



SWIMMING POOL DESIGN GUIDE

Poynter
Landscape
Architecture
& Construction



Talented Landscape Architects &
Craftsman Builders

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3	III. Around Your Pool.....	9
I. Pool Construction Essentials.....	4	Pool decks and patios	9
Pool Design Planning	4	Materials	9
Step 1: Meet your landscape architect	4	Landscape ideas	10
Step 2: Come up with a plan	5	Pool enclosures	10
Step 3: Construction	5	Pool houses and shade options	11
Timeline	6	IV. Additions.....	12
II. Materials (Options).....	7	Practical additions	12
Gunite Pools	7	Fun and relaxing additions	13
Pool Configuration	7	Luxurious additions	13
Pool Size and setting	8	V. Poynters.....	15
Pool Cost	8	Hiring a pool contractor	15
		Red Flags	16
		2 Keys to Communication	16
		In Closing	17



INTRODUCTION

So, you have decided to get a pool or at least consider what is involved in getting one installed. This is great, and something that at first may seem like a daunting task - all the research, investigating, meetings and decisions! Sounds scary and complicated, right? Well, it does not have to be. At Poynter Landscape Architecture we feel that this process should be fun and we work hard to make this process just that way...fun!

A swimming pool is the ultimate backyard amenity. It's the center of attention with children, family and friends spending much of their summers in and around it. When pools include water features, unique lighting, specialty materials and design features; they create an oasis right in your own backyard.

Our team of Landscape Architects, installers and professionals have decades of combined experience in designing not only the pool but the entire space. Even if you only need a pool, our expertise in this helps keep your yard from feeling like a pool was simply dropped in. We see the big picture.

Using that experience, we have put together a pool design guide for homeowners just like you. In this design guide we'll go over the basics of pool construction; choosing a contractor and team, deciding which pool is right for you, tips and timelines, and accessories and add-ons.

After going through this guide we will be more than happy to answer all your questions and partner with you to build your dream pool. Learn more at [Poynter Landscape](http://www.PoynterLandscape.com) or contact our team at (636)-256-2600.

1. POOL CONSTRUCTION ESSENTIALS

Pool construction is a landscaping project that takes a significant amount of time and planning, not to mention a big investment. However, after all the time and effort that is invested at the start the payoff will be fun and relaxation for you and your family and friends!

Don't be intimidated by the process. As you take one step at a time you'll be through the hardest part in no time. Also, with professionals walking you through every step you are ensured a smooth process that might even be fun.

First, let's look at some of the major steps in the pool construction process.

Pool Design Planning

STEP 1: MEET YOUR LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

The first step in the pool construction process is meeting the individual who will guide you through the journey. Any pool design or construction company you work with should send a professional landscape architect for a site visit on your property to talk about the pool you envision.

At Poynter Landscape Architecture, we assign a landscape architect and construction manager to work with you throughout the planning process to help you steer through the details, such as, the projected timelines, the various options available for your pool and the areas beyond your pool, including decking, accessories, fencing and lighting.



During the first meeting we create a checklist and review of your property which will help us detect your property's strengths and weaknesses. We want to identify current problem areas or potential ones. We want to make sure your project complements your home's existing architecture and fits into the context of your property and surrounding area.

We will also discuss project budgeting and construction deadlines. It is vital that you have a rough project budget in mind so we can design your envisioned swimming pool that fits your budget. During the first meeting it is always helpful to be able to provide your landscape architect with a survey of the property. This will help us build within your property's constraints, but also it will allow the permitting process to run smooth.

STEP 2: COME UP WITH A PLAN

Possibly you have ideas for your backyard swimming pool. The second step is the time to share them all with your landscape architect — and work together to build the pool that brings those ideas to reality in one perfect and complete project.



Once you have discussed all your ideas you will get several realistic options for pool designs. At Poynter we use several methods for this which occasionally includes a realistic 3-D modeling program that gives you an attractive visualization of how the pool will look upon completion.

STEP 3: CONSTRUCTION

Now we start to build! The construction phase begins with permits, inspections, grading and excavation. It may appear like it is a long formidable process but Poynter Landscape Architecture will be there every step of the way.



