"Exotic pool styles are trending, but I have seen a major comeback in the classic Hamptons-style pool. Homeowners who are investing a lot of capital into their backyard projects are looking for longevity of style."

A great way to complete the Hamptons style aesthetic is to incorporate complementary landscaping. "We typically deck out the yard with landscaping and hardscaping native to things you would find in the Nantucket area. Plants like manicured boxwoods, hydrangeas, and variations of roses," says McCool

Extreme pools are not merely places to swim; they are architectural masterpieces, audacious experiments, and gateways to new experiences. From suspended transparent pools to infinity pools blending with the horizon; from natural wonders to underwater kingdoms; and urban oases defying conventions, these extraordinary aquatic creations take swimming to a whole new level. Whether you seek adventure, luxury or a harmonious connection with nature, extreme pools are designed to captivate and awe. So, dive in, explore the extraordinary, and let the magic of extreme pools transport you to a world where dreams become a reality. H&H

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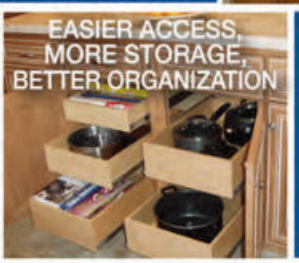


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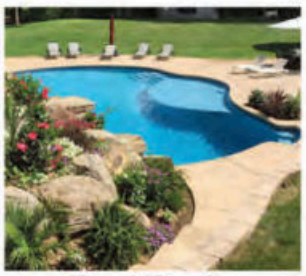


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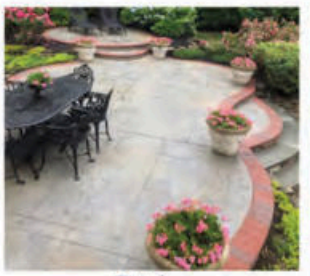
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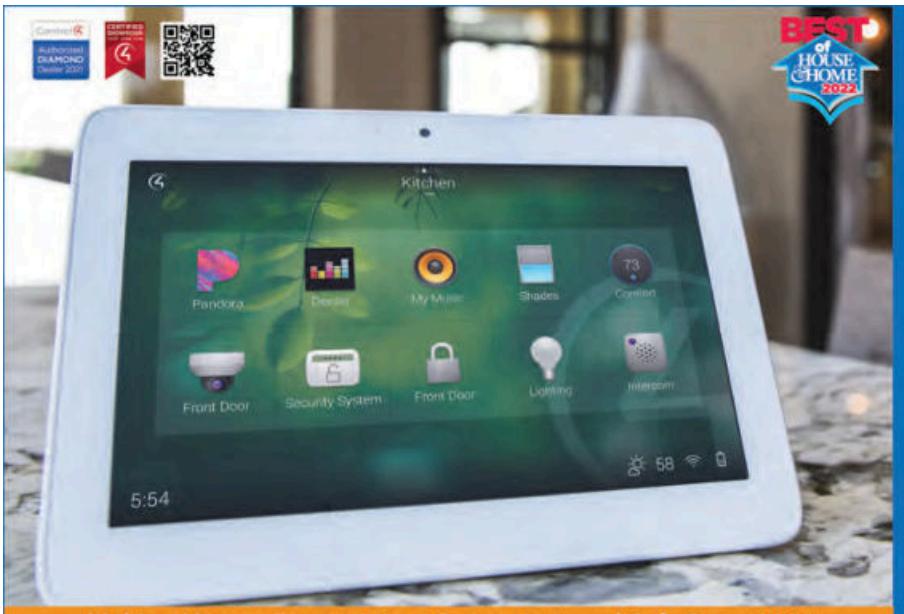
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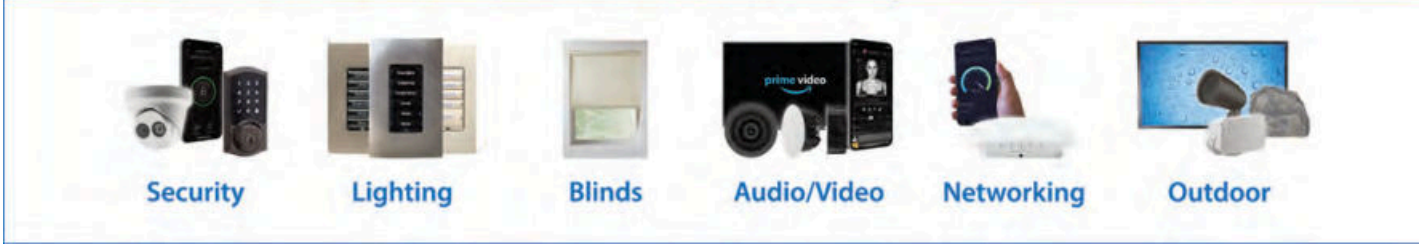
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