

# Backyard Escapes

## LOVE YOUR POOL, LOVE THE PLANET

How green technology can help  
with a pool's energy efficiency

## WHAT'S TRENDING IN POOL COLOURS

Just like fashion, everyone has their own  
favourites for pool colours and patterns

## TAKING POOL PARTIES TO THE NEXT LEVEL

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# WORK/LIFE BALANCE IS POSSIBLE IF YOU EMBRACE YOUR LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES

**A**nother season is just around the corner, and Ryan and I can't wait to get things going! We love working with our many wonderful clients as they prepare to open their pools for a summer of fun and excitement that includes family, friends and plenty of good times.

This year will be extra special for us. I'm thrilled to introduce a new addition to the family, Fallon, born on Oct. 23. We are over the moon with her arrival and are adjusting to all the joys and challenges that come with being parents of a newborn child.

Family has always been hugely important for us. My father, Derek, and mother, Cindy, started R&R Pools more than 35 years ago — building a small venture into a family-focused, family-oriented operation that depends on outstanding customer service, high-quality products, excellent craftsmanship and keen attention to our clients' needs.

In fact, many of our clients are just like family and we have always strived to put family first and business second. Perhaps that's why our customers are so loyal and have so many good things to say about the work that we do. That kind of dedication and support has encouraged us in the past to provide a high level of service and consumer satisfaction that will continue to inform our efforts as we move ahead.

With the province being in a state of emergency this spring, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been forced to take time out to adjust both at work and in our personal lives. We have been thinking a lot about how to make things easier for customers, our staff and ourselves during this unprecedented time. It has been challenging, but worth it. We know that you may be spending even more time home poolside and we are ready and here for you if you need us.

The tragedy that occurred here in Nova Scotia this April has had a profound effect on many of us. It is now more important than ever to support one another and to take time we each need to care for our families, friends and for ourselves. I'm proud to say we Nova Scotians are resilient, we have faced hard times before and have always made it through together. With so much going on, friends and family time is just that more important.

As you can imagine, I've been thinking a lot lately about the future now that we have a little person in our lives: where we are as parents; how our lives are going to change as Fallon grows up; and the things we can do as a company to ensure and enhance the safety and security of all the little ones (and so many others who are young at heart!) that enjoy the delightful magic of a backyard oasis.

I have thought also about how critical it is to have a work/life balance, to find time to share those treasured moments with family and friends at the end of the day or on the weekend around a pool that create a lifetime of memories. Sure, things are busy and it's easy sometimes to be swept up in the hustle and bustle of everyday events, but our experiences over the past three decades installing pools for countless people has taught us that work/life balance is possible if you invest the time and energy to embrace your leisure opportunities and appreciate how they can enhance in every way the quality of your family time outside the workplace.

I have been doing this for quite a while now and I'm still as excited as ever to make backyard dreams a reality for as many people as possible. I'm so proud of our team and all we have accomplished over the years, and I look forward to sharing our expertise and enthusiasm with you this year and for many years to come.

From my family to yours, all the best,

*Kara, Ryan and Fallon*



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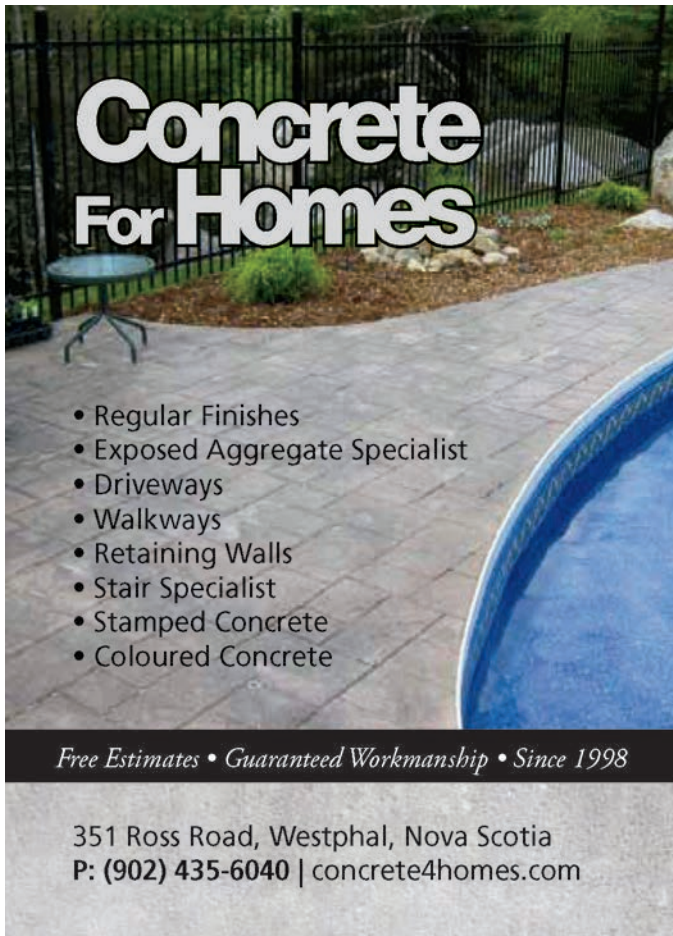
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# Backyard Escapes

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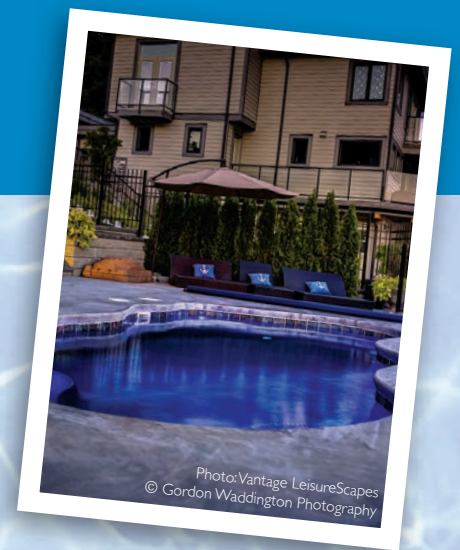




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SPRING/SUMMER 2020 / I







# LOVE YOUR POOL, LOVE THE PLANET

How green technology can help with a pool's energy efficiency

BY

Heather Laura Clarke

Most pool-owners are used to seeing a spike in their energy costs between May and October as they pay for their pool's water to be properly turned, cleaned, treated and heated.

But there are more ways than ever before to run your pool as efficiently as possible, so we've asked the experts for their best energy-saving advice on everything from pumps and filtration systems to lighting and pool covers.

Let's dive into "green" pool technology for the summer of 2020 ...

## VARIABLE-SPEED PUMPS

Craig McNutt with Holland Home Leisure in New Minas, N.S. says variable-speed pumps have been on the market for more than 10 years now, but he says there's been a big push towards them in the last year or two — and most provinces are offering rebates to encourage pool-owners to make the energy-efficient choice.