Poynter will manage the construction process to give you the peace of mind that your project is being built just as it was designed. You will have a Project Manager for your point of contact and keep you updated along the way.

With Poynter Landscape Architecture, you won't have to fret about acquiring permits and inspections because we'll do all the work for you. Once all the legal matters have been attended to we will begin construction by bringing in our expert construction team to get started. Your Project Manager will give you an estimated end date and work with you through the entire process to make sure everything is to your liking.

Timeline

As the construction begins realistically, there could be some delays due to weather. The Poynter architecture team will be able to give you a pretty good timeline including all the steps you can expect.

Here's a look at a basic rundown of the swimming pool construction process:	
1	CONTRACTOR SUBMITS A TIMELINE FOR YOUR SWIMMING POOL PRE-CONSTRUCTION PROCESS, INCLUDING PROJECTED COMPLETION DATES.
2	CALCULATE WATER RUNOFF & GREEN-SPACE DIFFERENCES
3	SECURE ZONING APPROVAL FROM YOUR CITY AND THEN APPLY FOR FINAL PERMITS FROM THE COUNTY OR CITY.
4	BEGIN EXCAVATION AND ROUGH GRADING FOR ALL POOL AREAS, INCLUDING PATIO AND FLOWER BEDS.
5	BEGIN BUILDING! INSTALL FRAMING AND PLUMBING FIXTURES.
6	INSTALL GUNITE SHELL AND PLUMBING
7	INSTALL MASONRY, TILE, COPING, ETC. AROUND POOL.
8	INSTALL PUMPS AND FILTRATION EQUIPMENT.
9	INSTALL POOL PATIO, PLANTINGS, FENCING, IRRIGATION, LIGHTING, ETC.
10	PLASTER POOL AND FILL WITH WATER.
11	BALANCE CHEMICALS AND FINALIZE OPENING PREP WHILE RUNNING FINAL INSPECTION.

2. MATERIALS (OPTIONS)

You decide how you want to make your pool uniquely yours and it all starts with the material you select. You first need to go over your options for shape, colors, accessories and add-ons.

Let's look at some materials.

Gunite Pools

A gunite swimming pool is highly durable, and it can be created in just about any shape. Gunite pools use a rebar framework that is sprayed over with a concrete and sand mixture. This method is preferable over a traditional poured concrete pool that requires a wooden framework to hold the shape of the basin.

Gunite is exceedingly durable; swimming pools made of this substance are built to last. The versatility of gunite swimming pools means more than the ability to create an unlimited array of shapes.

Pool owners with gunite pools can also choose from a variety of finishes to coordinate with the rest of their outdoor living area.



With proper care and maintenance, a gunite pool's plaster finish will last 20 years or more years plus.

Pool Configuration

Depending on the design of your home and landscape you can choose any shape or size. A gunite swimming pool, which features sprayed concrete, can take just about any shape you could imagine. Let your imagination — and your landscape architect — be your guide!



Pool Size and Setting

Two important questions you'll need to ask before beginning the design and construction process are How big should your pool be and where should it be located?

To begin, you'll want to think about how much room you have in your backyard. You should also consider who will be using your pool. Do you have children or grandchildren? Will anyone be swimming laps? Will you be installing a diving board that requires a certain swimming pool depth?

Most places in Greater St. Louis have extensive guidelines and restrictions on the placement of your pool, pool deck or ancillary structures. Your landscape architect will know many of these however all the different cities within the St. Louis metro area have their own specifics that need to be met. Our staff is skilled to review these so you don't have to.

If children will be swimming you'll probably want to locate the pool within view of your main outdoor living areas as well as inside your home, if possible. A more secluded area of your yard, away from the house, might be your choice if you're building a relaxing swimming pool for adults.

Beyond these initial questions, your landscape architect will be able to assist in these decisions during your pool & property assessment site visit.

Pool Cost

One of the most common questions in the swimming pool industry is "How much does it cost to build an in-ground pool?" The answer to that question can vary based on your location, type of pool, size of pool, added features, etc. There is truly no simple answer. However, the most accurate way to get an answer to that question is to get a quote from our professionals at Poynter.

