



LandscapingNetwork

MAGAZINE



2012

A BIG SPLASH



AN EXISTING MICHIGAN SWIMMING POOL IS REMODELED INTO A TIERED RETREAT WITH THE ADDITION OF A RAISED POOL

BY SARAH TATE / LANDSCAPINGNETWORK.COM COLUMNIST



This high-end swimming pool makeover has it all: a vanishing edge, a luxury spa, an outdoor fireplace, a large pool house with a full kitchen, a waterslide and much more. If you're thinking "I could never afford that," there are still plenty of ideas you can get from this pool remodel even if you don't have the funds, says project designer Patrick Zaremba, of Detroit-area Zaremba & Company. He even offers some tips on ways to lower your costs (see "Get This Look on a Budget" on page 51).

DESIGN GOALS

The owners of this Plymouth, Mich., property wanted to upgrade their existing pool into a space that would better accommodate young children and outdoor entertaining. They also requested that the new design blend with their home's architecture and have the atmosphere of a tropical retreat. Their wish list included:

- ▶ More shallow play areas in the pool.
- ▶ A larger pool house with changing rooms, shower and kitchen.
- ▶ A waterslide.
- ▶ Two removable basketball hoops.
- ▶ Some gas tiki torches.

PROJECT CHALLENGES

Zaremba doesn't particularly like the word "challenge." He believes that every job comes with its own set of unique circumstances that must be addressed and that these are just a normal part of landscape design work. Whether you see them as challenges or not, Zaremba and his team generated creative ideas to transform this once average, slightly awkward pool into an unbelievable outdoor living space.

Zaremba's first step was clearly communicating his vision for the project to the homeowner. Then he got to work executing his vision, addressing such issues as:

- ▶ Working around the deep existing pool.
- ▶ Overlapping a new shallow pool at a higher elevation.
- ▶ Creating a "common language" between the design of the garden and the architecture of the pool house and home.



PROJECT SOLUTIONS

Instead of demolishing or simply remodeling the existing pool, Zaremba chose to construct a second pool that would overlap the original one at a higher elevation. The new raised pool, which has a vanishing edge that spills into the old one, has shallow space at both ends where the kids can play basketball. To put the original pool, which was not well-suited for play because of its depth, to better use, a custom waterslide was added.

“Achieving this unique overlapping design required retaining walls to be built and the shallow wall of the existing pool to be reconstructed to ensure proper alignment with the new pool,” explains Zaremba. Much of the planning work for this aspect of the project was outsourced to a structural engineering firm to make sure everything was done just right. “We also had to address the fact that the original pool was not perfectly square. Granite coping was used to hide this and create a ‘common language’ between the two bodies of water,” he adds.

Other ways Zaremba unified the pool, garden and buildings on this property included:

- ▶ Using the same granite block for the retaining walls as for the exterior of the pool house.
- ▶ Using 2 x 2-foot granite pavers for the pool deck and interior pool house flooring.
- ▶ Constructing all the walls to be capped at the same height.
- ▶ Incorporating horizontal decorative bands of limestone and granite into the walls.
- ▶ Matching the column that supports the overhanging pool house roof to the

style of the home.

- ▶ Incorporating a NanaWall system (an opening glass wall) so that the corner of the pool house opens wide to the pool.

Another circumstance that Zaremba worked hard to address was clearly communicating his vision to the client. “Because this project required moving a large volume of dirt and was hard to visualize, I wanted to ensure that the homeowner had a full grasp of what I was proposing before he agreed to it,” he says. Luckily, there was already a high level of trust between Zaremba and the client because they had worked together previously on other areas of the property. But this didn’t change how thorough Zaremba was with the presentation of his plans for the makeover. “I created three-dimensional sketch-up models using computer software, and set out grading stakes and string lines to help him see the position and elevation of things. There were times where I know he was thinking, ‘The wall is going to be how tall?’ but at the end of the day it all came together quite nicely,” he says.

ADDING THE FINAL TOUCHES

To create the feel of a contemporary tropical retreat, Zaremba accessorized with sleek outdoor furniture, planted containers and gas-lit tiki torches. “When creating outdoor rooms that feel intuitive, you have to start with the end in mind,” he says. For example, from the beginning of the project Zaremba knew where the best spot was for chaise lounges to receive optimum sunlight, and he designed the layout of the remodeled pool deck accordingly. The gas-fueled outdoor fireplace and landscape lighting enhance the dining and lounging atmospheres well into the evening.



AN INSIDE LOOK: > THE DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION OF A BI-LEVEL SWIMMING POOL

This pool makeover for a residence in Plymouth, Mich., was not a run-of-the-mill project. Patrick Zaremba, a landscape designer and project manager based near Detroit, calls this job, which involved elevating a new pool above an existing one and installing a unique paving system with hidden drainage, the highlight of his 20-year career.

ELEVATING THE NEW POOL

The decision to stack a second pool 3 feet above and perpendicular to the original one meant that retaining walls had to be built and large amounts of dirt would need to be moved to reach the desired elevation. “This project required a higher level of technical expertise than is typical on residential projects,” Zaremba says. “We had to work hard to make sure that we had thought out every detail on paper and were always staying ahead of the construction.”

Zaremba had the raised pool concept in mind, but wasn’t sure how to make it work, so he outsourced the technical work to a structural engineering company. “In order to successfully execute a project of this complexity and detail it, I knew this was a requirement

that had to be factored into the job,” Zaremba says.

