



Platte County  
Photo Jimi Smith Photography

# POOL PARADISE

IT'S SUMMER AND THE LIVING IS EASY, ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVE A POOL THAT TURNS YOUR BACKYARD INTO A LUXURY RESORT.

words **Susie Whitfield**

**O**n a sweltering summer day in Kansas City, walking out your back door and diving into a cool blue oasis has an irresistible appeal. Chances are if you're plunging into a new pool, it's profoundly different from the backyard swimming hole you grew up with. Residential design experts say nothing has changed so radically in the past 20 years, in terms of experience and aesthetics, as the family swimming pool.

Gone are the chlorinated

rectangles of water with a diving board at one end and a concrete deck with scattered folding aluminum and strap chaise lounges. Now it's all about homeowners wanting to create a holistic design that will be a true extension of their home. Ralph Jackson of Jackson Pool and Spa says, "people are looking for a high-end resort experience."

Kurt Kraisinger of Lorax Design Group (a name that pays loving tribute to his favorite childhood book) is a landscape architect and

planner with a background in construction. He helps his clients design a cohesive master plan that incorporates the latest pool trends with their existing home.

In the past, Kraisinger said, homeowners would ask their builder for the name of "a pool guy," who would then put in a pool after a brief conversation and a pencil sketch on a Big Chief tablet.

The days of pools being concrete tubs have evolved and now not only are they built to compliment the design of a home, but also speak to the personality of the owner along with being tech-savvy.

## THE WATER

The inevitable consequence of highly chlorinated water is something most people are familiar with: dry skin, red eyes, green hair. Oxygen combined with small amounts of chlorine is

a gentle yet extremely effective purifying system, and although saltwater pools have been popular, salt can take a harsh toll on the pool environment as well as the swimmers.

The use of ultraviolet light is also becoming an industry standard, especially in Europe. Even though it is now very expensive, Kraisinger believes it will soon be more affordable and certainly desirable.

## THE POOL

Many homeowners are choosing a shallower "sport pool" or single depth pool which allows children as well as adults to enjoy playing games such as basketball and volleyball. Also, because so many



Photo LowGear Photography



Weatherby Lake, MO  
Photo Jimi Smith Photography



Weatherby Lake, MO  
Photo Jimi Smith Photography

people turn to swimming to exercise without stressing their joints, a lap pool is increasingly popular.

Jump stones are taking the place of diving boards. Aesthetically it's more pleasing and the pool doesn't need to be as deep.

Infinity pools suggest a limitless expanse of water that seems to become a part of the ocean or the sky. Kraisinger also sees an increasing demand for perimeter overflow pools, which allow water to overflow all the edges into a hidden catch basin. The water seems to be perfectly contained without boundaries, which creates a mirror-like appearance.

#### WATER FEATURES

Jetted water is not just for the hot tub anymore. Having an entire pool

that is a spa is gaining popularity along with fountains, swim-up bars and a "tanning ledge."

#### THE POOL DECKING

Many finishes are replacing concrete as a preferred material. Kraisinger says travertine is being used extensively in Europe and he sees it making its way stateside.

Ralph Jackson says other choices such as exposed aggregate pebble finishes and exposed quartz are both beautiful and highly durable. Mosaic tile and concrete pavers also create a visually pleasing setting for the pool as does the use of colors such as cobalt and azure that suggest cool and soothing depths.

#### LIGHTING

LED lighting has become increasingly affordable and practical. Lighting not only the pool itself but also the entire pool area and the landscaping creates a festive atmosphere and allows the pool to be enjoyed throughout the evening.

#### POOL APPS

Don't get up from that outdoor sofa! There are apps on a phone or iPad to control the water temperature, dim the lighting, begin the cleaning process, and cover the pool. Increasingly, advances in technology will make owning a pool more and more enjoyable. ■



Shawnee, KS  
Photo LowGear Photography



Platte County  
Photo Jimi Smith Photography