



■ Where properly designed, a natural swimming pool will rapidly reach a balance and cope perfectly well with environmental extremes such as pool parties and hot weather.

There is a certain something missing in our experience when we take a dip in a swimming pool. It is the rejuvenating sensation and quality that in ancient cultures gone by was considered pivotal to health and vitality.

One of my first and most memorable experiences of swimming in a body of natural freshwater was in the Sea of Galilee in Israel. It is warm, clean and clear freshwater. I went swimming under the moonlight. Such an experience enlivens every sense, the fresh smell of cool wild water, the initial uncertainty washed away by

■ Natural swimming pools offer a far more complete swimming experience than traditional pools.



A WINNING SOLUTION? Naturally...

«We have heard the case for chemical dosing and for non-chemical water treatment – what about a third solution, go au naturelle, says David Nettleton...»

the comfort of engaging with nature and feeling so very alive.

Swimming in natural waters can be one of the most exhilarating and fulfilling experiences, enjoyed by most people in Britain's past, but lost in more recent pool design.

A typical chlorinated swimming pool lacks many of the features and attributes which allow us to recreate such a feeling in our own garden, which is our slice of nature for everyday enjoyment. Fortunately a new concept in swimming pools has won the hearts of an increasingly more ecologically-minded public here in the UK.

Natural swimming pools offer a far more complete swimming experience than traditional pools and state-of-the-art equipment has progressed to offer reliable

year round clear water with minimal maintenance and attention.

Instead of using a system based on the chemical oxidation of pollutants, and the chemical inactivation of micro-organisms, a natural swimming pool encourages beneficial micro-organisms. It rapidly develops a balanced ecosystem that cleans the water naturally and manages itself, leaving little work for its owner. It functions like a refined form of constructed reed-bed, which as some of you may know can be used to treat domestic and industrial sewage and recycle household wastewater.

This usually vegetated filter, where wildlife will gather, is structurally separate from the swimming area. Where properly designed, a natural swimming pool will rapidly reach a balance and cope perfectly well with

environmental extremes such as pool parties and hot weather. The pool makes use of technology such as pumps to maximize the flow through the filter and the capacity for the pool to cope with organic pollutants. The more oxygen available the more microorganisms will be available to process nutrient cycles and destroy pathogens in the pools water, thus coping with higher pool usage.

I recently visited a pool in Austria (where the concept of natural swimming pools were first developed, and called swimming ponds) where absolutely no technology had been incorporated. Key design features had successfully stabilised the biology and water chemistry of this 'deep-ecology' pool. The owner was extremely proud of his creation which had taken a large place in his life and



