

Rustic Landscape by the Pool

The clients asked this landscape contractor to create a Southwest-style landscape that extended from the back patio out to, and surrounding, the new pool and deck area. Here's how the project came to fruition.



The finished landscape makes the pool feel more private, and the completed archway give the space a Southwestern style.

It's always interesting to me how customers define "landscaping." For some, "landscaping" simply means fabric ground cover, plastic edging, river rock and a couple of yews; yet for others, "landscaping" takes on a whole different meaning.

One recent project at Horticultural Impressions took the definition of landscaping to a new level. We were fortunate enough to work on a residential installation project that involved creating a rustic outdoor retreat in which the elements of earth, wind, fire and water were all included.

In my 20-plus years in the industry, I've never partnered with clients who were so excited about their upcoming project. Situated on top of a windy, rolling hill in rural Platte County, our clients had realized a dream with the installation of an in-ground swimming pool. They came to Horticultural Impressions to help them landscape their new pool area, creating a sanctuary in which to relax and entertain friends and family. With an upcoming family event already planned, our timeline for completion was tight.

Our clients wanted the look of a rustic Southwest landscape that extended from the back patio of their home out to and surrounding the new pool and deck area. No irrigation system made utilizing easy-to-maintain, drought-resistant plant material key. Since cactus isn't native or tolerant to Missouri landscapes, we utilized columnar English oaks to border the back of the



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Top: The finished landscape makes the pool area feel more private. Above: Before photo shows the area before the installation of the pool and landscape. Above, right: Crew members install an archway near the pool. Left: The archway construction and ground cover installation are partially completed.





The clients did not initially want landscape lighting, but now it is one of their favorite aspects of the landscape.



Flagstone pathways join the home, driveway, patio and pool.



pool to provide a vertical focal point. Other plant material utilized throughout the landscape included 'Ivory Silk' lilacs, Drift Series roses, 'May Night' salvia, catmint, Russian sage, black-eyed Susan, coral bells, inkberry holly and Bronx forsythia. These plants create a low-maintenance landscape that will provide seasonal color throughout the year.

In keeping with the spirit of the Southwest, native hedge-post archways were used at the entryways to the pool, along with hitching posts that double as towel-drying racks. In lieu of mulch on the windy hilltop, and keeping with the rustic theme, 200 tons of Dakota river rock were brought in to create a low-maintenance ground cover surrounding the plant material. Flagstone pathways wind through the newly installed landscape beds connecting the pool to the customer's back patio and driveway. Installation of a quartz fire pit created an additional area for visitors to relax and take the chill off cool evenings.

Landscape lighting was not part of the original project; however, as work progressed I became convinced that lighting would add the finishing touch this project needed. Convincing

our customer was another story. After showing photos of other lighting projects we'd worked on and discussing security benefits and the ability to enjoy the landscape year round, our customer agreed to accentuate his landscape with lighting. Night ambience was created using a Hunter FX 600-watt transformer along with six downlights and 14 uplights. As it turned out, the landscape lighting turned out to be one of their favorite aspects of the project.

This project was a prime example of the numerous skill sets that landscape professionals today must possess. Long gone are the days when horticultural knowledge was enough to get by; today's professionals must also have working knowledge and an understanding of masonry, electricity, plumbing, drainage, surveying skills and building codes, just to name a few. It also helps to have a little Psychology 101 to understand how best to work with your customers.

On this project, the customers were very visual so our crew worked to complete sections of the project each day. At the end of each day I met with the customers to discuss the project and

the goals for the upcoming day. Also, as we accomplished major milestones in the project, we would text a picture to them with updates of our progress giving them something to look forward to when they returned home at the end of the work day. These added steps kept our customers' excitement and enthusiasm high throughout the project.

To top it off, our crew had three "inspectors" on site each day ensuring we were working. Pepper, Cagney and Lacey, the family's three Corgis, kept my crew on their toes begging for attention by "borrowing" work gloves, tugging on water hoses, stealing bites from our lunch and on warmer days sharing the air conditioning with us in the truck during break time.

Needless to say, my crew and I are extremely proud of this project. It was one of the most enjoyable I've had the privilege to work on in years. 🐾

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