

HOME&GARDEN

Creating a sublime summer retreat in Northern Va.

Virginia couple found the perfect yard to fit their dreams of a pool

By Patrick Crowley
Special to The Examiner

Childhood summers spent in the family backyard pool inspired a Northern Virginia woman to want that same enjoyment for her family.

"I grew up with a pool in the backyard," said the Centreville woman. "I wanted a pool for our three children. We like to stay at home. Our kids are active and busy; we don't have a lot of time to go away. We wanted to make our home more enjoyable for the summer months."

Easier dreamed than done. There were challenges to overcome, including finding the right house for a pool, building on a wooded lot and complying with local regulations, before they could transform their backyard into a miniresort.

"I couldn't be more happy with it," she said. "We really use it and enjoy it. It's like a vacation home in our backyard."

The couple moved to Virginia four years ago, eventually settling into a house with a wooded backyard large enough for a pool. The couple's new backyard featured a deck and a mass of scrub pine trees that led out to a community farm pond. They asked Don Nesmith, of Land & Water Design, to draw up a new design.

"I knew the pond could be a really nice element," Nesmith said. "I came up with a concept and marked all the trees that had to be removed."

Once the trees were removed, the view of the pond improved, providing a natural water backdrop for the pool area.

A big challenge came not from Mother Nature but from the Fairfax County government. Hard surface runoff water regulations led Nesmith to design an elaborate, \$15,000 rain garden that allows rainwater hitting the pool's hard surface to flow to the pond.

"People need to know going in to a project that regulations are time-consuming and expensive," Nesmith said.

It is not uncommon for the permit process to take longer than the actual construction.

Nesmith oversaw the construction, working closely with two companies with which he has had long-term relationships: BR Design Build, the general contractor, and Classic Pools.

For the hard surface surrounding the large pool, Nesmith went with Techo-Bloc, a proven Canadian-produced paver he has used for seven years.

"In our mind it's the best paver on the market," Nesmith said. "To best of our knowledge it is the only concrete paver with a color dye system through the entire paver. The pavers are thicker than their competitors

Where to get the look

» **General contractor**
BR Design Build
Davidsonville, Md.
brdesignbuild.com
703-356-3522
410-798-5400

» **Landscape architect**
Don Nesmith
Land & Water Design
Gainesville, Va.
landandwaterdesign.com
571-261-5925

» **Swimming pool**
Classic Pools
Fairfax Station, Va.
703-426-0600

» **Pavers**
Techo-Bloc
St-Hubert, Quebec J3Y 8Z8
techo-bloc.com
Toll-free: 800-463-0450

» **Pebble Sheen**
PebbleTec
Scottsdale, AZ 85260
pebbletec.com
800-937-5058

and are resistant to salt."

The pool is constructed with Gunite, a mixture of concrete and water applied through a high-pressure hose.

"When the mixture comes through the end of the hose it is almost dry, just wet enough for the crews to form and shape the walls," Nesmith said.

The pool is approximately 850 square feet. From the shallow entrance to the deepest end of the pool is about 44 feet at its widest, narrowing to about 18 feet.

The pool, 8 feet at its deepest part, is finished with Pebble Sheen. The pool-finish product fuses colorful tiny pebbles that have the look of granite.

"We picked an ocean blue for the color to give the pool a natural water feel," the homeowner said.

The project also included an outdoor dining area. Soft lighting was used in and around the pool and on some trees. "It is very subtle, very relaxing," the homeowners said. Other amenities include a spa, or hot tub, and a waterfall.

The pool area is landscaped with mainly perennials, including lots of Black-Eyed Susans, a favorite of the homeowner. Other plants and flowers include catmint, broadleaf evergreens, inkberries, hosta and river birch trees. Nesmith also planted ornamental grasses.

Construction started in March and the family was swimming by mid-June.

"The beauty of this project is that it feels so natural," the homeowner said. "The landscaping has filled in, and the trees behind it are big and full; it looks much more natural now than it did at first."

BEFORE

The Northern Virginia couple settled into a house with a wooded backyard that would be large enough for the pool of their dreams. The scrub pine trees needed to be removed so the view of their pond would be improved and it would provide a natural water backdrop for their pool area.



DON NESMITH LAND & WATER DESIGN

Pave the way

Techo-Bloc, a proven Canadian-produced paver that is thick and salt resistant, surrounds the pool.

Take a dip

The 850-square-foot pool, finished with Pebble Sheen, is between 18 and 44 feet wide and goes as deep as 8 feet.

Full of nature

Perennials such as Black-Eyed Susans are included in the landscaping along with hostas and birch trees.



JIM FOLLIARD, GEARSHIFT PRODUCTIONS

AFTER The backyard is now equipped with an 850-square-foot swimming pool finished with Pebble Sheen, a hot tub, a waterfall, an outdoor dining area and soft lighting around the pool and on some of the surrounding trees. It was finished off with flowers and plants to give the space a natural, yet very subtle and relaxing feel.