

The *JUMP IN* issue



For all their allure as the source of recreation and exercise, swimming pools have a significant impact on any landscape design. In much the same way as a fireplace is the focal point of an interior room, a swimming pool becomes the focal point of many landscapes. For that reason, the placement of a swimming pool is of utmost importance. Although there are instances where it makes sense to tuck a pool into a discreet corner of the the garden, in most cases you'll want the pool in the line of sight, enhancing and complementing the overall landscape design.

The style of pool you choose is as much a product of your personal style as it is anything else. The first step is to decide whether your pool will be classically formal, contemporary, or designed to emulate a natural pond. In all likelihood, the style of your pool will also reflect the style of the landscape itself.

Once you've decided the style, there are myriad choices regarding the surrounding pool deck, the type of coping used (or whether to use any at all), and the color of the plaster, which determines the color of the water. A generation ago all pools were finished with white plaster (which produced the quintessential "swimming pool turquoise" water) and that rather clunky terra cotta colored, curved coping. Some of today's expanded choices are pictured on this page, including pools where the surrounding decking comes right to the pool's edge (without any coping), producing a very tailored look. Although medium or dark gray plaster are usually our first choices, we recently installed a natural-looking pool with tan plaster which produced an appealing, light blue-green water.

Probably the most significant evolution in swimming pool design has been the advent of the "infinity-edge." While not appropriate for every pool, in instances where it is – such as hillside setting – the results are very dramatic, as if the pool spills out and becomes part of the view.



Top: An infinity-edge pool visually spills into the lily pond beyond. Above: A slice of sky masquerading as a swimming pool. Bottom left: A natural pool with some serious boulders. Bottom center: A contemporary pool at the edge of the world. Bottom right: New pool and deck complement a vintage Mediterranean home.



Travels with Jack & Jennifer

Southern Chile

Jack is an adventurous traveler, but when he said he was going to Southern Chile, it left some of his friends scratching their heads. Maybe it isn't so surprising after all, as Southern Chile and Patagonia are often compared with the American Far West for a variety of reasons. About the same time that the U.S. was conducting its war against the Plains Indians, the governments of Chile and Argentina were wiping out the indigenous people of Patagonia. They almost succeeded, and today, the culture and peoples are almost completely derived from Europe: Spain and Italy especially, with smatterings of German, Welsh, and others. Like the American west and Alaska, which are almost completely derived from Europe, the cultures in Patagonia are independent of each other. While there, Jack had an excellent local guide and a four-wheeled drive truck which came in very handy during several off road experiences. Like our Far West, Southern Chile has everything from stunning mountains to equally stunning coastlines. With his local guide, Jack was able to experience local events and meals, including Chile's famous grilled meat feasts. Did he enjoy the trip? Well, it wasn't six months later before he booked a return trip, which we'll tell you about next time.



Above: Typical sunset off the Southern Chilean coast. Below: A road through Chile, the one everyone "has one for."

Bicycling Through Turkey

Last October, Jennifer took a bicycle trip through Turkey. The trip was arranged by VeloAsia (www.veloasia.com), a company better known for its bicycle adventures in East Asia. That said, Jennifer has nothing but good things to say about the way the trip was organized, the guide and the driver, and the totality of experiences they offered. Although each day consisted of approximately 50 miles of bicycling, participants could get a hitch in the van anytime they were feeling fatigued. Even though autumn is cooler than summer in Turkey, daytime temperatures often reached 90 degrees. Generally the cyclists were out on the road by 8 or 9 o'clock in the morning after a typical Turkish breakfast of tomatoes, a white cheese (like feta), olives, bread, and chai. It's not called the "Turquoise Coast" for nothing, says Jennifer: "There were parts of the trip where the terrain reminded me of Big Sur, but there was that vast turquoise sea reminding me of where I was." The stops along the way included a good mix of culturally or historically important sites – and considering just about every significant ancient culture built monuments in Turkey, the stops were, indeed, important. Jennifer was impressed with how intensely the land is used: virtually every flat piece of land had a truck garden on it and the hillsides are densely covered with olive groves, grazing sheep and goats, and grapes. Evenings were spent in an array of lodgings, all of which were more than acceptable. The trip was so successful, Jennifer already has a couple of weeks blocked off in November for VeloAsia's special culinary bicycle trip through Viet Nam!



