

AN ISLAND IDYLL

When this family of five wanted to create a resort at home, with a poolscape to rival their favourite tropical island destination, it came down to an expert team to bring the dream to fruition.

Photography: Glenn Weiss

Enter Argo Architects, known for designing poolscape and outdoor areas that turn a humble home into a stunning sanctuary.

"The brief was to create a resort-quality space that draws you into the backyard," says Principal of Argo Architects, Will Marcus, adding that the clients had a firm vision. "They had already prepared a 'Style Master' – images which showed their preference for tropical Bali-style gardens and ponds, with a palette of stone, timber, water features, lily ponds, garden pavilions and feature sculptures used throughout."

The tropical aesthetic noted, after further discussion, both client and architect decided that there was scope to modernise the dream – although the Balinese inspiration was attractive, it wouldn't be slavishly

reproduced. Contemporary layout principles and materials would dominate, rather than the more typical Bali elements of thatched roofs, sculpted stone panels and red brick garden walling.

The client also wanted a decent lawn which could serve as a play area for their three children, complete with cubby house, basketball hoop, punching bag hanging point, hammocks and scope for several other outdoor activities. A herb and vegetable garden was another must-have.

But it's the pool, by Genesis Pools, that is the standout star by Argo backyard! The geometric stepped entry has been designed in such a manner as to blur the pool's edge and allow for shallow water play for the youngest daughter. Large format black granite stone facings

establish the set-out, the gap between the stone slabs filled with river pebbles.

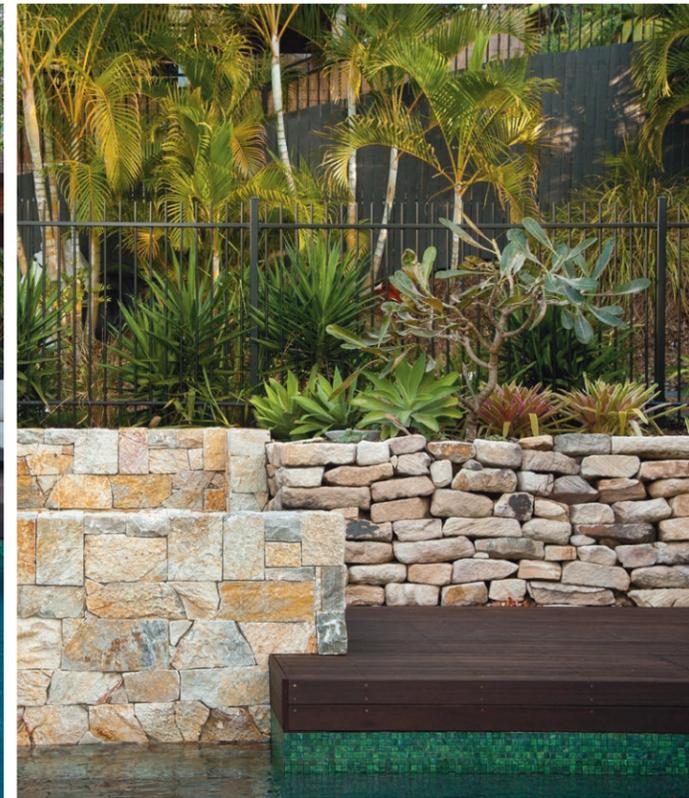
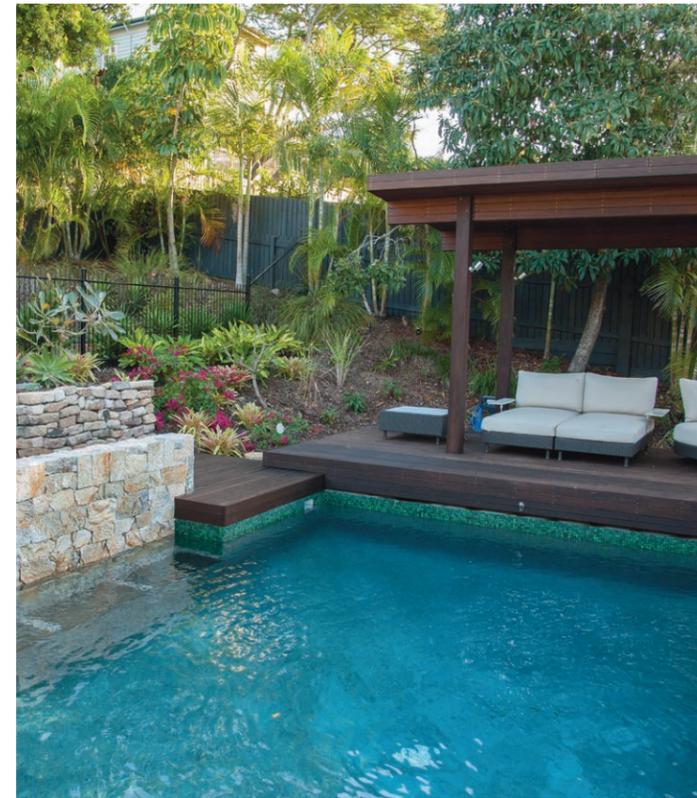
The black coping and concourse tiles were a matter of much discussions, says Will, as they would be hot to walk on with bare feet in Summer. The solution: a misting spray system that sprays water onto the black stone and immediately cools it off within 15 to 30 seconds. The spray system also doubles as a garden irrigation system at the flick of a switch.