Important cost considerations include the custom aspects of the design you choose, such as the accessories you select. Beyond the swimming pool itself, the type of paving you use in your pool deck can impact the total cost too.



3. AROUND YOUR POOL

Pool Decks and Patios

A pool that fits into your overall landscape will be a much more enjoyable outdoor living experience. Keep this in mind as you design around your pool.

You may choose to build a pool deck that blends in seamlessly with the rest of your landscape and even the style of your home, but you may also want to create a strikingly different area to set your pool apart from other parts of your landscape.

We can help you enhance the look of your pool using brick, natural stone, pavers and other landscaping materials.



Materials

You should also select a surface that will still offer ample traction when wet and stay as cool as possible to protect bare feet that have just come out of the pool. Beyond that, the surface materials you choose will depend only on your tastes and your budget! Concrete has many forms and colors stamps to choose from. Here's a look at a few different paving options.

With St Louis having so much brick incorporated in the local architecture, brick and concrete pavers can be a great highlight and can tie in the homes architecture.



Natural Stone is used for coping, pool decks, walls and water features.



Stone pavers or stamped and dyed concrete are great choices as well.



Landscape Ideas

Plants that Accent Pools:

Landscaping is about more than just planting a few flowers and bushes around your pool. It's about planning and creating a pool environment that's easy to get to — and hard to leave.

You also want to consider plants that won't make a mess by dropping leaves, petals and other natural debris into your pool complicating your cleaning and maintenance routine.



Container gardening or Urns are quick way to dress up any landscape area, especially around your backyard swimming pool!

You can transform even a simple pot into a brilliant display with a surefire container mix in a variety of colors, shapes and textures. This also gives you the ability to explore different types of poolside plantings without committing to a year-round bed.

Plants Not to Use Near a Pool:

Chlorine and other chemicals in the water will likely splash up onto nearby plant life so any landscaping that's highly sensitive or sensitive to those factors probably is not a good choice. You should also keep in mind that a backyard swimming pool typically creates a microclimate, raising humidity levels and often raising the temperature nearby as well.

Other Considerations:

Here are some other items to consider when planning your pool project: leaves and grass clippings too close to the pool, gravel mulch that is close to the pool deck where children play and privacy around the pool or outdoor living space. Your designer can help with all these important functional details.

Pool Enclosures

Pool enclosures are a required and important addition that you shouldn't overlook when designing your new swimming pool. Pool fences are one of the more common ways to ensure safety and are usually gate-locked and childproof.



A four-sided isolation fence surrounds the pool or spa. It is different from a “perimeter” fence that keeps neighbors’ children from accessing your pool. Isolation fencing separates swimming pools or spas from the house. Perimeter fencing encloses a backyard pool but allows ready access through the house.

Your neighborhood association or municipality has regulations in place for fence height and other factors, and so your landscape architect will be able to help you select an enclosure that abides by local standards and codes while protecting you and your family.

The cost of fencing can add up quickly, so be sure to discuss this in your budget-related conversations.

Pool Houses and Shade Options

Pool Houses and Cabanas:

Pool houses and pool cabanas are a great way to shelter pool equipment and provide a space for washrooms, changing or entertaining. Whether you choose a traditional or a space saving five-sided design, these units are an attractive addition to any poolside setting.

[More Great Pool Houses in St. Louis](#)



Pergolas:

Outdoor pergolas do much more than bring all your outdoor elements together; they bring families and friends together.



Pergolas are wooden or synthetic structures that can be built in many styles and sizes — the one common feature is permanent overhead shade and weather protection! They make great poolside enclosures as well as outdoor dining areas and simply decorative accents for your outdoor living space.

[See More Pergolas & Pavilions](#)

Other Options:

The opportunities are almost endless: You could even add a refrigerator, some outdoor kitchen equipment, a table and chairs, and create a space to relax and grill while the kids enjoy splashing in the pool.