"A variable-speed pump can offer up to 70 per cent reduction in energy costs, depending on your pool set-up," says McNutt. "And Efficiency Nova Scotia is offering a \$200 after-tax rebate that we take off your purchase right here in the store."

Jennifer Gannon of BonaVista LeisureScapes in Toronto, Ont. says the old standard used to be switching your pool pump on in May ... and not switching it off until you closed your pool in October.

Having a variable-speed pump doesn't mean it's ever switched off entirely, though — it's just that the speed is adjusted.

"Now people can schedule times for their pump to run so the pool water is always moving, but at different speeds," says Gannon. "We recommend it runs during peak sunlight hours but that could be on low speed, and then you could crank up the speed for between midnight and 6 a.m. when rates are lower."

If you ask Kara Redden with R&R Pools in Halifax, N.S., she'll tell you a variable-speed pump is "not a want — it should be a requirement."

She says Nova Scotians worked diligently to put a rebate program in place to make variable-speed pumps more affordable, and says Efficiency Nova Scotia's \$200 credit has been "one of the biggest breakthroughs in the industry."

"It's not new technology, but now it's affordable for the average homeowner," says Redden. "There's really no reason why every pool shouldn't have it because it pays for itself in a summer and a half. It's a no-brainer."

Variable-speed pumps can be programmed to run at lower speeds when rates are higher, instead of having the motor running at full speed all of the time. Redden says this makes a huge difference on your energy bills because "pool pumps can be energy hogs."

The team at R&R Pools processes the

“There's really no reason why every pool shouldn't have it because it pays for itself in a summer and a half. It's a no-brainer.”

– Kara Redden,  
R&R Pools, Halifax, N.S.

rebate on the spot during the purchase, so homeowners don't need to fill out tedious applications or wait on approvals — the \$200 is immediately taken off their bill.

Of course, variable-speed pumps aren't cheap. Rhett Bradshaw with Vantage LeisureScapes in Langley, B.C. says sometimes there's "a bit of sticker shock" when someone first sees the price.

"What they may not realize right away is that the energy they'll save in the course of even just a few seasons will more than pay for the pump," adds Bradshaw. "So having that pump for five, six or even eight years is going to significantly reduce your energy costs."





Photo: I23RF

## POOL COVERS

If you have the funds for an additional “green” upgrade, Redden’s a strong believer in the benefits of an automatic pool cover.

“They decrease evaporation — so there’s less heat loss and chemical loss — and they also decrease your cleaning time,” says Redden. “Automatic covers are expensive, but it should be something you seriously consider with a new pool.”

If an automatic cover isn’t in your budget, Redden says you can achieve similar results by using a manual cover to keep that temperature-controlled, heated water where it belongs — in your pool!

But Gannon says there’s an interesting new product that’s designed to act like a pool cover in a bottle. Cover Free is a natural chemistry product you add to your pool water to help reduce evaporation at the surface.

“It covers the surface of the water with an invisible film, sort of like how oil and vinegar are separate layers in a salad dressing,” explains Gannon. “It’s undetectable and you won’t feel it on your skin, but it provides a protective layer that can reduce your pool’s evaporation by 50 per cent or more.”

## LIGHTING

Bradshaw says most pool lights are now available in more energy-efficient versions that boast lower voltage.

“The new 12V models draw far less electricity compared to some of the old 120V systems that were out there,” says

Bradshaw. “So if you were thinking about replacing your old pool lights anyway, these new low-voltage options can lower your electricity costs as well.”

When it comes to underwater lighting, Gannon says they’ve pivoted from halogen light bulbs to energy-efficient LED bulbs with “a much longer lifespan.”

## CARTRIDGE FILTRATION

McNutt says another way to ensure an above-ground pool or in-ground pool is more energy-efficient is to use cartridge filtration.

“Instead of backwashing your pool every four weeks with a sand filter — wasting water and chemicals and then wasting energy to heat your pool back up because you’ve just had to dump cold water back in — you can use cartridge filters,” explains McNutt. “They don’t require backwashing, so there’s a lot of savings to be had.” ■

“So if you were thinking about replacing your old pool lights anyway, these new low-voltage options can lower your electricity costs as well.”

– **Rhett Bradshaw,**  
Vantage Pools, Langley, B.C.



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# WHAT'S TRENDING IN POOL COLOURS

Just like fashion, everyone has their own favourites  
for pool colours and patterns

BY

**Heather Laura Clarke**





Photo: Contributed by BonaVista Pools  
Photographer: Jeff McNeill

**P**ale blue? Grey pebbles? Warm black flagstone? Choosing a colour or pattern for your pool is often the most difficult decision you'll make in the planning process.

"Families usually decide on the shape and features pretty quickly, but when it comes to the colour, they can go back and forth about it for days," says Rhett Bradshaw with Vantage LeisureScapes in Langley, B.C. "Everyone has their own opinions."

From dark and dramatic lagoon-style pools to a wide range of classic blues, here's what the experts have to say about choosing colours and patterns for your pool in 2020 ...

### LAGOON-STYLE HIDEAWAYS

Jennifer Gannon of BonaVista LeisureScapes in Toronto, Ont. says they recently worked with a client who had a gorgeous ravine property with tiers that descended down from their home.

They designed grottos and cascading pools that overflowed, bringing in talented stonemasons to create something "quite exceptional" and achieve the client's vision.

"If you have a beautiful forest as your backdrop, then quite often it makes sense to have a naturalized pool to complement the existing architecture of nature," says Gannon.

Craig McNutt with Holland Home Leisure in New Minas, N.S. says they don't do very many lagoon-style pools because most of their clients have large yards so there's plenty of room elsewhere to have a "garden" feel.

If you do opt for a lagoon-style pool, he says it's important to make sure you choose the landscaping carefully — certain plants can negatively affect your water chemistry.

"If you are looking for a more natural-feel, built-up areas in the background of the pool can offer a great space to plant gardens that are kept away from the pool, but still look like part of the overall pool and property design," adds McNutt. "Positioning the pool

to best utilize the natural landscaping of the property is another great way to create a natural-looking surround that really fits the space."

Kara Redden with R&R Pools in Halifax, N.S. says while lagoon-style pools are very Pinterest-worthy, she's not seeing many homeowners actually choose them yet.

"They're trendy and expensive-looking, but they can also be cold-looking. They remind you of a pond," says Redden. "They're more like an art piece."

### DARK COLOURS

Colours can look very different when they're actually inside a pool filled with 80,000 gallons of water, so it's important to look at "after" photos instead of just tiny samples.

"The deeper the pool, the more rich the colour becomes," explains Redden. "Darker liners are going to look more bottomless, but so do very light pools because you can see the bottom."

If you have your heart set on a dark pool, Bradshaw says to be careful your guests are aware of the depth — dark colours can throw off people's depth perception.

"It might look dark and deep but actually be very shallow," cautions Bradshaw. "Darker pools are best for dipping pools where it's very clear it's not a diving pool. It's more like a beautiful water feature."

