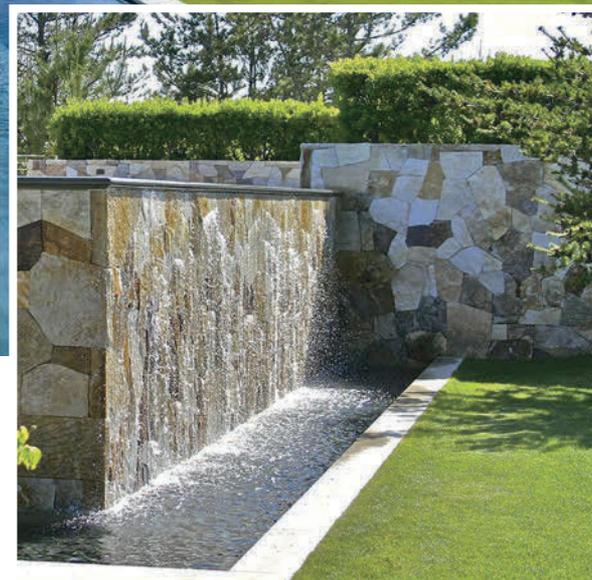


A picturesque Water Mill retreat, courtesy of Pristine Pools. BELOW: A cascading waterfall feature designed by LaGuardia Designs.



infinity and beyond

THE HAMPTONS SETS THE STAGE FOR A DEEP DIVE INTO THE LATEST TRENDS IN POOL DESIGN. BY STEPHANIE MURG

Where swimming pools were once thought of as a one-size-fits-all home addition, the backyard East End staple has become infinitely customizable. Pool designers today can offer an extensive list of options: novel finishes, unique shapes and dimensions, resortlike settings, and integration of fuss-free technology that saves both energy and time. “Designers now create an environment that fits the home’s architecture, the existing landscape, the client’s taste, and their lifestyle,” says landscape designer Elizabeth A. Lear, co-principal of Southampton-based Lear & Mahoney Landscape Associates (30 Main St.,

283-8649; bjm-asla.com). “The current trends go past the simple idea of designing a pool to the conceptualization of a masterpiece.”

Creating such a masterpiece is made possible by an expansive palette of colors and materials. “The days of white and gray pools are over,” says Cliff Gibbons of Gibbons Pools (171 Bridge Road, Islandia, 851-3000; gibbonspools.com). “Today a customer can basically choose a finish based on what color of water they want to look at, from the standard white to Caribbean blue and even black.” Gibbons points to Pebble Tec, a versatile finish available in 18 colors, including Sedona Red and Crème De Menthe, that can be further

enhanced with the addition of colorful glass beads or sparkly seashell bits.

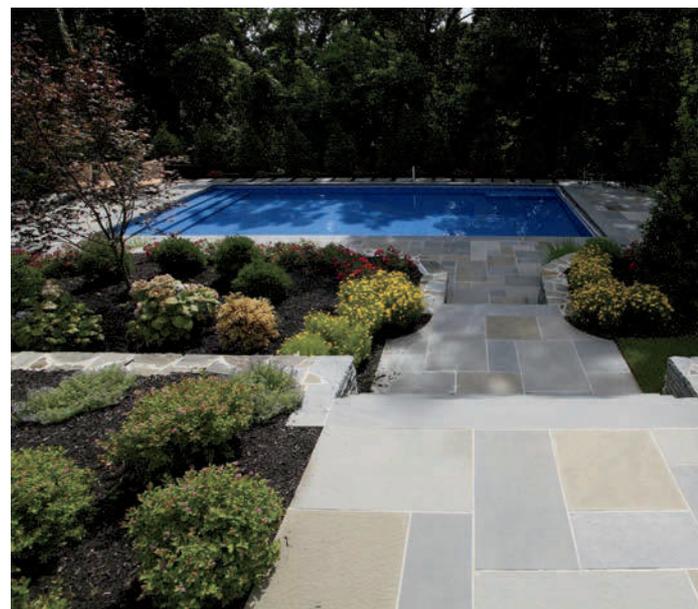
And while clean-lined, geometric shapes still hold sway over the curvy forms favored in the 1980s, pools are taking up more space than ever before. “The biggest change I have seen in pool design is the length,” says Christopher LaGuardia, principal of LaGuardia Design, a local landscape architecture and planning firm (860 Montauk Hwy., Water Mill, 726-1403; laguardiadesign.com). “We have built many pools in the last few years that are 75 feet and longer.” He attributes the shift to both increasingly

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PHOTOGRAPHY: GORDON N. GRANT (WATER MILL); JEFF HEATLEY (WATERFALL)



LEFT: A classic Southampton pool by Lear & Mahoney Landscape Associates. BELOW: The blue lagoon by Swim King is set in a “poolscaped patio.” BOTTOM LEFT: In Montauk, a poolside hot tub with ocean views by Pristine Pools.



“The current trends go past the simple idea of designing a pool to the conceptualization of a masterpiece.”

—ELIZABETH LEAR



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fitness-conscious consumers and the wow factor. LaGuardia says he prefers a pool that fits the scale of the property and recommends an elegant proportion where the length is four to five times its width.

Longer pools are not the only resort-style touch popping up behind Hamptons homes. Designers report an increased demand for vanishing-edge pools and spas surrounded by multiple seating areas, outdoor kitchens, formal dining areas, and living rooms with arbors and fireplaces. Lear, who has been designing in the Hamptons since 1986, has seen a recent uptick in requests for luxurious amenities such as waterfalls, fountains, and swim-up bars with underwater bar stools.

The move to saltwater is also in keeping with

the interest in spalike surroundings. “Saltwater pools become more popular every year—everyone seems to have a friend or a neighbor who has one and loves it,” says Peter Persico of Casual Water (241 County Road 39A, Southampton, 537-5700; casualwater.com). “They’re easy to convert to, they save you money on chlorine, and the water is much more gentle on skin and hair.”

Finally, in the age of smartphones and tablets, technology is king; it allows for options like energy-efficient automatic covers and underwater speakers. “LED lighting has taken the pool market by storm,” explains Gibbons. “To be able to change the color of your water at night with the touch of a button amazes consumers.”

Better yet is the ability to control all of a pool’s high-tech—and eco-friendly—functions, such as gas-conserving heaters and water-saving filters, from anywhere. “People have become accustomed to using their mobile devices for everything,” notes Persico. “Now homeowners are able to control their pools, spas, and heaters right from their iPhones or iPads, whether they’re in their backyard or heading east on 495.” **H**

PHOTOGRAPH BY GORDON M. GRANT (MONTAUK); DOUG YOUNG (SOUTHAMPTON); RALPH PUGLIESE (SWIM KING)