4. ADDITIONS

In addition to a beautiful swimming pool, what you surround your pool with makes all the difference in creating an oasis.

Let's look at some of the most popular options from the practical to the luxurious.

Practical Additions



Pool Lighting

Lighting can completely change the look of an area and create an enticing atmosphere after the sun sets. Your design professional can show you how appropriately placed path lights, up lights and spot lights can dramatically illuminate the pool and surrounding area.

Your Poynter landscape architects can work with you to create a beautiful lighting design scheme that extends far beyond underwater illumination and throughout your landscape.

[More Lighting Examples](#)

Pool Heating

The addition of a pool is accompanied with the expectation of added comfort in your backyard. However, we understand cooler weather can alter these results. Adding a heater to your pool can extend the swimming pool season past the typical summer

Most people put them in, but the reality is you will most likely only use them in the month of May and again in September

There are many types of pool heating systems and your Poynter professionals will be able to explain the differences. They will guide you through the pros and cons of each heating system. They will also help you decide which unit is best for your needs, in terms of comfortable pool temperature as well as preliminary and operational costs.

Fun and Relaxing Additions

Spas & Hot Tubs:

Whether you enjoy the many advantages of a hot tub year-round or just indulge when the temperature drops, there are so many benefits to owning a hot tub. Hot tubs offer some incredible benefits for body aches and stress.

[More Hot Tubs](#)



Slides:

A swimming pool waterslide integrated into the pool landscape gives you the feel of a water park in your backyard! With endless fun for children and adults, a water slide is the ultimate addition to any pool.

Any pool slide must drop into water deep enough to be safe for the swimmer. Many waterslides require professional installation to meet safety guidelines established by municipal building codes.

Luxurious Additions

Infinity Pool Edges:

Infinity pool edges — also known as negative edges, zero edges and vanishing edges — can add mystique and intrigue to any pool. They are often seen at resorts, but are attainable for your home as well. We can help you build an infinity pool in your own back yard.



Interestingly a large drop off in elevation is not necessarily needed for these to be effective. The best time to consider an infinity edge for your swimming pool is during the initial design phase — when your pool contractor can make all necessary calculations in relationship to your property's grades.

[See More of This Award Winning Pool](#)

Water Features:

You can transform your swimming pool into an even more appealing, decorative landscape feature by adding a water feature. There is just something very tranquil and relaxing about floating in a pool or laying out on a deck and listening to the sound of cascading water.



Although the sound is quite nice, the beauty a water feature can add to a pool project can be quite dynamic as well.

There are water features to suit every design taste and pool budget! If you see something that inspires you share it with your landscape architect to integrate your inspiration into your pool's design.

More Pool Water Features

Sun Shelves:

A sun shelf can be fashioned from an oversized top step, a second step, or a completely independent addition to the side of the pool. The sun shelf is the spot for little ones to play, or for you to set up your lounge chair. You may find that your sun shelf is also the perfect location for your bubbling fountain.



Sun shelves don't occupy much space in the pool and they can be installed as shallow or deep as you'd like.

Beach Entries:

Like sun shelves, beach entries can be perfect for families with small children who would rather splash around in shallow areas. Beach entries they are great for elderly homeowners who enjoy the pool but need a more gradual entry to the pool in their later years.



5. POYNTERS

Hiring A Pool Contractor

20 Questions to Ask:

You'll probably interview a few pool contractors to bid on your project, and it's always a good idea to get more than one. Consider limiting your bids to the few top contractors that can truly fulfill all the goals of your project and understands your entire outdoor space in relation to the pool.

Check to see that they have the skills, certification, insurance, experience, and reputation to carry out the highest quality work. In other words, don't invite any pool company you find online to give you an estimate. You'll make the process more overwhelming than necessary and may incur design costs more time that is necessary.

You may choose to build a pool deck that blends in seamlessly with the rest of your landscape and even the style of your home, but you may also want to create a dramatically different area to set your pool oasis apart from other parts of your landscape.

Here's a list of common questions to ask any pool contractor you're considering. Print them out, you'll be glad you did.