### JUST SAY NO TO BORDERS

While just about every pool in the '90s had a decorative border around the waterline, McNutt says today's consumers almost never choose a border for their pool.

"People tend to like a prism pattern or a nice tile pattern, but borders are becoming less and less popular," says McNutt.

### NATURAL SHADES

If you live in a more rustic, natural setting, Redden says it makes sense to design a pool that will have a similar look and feel.





“Brown pools are great for anywhere, but we tend to do them especially in natural areas with more landscaping, like in wooded areas,” says Redden. “And a grey pool can give you a higher-end, more expensive feel.”

BonaVista Pools sticks to building custom concrete pools, so Gannon says she’s also noticing a desire for naturalized cement finishes in charcoal greys and darker blues.

“There seems to be a movement away from turquoises and other very vibrant colours, which to me can feel dated,” says Gannon.

### NATURAL PATTERNS

Bradshaw says GLI Pool Products has come out with a mix-and-match series where you can combine a few different styles within the same pool.

“You might decide on a tanning ledge that has a pattern of rocks, pebbles or flagstone, but maybe the floors and walls are a different pattern that either matches or contrasts so it isn’t all the same,” explains Bradshaw. “It’s a really nice way of accentuating different features of the pool.”

What if you get sick of the pattern you choose? Redden points out that the nice thing about vinyl pools is that you can always choose a new colour or pattern when you replace the liner in a decade or so — and it’s like getting a brand-new pool all over again.

### LIGHT TROPICAL SHADES

When people think of a resort-style pool, Bradshaw says they often picture a pale aqua or even a white pool that naturally feels like

warm, soothing water — since darker blues can conjure up feelings of a freezing cold ocean.

A greenish-brown pool might sound strange, but Redden says it’s “surprisingly” excellent for replicating the warm-water feel of a pool in a resort down south.

McNutt agrees, adding that liners in shades of brown, grey and green look “really natural” when they’re filled with water.

### 50 SHADES OF BLUE

Blues are still the most popular pool shade, but it’s easy to get overwhelmed by the sheer number of blues on the market.

Redden says medium blues are the “stereotypical pool blues” that most people envision, whereas light blues and dark blues can make the water appear cooler.

“Medium blue pools are very inviting. They’re like the pools you remember as a kid, where you just can’t wait to jump in,” says Redden.

At R&R Pools, Redden says they have “a very specific process” they go through with each client when it comes to picking colours. They talk about what they envision in their mind, review samples and narrow down their favourites. But in the end, Redden says it’s about going with your gut.

“At the end of the day, we want people to walk outside their home, look at their pool and think ‘I love that!’” says Redden. “Colours evoke strong feelings. You know when it’s the right colour because it makes you feel great.” ■

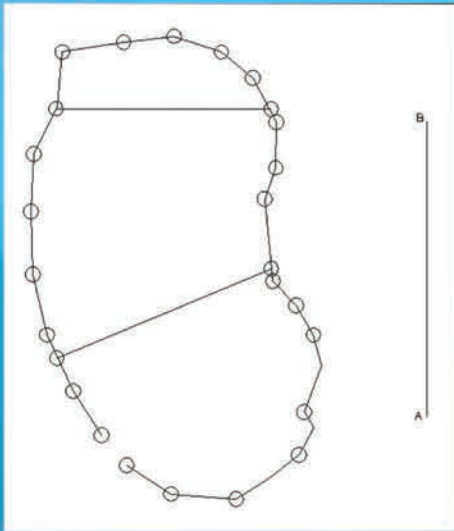
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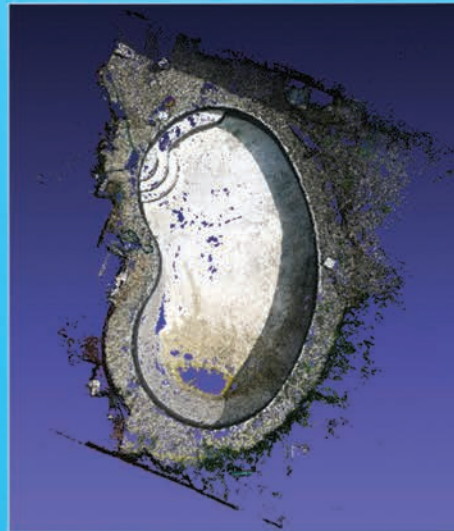


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Photo: Contributed by Vantage LeisureScapes © Gordon Waddington Photography

# CREATING A BACKYARD OASIS — OF ANY SIZE

You don't need a huge backyard to create a dreamy space  
for relaxation, socialization

BY

**Heather Laura Clarke**





“No one cares how big or small your pool is — they just want to be invited to enjoy it with you.”

— Kara Redden,  
R&R Pools, Timberlea, N.S.

It used to be that certain houses had a yard you'd describe as “just perfect for a pool” — a large, perfectly flat rectangular plot of grass without a rock or tree in sight.

But these days, pools come in all shapes and sizes, making just about every yard suitable for some type of pool. It's sometimes just a matter of getting a little creative.

So whether your yard is the size of a football field or barely large enough for a decent game of tag, here are five things to keep in mind when it comes to designing your perfect backyard oasis ...

## 1. START WITH A PLAN

Jennifer Gannon of BonaVista LeisureScapes

in Toronto, Ont. says when it comes to making best use of your yard, “design matters.”

“A pool is only one line item on a backyard project plan. It's worth paying a professional to help you lay out the space in a thoughtful way for optimal flow and to maximize the space,” says Gannon. “A good landscape designer also understands municipal regulations about how far things must be set back from property lines, utility placements and grade changes.”

When you're in the planning phase, Kara Redden with R&R Pools in Halifax, N.S. says it's critical to consider a multi-year perspective.

“We recommend people try not to do it all at once unless you're really going to think it through, because things can change. The way you use your yard can change,” says Redden. “The people who tend to be the happiest with their yards are the ones who thought it through and completed it in layers.”

She says you might start by adding the pool, and then decide after the first summer that you know which area NEEDS to have a fit pit because that's where you've been using a temporary one.

## 2. WORK IN STAGES TO KEEP COSTS DOWN

Gannon says it's perfectly reasonable to create your backyard in stages so it's more affordable. First comes the hardscaping — the pool and its enclosure, along with perhaps planting a few trees — and then Phase II would involve any softscaping a.k.a. landscaping.

Even if your plan will take several years to complete, Gannon says having a solid plan from the start means when it's time to tender the landscaping contract, everyone is bidding on the same scope of work. It also means any lighting cable is laid during Phase I — hardscaping — even though the lights may not be added until the following summer.

## 3. DON'T FRET OVER YOUR SOIL

Craig McNutt with Holland Home Leisure in New Minas, N.S. says while many Nova Scotians have large, grassy backyards, there are still many urban centres with smaller lots — or other “rocky” challenges.