Above: The library at the ancient city of Ephesus which, at the time, was the third largest library in the world, built with a humidity control system. Left: Traveling along the Turquoise Coast.

GuestChef Cort & Spring Lamb Shish-kebab

When it comes to lamb, it seems like most of us are bound by tradition and think about it only for Easter celebrations, and then usually as a roast leg of lamb. Why not break out of the box and try lamb shish-kebabs done in a Mediterranean style? My guess is that even folks who say they don't like lamb will fall for this dish.

The best cut of lamb to use for shish-kebab is a boned leg, cut into 1 1/4- to 1 1/2-inch cubes. It takes a while for a butcher to perform this job, so it's best to order it ahead of time. A 6-pound leg will serve four people with leftovers.

I like to serve this with cous-cous (sometimes I add diced dried prunes or apricots and toasted almonds to it – very good!) and a big Greek salad made with tomatoes, feta cheese, chopped cucumbers and/or chopped romaine lettuce and black olives, dressed with a light vinaigrette. For dessert, I make it easy on myself and serve store-bought baklava.

Mediterranean Marinade

1/2 cup olive oil

1/4 cup dry white or rose wine

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

4 cloves garlic, pressed

1 tablespoon dried rosemary

2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper

1 teaspoon dried thyme



Combine the marinade ingredients in a 1-gallon zippered-top plastic bag. Add the cubed lamb, seal, and squish around to coat; let marinate in the refrigerator for 4 to 6 hours or overnight if desired.

If you're using a gas grill, preheat the grill with all the burners on high for 10 minutes with the lid closed. While the grill is preheating, thread the lamb cubes onto the skewers, with the sides barely touching.

When the grill is hot, turn all the burners to medium. Place the skewered lamb on the grill, close the lid, and cook for a total of 8 to 12 minutes, turning once midway through. This will yield lamb cooked to medium-rare; adjust the time slightly up or down if you desire a different degree of doneness.

If you're using a charcoal grill, ignite 55 to 65 briquets or an equal amount of lump charcoal. Arrange them in a single layer, approximately the same size as the lamb skewers will cover on the grill, in the middle of the fire grate. Once the coals are covered with light gray ash, put the cooking grill in place (3 to 5 inches above the fire if you have an adjustable model) and wait about 5 minutes or so for the fire to die down a bit. Place the skewered lamb directly over the coals. With covered grills, put the lid in place, with both the top and bottom vents completely open.

Turn the skewers every 4 to 5 minutes. They should cook to medium-rare in 12 to 14 minutes.

Serve hot off the grill or at room temperature.

As far as wine goes, I prefer something light and usually serve either a dry rose or a gamay beaujolais, served cold.

– A. Cort Sinnes

Before and After — *from mid-century to 21st century*

The landscape surrounding this mid-century ranch house in Napa was showing some classic mid-life symptoms: it was tired and could probably benefit from a facelift and a serious make-over. The owners are boomers with teenage children. The parents enjoy entertaining outdoors and the kids like inviting neighborhood friends over for some backyard fun. Considering how much time the whole family spent outdoors, they contacted Jennifer to see what could be done to take their landscape and bring it into the 21st century. The results were deemed a complete success: a kid- and dog-friendly backyard, one which also works wonderfully for family outdoor entertaining. The overall feel of the landscape is stylish and sophisticated, but not so much so that it inhibits a free expression of fun and enjoyment. All in all, it's a good lesson in how a landscape can influence the liveability of a house – especially in a climate as wonderful as the one we enjoy in the Napa Valley.