The engineers assessed the structure of the existing pool and provided technical expertise for conjoining the existing pool with the proposed pool above it. They recommended removing and rebuilding the entire shallow wall from the bottom up and provided specific details for construction. Additional outside professionals, such as surveying engineers, were utilized throughout the project to ensure accurate layout, elevations and control points. “The engineers were out several times during the construction—before we poured the wall footings and after—to double check the work,” says Zaremba.

Because of a drastic elevation change between the home and existing pool, Zaremba and his crew ended up using retaining walls on either side of the new pool to create a level plateau. He calls the wall that divides the two pools “the spine wall” because it runs through the center of the design and supports the structure of the entire project. A vanishing edge and wide steps leading to the sun deck were also incorporated into the spine wall.



A before shot of the existing pool.



AN INSIDE LOOK:



Granite pavers installed on a pedestal system allow water to flow through the open joints and into a hidden channel drain in the pool deck.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- An elevated 61x22-foot pool installed 3 feet above an existing pool
- Pedestal paving system for the 7,700-square-foot pool deck to hide drains
- Retaining walls that double as seat walls
- Vanishing edge incorporated into the spine wall allows water to spill from the upper pool into the lower one



Two additional independent walls, that when completed appear to be seat walls, were built on the far side of the pool area. They were backfilled and graded so that only 1 1/2 to 3 feet of the walls remained exposed. These walls were key to creating a level area around the new pool that would connect the residence to the pool area.

PEDESTAL PAVING SYSTEM

For the pool deck paving, Zaremba wanted to achieve a clean, elegant look. He opted to use a pedestal paving system that would allow

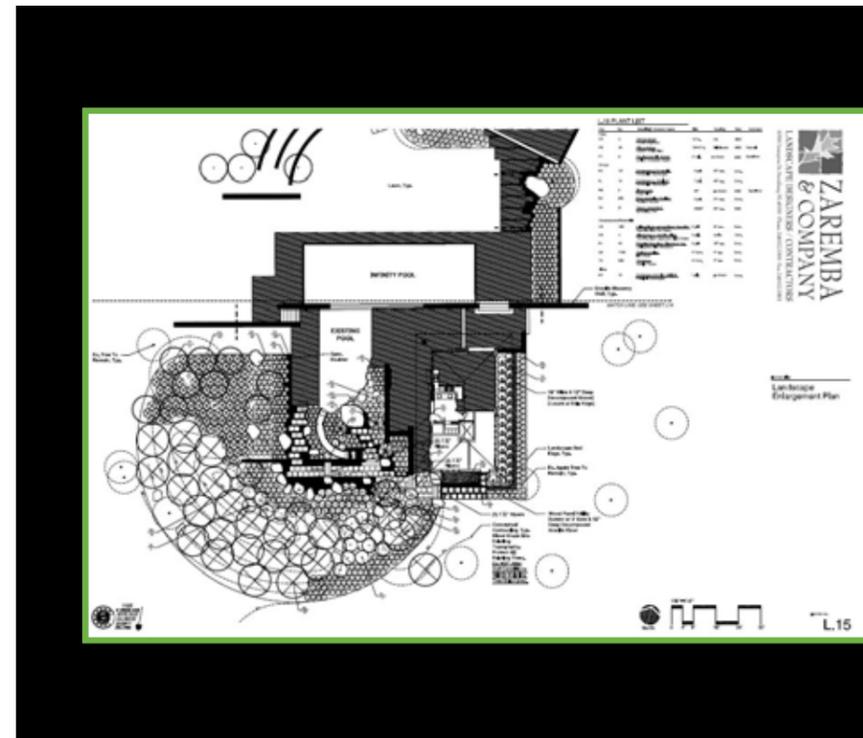
the surface to be uninterrupted by drains and remain completely level, as opposed to the traditional technique of slightly pitching a pool deck. "We suspended rather than mortared the 2x2-foot granite pavers over concrete. Water flows through the open joints and drains via a subsurface drainage system," explains Zaremba.

This type of paving system is typically used on rooftops, and can be costly. But for the right client, it's a great upsell, according to Zaremba, because it tremendously

improves the look of a pool deck. Another issue with the pool deck paving that Zaremba had to address was how to adjoin the smooth, square pavers with the rough-cut granite block walls. "Simply abutting the pavers to the wall and mortaring the awkward gap between them would have ruined the clean, elegant look that we were trying to achieve with the pedestal system," he says. Instead, Zaremba decided to grind out a narrow channel in the bottom of the walls and slide the pavers underneath, which completely hid the transition from one material to

the next. "Because there is little forgiveness with a sophisticated hardscape, the goal was to keep the gap between the pavers and the block tight, somewhere between 1/4 and 3/8 of an inch," says Zaremba.

Zaremba's willingness to call in experts and his keen attention to detail paid off in the end. The homeowners love their revamped pool and use the outdoor living space frequently to play with their children and entertain friends. The project has also received attention from regional publications and award committees.



GET THIS LOOK ON A BUDGET

If you're on a budget for your pool project, Zaremba has the following suggestions:

- Instead of custom-built walls, use a manufactured block system and cover it in vines.
- Replace the costly granite pavers with stamped concrete or exposed aggregate.
- Forgo the pedestal paving system and use traditional drainage solutions, such as drains and pitching the decking slightly.
- Skip the pool's custom rim flow edge and opt for a basic coping.

LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONAL

Zaremba & Company / Clarkston, Mich.
Website: www.zarembaandco.com