“We've worked with clients where their yard is almost entirely rock, and this is always a challenge. Sometimes, backyards like these can require a week's worth of rock breaking for a large inground design,” says McNutt. “For these situations, often an onground pool would be more suitable

as they have shallower deep-ends, can be installed partially above ground or can be installed at a constant depth.”

No matter what the material, McNutt says “there's always a solution,” which is why it's so important to connect with a reputable and experienced dealer who will work with you to find the best options for your space.

## 4. POOLS COME IN ALL SHAPES & SIZES

If you're dreaming of a pool but not sure your yard is large enough, McNutt says there are easily 100+ different options as far as pool shapes and sizes — and one of them will likely be ideal for your yard.

“We can design something to fit any space out there,” says McNutt. “If you're really tight on space, you might want to consider a swim spa, which can be as small as 10 x 7 feet. Then you can have a place to swim, plus get the massage benefits of a hot tub.”

## 5. BIGGER ISN'T NECESSARILY BETTER

Rhett Bradshaw with Vantage LeisureScapes in Langley, B.C. says lots of people would love to live on a huge acreage and put in an Olympic-sized pool if they had the means, but it's rarely an option.

“With development now, often homes have smaller backyards so we're always working to maximize that space,” says Bradshaw. “You can still do amazing things with a small yard.”

He says customers often come into Vantage LeisureScapes to ask “What's the smallest pool you can build?” Their answer? “Whatever you're comfortable with. There is no minimum size.”

Bradshaw says the smallest pool they've built so far was just 4 1/2 feet deep, 7 feet long and 5 feet wide. It was tiny, but it was equipped with a powerful jet system so the homeowners could exercise by swimming against the current.

“It's all about how the homeowner wants to use the space they have,” says Bradshaw. “If they have a really small yard but they want a pool, a hot tub and a tennis court, that's probably not realistic — but a swim spa would check off two out of the three.”

When it comes to pool size, Redden agrees “bigger isn't necessarily better.”

“I compare it to buying a house with a huge dining room knowing you're only going to use it for Thanksgiving and Christmas,” says Redden. “No one cares how big or small your pool is — they just want to be invited to enjoy it with you.” ■



# PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

Great ideas to make your pool or hot tub more enjoyable this season



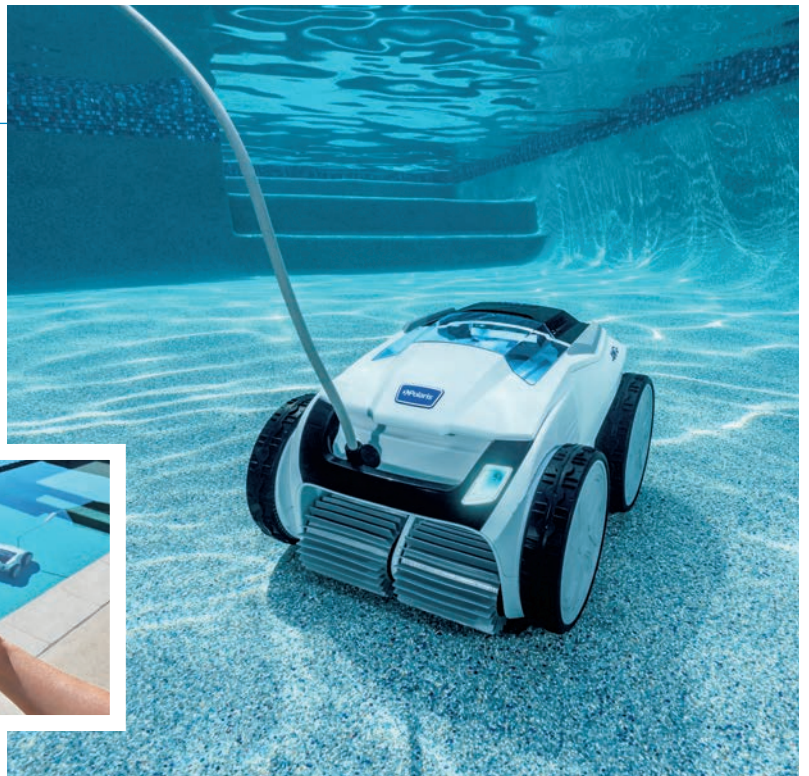
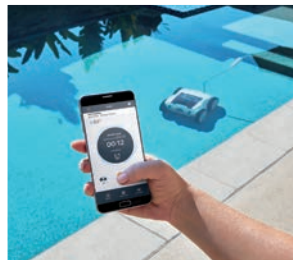
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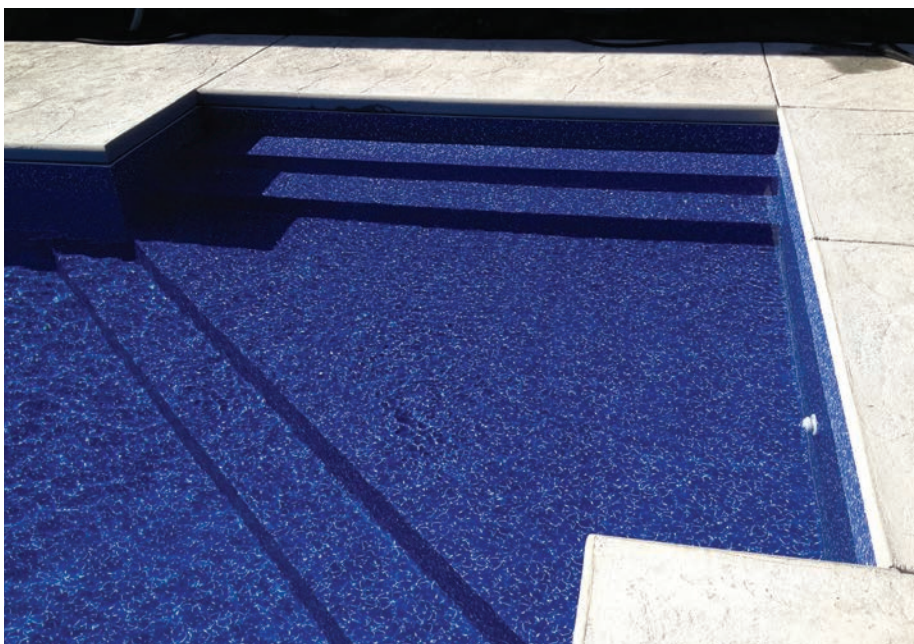
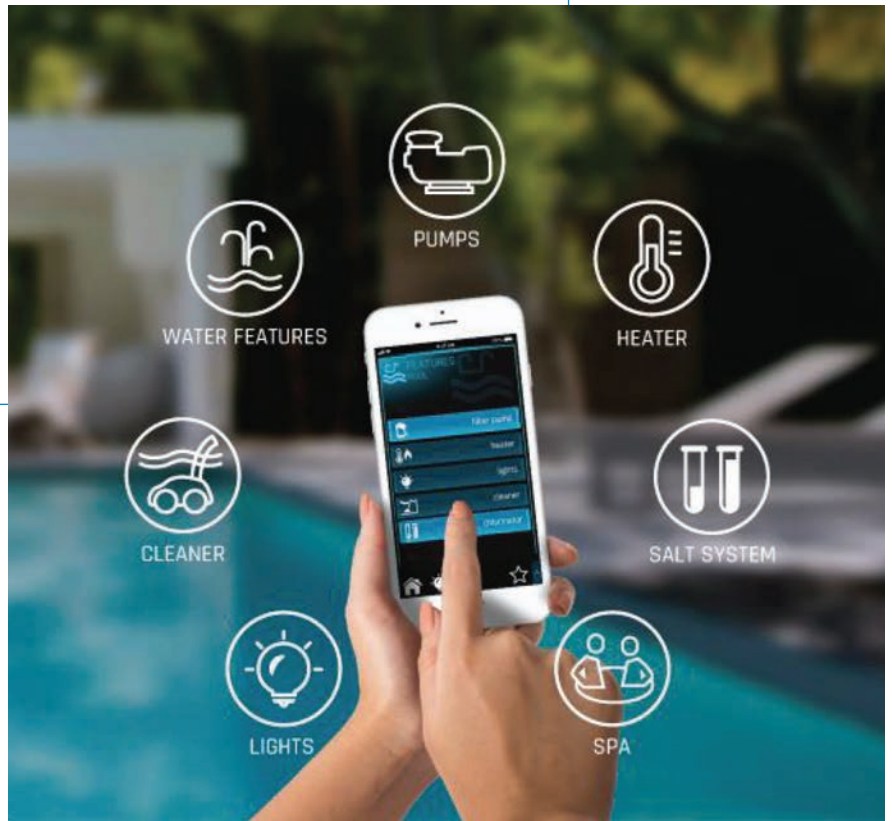




