

Lamorinda OUR HOMES

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Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

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Create an outdoor oasis with smaller pools and backyard living spaces

By Paula King



This small pool with an integrated spa utilizes maximum space.

Photo Andy Scheck

When Scott and Stephanie Barmmer moved into their Broadview Terrace home over a decade ago, their backyard requirements were minimal landscaping, play areas for their three young children and a fence for the steep slope. Now that they have three teenagers, the couple wanted to upgrade the yard into another living area, so it would be an inviting gathering spot for their children and their friends.

“We wanted to build a space that was an extension of the house,” said Scott Barmmer.

In 2007, they hired Orinda’s Garden Lights Landscape and Pool Development to complete their simple backyard project. Then this past spring, Garden Lights returned to add a vineyard on the slope, high-quality artificial sod, an outdoor kitchen, fire pit and a modern swimming pool.

Even though the Barmmers just have a 21-by-15 foot pool, it reflects many of the recent swimming pool trends in Lamorinda. The Barmmer’s home is no exception to the incredible views that are almost the norm in Lamorinda homes and Garden Lights owner and designer Stephen Lambert wanted the vanishing edge pool to be an ideal place to take in the spectacular view of Mt. Diablo there.

“Their backyard project is like adding three more rooms to the home. People are trying to live outdoors more now,” Lambert said.

According to Lambert, the Barmmer’s project bucks the notion that you can’t place a pool in a smaller yard. He said there is definitely a trend to build smaller pools in yards that aren’t spacious and he has designed three smaller pools in Lamorinda alone this year.

“It (the pool) is big enough that the kids can jump into it feet first,” said Barmmer.

Lambert calls the smaller pools “spools.” He noted that it is important that a pool not overwhelm the yard and “spools” are ideal for not being too immense.

“Homeowners are thinking about design and flow,” Lambert said. “It is important to look at it as a holistic thing.”

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