

OPPOSITES ATTRACT

FIRE AND WATER FEATURES
TRANSFORM YOUR BACKYARD
INTO A PRIVATE OASIS

by SUSAN KERR



CEVAN FORRISTT LANDSCAPE DESIGN



PHOTOS (LEFT AND RIGHT) BEPIX.COM; (RIGHT) ARCHITECTS HARVEY & CONRAD SANCHEZ

CHRIS REED INTERIOR DESIGN

THE SOUND OF WATER, HERE BEAUTIFULLY MAGNIFIED THREEFOLD BY DESIGNER CEVAN FORRISTT, PROVIDES A SOOTHING TONIC TO STRESS.

LUXURIOUS YET UNPRETENTIOUS. THIS INVITING OUTDOOR SPACE CREATED BY CHRIS REED BIDS ALL TO STEP IN AND PULL UP A SEAT.



SMALL BROWN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

ABOVE: LET FIRE AND WATER LIGHT UP THE NIGHT, SAYS DESIGNER RUTH BROWN, WHO DESIGNED THIS SPECTACULAR PATIO WITH SARAH SMALL.

IF THERE'S ANYTHING MORE BASIC THAN OUR NEED FOR FIRE AND WATER, we have yet to discover what that might be. Just as cavemen huddled around a fire or waterhole, modern-day homeowners increasingly are looking to these two elements to transform their backyard into both a calm, private oasis and a warm, welcoming center for entertaining.

"Fireplaces and fire pits are really sociable. You sit around them and talk and enjoy a cocktail," says Steve Grimes, owner of Grimes Natural Landscape Inc., a Los Altos Hills company founded more than a half century ago. "Water is soothing. It drowns out the noise. Just the thought of running water is like being in the mountains next to a stream or by the ocean."

Backyard swimming pools have long been considered essential to upscale domestic living—and we're not about to dispute the pleasures they invite. But pools encourage activity and sport, while a fountain or fireplace creates serenity. You gather friends around them. You take warmth from a fire or gather inner tranquility from the sounds of a fountain.

Ironically, while fire and water are outdoor elements, most of us know them better as indoor necessities—think of your stove or tub—that are now being reintroduced to the deck, patio or lawn.

Grimes and other landscape designers have seen a noticeable uptick in the desire for bringing these elements, fire in particular, to private outdoor areas. According to the American Society of Landscape Architects, fire pits and outdoor fireplaces are the number one requested design feature. Water elements continue to be popular as well.

PHOTO: CP LARSON PHOTOGRAPHY. COURTESY OF SMALL BROWN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS



JENSEN LANDSCAPE & CONSTRUCTION CO.



MARTINO INTERIORS

LEFT AND BELOW: JENSEN LANDSCAPE PROVES THAT WATER FEATURES CAN BE BOLD FOCAL POINTS OR GENTLE, UNOBTRUSIVE ELEMENTS. (ABOVE) RON MARTINO PUTS A MODERN OUTDOOR TWIST ON THE LARGE, GLORIOUS FIREPLACES OF THE PAST.



JENSEN LANDSCAPE & CONSTRUCTION CO.

PHOTOS: (TOP LEFT AND BOTTOM) COURTESY OF JENSEN LANDSCAPE & CONSTRUCTION. (TOP RIGHT) BY JOHN SUTTON



SAMSCAPING INC.

BACKYARD WATER FEATURES HAVE MOVED BEYOND THE STANDARD SWIMMING POOL TO EXOTIC ELEMENTS, SUCH AS THE BABBLING BROOK (ABOVE) CREATED BY SAMSCAPING.

“A lot of people say ‘I never use my yard.’ Well that’s because there’s nothing to use out there,” says Ruth Brown of Small Brown Landscape Architects, Burlingame. “Once you have these features, it’s like extending your house to the outdoors.”

Better technology and decreasing price points are opening up the option of fire and water to more backyards. What’s more, they make your backyard accessible both day and night, a big, added plus, says Brown. Fire naturally supplies light and warmth, and water elements are increasingly being lit. “The interplay of water and light at night is lovely,” she remarks.

This increased popularity goes hand in hand with the trend of building outdoor rooms, such as complete kitchens that you can use under the stars. Surveys indicate that Americans are both spending more time at home and creating more livable outdoor areas.

“It’s just as easy to bring people into your home, and it’s more comfortable.” So believes Rodney Whitacre-Morimoto, vice president of Jensen Landscape & Construction Co., San Jose. He points to the development of “stay-cations” or staying home rather than traveling as an important part of the increased desire for backyard features.

Indeed, resorts and hotels are credited as the early adopters of these outdoor features. When guests return home, often they try to re-create the same ambience that they enjoyably experienced while on vacation.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SAMSCAPING INC.



SMALL BROWN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS



JENSEN LANDSCAPE & CONSTRUCTION CO.

PHOTOS: (TOP) COURTESY OF SMALL BROWN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS. (BOTTOM) COURTESY OF JENSEN LANDSCAPE & CONSTRUCTION

WHEN GATHERING AROUND A FIRE, TODAY’S HOMEOWNERS HAVE MANY CHOICES, FROM OUTDOOR FIREPLACES (TOP, FROM SMALL BROWN) TO FIRE PITS THAT OFFER THE FUN OF CAMPING, BUT NONE OF THE DISCOMFORTS (ABOVE, FROM JENSEN LANDSCAPE).