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# TAKING POOL PARTIES TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Tanning ledges, swim-up bars, in-pool furniture and more

BY

**Heather Laura Clarke**





Photo: Contributed by BonaVista Pools  
Photographer: Jeff McNeill



Photo: 123RF

“ People want these shallow areas for setting a chaise lounge or for giving children a makeshift wading pool that’s anywhere between six and 18 inches deep.”

– **Jennifer Gannon**,  
BonaVista Pools, Markham, Ont.

Canada may be far away from luxury resorts in Mexico and the Caribbean, but that doesn’t mean we can’t borrow their creative pool design ideas.

From tanning ledges, swim-up bars and in-pool seating areas — complete with umbrellas — we asked the experts about the newest ways to trick out your pool for unforgettable parties with family and friends ...

### TANNING LEDGES

Jennifer Gannon of BonaVista LeisureScapes in Toronto, Ont. says many pool manufacturers are coming up with creative new ledges and inside staircases that provide shallow spots for splashing, tanning and relaxing.

“People want these shallow areas for setting a chaise lounge or for giving children a makeshift wading pool that’s anywhere between six and 18 inches deep,” says Gannon. “It’s a nice entry point, too, where

you can get into the pool slowly or just sit there and cool off a bit without being fully submerged.”

### IN-POOL FURNITURE

Rhett Bradshaw with Vantage LeisureScapes in Langley, B.C. agrees that tanning ledges have become “the big thing,” especially within the last year or so.

“It seems like with every other pool we’re building, people are asking for a tanning ledge,” says Bradshaw.

He says these ledges tend to be designed so they’re under about 10” of water, making them the perfect spot for staying cool in a chair that won’t damage your pool.

“Companies like S.R. Smith and Ledge Lounger make furniture that’s specifically designed to be placed in pools, whether your pool is cement, fiberglass or event vinyl,” says Bradshaw. “They’ve become really popular.”



Photo: Contributed by Carefree Pools





Photo: Contributed by BonaVista Pools  
Photographer: Jeff McNeill

“ More people are looking for the ability to play, lounge and hang out in their pool, It’s less about swimming than it is the ability to cool off and entertain.”

– **Craig McNutt**,  
Holland Home Leisure, New Minas, N.S.

## SWIM-UP BARS

Gannon says many homeowners take inspiration from their favourite beach vacation resorts when designing their backyards, so it’s fun to help them bring those ideas to life here in Canada.

“My kids still speak about a place in Mexico with a swim-up bar. It was just a little concrete pier with seats, but the concept was so novel to them,” says Gannon. “So when we’re creating a vacation alternative here at home, we want people to feel like they’ve been offered all these kinds of features.”

## IN-POOL SEATING AREAS

Kara Redden with R&R Pools in Halifax, N.S. agrees that many homeowners want to recreate the “down south experience” with their own backyard pools — and now it’s more attainable than ever.

“The sky’s the limit for what you want to do with pool design,” says Redden. “We can install stools, tables and umbrellas into flat surfaces. We can add ledges and inside steps, too. People want places to sit in the pool.”

If your existing pool doesn’t have these features, Redden says it’s easy to add them during a renovation. (If you have a vinyl pool, upgrades like this need to go hand-in-hand with a liner replacement, of course.)

## OUTDOOR KITCHENS

If you’re adding a swim-up bar, Gannon says it often makes sense to have it connected to an outdoor kitchen so people “on land” can also have full access to refreshments.

“Outdoor kitchens are becoming more and more popular because you don’t need to have people walking in and out of the house in wet bathing suits,” adds Bradshaw. “Everyone can enjoy food and drinks outside.”

## SHALLOW-DEPTH POOLS

Craig McNutt with Holland Home Leisure in New Minas, N.S. says pool parties may take place in and around a pool, but it’s not necessarily about the swimming specifically. That’s why shallow-depth pools are becoming more popular each year.

“More people are looking for the ability to play, lounge and hang out in their pool,” says McNutt. “It’s less about

swimming than it is the ability to cool off and entertain.”

## SHADE FOR DAYS

Bradshaw says the Vantage LeisureScapes team likes the oversized shade sails made by Nestling.

“You can tie off a few corners and create a large shady area for when people want to get out of the pool and stay out of the sun for a while,” says Bradshaw. “It’s important to give your guests the option to sit in the shade so no one becomes overexposed to the sun.”

Bradshaw says they’re also selling a lot of enormous umbrellas with 10-foot spans, designed to place near lounge chairs.

## FIRE FEATURES

“There’s a real desire to

combine the elements of fire and water,” says Gannon. “It creates such a compelling conversation, whether you’re gathering around a bonfire pit near the pool or you’ve added a fire feature near the pool to create a cozy ambiance.”

## CONVERSATION AREAS

With all of the excitement over fancy new features, don’t forget classics like chairs around the pool deck. The party doesn’t just happen in the pool, so your guests need places to lounge while they dry off and soak up the sun.