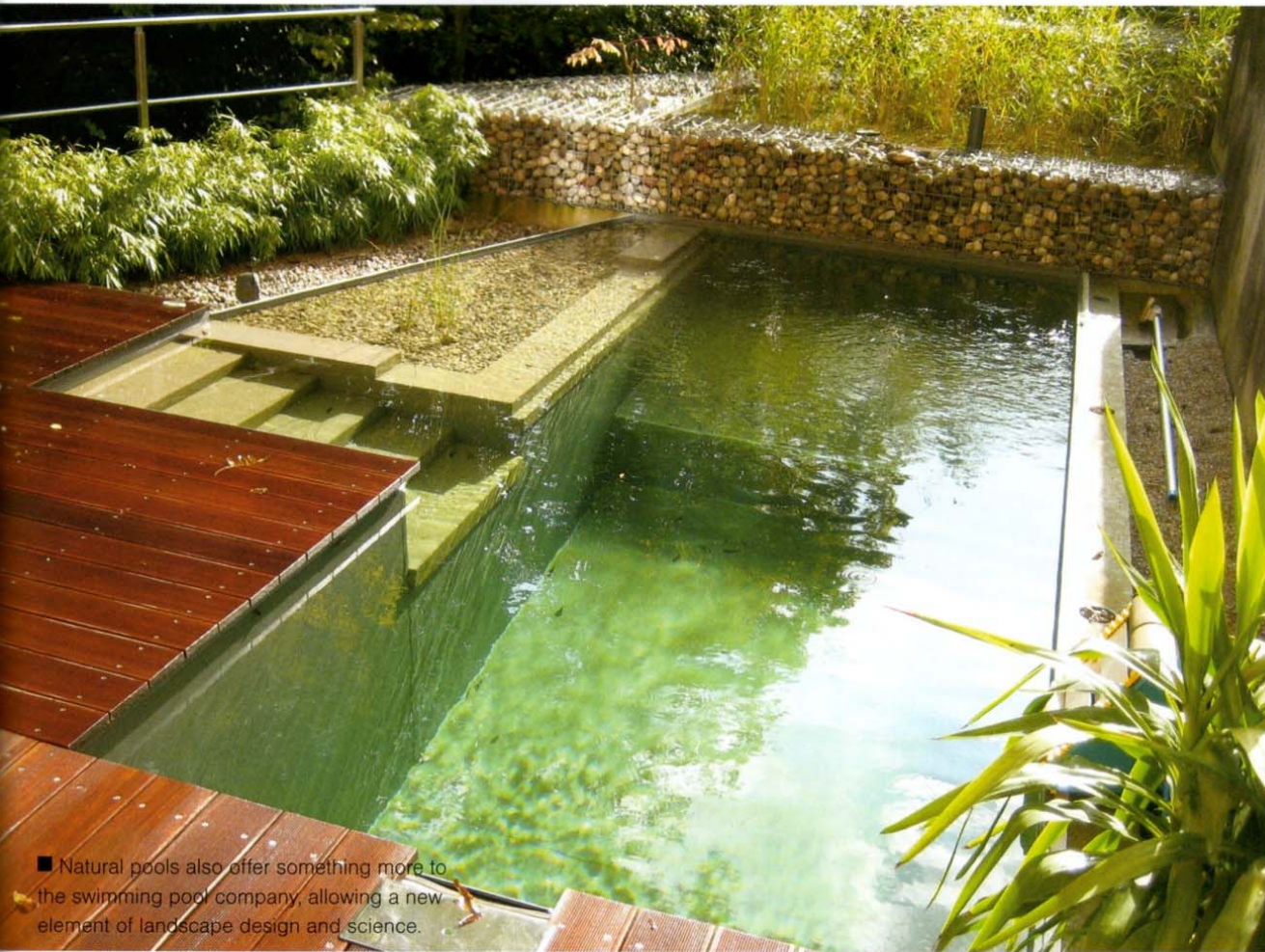
home; it cost him as little as £5,000 to create, was about 10m by 5m across the surface and 4m deep in the centre.

Catering for wildlife and every component of the pools ecosystem, the attention to detail was profound. The love of his creation ran deep, which carried in his voice as he explained the nuances of this balanced, all-natural pool. Our jaws were on the floor! All pool owners should be allowed the opportunity for their pool to become such a stimulating hobby. These pools can be created extremely cheaply and self-built with a little expert guidance and the right supply of materials. This opens up a whole new world of ownership. Not only that but it's a year round water feature, which doesn't lose its appeal with the close of summer. Of course a customer could also go to the other end of the spectrum and spend a fair amount of money having a marvel of architecture installed; the potential and design possibilities have an extremely broad spectrum.

So we know these pools work, and we're not going to be faced with green water. However, natural swimming pools also face three more problems in the public eye. ▶▶



■ Offering natural-swimming pools as an option can become the new green, 'eco' arm to your business, an angle that has never won as much popularity as it does now.



■ Natural pools also offer something more to the swimming pool company, allowing a new element of landscape design and science.

MYTH NUMBER ONE - HEATING

There is a general belief that heating is not possible in natural swimming pools. Putting the record straight, the state-of-the-art means we CAN heat it without upsetting the biological balance, this is fact, and renewable energy systems should be encouraged to help with this, such as solar heating combined with heat exchanger systems.



■ Swimming in natural waters can be one of the most exhilarating and fulfilling experiences and is winning the hearts of an increasingly more ecologically-minded public.

MYTH NUMBER TWO – THE GLORIFIED POND!

I prefer to call them natural swimming pools as opposed to swimming ponds. The term pond suggests that the bottom will be full of silt. As far as is possible, a natural swimming pool must be kept free of organic and nutrient input. It must be isolated from run-off, messy

animals and too much leaf litter. The build up of sediment is as much an issue to the natural pool as a conventional pool. Consequently, they are very clean.