The deep iridescent green 'Le Gemme' glass mosaic tiles from Bisazza make a punchy design feature against the black epoxy grout. "We were actively looking for the landscape greens to be reflected in the pool water, so these tiles from Bisazza were perfect," says Will. "The resulting reflections in the water are spectacular!"

Will has high praise for Brandon Appleton from Genesis Pools for the success of the pool's design. "His cool appreciation of the importance of these finer details and the methodical system he took to establishing the works on site – from the detailed excavation, formwork, steel placement and concrete spraying – ensured that it all worked together perfectly in the end."

And it was the site that was the challenge from start to end. Restricted access made the progress of work a little tedious at times, while the slope across the pool's width provided foundational issues. Matthew Yourell, Principle and owner of Newport Consulting Engineers, worked with Argo to quickly restore order to the structure, which was threatened by an uncertain excavated floor. "Matthew and his team to their credit understood our complex design and responded with a very effective and logical structural solution that we were all very happy with."

The pool is solar heated with reverse cycle so that it can be used for twice as long as unheated pools in Brisbane. Argo Architects specified a QIS Solarwise system for their high performance and automated solar absorber, which is concealed in the home's roof. "We prefer to use Solarwise systems because of their long track record in developing highly efficient systems and their after-sales and warranty service," says Will. "Everyone hates the look of the more typical large aluminium blanket rollers, so hiding them and making them easy to use has become one of our specialities. On this project, we went for a black and blue thermal blanket, the first black pool blanket installed in Australia."



The QJS Solarwise system is semi-intelligent in as much as it maintains water temperature at a set level. So, if the water temperature gets too high mid-Summer, the solar system cycles water onto the roof when there is cloud cover, or at night, to chill the water back down to the desired temperature.

And, while black pool interiors are not often selected because clients think you aren't able to see the pool floor, Will states that this is simply not correct. "The water is crystal clear, and the darker colour adds about one to two months extra swimming season, even without heating."

Completing the family's 'resort at home' idyll is an island deck, accessible only over the water, and a pool pavilion with daybeds and

sun lounges beckoning relaxation. The whole space has been created holistically and shows the combined efforts of such an expert team of specialists in the fields of outdoor design.

So successful was it, Will calls it one of his favourite jobs undertaken in the last year. The moment he got to see the client's children first use it all was a testament to his passion for lifestyle design. "Seeing their excitement as they explored the pool, playing under the water features and on the micro-massage underwater ledge, remains a favourite memory of this project. Sometimes I live vicariously through my clients because, these days, I rarely get to swim in the pools that we create – if I did, I would be rather water logged!".

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