

*Luxurious*  
LANDSCAPES

# THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Three dazzling projects create  
luxurious spaces for relaxing  
and entertaining under the stars





The pool house harbors a chic living space with a vaulted coffered ceiling (right). Hanging lanterns by Holly Hunt make a bold statement. Designer Kristin Peake selected durable but sophisticated furnishings, including ottomans that open to store toys (top). A kitchenette (above) serves up refreshments during lazy afternoons by the pool. Outdoors, a handy potting shed (opposite) makes a perfect spot for arranging cut flowers.



In a backyard retreat designed by McHale Landscape Design and Kristin Peake, the pool magically reflects the newly designed pool house, the waterfall fountain and the fireplace beyond.

# Al Fresco Elegance

BY LINDA HALES

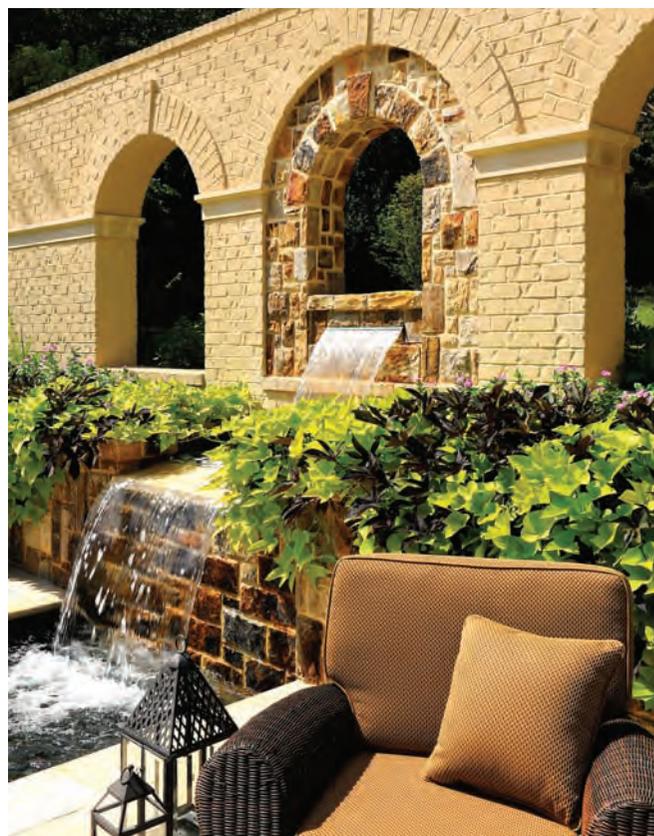
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BOB NAROD



The serenity of the pool terrace at dusk is a compliment to the interior designer, Kristin Peake, who chose a palette as soothing as the froth on a latte to complete a grand private garden in McLean. On a hot summer day, creamy draperies billow in the arches of the deliciously cool pool house loggia, a nod to the Old World elegance she imagined. But Peake is the first to acknowledge that success on this project required more than plump cushions and custom chaises or meticulous attention to the detail of ceramic tiles. Recasting this long, narrow backyard into a modern family paradise required a team of experts and a client who understood the value of a master plan.

“The client brought in the right people and let us do our jobs,” says Peake. “They started with an idea of how they wanted it. We were able to completely change their minds.”

For the past year, the clients and their three young children have made the most of their new Tudor-meets-Tuscany environment complete with an outdoor kitchen, hot tub, monumental fireplace and cascading fountain. A peek-a-boo wall provides an elegant arched backdrop for entertaining by the 18-by-36-foot swimming pool. The wall connects with a jewel of a pool house, where the family finds refuge with chic furnishings, a flat-screen TV, kitchenette, laundry and sleeping



**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE:** ANTHONY CUSAT, McHale Landscape Design, Inc., McLean, Virginia. **INTERIOR DESIGN:** KRISTIN PEAKE, Kristin Peake Interiors, LLC, Rockville, Maryland. **POOL HOUSE ARCHITECTURE:** MICHAEL NAWROCKI, AIA, Nawrocki Architects, McLean, Virginia. **CONTRACTOR:** GILES GRIFFITHS, NICK DANGL, project manager, McHale Landscape Design, Inc.

Inviting seating options beckon poolside (top), where a peek-a-boo wall leads to a formal lawn and playground and a fountain (above) creates movement. Draperies billow in the archways of the pool house loggia (opposite). Turkish travertine paves the deck around the pool, surrounded by walls made of local stone.



The pool house is designed to be breezy or toasty warm depending on the season, thanks to fold-back glass doors that open wall-to-wall on the loggia side. The building itself is substantial, with a full basement for storage and radiant heat under the Turkish travertine floor. Custom lighting by Holly Hunt hangs above plush furnishings, which Peake has upholstered in pale but practical indoor-outdoor chenilles and linens. A fireplace crackles in winter, below the flat screen television, which provides sports and entertainment on command. For the fireplace wall, Peake designed a ceramic tile surround with a custom upholstered frame to ensure that the flat screen would fit seamlessly into the tile work.

The kitchenette, with its nifty gleaming espresso machine, is served by a dark-stained teak table that expands to seat eight. A tall, narrow wine cooler is hidden in one of the ample built-ins that Peake designed to keep the multi-functional space neat. The bathroom opposite the laundry room is as sophisticated as the rest of the décor.

To the architect, the combination of details lifts this pool house above the routine. "Pool houses often seem more like largely open party spaces, which are much more closely related to the pool," Nawrocki says. A bar is standard equipment, but the overall impact is "a place to hang out with a changing room. This is really getting a lot closer to a guest house, a year-round refuge."

Like Peake, Nawrocki credits the client and all the collaborators on the project and gives special kudos to Cusat, whose "masterstroke" was to site the pool house on a visual axis that allows the owners to gaze from the breakfast table across the pool deck, through the glass doors of the pool house and on to the garden beyond. ❖

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## The pool house is designed to be breezy or toasty warm, depending on the season.

loft. Nature takes over beyond the garden wall where a formal lawn gives way to a flagstone path leading to a fire pit. There's space for a professional-quality playground as well as individual cupboards to "garage" children's cars.

The property is part of a developing lane of houses designed for sophisticated living. The owners were hoping to add a five-car garage and replace a builder-designed patio with a pool and pool house when they approached McHale Landscape Design in 2008. They quickly learned that the hidden dynamics of their site would challenge those ideas—and lead ultimately to a more enticing space. Phil Kelly, McHale's chief operating officer, and landscape architect Anthony Cusat relayed the news: With setback requirements and an awkwardly placed septic system, it would require ingenuity just to fit in a pool. With help from a civil engineer and septic system designer, Kelly found the way forward. Cusat never wavered from his goal of creating a "destination" with features to entice children outdoors.

Architectural elements give the project the Tuscan flair that inspired Peake's décor. The combination of local stone walls and imported Turkish travertine underfoot creates a courtyard-like enclosure, with the pool house as a focal point. To complete the pool house layout and interior, which offers a 22-foot-high coffered ceiling under the peaked roof, McHale called on architect Michael Nawrocki.



Near the main house, an outdoor kitchen with bar seating (opposite) and a covered porch with a beamed ceiling and massive fireplace (these pages) blend in with the new construction.