Below: An old redwood “dog-ear” fence and gate was replaced with a Craftsman-inspired covered entry. It provides a division between public and private spaces without completely blocking the views in and out. Interestingly, the Craftsman style feels right at home with the Asian-influenced architecture of the exterior of the house. *Right:* Above the stone steps leading from the patio to the pool, Jennifer incorporated a pond, complete with a variety of aquatic plants and fish. It not only softens the hardscape, it provides an interesting focal point, attractive to adults and kids alike.



Above: After some forty years, a house that was once considered “modern” had begun to feel dated and worn. A long stone retaining wall separated the patio from the existing pool, both physically and visually. Jennifer removed the retaining wall and replaced it with a series of wide flagstone steps, punctuated with moss-covered stones. New raised planters were faced with more field stone, adding to the natural look. Now the patio area next to the house flows easily to the pool, with the stairs and koi pond serving as an elegant transition zone. The old concrete deck surrounding the pool was replaced with flagstones matching the steps, tying the space together visually. Interestingly, the landscape makeover resulted in making the house look “modern” again, ready for another 40 years of gracious living.



Old Man River



A placid Napa River on a bright morning, just outside the back doors of our office. This issue we offer the river the poem at right.

The Road That Runs Beside The River

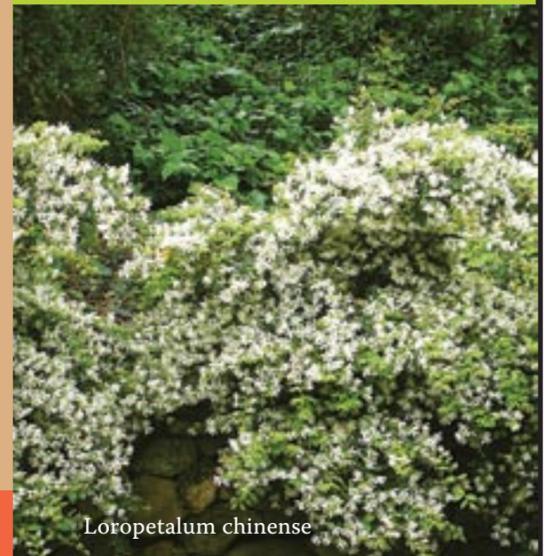
Follows the river as it bends along the valley floor, going the way it must. Where water goes, so goes the road, if there's room (not in a ravine, gorge), the river on your right or left. Left is better: when you're driving, it's over your elbow across the road. You see the current, which is what the river is: the river in the river, a thing sliding fast forward inside a thing sliding not so fast forward. Driving with, beside, the river's flow is good.

Another pleasure, driving against it: it's the same river someone else will see somewhere else downstream -- same play, new theater, different set. Wide, shallow, fairly fast, roundy-stone streambed, rocky-land river, it turns there or here -- the ground telling it so -- draining dull mountains to the north, migrating, feeding a few hard-fleshed fish who live in it. One small sandbar splits the river, then it loops left, the road right, and the river's silver slips under the trees, into the forest, and over the sharp perpendicular edge of the earth.

Thomas Lux

Favorite Plant

Unfortunately, *Loropetalum chinense* doesn't have a common name, it's just known as "loropetalum." It's a graceful, easy-to-grow, evergreen shrub which grows to 6 feet tall with a 6- to 8-foot spread; with pruning it can be kept lower. Blankets of small white flowers cover the horizontal branches in spring. As mentioned, it's a remarkably non-fussy plant, but does best in a slightly acidic, well-drained soil. In addition to the species form, there are several named cultivars with purple foliage and pink flowers, but we like the old-fashioned original best.



Loropetalum chinense

Spirit Boat

As you may be aware, Jack has a thing for boats. Jack sculpted this one from steel. It's approximately 30 feet long and is currently hanging from the rafters in our office by the river. Be the first one to identify where you first saw the drawing of "Spirit Boat," and win a set of our favorite wineglasses. By the way, the winner of our last contest was Mary Keetch, correctly identifying the in-progress design as Jennifer's.



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