

Today's Outdoor Living Space Combining Beauty With Functionality

by Cynthia Mendenhall

Enhancing backyard space has become a priority across the southeast coast, making the outdoor living market stronger than ever before. While functionality is important in the latest designs, making that space serenely exquisite is becoming a top priority. *Building Industry Synergy* reached out to six area professionals to share the trends they've noticed in extending living space to the outdoors.

Quality Pools & Spas / Landscaping & Design specializes in making dreams a reality. They offer outdoor kitchens, gazebos, kiddie areas, fencing, irrigation, landscaping, driveways, and of course, pools, spas, and more. "We do everything outside the four walls of your home and there is no easier way than to work with a single contractor to handle it all," explains owner Bill Seay. "We take our customers through the entire process starting with the conceptual design using full-color 3D images. We handle the permitting process

and even assist with HOA approvals. And my team follows up with 4 weeks of service, teaching you to care for your new pool, spa, or landscaped area."



With over 20 years of experience in the Myrtle Beach area, the folks at Quality Pools & Spas / Landscaping & Design are respected professionals. That is not always true of others, and Bill offers a stern warning for Horry-Georgetown residents. "Unfortunately, in South Carolina, a big loophole allows anyone with a pick-up truck and a business card to become a pool builder, regardless of their training or experience." Seay's office averages 3 calls a week from desperate homeowners who have hired someone who has taken their deposit and disappeared." Mr. Seay advises

contractors, community managers, and homeowners: "Please know that a licensed, reputable contractor will never ask you to secure the permits in your name. Most people don't realize the risk and liability of injured workers or other accidents falls to the permit holder." Bill and his team are builders who are state-trained, tested, certified, licensed, and they give great attention to every detail including the latest trends.



The hottest thing in pool design is tanning ledges. That's a shallow shelf which acts as a kiddie pool and the perfect place for teens and adults to soak up the sun. "In fact," Seay estimates, "about 8 out of every 10 calls lately have requested a tanning

ledge." The ledge can be added to existing pools. Attached spas are also popular and make a great addition to any backyard.

In the area of Landscape & Design, Mr. Seay notes, "Pavers have completely taken over as the pool decking material of choice, and outdoor manufacturers have created kitchens, fireplaces, fire pits, and more that match beautifully with the pavers." This gives outdoor designs a seamless and stunning flow.

If you want to take the outside space of your home or community to the next level, go with a company who believes in quality craftsmanship and customer satisfaction. Call Bill at Quality Pools & Spas / Landscaping & Design to create your ultimate backyard oasis.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION REGARDING QUALITY POOLS & SPAS / LANDSCAPING & DESIGN PLEASE REFER TO PAGE 9 OF THIS ISSUE.

Nick and Jenna Hudson started **Southern Scapes Landscaping & Garden Center** in 2009. The husband and wife team love the outdoors and love helping others take living outdoors. "We believe your outdoor space should be an extension of your indoor space," Jenna said. That goal drives their company helping to make them a local leader in the industry.



Southern Scapes' owners Nick & Jenna Hudson.

Homeowners, property management companies, builders, and landscape contractors rely on the Hudsons' expertise when creating more useable outdoor spaces. Nick and Jenna understand that folks want beautiful, low maintenance, sustainable designs hardy enough to endure winters. That explains the recent spike in the cold-tolerant Sabal Palmetto

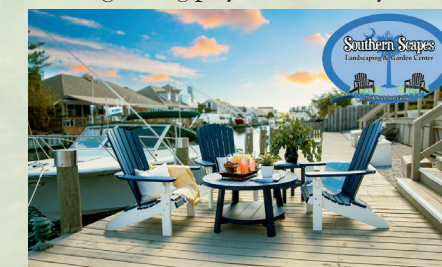
tree sales. "People want beautiful, but they want beautiful year round," Jenna added. More exotic and trendy items as seen in design blogs, magazines, and on TV are also available, like roses and azaleas that bloom all year long.

The Hudsons have noticed a significant shift toward the use of rock the past few years. Mulch deteriorates over time and requires annual replacement, while decorative stone is a one-time fix that needs little or no maintenance. "The rock or stone is great for everyone, but perfect for retirees or those who travel a lot," Jenna explained. "And it comes in all sorts of colors, shapes, sizes, and textures to match every outdoor design."

Decorative planters are quite popular this year, from terra cotta or ceramic to antique and trendy farmhouse pots. "Planters are perfect for customers who want to add beautiful colors near their front doors and porches," Jenna noted. Gardeners and landscapers alike appreciate the huge selection of vegetable plants and herbs at Southern Scapes, and flower enthusiasts enjoy a great assortment of annuals and perennials.



Southern Scapes Landscaping & Garden Center has become a valuable and trusted resource for building contractors, property management companies, and landscapers in the area. "Our business is helping others create designs, allocate materials, and bring designs to life. We are a one-stop shop which makes it easier for both homeowners and contractors," Jenna explained. "And we are constantly adapting what we offer to what people want, so we do carry a lot of the most current design trends." You'll want to check out their fire pit and fireplace options and the sturdy and long-lasting poly furniture they offer.



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If you want to spruce up your place with a few flowers or add a new shade tree, stop by Southern Scapes Landscaping & Garden Center. If you're looking to hand off a major backyard design to true professionals, you'll definitely want to connect with Nick and Jenna at Southern Scapes, the Grand Strand's choice for everything landscaping and gardening.

Prestige Outdoor Lighting offers low-voltage, specialty lighting to homeowners, communities, and businesses and has since 2009. Owners Bill and Julie Raphael are all about making their customers happy; Bill brings over 30 years of electrical design experience to every project. Most of all, they understand the harsh environments of the southeast and extend an unmatched lifetime warranty on all of their products and workmanship.

