

Lisa Rosenfeld replaced her conventional pool with a natural stone environment that includes an integrated waterfall and a hot tub that is part of the pool.

Mark Stevens & Co.

# The tao of pool

Jennifer Lisle  
The Journal News

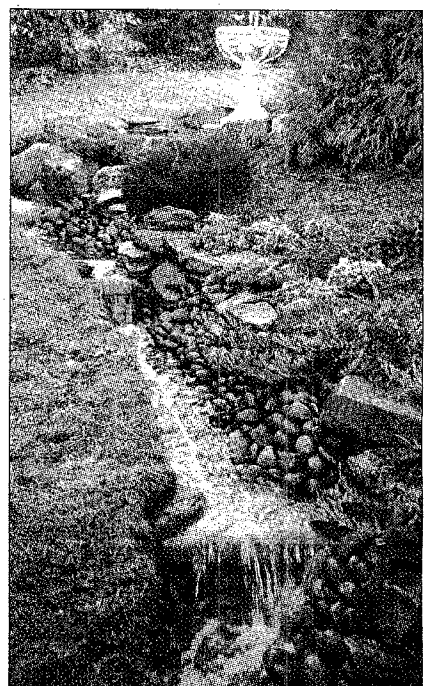
Suburban backyards have become a form of high art for Rockland, Putnam and Westchester county landscapers and the latest outlet of personal expression for a growing number of home-improvement junkies. Instead of using separate contractors to design their pools, gardens and lawns, many homeowners are hiring landscaping teams to create "outdoor environments" in which all of the elements tie together and make

some kind of personal statement. "A pool is never just a body of water," said Bill Meredith, a designer for the Glen Gate Co., a Wilton, Conn.-based pool and landscaping firm that has many Westchester clients. "Most people are now looking for it to make a statement about their lifestyle. If they're relaxed, they may want something simple, or they may want it to be something unique and dramatic," Meredith said. Instead of showing clients some photos of rectangular and liver-shaped prototypes, Meredith said that this new protocol requires him

Homeowners look to landscapers to design their backyards into 'outdoor environments'

to work closely with his clients in order to understand what they want. "As a designer, I must understand my client. I need to know how the outdoor environment will play in their life, and everyone has a different agenda. Do they want to feel they're on vacation? Do they want to feel like they're alone?" Meredith said. According to Meredith, clients who want a pool generally use it as the centerpiece for the rest of their landscape design. Some clients

Please see WATER FEATURES, 26



G. biloba Garden Environments

For Randi Shebitz, one benefit of having created a running stream along one side of her Upper Nyack back lawn is that it draws more wildlife into her garden. Shebitz had a pond on her property and commissioned Jon Feldman to make a stream as a natural extension.

## Unlocking holistic landscaping

WATER FEATURES, from 1G

want their pool to be close to the house and within viewing distance, while others want theirs to be a more natural "water feature."

"We can design something to blend in so that it looks like a natural body of water, and it could have a stream or a waterfall as part of it — it could also have a volcano attached to it if you want," Meredith said.

For these natural bodies of water, landscapers use various kinds of rock and slate materials around the pool and within the landscaping to create architectural forms that fit in with and enhance the environment.

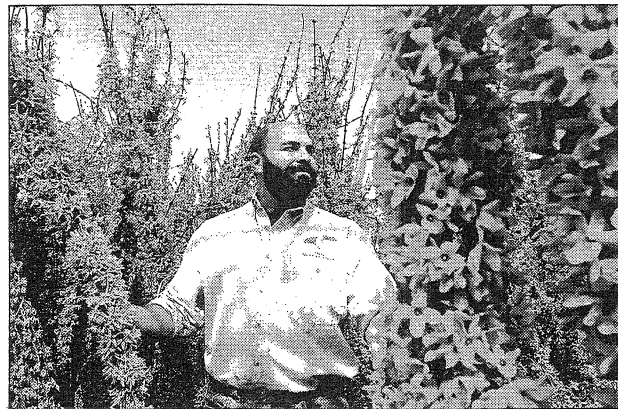
West Nyack-based landscape contractor Michael Naclerio tries to design landscapes that highlight the setting of the house. For a contemporary house and pool set into a mountainside, he built two surrounding walls in conforming semi-circles at the back and front of the pool to accentuate the pool's circular shape.

"The walls were graduated from four feet to 10 feet so that they mirrored the hillside and fit into the mountainside," Naclerio said.