MYTH NUMBER THREE – HEALTH RISKS

There are many public natural swimming pools in Austria and Germany that consistently comply with EU water quality standards. There has been no evidence of health risks associated with them, even where heating is installed, UV units are an excess. Research has been carried out on pathogen risk in natural swimming pools. The author is currently endeavouring to translate the relevant German reports into English, but the faultless history speaks for itself. SPATA are planning to bring natural pools under their accreditation schemes.

The public do already think these pools are glorious in appearance and highly desirable, but the myths perpetuate. By working together to promote these pools we will dispel these barriers. They will also understand that the natural pool is suitable for all tastes, purposes and perhaps most importantly, budgets. It is thus, an extremely attractive option.

SELLING POINTS:

- Eco-friendly
- Wildlife magnet
- Chlorine-free swimming
- Natural water sensation
- Attractive budget pools
- Passive solar heating
- Wider design potential
- Landscaped all-year-round feature
- Minimal maintenance
- Minimal running costs
- Pool conversions

MARKET POTENTIAL

The obvious market for natural swimming pools lies with those that wish to own a chlorine free swimming pool, those with allergies to chlorinated conditions, wildlife enthusiasts, environmentalists, designers and gardeners and those wishing to be out of the ordinary. However, in a time of decreased public spending, natural swimming pools give an opportunity to draw back customers open to luxury fashionable products. I don't see natural swimming pools as being a niche market, they are suitable for all tastes. I see ►►

them expanding the existing market, bringing in new customers that wouldn't originally have considered spending on a pool. They may also win over those sluggish and wary potential customers. They offer far more to the customer, somewhere to relax by, enjoy the setting, giving a further dimension to their garden. It's no news that affordable pools are with us and this has opened up the industry to an ever-wider spectrum of customers, however, many of these budget pools really do not have the aesthetic appeal of their more pricey cousins. Natural swimming pools can solve this shortfall.

BEVERLY HILLS

It always confounds me that the average swimming pool conforms to a typical design, what I call the Eighties' Beverly Hills pool. Natural swimming pools also encourage a diversity of pool designs as all natural pools are aesthetically unique. Furthermore, pool conversions are also possible and relatively straight forward. Such a conversion instantly adds character to a simple pool design.

Natural pools also offer something more to the swimming pool company, allowing a new element of landscape design and science to enter your business. It allows the two

industries to cross and collaborate. As consumer interest in the health of our planet, corporate social responsibility, eco-friendly goods and sustainable building design continues to gain momentum, business can add value and raise interest by recognizing and displaying an environmentally conscious manner. Offering natural swimming pools as an option can become the new green, 'eco' arm to your business, an angle that has never won as much popularity as it does now, and for the time being anyway, be a unique selling point. These days many people talk about companies by their display of environmentally responsible goods and practice. It is a 'must have' in a society of ever more conscientious consumers, more and more people are choosing sustainable lifestyles. The organic revolution has made it fashionable to be eco-friendly across much of the country.

TAKE THE LEAP

The UK is at last promoting natural pools to the English-speaking world. The USA and other countries across the world are already looking to the UK for information on natural swimming pools. Discussion forums in the states point to this fact. The idea is also spreading rapidly across the continent from Austria and Germany, where it is has

been long established. Michael Littlewood, who has recently released a book on the subject, has been working to promote the idea for several years in the UK. Clear Water Revival launched this year in partnership with a group of water treatment scientists in Austria. Its aim is to provide a guaranteed filtration system enabling companies across the UK and abroad the potential to market and build failsafe natural pools from this moment forward. This will allow us all to promote this wonderful concept and develop an exciting new line in your business.

Remember, every natural swimming pool built is giving something back to nature, replacing the vast tracks of aquatic habitat lost to industrial development over the years.

I firmly believe natural swimming pools have a very strong future in the UK. Their popularity in Austria has spread confidently owing to the response they elicit with all who experience them. When people see a natural swimming pool, they want one, the reaction carries emotion; this will work, so let us offer it, and watch them bite. ▶▶

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