“People often want a space with multiple chaise lounges in a row, like you’d see at the Hilton around the pool,” says Gannon. “It can really give you that ‘resort’ feel, especially with nice wide umbrellas for shade.” ■



Photo: Contributed by BonaVista Pools  
Photographer: Jeff McNeill



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Photos: Contributed by BonaVista Pools

# SMALL BUT MIGHTY

Exploring the popularity of swim spas and shallow-depth pools

BY

**Heather Laura Clarke**

**F**or decades, pools tended to look a certain way: large blue rectangles with a shallow end and a deep end. End of story.

But over the years, homeowners decided that just because that type of pool was “standard” didn’t mean it was what would best suit their own needs.

If you don’t plan on training for the Olympics, do you really need an Olympic-sized pool? If you never dive and find yourself crowded in the shallow end with your family, do you really need a deep end at all? If you’re always lamenting that pool season just isn’t long enough, what if you had a pool that could be used year-round?

Here’s a look at shallow-depth pools and swim spas — both small and mighty in their own ways ...

## SHALLOW-DEPTH POOLS

Instead of a standard pool with a shallow end followed by a drop-off leading to a deep end, many Canadians are opting to build shallow pools with a consistent depth throughout.

Kara Redden with R&R Pools in Halifax, N.S. says they do a lot of shallow-depth pools, referring to them usually as “exercise pools” or “plunge pools.”

“They’ve become a popular way for people looking to increase their fitness level with

volleyball, basketball or water aerobics,” says Redden. “People want to be able to stand around to cool off — and maybe duck down underneath the water, too — but not everyone wants a deep end anymore.”

Redden says these pools are great for kids as well as older adults and people of all ages who can’t swim. The consistent depth means that if you can touch the bottom when you first step into the pool, you’re fine to bop around the rest of the pool without worrying about a drop-off point.

“Every pool is personalized to our customers’ needs and wants, so we always want to explore their intention,” says Redden. “They might think they want a standard pool



with a deep end, but we dig a little deeper and ask how they plan to use it. Sometimes a pool like this is the perfect solution for them but they don't realize it's an option."

At Holland Home Leisure in New Minas, N.S., Craig McNutt says many of their clients are choosing shallow-depth pools designed for backyard sports. When the water level is waist-height or chest-height, he says it's great for basketball hoops or volleyball nets.

"Families with young children also like a constant-depth pool because there's no deep end," adds McNutt. "On-ground pools tend to be 52" deep and we do a similar depth for in-ground sports pools."

Rhett Bradshaw with Vantage LeisureScapes in Langley, B.C. says they often refer to these constant-depth pools as "cocktail pools" or even "dipping pools."

"We do smaller ones where people just want to be able to get in and cool down on a hot day, and larger ones for people who want to play games," says Bradshaw. "When they're not really deep, they're great for families with little kids because they're not dealing with a pool where half of it's over everybody's heads."

## SWIM SPAS

While shallow-depth pools are ideal for splashing around for a game of basketball or volleyball, a swim spa is a clever combination of "spa" and "miniature swimming pool."

.....

“They’ve become a popular way for people looking to increase their fitness level with volleyball, basketball or water aerobics. People want to be able to stand around to cool off — and maybe duck down underneath the water, too — but not everyone wants a deep end anymore.”

.....

— **Kara Redden,**  
R&R Pools, Timberlea, N.S.

.....

Jennifer Gannon of BonaVista LeisureScapes in Toronto, Ont. says swim spas are especially popular in urban areas with small lots because they create "a big swim experience in a small footprint."

.....

"They're small and efficient, so they still leave space in your yard for lounging around, barbecuing or setting up a badminton net," says Gannon. "We've even set them up on condo rooftops and penthouse terraces."

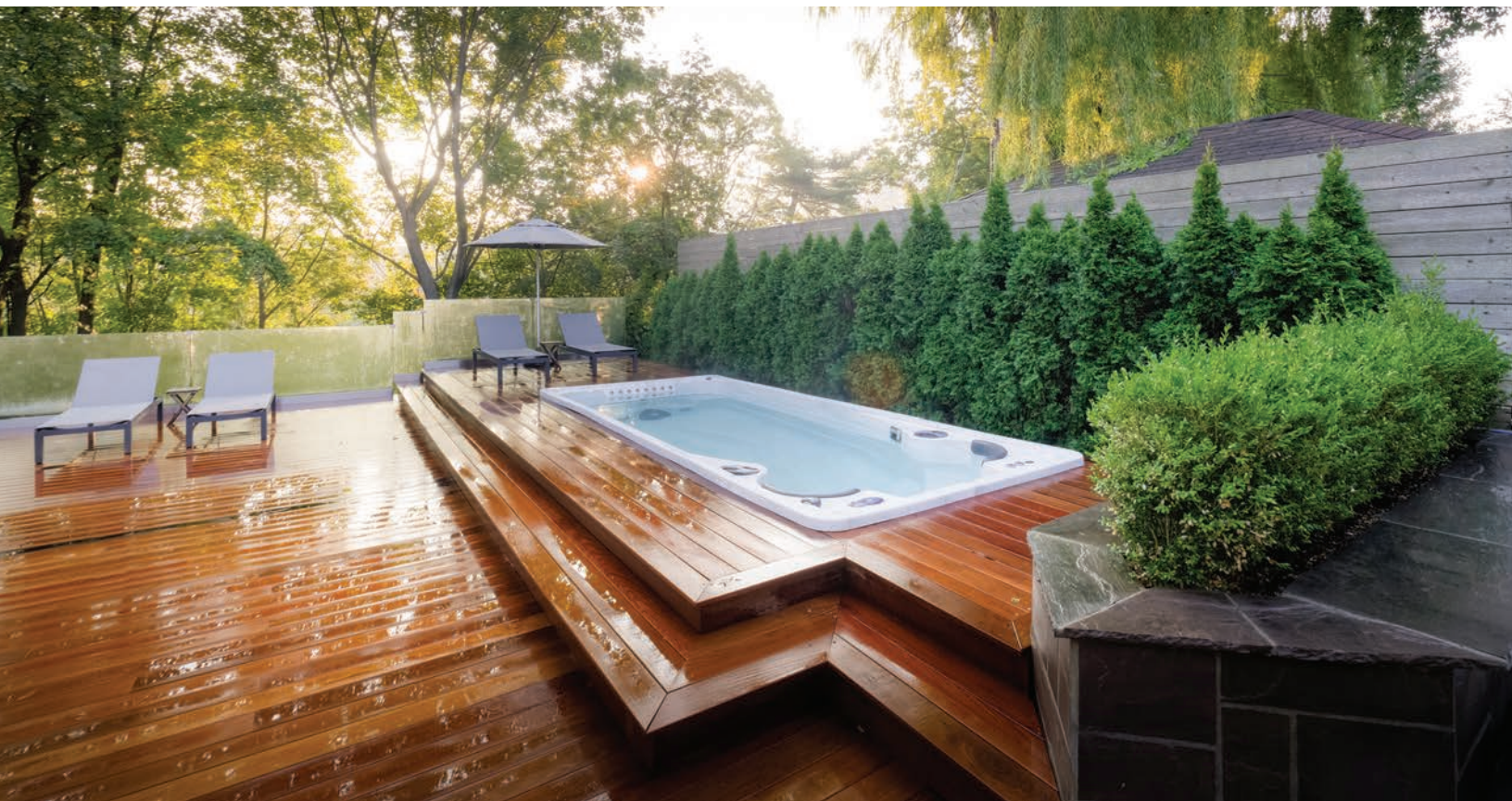
A standard swimming pool may hold 80,000 litres of water while a swim spa only holds between 6,000 and 10,000 litres — all enclosed in an insulated cabinet so it can be used year-round if it's kept nice and warm. Swim spas also don't typically require a fenced-in enclosure, thanks to their thick foam safety covers.

