

PANORAMIC



**ABOVE:** Barbara and Ross Buck transformed their backyard into a softly undulating series of outdoor rooms. **LEFT:** In keeping with pool designer Skip Phillips' philosophy of minimal elevation change, the spa sits less than a foot above the pool.

# OASIS

An innovative pool and spa become the centerpiece of a backyard designed for family-friendly living.

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**D**uring any given week, Barbara and Ross Buck's pool in Carlsbad, California, gets a good workout. It's the site of excited squeals, shrieks, and giggles when the couple's young grandchildren visit and, in quieter moments, a private gym for Barbara's water aerobics. On stiflingly hot days, its beach entry provides a place for semisubmerged lounging, and at day's end, the adjoining spa offers one of the best seats in the house for watching the sunset. But it's how the pool looks during the absence of activity that truly delights Barbara and Ross.

"It's just a wonderful, beautiful thing," Barbara says. "We get the most enjoyment from simply looking at

it. When the rain falls, it looks like a natural lake. When the sun's out, it reflects the landscape, and at night when it's all lit up, it looks like a resort."

Pool designer Skip Phillips worked closely with the couple to keep the pool in proportion with the rest of the backyard. "When you talk about a complete backyard design, a pool is just one element," Phillips says. "We created different destinations to give the backyard balance."

An outdoor kitchen sits at one end of the pool, a slightly raised seating area at the other. A small stone bridge arching over a softly flowing stream provides access to the seating area, which overlooks the pool and neighboring canyon. With a semicircular bench

**BELOW:** When the umbrella-shaded sitting area seems too far from the cooling water, boulders rising majestically from the beach area make great impromptu seats. **OPPOSITE:** The trickle of water over rocks in the streambed is kept thin to make a soothing sound. "Skip's design philosophy was to have the source of water hidden, so you want to go through the garden looking for it," Ross says.







