

FIRST RESORT

Story: Tiffany Adams | **Photography:** Rett Peek | **Styling:** Chip Jones



A North Little Rock family turns their blank-slate backyard into a vacation-worthy retreat with the help of a few Central Arkansas design pros

A no-travel-required vacation is a dream for many people. For this North Little Rock family, who live in a contemporary home on the shoreline of one of the lakes inside the Lakewood neighborhood, it became a reality. “My husband has a demanding job, so a vacation home is not necessarily in the cards for us. We wanted a sort of backyard vacation that we could get to easily without driving, and we wanted to be able to use it after work and on Sundays,” the homeowner says. With this thought in mind, exterior designer Chris H. Olsen took to the drawing board to create a resort-worthy space.

Points of Interest

The multiple areas for relaxation and enjoyment are, perhaps, one of the reasons it works so well for the family. For starters, the 40-foot, diamond-shaped pool, which Olsen designed and Grindley Pools installed, has plenty of space for water volleyball games as well as a sundeck where adults can relax. Its infinity edge is complemented with a tile-bordered return, which is repeated along the pool's outline. "The pool is definitely a key feature of the backyard," Olsen says. "I designed it specifically to fit the site, and I think it shows you don't have to do a traditional rectangular pool. I really try to design each pool custom to the site and the house," he adds.

A nearby gas-and-volcanic-rock firepit is one place that is a favorite spot for year-round use. "Gas is so functional and easy to use, so they can really enjoy it any time with little effort," Olsen says of the design feature. "I also added the sitting wall, so everyone can sit back and put their feet up—it just makes it that much more comfortable and convenient," he adds. A third area, the outdoor kitchen, allows the family to spend the day outside without frequent trips indoors for snacks and drinks.

Colors of Paradise

John Gibson of Little Rock's Urban Pad worked with the homeowners to select outdoor furnishings that would complement the backyard design and the home's contemporary exterior. Comfortable club chairs surround the firepit and casually chic chaise lounges line the perimeter of the pool.

When it came to adding color, Olsen accessorized with vivid plants, many of which are potted in timeless charcoal pots that will remain current for seasons to come. A mix of Southern varieties, all from Olsen's Jhemajang plant line, fill the containers in hues that are reminiscent of a tropical paradise's landscape. Conscious of the Arkansas heat, Olsen notes that he tries "to use plants that stay fresh until fall."

Right-at-Home Retreat

As noted, one of the things the family loves most about the space is its proximity to home. "I grew up going to the lake on the weekends, and this backyard area was a way for us to have that same sort of getaway but be able to get a lot more use out of it," the homeowner says. While reflecting on the fun enjoyed in her own childhood, she and her husband also considered what their children would most enjoy in a backyard retreat. "We have three kids, so we really wanted to create a fun space that was a source of entertainment for us and for them," she notes, "and we all truly love that you can walk outside and be on vacation."

Design Resources

Exterior, landscape, and pool design **Chris H. Olsen, chrisholsen.com; Botanica Gardens, Little Rock, (501) 614-3000, botanicagardens.com; Plantopia Home and Garden Center, North Little Rock, (501) 812-5900, plantopianlr.com**

Contractor and project management **ITR Construction, North Little Rock, (501) 650-0562**

Hardscape and plant installation **Botanica Gardens, Little Rock, (501) 614-3000, botanicagardens.com**

Outdoor furniture **Urban Pad, Little Rock, (501) 664-4202, urbanpad.net**

Pool installation **Grindley Pools, Cabot, (501) 835-7946, grindleyconcretepools.com**