And while companies like Peloton are leading the charge for in-home workouts, Gannon says swim spas make it easy to swim "laps" against a resistance current — all in the comfort of their own yard or patio.

"Gyms may close, but swim spas provide an at-home workout whenever you want one," says Gannon.

Since Canadian winters are becoming more moderate, Gannon says it's easier than ever to use a swim spa year-round — cranking up the temperature to 90 for a nice winter swim or even 104 for a toasty winter hot tub session.

"Whenever you get into a body of water, there's this feeling of weightlessness that allows you to really relax," says Gannon. "It's wonderful to be able to put down your phone, get away from all other distractions and just relax." ■







# CLEAR WATER, CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS

Expert advice on simple, effective water care

BY

**Heather Laura Clarke**

If you're worried about managing your pool's water care, the short answer is that it might be easier than you think — providing you follow one important rule.

## BE CONSISTENT

Rhett Bradshaw with Vantage LeisureScapes in Langley, B.C. says there isn't necessarily a right system or a wrong system, but consistency is everything.

"The key is picking a water-care program and sticking with it," says Bradshaw. "As with a lot of things in life, a little bit of preventative maintenance goes a long way."

He says trouble tends to arise when a

pool-owner thinks the water "looks OK" so they don't think they need to follow any particular program to keep it in balance. While the water may be crystal-clear, Bradshaw says there could still be underlying issues putting people's health at risk.

"When you stick to a regime, you'll see benefits in not only how the water looks, but also how it feels — and how well your pool and equipment hold up over the long run," adds Bradshaw.

## TEST REGULARLY

But a proper water-care routine doesn't mean you're going to be stuck out at the pool

messing around with chemicals for hours. If you are, Craig McNutt with Holland Home Leisure in New Minas, N.S. says that could be a sign you're doing something wrong.

"If you're taking any more than 10 minutes, once a week, to do the chemistry on your pool, you're doing too much," says McNutt.

He says any water-care work should be done quickly, once a week, and then there will be seasonal adjustments to do a few times a year. Once a month, he recommends bringing a water sample to a reputable pool dealer so they can "take care of the hard stuff."





Photos: 125RF.com



says Redden. “Pool care is very easy, as long as someone is telling you exactly what to do and you’re sticking to those instructions.”

At R&R Pools, Redden says they like the BioGuard® ALEX water testing system because it’s “extremely easy” for homeowners to follow.

“You want to make sure you’re doing your own testing once a week, and then doing an in-store test once a month,” says Redden. “But we’ve created different approaches for different customers, from the DIYer to the person who wants white-glove service where we take care of everything. It’s just a matter of what the customer wants.”

### ASK QUESTIONS

Jennifer Gannon of BonaVista LeisureScapes in Toronto, Ont. says many of their customers are choosing pool products that are “as natural as possible” while still keeping the water safe.

“We need to use sanitizers to kill any bacteria, of course — bromine and chlorine — and the rest of water care is really all about balancing the water so it feels as aligned with your body’s natural chemistry as possible,” explains Gannon.

She says it’s not about using a lot of products — it’s about carefully selecting only the most effective ones. When the water is sanitized and regularly tested for pH and alkalinity levels, she says it will keep the water from fluctuating and ensure it’s “better able to combat anything nature throws at it.”

It can be difficult, she says, to decide on your own which products to purchase. There are companies touting the benefits of ozonators and UV lights, but not every pool-owner realizes these new gadgets are designed only to augment sanitizers, not replace them.

“On a weekly basis, you’re just monitoring your pH levels and sanitizer levels. Let us take care of the rest,” says McNutt. “The more proactive you are, the less you’ll fight with it — and the less you’ll have to spend.”

### FIND THE RIGHT POOL PARTNER

Kara Redden with R&R Pools in Halifax, N.S. says it’s important to choose a pool company that has a solid water-care system but that it’s not necessarily about the chemicals themselves — it’s about the approach.

“You want a company who’s going to provide clear, easy-to-understand instructions. That’s what’s going to guarantee success,”

“On a weekly basis, you’re just monitoring your pH levels and sanitizer levels. Let us take care of the rest.”

– **Craig McNutt**,  
Holland Home Leisure,  
New Minas, N.S.

“We will always need sanitizers, but you can augment them with ozonators or UV lights to perhaps reduce the amount of sanitizer you need,” confirms Gannon.

### TRUST THE EXPERTS

Gannon compares the process of learning how to care for your pool’s water to bringing a new puppy home and learning how to keep it healthy and safe. Just like you’d build a relationship with a veterinarian to help care for your puppy, pool-owners need to build a relationship with a trusted LeisureScapes dealer so they can manage their water care.

“You need someone you can trust — someone who will help you cut through the clutter of what to buy and what to do, and help you make good decisions,” says Gannon. “We’re here to help keep you and your family safe.” ■





Photo: I23RF

# THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

## What's new in pool/spa automation?

BY

**Heather Laura Clarke**

“Siri, turn on the pool lights.”

“Alexa, warm up the pool to 82°.”

“Hey Google, turn on the waterfall feature.”

**W**ith phones in our back pockets and WiFi all around us, it's possible to control just about every aspect of our pools without even being in the same country.

“The pool industry has noticed a big movement towards ‘all things automation’ over the last couple of years,” says Craig McNutt with Holland Home Leisure in New Minas, N.S. “Hayward’s OmniLogic line lets you control your heater, salt system, lights and pump all remotely, using your smartphone or a voice assistant like Alexa or Google Home.”

He says having remote access is convenient for people who travel or for those with a pool at a weekend property because “you can check in on everything from a distance and have that peace of mind.”

Of course, McNutt jokes that it's also just fun to sit around with your friends and family and “show off” by switching on your pool's lights from your phone.

Rhett Bradshaw with Vantage LeisureScapes in Langley, B.C. agrees many pool-owners find it “fun and exciting” to have the latest automation gadgets.

“People love being able to pull their phone out of their pocket and say ‘Watch

this,’ while they turn on their waterfall or start a light show in their backyard,” says Bradshaw.

But it's also extremely convenient, he points out, to be able to access your pool's features without needing to be right there in person.

