



Surrounded by flagstone terraces, this pool angles to fit between existing trees. Photographs: Van Chaplin

Shaped To Fit Among the Trees

The first thing you notice about Sheffield and Mary Lynn Nelson's backyard is the attractive, yet unusual, shape of their swimming pool. It wasn't built that way simply to look good or just to be different. Instead, the pool's design, along with the rest of the landscape, reflects the unique features of their lot and the needs of their family.

When the Nelsons decided to add the pool and a new guest suite to their Little Rock home, they called Landscape Architect Cinde Bauer, ASLA, for help in planning the project. Siting a pool on the lot proved to be a challenge for a number of reasons. "They wanted the pool to be large enough to swim laps in, but space was restricted by the new wing. And there were also some large trees on the lot that we wanted to preserve," Bauer explains. Her solution was to align the shallow end of the pool with the building addition, then turn the deep end at an angle between the existing trees to achieve the desired length.

Still, some tricky engineering was required. "Originally, their lawn rolled down a hill from the rear of the house toward the back of the lot," Bauer explains. This change in grade meant that a series of retaining walls had to be built to provide a level surface for the

pool and the surrounding terraces. "One of our goals was to make all the improvements look as if they were part of the original construction—that they hadn't been added on," Bauer says. For this reason, the retaining walls near the house were built of white brick to match the Nelsons' home. Farther away, they're made of stone similar to that of the terrace floors. In

Outside the addition, a sheet of water from the brick fountain splashes into the pool.



several areas, the walls incorporate planters that provide a place for greenery at poolside.

A fountain built into a wall outside the guest addition produces a sheet of water that overflows into the pool below. "The fountain provides a focal point along the retaining wall, and the cascading water adds a soothing sound to the garden," Bauer says.

The sandstone terraces, which stretch from the house to surround the pool, give the Nelsons the additional outdoor living space they needed. Built on several different levels and connected by wide, low steps, these terraces offer a circulation pattern that's perfect for a party. "It's a wonderful place for entertaining," Mary Lynn says. "It works equally well for a large event or a small group of friends."

Bauer chose plants that provide an ever-changing seasonal display. Red crepe myrtles and annuals accent the summer scene until the changing leaves of the oaks overhead announce fall's arrival. In winter, the lustrous foliage of dwarf Burford hollies and the berries of treeform yaupons brighten the landscape. Yellow jessamine climbs the rock walls and scents the early spring air until it's time for the azaleas to bloom.