

IN THE CALM BEFORE THE WARM, PROS WEIGH IN ON THE SEASON'S BEST UPGRADES.

ELEMENTS OF SUMMER



BY LISA MARIE HART

For this Indian Wells residence, Studio AR&D Architects created a strong connection between the home's interior and its contemporary landscape.

Is the sweat-dripping, clothes-sticking heat of summer really the best time to embark on a massive outdoor endeavor? Or is that just our semi-urban valley legend, a prank that locals play on transplants?

“For homeowners, summer is actually the best time of year to remodel and tackle exterior upgrades,” says Shanna Frey, co-owner of Triton Tile. “The work flow slows down for most trades and contractors and they are more likely to be able to get the job done quickly. Summertime sales make it a good time to shop for materials.”

While many homeowners skip town for all or part of the scorching months, professionals in the home industry stick around to prep homes for fall. (Fortunately, our air-conditioners drown out the construction noise.) Rick Neff, owner of Azure Pools & Spas, says new pools stay in demand year-round. Locals want a place to plunge during the summer heat; snowbirds want theirs in tip-top condition for high-season shindigs and holiday get-togethers. Neff sends progress photos to traveling and part-time homeowners. “By the time they’re back, it’s ready for fall,” he says. “In the process, they’ve increased their property value and added a pool that is aesthetic even when it’s not being used.”

Pools are just part of the story for summer’s valiant working crews and homeowners with big plans for improvement. Drought-friendly landscape (known as xeriscape) is de rigueur. A wide array of options prevents a boring design. Consider gravel, stone, pavers, concrete (maybe softened by a beautiful rug), tile, recycled rubber mulch, and artificial turf. Count on clustering small plants together and buying at least one or two larger plants or trees to avoid that sparse, just-planted look.

Outdoor kitchens appeal to home cooks with wood-fired pizza ovens, smokers, built-in barbecue stations, warming drawers, wet bars, wine fridges, ice makers, and heavy-duty margarita blenders. Cover with proper shade.

“It’s a good opportunity to take advantage of the time of year. You can see the sun’s position in the sky and how your yard works in summer,” says Kevin Kemper, co-owner of H3K Design. “If you’re building a pergola for sun and shade, you can position it perfectly.” While you’re updating one aspect, consider all facets. The thermometer might read 110 degrees now, says Kemper, but come November guests will appreciate overhead infrared heating, fire pits, fire bowls, and a party-sized hot tub. Ambient lighting, metal work, gates, sculpture, misters, ceiling fans, and mounted televisions enhance outdoor living spaces. Solar panels and air conditioners? Without question. Indoors, summer tradesmen work through the heat installing home security systems, renovating dated spaces, and creating icy-cool home theaters.

“Even showing up on the job site in full sun and watching the workers is hard!” says Howard Hawkes, the other half of H3K. We asked these pros who brave the blaze for tips on summer projects. Your role: Pull the trigger, pay the bill, and observe from air-conditioned comfort.

Native and drought-tolerant plantings mix with board-formed concrete, corten steel, and lpe wood siding at this home designed and landscaped by Studio AR&D Architects. “The yucca, cactus, palms, and boulders generate a contemplative, sculptural yet habitable poetry,” says principal Sean Lockyer.

Michal Utterback





This complete perimeter overflow pool by Azure Pools & Spas incorporates two spas.

PROJECT: New Pool

AVERAGE TIME FRAME: Eight weeks

TOP INNOVATIONS: Smaller, safer LED lights in the side of the pool (versus big headlight-style lamps); zero-edge and perimeter overflow pools

TIPS FROM THE PRO: Rick Neff, Azure Pools & Spas

PUSH BEYOND A FACELIFT. Some people want to just redo the plaster and tile. But many older pools need to be updated for safety and replumbed with new equipment. During the design process, we make the most of a wish list and budget. We handle permits plus HOA hoops and hurdles.

LIGHT SMART. The new LEDs spread the light, eliminate hot spots, are more efficient to run, and are a lot safer.

CHOOSE DURABILITY. Pebble Tec is still the No.1-selling surface and the most durable. Glass tile looks awesome at first, but over the years proves fragile and tough to clean. A good, durable porcelain tile is better. A light-colored tile is more forgiving with calcium than a darker blue.

GOOD LOOKS = MORE WORK. Perimeter overflow pools look like a sheet of glass and are the Ferrari of pools. But they're more technical and require more maintenance. You have to know what you're doing to design and own them. **SAVE UP.** When I start pricing out pools, even I'm surprised. Several factors are driving the price up. After grass removal at \$1.25 a square foot, you have permits, material cost, digging, rebar, plumbing, bonding, concrete. It's costing a lot more to build pools than even 10 years ago.



In Little Tuscany, an entry becomes an experience. Home and landscape by Studio AR&D Architects.

PROJECT: Contemporary Landscape

AVERAGE TIME FRAME: One month

TOP INNOVATIONS: A hidden subsurface drip irrigation system that allows for pressure adjustments and a clean look; moisture-sensing irrigation controllers that use water only when needed

TIPS FROM THE PRO: Sean Lockyer, Studio AR&D Architects

GO BIG AND NATURAL. The landscape architecture we adhere to is pretty contemporary — not midcentury. It's a bit more natural looking. We use a lot of natural materials like boulders. I don't like straight lines and neatly spaced barrel cactus.

BOOK YOUR PLANTS. We have a spec book of every plant material we like to use. We loan it to clients and they flag what they like. It gets them involved. Some even let their kids pick out a tree or plant. We also use Pinterest to share ideas and information for a quick visual exchange.

Pool: courtesy Azure Pools & Spas; landscape: Michal Uterback

A curved-edge perimeter overflow pool at Tradition Golf Club mimics a nearby window. Design by Gordon Stein; built by Azure Pools & Spas.



Courtesy Azure Pools & Spas