Naclerio also tries to match the kind of stone he uses with the environment.

"In Stony Point it's very woody, so I try to use a lot of native stone to fit in with the area," he said, referring to the way he constructs walls and staircases out of materials like fieldstone, which are nat-

ive to the area.



Peter Carr/The Journal News

Nyack-based landscaper Jon Feldman of G. biloba Garden Environments, looking over the forsythias at Shemin's Nursery in Orangeburg.

Nyack-based landscaper Jon Feldman who owns G.biloba Garden Environments also emphasizes using native greenery in the gardens he designs in Rockland and Westchester.

"A lot of people want a place that's comfortable and private. They want to feel like they're in a natural environment," said Feldman, explaining that he uses native trees like dogwoods and native plants like viburnum, spirea and hydrangea to achieve this feeling of being in comfortable surroundings.

"Mostly, it's the look that's better, but they can also be easier to care for," Feldman said.

Feldman says that although he doesn't design pools, he now

works more closely with pool companies to devise ways to make the pools look like they've always been there.

"We usually survey the backyard and try to shape the pool so that it fits into the existing landscape. We pick up some of the same elements of rock and rough stone and extend that into the gardens," said Feldman.

According to homeowner Lisa Rosenfeld of Harrison, the effect of having a natural garden and pool environment is that it's something you don't even notice.

"It's very comfortable and relaxing, it's hard to say why," said Rosenfeld who decided to change the pool at her house because it was a standard-issue blue square.

"We knew we didn't want to



G.biloba Garden Environments

Feldman emphasizes using rocks and native greenery in the gardens he designs in Rockland and Westchester to create a comfortable and private environment. Stone steps blend into the graded slope of the Randi Shebitz's backyard in Harrison.

keep the boring pool, so we had them design something free-form with an attached patio and a hot tub a few steps up that spills into the pool," Rosenfeld said.

Even though the house is very contemporary, the pool feels natural because it blends with the rocky environment, Rosenfeld said.

For Upper Nyack homeowner Randi Shebitz, one benefit of having created a running stream along one side of her back lawn is that it draws more wildlife into her garden.

"We love the sound of the water, and the birds love the sound

of the water too. We've also had frogs, fish and snails — it's a whole ecological system over there," said Shebitz, who had a pond on her property and commissioned Feldman to make a stream as a natural extension. The water recycles back into the pond, which hosts koi.

"We had other work done, but this was something special. It makes the garden a multi-sensory experience," said Shebitz.

According to Naclerio, this trend is part of the home-improvement obsession among homeowners.

"People had money in their

401ks and now they're putting it into real estate, and since many have done a fair amount to the inside, they're realizing they need to fix the outside too," he said.

And, while it doesn't dramatically increase the value of a house, according to Tiffany Kogen, a Nyack-based real estate salesperson, a pool can add some value.

"You can add at least the cost of the pool, about \$30,000 for a good pool, to the listing price of your price," said Kogen.

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## Know who your agent represents

SIDES, from 1G

tors, said the state law has reduced but not eliminated confusion.

"It's better now than it was be-

a dual agent representing both parties in a mutually dependent transaction, the warning noted.

"As a principal in a real estate transaction, you should always

## Carpet choices stretch wall to wall

Catherine Murrell

The (Louisville, Ky.) Courier-Journal

Jenny Patterson is the branded programs director for Solutia Inc., manufacturer of Wear-Dated carpet fiber. She works out of Kenesaw, Ga. Here she answers consumers' question on buying carpet.

Q: What do consumers need to know to make a wise carpet in-

get about the types of carpet available and the properties and warranties associated with the different types, the better. You'll be better prepared to make good decisions once you go into the carpet store.

Q: Can you discuss the types of fibers?

A: There are a number of different fibers on the market. I'll talk about four that should be familiar

fiber in carpet today.

Each of these fiber categories offers different properties. Polyesters are inherently more stain-resistant than other fibers. The tradeoff is that it doesn't necessarily perform as well. It's lacking in terms of resilience, appearance retention and resistance to wearing out with traffic.

Olefin is very stain-resistant as

and-coming styles that people may not be aware of.

One is freize. It's a cut pile carpet with a tight twist. It has a very casual texture. It's a little more distinctive than most other cut pile carpets, and it has a great hand to it.

Another category is cable. It's reminiscent of the old shags. It has fat yarn, a lot of texture and a higher pile height. When you see it, you're