“You could be on your way back from vacation and decide to fire up the hot tub to get it to your desired temperature so it's ready for a soak as soon as you get home,” says Bradshaw.

Kara Redden with R&R Pools in Halifax, N.S. says automation has been standard on all of the pools they've built over the past few years.

“It's affordable, it's easy to use and there's no reason not to put in it,” says Redden. “If people aren't technologically inclined, they can still use everything manually if that's what they want to do. But automation has the power to make things easier and reduce your energy costs — there's even a safety component — so we find people get on board quickly.”

While pool covers can't be controlled remotely for safety issues, Redden says pool-owners can get a notification on their phone reminding them if their pool cover is off.

When it comes to adjusting your pool's chemistry, Redden says R&R Pools likes products that automatically alert them

if a homeowner's pool water needs to be adjusted.

“OmniLogic's new interface makes automation easier than ever,” says Redden. “If someone calls us with a problem, I can quickly pull up their pool's information and see exactly what's happening with their pool equipment.”

Jennifer Gannon of BonaVista LeisureScapes in Toronto, Ont. says automation is also making it easier to clean your pool. She says the BonaVista Pools team likes the Maytronics products that utilize WiFi connectivity.

“You can program them to run for 1-2 hours, but if you want a quick cleaning you can actually drive them around like a remote-control car.”

While cleaning up the water, flipping on the lights and sending reminders about the cover are all important, Gannon says the No. 1 perk of pool automation always comes back to one thing: getting that perfect temperature, exactly when you want it.

“Homeowners love that automation is making adjusting the temperature of your pool or spa as easy as adjusting the temperature of your home,” says Gannon.

“You can use an app to change your pool's temperature from your office at lunchtime so it's perfect for an after-work dip — in your comfort zone — when you get home. It's so easy.” ■





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Photos: Contributed

# R&R MAKES POOL CONCEPT A REALITY FOR MCCABE LAKE COUPLE

By Fred Sgambati

There's nothing more satisfying than envisioning something and seeing it come to fruition. That's exactly what happened when John Titchmarsh and Claire Greco of McCabe Lake, Nova Scotia, decided to install an in-ground pool in 2017 with R&R Pools of Timberlea.

They had just finished landscaping their new home, including a patio space, new shed and some mulch, when the conversation turned to pools. The couple has owned above-ground pools in the past and appreciated what a pool adds to a property, but decided this time that an in-ground might be the way to go. They were so excited by the prospect that they actually got a can of spray paint and marked off where they thought the pool should be.

They traced out a kidney-shaped concept, but thought it might be "too 1980s" so they revised the plan, settling eventually on a 16' x 30', 3.5' to 6' deep rectangular

configuration without a diving board that featured grey steps and a dark pool liner bordered by stamped concrete and artificial turf instead of mulch. They thought that real grass and bark would end up in the water, so they came up with an alternative approach that combines functionality and aesthetic appeal.

They pictured a dining area and plants to accent the space, but were very aware that real plants attract pests and insects so they opted for artificial trees and potted shrubs that are so realistic, guests are hard-pressed to tell them from the real thing. Claire says they were interested in something that was low-maintenance to allow more time to enjoy the pool, family, friends and guests.

## Did their homework

John and Claire did their homework too before deciding on a company to make their dream come true. They received

three quotes from different companies and did plenty of research online, checking comments and noting levels of satisfaction. Word of mouth is powerful, and they approached several people and asked directly about their experiences with R&R Pools. All of them gave R&R two thumbs up and outstanding recommendations.

John and Claire knew also that the company has been in business for more than 35 years, and that gave them additional incentive to connect with owners Kara Redden and Ryan Fitzpatrick about the pool project.

The install itself took about three weeks to complete in August 2017, and John, Claire and their family, including their two sons and a young grandson (now three years old), were enjoying the water by September. R&R founder Derek Redden, who is now semi-retired, worked on the project as well, which meant a lot to John and Claire.

## REST & RELAXATION

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“It’s nice to share the pool with family and friends,” Claire says. “It makes the time together more special.”

– John Titchmarsh  
and Claire Greco,  
McCabe Lake, N.S.



### THE DETAILS...

**Pool Size:** 16'x30' Rectangle

**Pool Depth:** 3' 4" to 6'

**Pool Type:** Steel

**Liner Pattern:**

Midnight Barolo by Latham

**Colour Package:** Grey

**Water Feature:** Two in-wall jets

**Step:** Outside 6' Grey Straight Step

**Concrete:** ARTCrete



The team excavated several large boulders during the install process and John and Claire dotted them around the backyard as functional, decorative pieces. R&R didn't haul any dirt either, choosing to use what had been excavated to slope the land to maximum advantage as part of the installation.

The liner was custom-built to conform to the sloped configuration. R&R staff recommended installing a heat pump to extend the swimming season in the spring and fall and 'hiding' the pump in the shed so guests wouldn't see it — and to minimize any noise when it was operational.

"The pool holds the heat pretty well," John says. "Once we get it up to temperature, the heat doesn't come off because we use a solar blanket."

### All the little things right

R&R even put a camera in a tree and a drone in the air to videotape the installation and capture still photos for posterity. "They were very good to deal with," John says, "They did all the little things right. The workmanship was outstanding, Kara was easy to get a hold of whenever we had a question, and they set and met guidelines

and deadlines."

"We're on house number six right now," he added, "and they have been one of the best companies I've ever dealt with, and I've dealt with a few of them! They did exactly what they said they would, on time and on budget. I would highly recommend them."

John and Claire have now enjoyed the pool for two full summers and they use it almost every day in season. "Claire's retired," John notes. "She has the grandson quite a bit and he loves it! We have two boys and they like it, too. Family and friends come over, especially on weekends, and we enjoy seeing the pool being used."

The couple has hosted parties of between 30 and 50 people and say the backyard isn't crowded at all. They planned for lots of seating and looked forward to plenty of entertaining. "It's nice to share the pool with family and friends," Claire says. "It makes the time together more special. We've had birthday parties, pool parties and a Jack and Jill shower when my son got married (last summer)."

"We like the beaches and pools in Florida," John adds, "and we've got a little something like that here." Claire says they definitely stay home more in the summer, enjoying outdoor living and a sweet staycation in what John calls "our backyard paradise."

When asked about their experience with R&R and what it means to have a pool right outside your back door, John didn't hesitate: "It's just enjoyment," he says. R&R helps them open and close at the start and conclusion of each season — and any questions they have are answered promptly and efficiently by Kara, Ryan and their staff.

John and Claire started with a clear idea of what their backyard could be and R&R Pools made it a reality. "It's our little dream space," John says. "We get to just go out and do nothing. It's very relaxing."

Isn't that what it's all about? To make your backyard dreams come true, contact R&R Pools in Timberlea by calling 902-876-2773, emailing [info@rrpools.ca](mailto:info@rrpools.ca) or visiting [www.rrpools.ca](http://www.rrpools.ca). ■







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