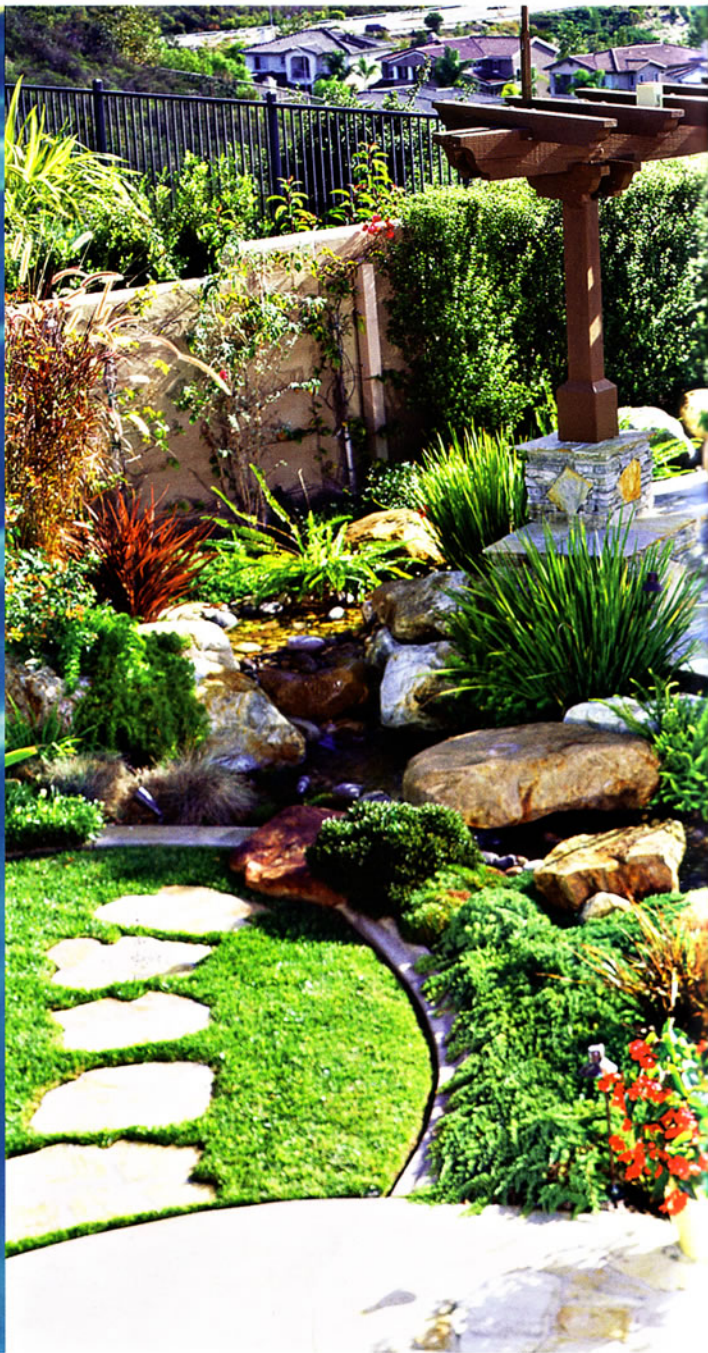




## Get the Look: Unified Style

Pool designer Skip Phillips shares his tips for creating a cohesive look in a multipurpose backyard.

- **FIND A STYLE THREAD.** Make a connection between your front yard, backyard, and the interior spaces of your home to keep a unified feel. In the planning stages, look around your interior spaces for materials that could be repeated outdoors. If you've used light-color tile throughout the house, consider using a similar-hue stone for pathways and patio spaces.
- **BALANCE THE SCALES.** Don't congregate several tall, visually hefty items in one area of a yard. Create a smooth transition between spaces by interspersing structures in accordance with elevation changes.
- **BE CONSISTENT WITH COLOR.** Develop a color palette for your outdoor rooms and use it as a guide when selecting paving materials, flowers, and furniture fabrics.
- **CONNECT WITH HARDSCAPING.** Once you select a paving surface, carry it through every outdoor room. You don't have to repeat the way in which you use it, but reintroduce it, even if it's in smaller doses.
- **LAYER LIGHTING.** Use pathway lights to connect outdoor rooms after dark, and add uplights on trees to create dramatic focal points within outdoor spaces.















**LEFT:** The Southwest-inspired fireplace runs on natural gas. "We didn't want to worry about smoke, and with the natural preserve so close, we definitely didn't want any sparks," Barbara says. **PAGES 90-91:** A pergola above the curved quartzite bench provides shade and definition.

and pergola for emphasis, plus a cozy fireplace, the area rates as a favorite spot for dining and entertaining. "It's very restful and quiet," Barbara says. "You can hear the rush of water from the stream, and you can look over the rest of the yard. It makes for a wonderful vision."

While consistent use of quartzite hardscaping ties the dining area and water rooms together, landscaping provides the glue. Barbara selected a host of tidy, low-maintenance plants for a successive display of year-round color. She emphasized red flowers and copper-color foliage to complement the reddish tint of the quartzite and the many boulders that Phillips artfully positioned around the pool and living areas. "The stones have grown together with the help of the landscaping," Ross says. "They look like they've been there forever."

The pool, which has an organic shape, features a slot overflow perimeter that allows water to tumble over an almost imperceptible edge into a return system below. The continuous flow of water creates a placid surface but also acts as a giant skimmer, sweeping away dust, debris, and leaves.

A zero-depth beach with quartzite underfoot provides an easy and safe entry point, which was important to the Bucks, who have five grandchildren younger than age 10. From the beach, the pool steps down to a depth of 4½ feet, then slopes to 6½ feet in the center, providing just the right change of height for a multitude of water exercises. The pool bottom's black onyx pebbles are small and smooth, so they don't hurt bare feet, and they give the pool the look of a natural lagoon. A saltwater chlorinating system keeps the water soft on eyes and skin.

It's the perfect package. "The pool's design is so interesting and unique," Ross says. "Our entire backyard is a very special place because of it." □

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## Sonar Safety

Ross and Barbara Buck originally planned to build a pool that could be topped with a cover for safety, but they fell in love with Skip Phillips' organic design and opted to install a sonar safety system. Military-grade sonar can distinguish between the sound of surface disturbance, caused by a falling leaf or a rock, and the sound of a child falling into the pool.

When appropriate, the system sets off an alarm inside and outside the house. "The system is excellent," Barbara says. "We feel much safer with it in the pool."