

local color

FLUFFY TOWEL TIPS

■ Don't overstuff the washer: Always wash towels on their own for maximum fluffiness. Avoid filling the washer; shoot for 1/2 to 3/4 full. ■ Medium heat for the win: The high heat dryer setting de-fluffs towels. Dry them com-

pletely to avoid mold and mildew. ■ Use less fabric softener: Too much gives towels a waxy sheen. Try cutting the amount you use in half. Or forgo softener by adding 1/2 cup of vinegar to your wash cycle. — BrightNest.com

q&a | Kurt Kraisinger, owner of Lorax Design Group



TRAVIS BECHTEL PHOTOGRAPHY

Rather than pave around the entire perimeter of a pool, Kraisinger prefers to open a portion of it up to the lawn or landscape, like he did at the far end of this pool in Leawood. He added native grasses to achieve an organic yet uniform look.

By ANDREA DARR
Special to The Star

With summer in full bloom, the allure of the outdoors grows. Shady trees, colorful blooms and refreshing pools make the experience that much greater for those who have a scene designed by landscape architect Kurt Kraisinger.

He specializes in high-end residential design, with an emphasis on quality and longevity. Since starting Lorax Design Group six years ago, he has applied the entrepreneurial spirit to other ventures that give him better control over the finished project: Liquify, for high-end pool design through construction using his own hand-selected tradesmen, and Blue Ocean Stone, for clients to source specialized materials in Lorax's new showroom at the downtown Overland Park office.

How do you approach the design of each project?

It's about having a grounded concept. You want it to not just look cool but tie into a family experience.

We design parallel to our clients' lifestyle. We want their involvement, but they can't drive the project. Design is fun, it's like planning a vacation, but it takes a lot of effort too. We don't ask for carte blanche, but we want them to embrace what we bring to the table.

People living in the Midwest have debated whether having pools in our climate is a good idea. Is there a new consensus on that?

It seems every project I've been doing has a water component. People are using their pools seven or eight months of the year. You can extend the season 45 days or more either direction by using heaters.

What's trending in pools?

Everyone wants to throw in a slide or grotto; we're stuck in that theme. But I really like a simple pool with a perimeter overflow, taking the water right to the edge. That's the thing now.

The downside is it's difficult to cover automatically and rules out those with young kids who want all the fun stuff. But it's great for the grandparents who want a statement pool that they can wade around in with cocktails and socialize.

I'm also not a fan of paving all around a pool; it's too municipal to have an expansive area with no interplay with the landscape. A portion should open up to the lawn or landscape. That presents so much nicer and flows with everything.

When is the best time to get started on a pool?

Summer is actually our slowest time because people are on vacation. I encourage clients to get the design done in the fall because there's always a week or two in December or January with nice weather when work can be done, even in the cold. Then you've got a jumpstart on your pool in spring.

What are some of your favorite plants and



MOLLIE HULL

Kraisinger specializes in high-end residential landscape design, with an emphasis on quality and longevity. In addition to Lorax Design Group, he founded Liquify, a pool construction company, and Blue Ocean Stone, a source for specialized materials, so he can have better control throughout the landscaping process.

trees?

More people are asking for maintenance-free landscaping, but there's no such thing. Natives, like grasses, come close and can achieve a look that's very organic or uniform and contemporary.

I love perennials, but the problem is that they flush up in one part of the season and don't look so great the rest of the time. However, penstemon has nice foliage underneath when it's not flowering. For annuals, I like Kong Jr. coleus. It's vibrant, almost fluo-

rescent, and adds color in late spring all the way through fall.

My favorite tree is a sycamore or London planetree. It's really majestic at 70 feet wide by 80 feet tall with big leaves, and it shades well. Another tree that's not native here but does well is the Quaking Aspen. It's uniquely different because of its white bark.

Do you have tricks for making a big impact in a landscape?

I like to design in masses of plants. Why one plant here and one there? Why not 50 or 500 up all together at one time in one bed. People will put that on the calendar and wait for it. I design for all four seasons, but I like to have something to really get excited for.

What does your home landscape look like?

I'm like the plumber with a leaky faucet. I have a lot of types of plant material, but I don't have time to maintain it. I'd rather spend time with my son and family.

If I pay someone to do it for me, it's a gardener, not a landscape contractor.

There's a correct way to prune shrubs, for example, and contractors tend to use a military approach and take away all the character.

If you did have time — and money — to design for yourself, what would it be?

That's easy. I would buy a small lot and build a house a tenth of the scale of what's being built today, but I'd build it with the same quality that a lot of our clients do.

I would make it fit into the context of the environment, say if it was next to two bungalows, I'd design to fit with the roof lines but maybe include a glass studio off the back. I'd challenge myself to use only eight plants and keep it so simple. Sometimes the simplest things are the most impactful.

If the landscape allowed for a pool, I'd put in a "spool" or plunge pool, 300-400 square feet with heated jets, like a big hot tub, but you could still use it for activities.



One trick Kraisinger uses for making a big impact is to design in masses of plants, like he did in the pots around this pool in the Village of Loch Lloyd.

HANDYMAN

One layer of shingles or two? What to consider

By C. DWIGHT BARNETT
Tribune News Service

My garage roof has shingles that are worn and weathered. Under what conditions would it be advisable to lay a second layer of shingles over the existing layer? I would assume there are cost savings doing this. There is currently only one layer of shingles on the roof and no leaks in the building.

Most people will choose to roof over the first layer of shingles because of costs. If the area around the building is accessible and only one story high, the costs to remove and replace the older shingles is about twice the cost of a roof-over.

Among the things that affect roofing costs: how many stories the building is, the steepness of the pitch or slope of the roof, accessibility to the building and the style or type of shingles.

Typically a garage is a 4/12 pitch, that is, the rafter will have a vertical rise of 4 inches every 12 inches in horizontal length of the wall below it. The steeper the slope of the roof, the better when adding a second layer of shingles. I would not recommend adding a second layer unless the roof is a 6/12 or steeper angle.

Next, check the size of the rafters and the spacing between the rafters. A two-by-four-inch rafter set every 24 inches along the bearing wall may not adequately support the added weight of a second layer of shingles.

Check the collar ties, the two-by-four or two-by-six boards that span from one bearing wall to the other. There should be one collar tie for each set of rafters. Collar ties prevent the walls from spreading under the weight of the roof. Add collar ties if needed. If the rafters are prebuilt trusses, they should be checked by a qualified home inspector, roofer or carpenter before adding the extra weight.

Inspect the roof's decking. It would be wise to remove the older shingles and replace damaged decking.

You also have to consider the weight of the shingles you choose. Shingles vary in weight per bundle. Shingles are typically sold per square (100-square feet) and are marketed by the number of years they are expected to perform under normal weather conditions. A shingle that is expected to last 20 years will not be as heavy as a 40- or 50-year shingle. The weight per square can be supplied by the supplier or manufacturer.

Next, consider the longevity of the product. A second layer of shingles will not last as long as a single layer.

Finally, what is the condition of the original layer of shingles?

Shingles that are cupped, cracked or are lifting can ghost through the second layer of shingles and are not only unsightly but will cause advanced wear to the new layer.