1. How long have you been in business? Tell me about your pool experience.
2. Can you provide a portfolio of complex projects you have built to review?
3. Which subcontractors/vendors do you partner with and are they insured?
4. Are the photos you have actual photos of work you built?
5. Can you provide references to call?
6. Do you have design capabilities in house or do you outsource?
7. Besides pool construction, what other outdoor construction projects can you perform (i.e. landscaping, patio, pool house, pergola, irrigation, lighting)?
8. How do you communicate?
9. Can you outline the construction process and what I can expect?
10. Will you provide construction timelines?
11. Will you handle all permits and inspections?
12. Do you handle construction drawings, municipal approvals, architectural review board meetings and variance requests to the local city?
13. Who will oversee the build of our project?
14. How large is your contracting crew?
15. What specialties do you provide in-house (such as masonry, plumbing, landscape architecture, lighting, irrigation, engineering)?
16. What payment schedules are available?
17. Are you affiliated with any professional associations?
18. Do you have general liability and workers' compensation insurance, and can you provide certificates of proof?
19. What safety measures do you take during the pool construction process?
20. Do you provide full cost on all auxiliary items such as electrical upgrade requirements, repairs to existing irrigation or lighting systems damaged during construction, construction road access and repair?

It's not too much to expect a cost estimate for everything needed, start to finish with few exceptions.

Red Flags

Don't hire a Contractor if...

1. The contractor does not return call promptly or communicate well.
2. Cannot provide solid references or cannot show photos of actual work they built – not stock internet images.
3. Has unresolved or numerous complaints filed with the Better Business Bureau.
4. Provides estimates that are significantly lower than others and cannot back up their work with references.
5. Cannot provide proof of insurance.

2 Keys to Communication with Few Surprises

You're ready to get started with the design and pre-planning process. Cheers! From here, the "mortar" that will hold your project together and keep everyone on the same page is regular, clear communication.

No one wants surprises during a project. You can work through any frustration during the build by ensuring the communication efforts are set up on the front end.

1. How do you prefer to communicate?

Set expectations as to how you prefer to communicate early in the process.

Email: Clearly in these busy times email can be great. It is documented, includes multiple parties and executed at a convenient time for each party to write or respond. This is great for updates, setting meetings and more but not good for complicated or heavy visual needs.

Voice and face to face: There are so many nuances associated with complex projects that voice and face to face is always best for all involved, whenever possible.

Texting: This can be the worst form for detailed conversations. It is not well tracked and can easily be missed, so either party can feel overlooked.

We at Poynter discourage, and in fact, a few years ago, we barred our staff from texting with customers for a time. Texting for anything other than non-important info, such as, "I'm running late," or "Can we reschedule?" will lead to dissatisfaction for either or both parties.

2. Outline the Project Timeline

Pools can take time to install. Some parts of your project can be done simultaneously, but others cannot. Sometimes it's merely not putting shoes on before the socks and in other instances it's about getting the correct trade skill. You should never expect a stone mason to do irrigation work or a concrete finisher to install plants.

Ask the pool contractor to be honest about when the company can start and, if possible, the delays that could occur during the construction. Months and years after everything is complete, you will be thankful the project was completed properly and not rushed. It's a significant asset you'll be happy with for years.

Get a construction time line: a spreadsheet that shows the order of a project build and the builds that can be done simultaneously vs ones that cannot. It will illustrate to you the competence of your contractor, and you will know what to expect. Knowing your contractor's experience, and understanding the timeline and where the gaps in construction may occur will lead to a better construction experience for all parties.

In Closing

Whether you have a clear vision of how your landscape construction will take shape or you are still looking for ideas, you can count on Poynter Landscape Architecture and our team of landscape architects to guide you in the right direction. Through commitment and professional expertise, we will assist you from inspiration to completion, making your dream an incredible reality.

There are a few layers that go into our process – all of which result in a finished outdoor space that is beautiful from one corner of your property to the other.

ARE YOU READY TO GET STARTED?

To learn more about Poynter Landscape Architecture's custom designs...

Give us a call: 636.256.2600

OR

Fill out the form online: [Get Started Now!](#)