GRIMES NATURAL LANDSCAPE



NICKI WEST INTERIOR DESIGN



SMALL BROWN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

TOP: GRIMES NATURAL LANDSCAPE CREATES A BUCOLIC WATER SETTING. DESIGNER NICKI WEST DEMONSTRATES (ABOVE LEFT) SO RADIANTLY THE HOTEL-LIKE LUXURY OF FIRE AND WATER WHILE SMALL BROWN (ABOVE RIGHT) FASHION A WARM AND COMFORTABLE GATHERING SPOT.

Other memories go back even farther, to childhood. What does the fire pit resemble if not the good old campfire that so many enjoyed as kids at summer camp? Whitacre-Morimoto speaks fondly of the fire pit he installed in his own yard. “It’s almost like you’re camping,” he says.

But just as Smokey warns against forest fires when you’re camping, most South Bay towns have limits on open flames in the yard and have strict air quality rules. Fortunately, gas fireplaces and pits offer the attraction of fire without the danger and smoke. What’s more, no clean up of ashes is required.

Options for fire range from simple metal bowls that you can use for a pit up to custom extravagant outdoor fireplaces that can cost upwards of \$15,000 to install. Prefabricated fireplace shells are now on the market for as little as \$2,000 and can be personalized with stone faces. Prefabricated water features exist as well, but any water element, whether a small fountain or a babbling brook, requires more maintenance and attention to cleanliness than a fireplace.

No matter what entices you, be it fire or water or both, there are few places so well suited to al fresco living as the South Bay. “Outdoors living—it’s California!” says Grimes. ■

PHOTOS: (TOP) COURTESY OF GRIMES NATURAL LANDSCAPE. (BOTTOM LEFT) BECPX.COM. ARCHITECTS: HARVEY & CONRAD SANCHEZ. (BOTTOM RIGHT) COURTESY OF SMALL BROWN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

SEMIANNUAL

Dining Guide

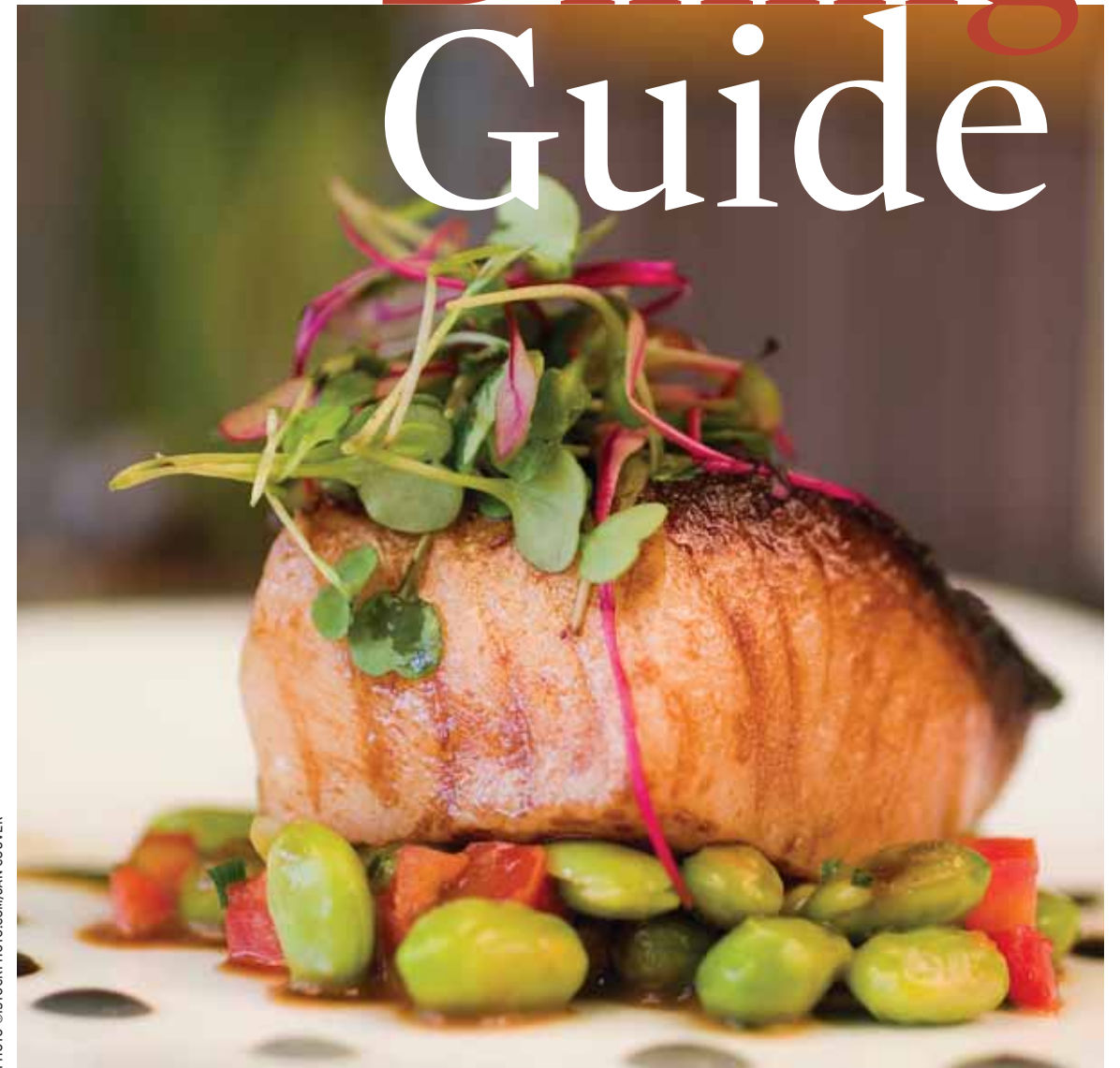


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