

Published May 26th, 2010

The New Nuts and Bolts of Pools

By Susie Iventosch



Outdoor living with pool, TV, kitchen and space for the dogs at the Obrand's home in Moraga Photo Doug Kohen

cover, too.

Then there is the material selection, which can range from natural rock or pebble plasters, to ceramic or glass tiles-new and shiny, or recycled. The inside surface of Dean Hanley's pool in Hiller Highlands is entirely finished with cobalt blue glass tiles.

For the Obrand family of Moraga, the perfect pool was a 10 by 14.5 foot rectangular spa, with three water features (falls), built-in bar stools and two unique sets of jets-one for swimming in place and the other for massaging sore muscles. And, for an exclamation point, they added a hanging television 15 feet away in the outdoor living room. (See photo page OH1)

"We wanted to replace the existing pool with something that allowed us to use it for exercise as well as recreation," David Obrand said. "The swim-in-place feature has met our expectations-we can crank up the jets for a good workout."

Heater and jets are operated by remote control, and the heater can get up to 100 degrees within an hour of turning it on.

"We have a blue-black rock bottom, which attracts the heat and helps warm the pool faster," Obrand added.

Charissa Kronenberg, also of Moraga, says her family wanted to maintain the old pool's rectangular footprint, but they added a raised spa, also with three waterfalls.

"The waterfalls are very calming in the morning, and the whole design is very clean-looking," she said.

Their pool, however, is what is considered a "sports field" design, meaning it is deep in the middle, but shallow along the sides. This way her boys can play sports in the pool. They also used a "hardscape," a system of interlocking pavers by Belgard, for the pool decking and the floor of the outdoor kitchen.

"It blends together nicely with the mixed stones we selected for the pool trim and the outside of the spa," she said.

Steve Lambert of Garden Lights Landscape & Pool Development says the most significant innovation in pool design has been in the electric infrastructure of the pools. He also says most pools built these days are rather shallow, no more than six to seven feet deep, making them easier to heat. The use of salt systems instead of chlorine to balance the water have really become popular and are easier on the skin, better for the environment and less expensive than traditional chemical treatments. All of this is complemented by the use of high-efficiency filtration pumps.

The Latest in Heating Systems

While solar is still a great option, high-efficiency gas heaters are more economical in terms of energy use. Solar systems work very well and tend to throw off a little more heat, but a passive solar system can use a lot of electricity in the process, especially if you heat the pool daily. These systems are designed to pump the water from the pool into roof panels, where it heats, and then back to the pool.

Electrical, filtration and water balancing systems

For those homeowners who have the space, a photovoltaic solar cell system is a great way to go, because it actually produces electricity from the sun. This is the most efficient way to heat the pool, but requires plenty of roof

Windows open to the warming June air usher in that familiar suspension of summer's stillness. Our thoughts turn to barbecues and backyard fun, as the delightful echoes of giddy children splashing in pools or skipping through sprinklers wave through the neighborhood. There is something enchanting, almost nostalgic about those squeals of delight, as we remember days of our youth, staying cool in the rays of the midsummer sun.

Pools have changed over the years, and the sprinklers we ran through as kids have long since been replaced with timed "irrigation" systems, but the sounds are the same, and the water is still wet.

Pool Designs

Today's pools come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and they have all sorts of water features-waterfalls, slides or babbling brooks. Anything goes, and the most important thing is to choose a design that best suits your family's summertime activities. For some, this might be a natural rock pool, complete with a series of ponds, a beach entry, a waterfall or a slide. Some enjoy Acapulco areas, very shallow water with built-in umbrellas for sitting or lounging right on the bottom of the pool. Others prefer the cleaner look of the traditional rectangular pool, which is easier to

space for both the solar heating panels and the photovoltaic cells. In this system, the PV cells create the energy used to pump the water through the solar heating panels and back into the pool.

For pool filtration systems, Lambert says that PG&E strongly recommends the installation of high-efficiency pumps and offers incentives to manufacturers who produce them.

"PG&E is really pushing these systems now," Lambert noted. "We used to install oversized pumps, which worked very well, but burned through a lot of electricity. The newer systems adjust themselves to flow only to the extent they need to in order to get the job done. This nearly eliminates the overuse of electricity. And, they are incredibly quiet."

The use of salt water balancing systems has become popular for many pool owners.

"They may taste ever-so-slightly salty, but they are much easier on the skin," Lambert indicated. "This is like creating a huge soft-water system in your pool."

For those pool owners wishing to convert their chlorine systems to salt systems, this can be done by cutting a new device into the pool piping. The cost is roughly \$2,000. The use of salt systems reduces the need for pool maintenance to twice yearly, because where chlorine evaporates from the water, the salt leaves the pool only when water leaves the pool as a result of splashing or heavy rains.

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The Obrands' pool was designed by:

Canyon Design Build

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<http://canyondesignbuild.com/>

and built by:

Alta Quality Pools

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<http://www.altaqualitypools.net>



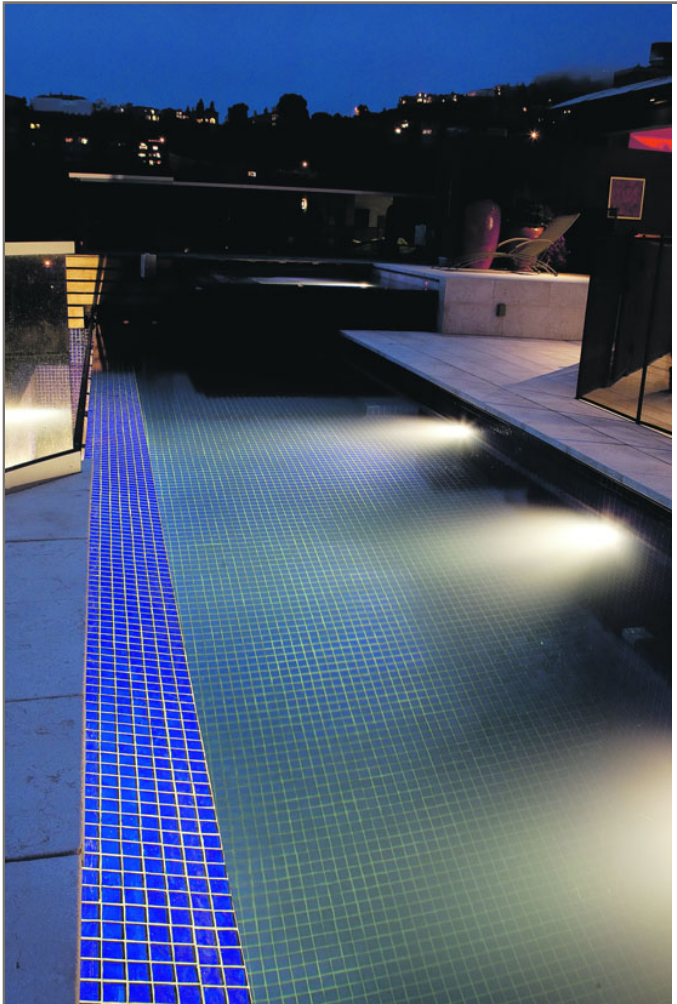
Waterfall on 8' supporting wall Photo provided by Garden Lights



Added raised spa with three waterfalls Photo Doug Kohen



Water fall feature Photo Doug Kohen



Cobalt blue glass tile pool with a vanishing edge Photo Doug Kohen

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