"For some, it's the architectural features of their home. Maybe it's the statue from grandma, but my first question is always what do you want lighted." Regardless of what you choose, the Raphaels know outdoor lighting adds beauty, value, safety, and security to every



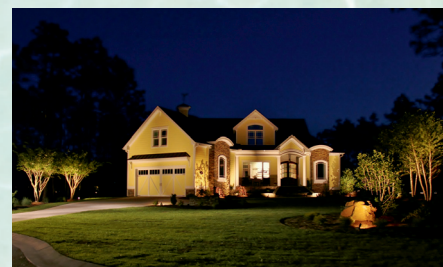
Bill & Julie Raphael with Prestige Outdoor Lighting.

space. One of Bill's best techniques is down-lighting where special lights are mounted up in the trees to shine down through the branches and leaves producing a captivating look. "It's a full moon every night," he says.

A few years ago, the lighting industry experienced its biggest change of all – the switch from halogen bulbs to LED. According to Julie, "That allows us to add more fun to all our designs." Today, the more popular requests are small, twinkling lights, the large orbs or globes, and bistro-style string lights. Another new trend is remote-controlled, color-changing bulbs or strip lights, where you can easily adjust your lighting to fit the evening's mood. Also, astronomical timers are hot now.

They can be set for to turn on your lighting at dusk (no matter what time that is) and turn off at dawn or when you decide. This happens year-round, automatically adjusting for daylight savings time. Bill adds, "Of course, we are seeing more and more outdoor lighting incorporated into Smart Home designs too."

The Raphaels work with property managers and local businesses to create more eye-catching signs and entrances. Julie notes, "By adding lighting designs,



communities are improving their gathering and entertainment areas, making those spaces more functional, safer, and much more appealing." Homeowners and communities alike are requesting task lighting like lighting the grill area, highlighting steps, placing LED strips around outdoor kitchen spaces, and more.



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Bill and his team can do anything the customer wants and do it without breaking the bank. He explains, "Our customers are not only higher-end homes. We've done great designs for average homes as well. Our lighting packages have ranged from \$800 all the way up to \$30,000 systems. And they are all happy customers in the end."

Randy Gaskins of **Plants Direct, Inc.** holds a great appreciation for all of their customers, and likes to do everything possible to make them happy. "My wife and I started the company 8 years ago and are proud to be a locally owned company," Randy said. "We like to take care of our

customers with that local, hometown feel, and we will always go a step beyond."

The company has two separate divisions that serve the greater Grand Strand area. Plants Direct, Inc. targets developers and works on larger scale projects like golf courses, universities, in new communities, and with landscaping contractors. "We do lots of work in North Carolina, going all the way from Wilmington to Charleston and service inland all the way to Charlotte," Randy explained. Larger projects always include wholesale pricing on products based on quantity and purchase levels.

Plants Direct Nursery & Garden Center is the division focused more toward the needs of local homeowners. "Consultation is such an important first step and we like to do that for all of our homeowners. We can help them with design and assist in choosing plant material that does well in our area." Randy said. Plants Direct will install the design or residents can plant and do the upkeep if they prefer. Locals enjoy stopping by the garden center and will always find competitive retail

pricing.

Not only does Plants Direct offer two distinct divisions to better serve their customers, they now have two locations. The original Myrtle Beach location, located on Highway 544, and managed by

Teresa Nunn, is now accompanied by a North location. The new location opened in November 2017 and is on Highway 57 in Little River, near the Brunswick County border. It is managed by Ryan Graham. Both locations offer 3,000 square foot garden centers, filled with plants of all kinds, yard art, wind spinners, fountains, stone, pine straw, mulch, and more. Plants Direct also does paver patios, fire pits, outdoor kitchens, lighting,



Teresa Nunn manages the Hwy. 544 location.



Ryan Graham manages the new Hwy. 57 location.



Randy & Leigh Anne Gaskins in front of their new location on Hwy. 57 in Little River, SC.

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“Outdoor space is number one right now,” Randy stated, as he has seen a significant shift in more requests for complete outdoor designs. This part of the company is headed up by Eddie Deutsch who has many years of experience and is SC Certified in paver and mason installation.



Eddie Deutsch is the Director of Operations for Plants Direct & oversees the outdoor designs & installations.

Another popular request is for outdoor upgrades in private residences and in communities. “We are always available to spruce up both old and new landscapes,” Randy mentioned. Property management companies and HOAs value this service.

When investing in the space around your business or home, you will want to work with a local company that is knowledgeable and experienced enough to successfully design, install, and maintain your new outdoor living space. Schedule a consultation with Randy, or stop in and ask for Teresa, Eddie, or Ryan. With over 60 years of combined experience in the landscape industry, Plant Designs is a company you can trust to create a fabulous outdoor space suited to your needs and desires.

Tommy and Troy Ashburn of **The General Pool Company, Inc.** have been building pools and creating personal retreat spaces in the area for over 31 years. Tommy recently shared the latest trends in pools, decking, and ambiance, and gave his secret to working successfully with local builders.

In the way of pools, salt generators and



Tommy Ashburn with The General Pool Company.

pool automation have become more than a trend. “Salt pools and pools built into Smart Home designs are the new norm,” Tommy explained. Your pool, hot tub, waterfall, lighting system, and more can now be controlled from your handheld device or with Alexa. In pool aesthetics, colored quartz plasters are quite popular. “A deep blue plaster becomes the eye candy of the entire pool, and swim-outs are the new answer to the ugly stainless steel ladder.” The company is also doing more and more designs with multiple beach seats, and umbrella anchors are being added to swim outs, tanning decks, and

bench seats.

“We’ve seen so much more emphasis on pool decks than ever before,” Tommy



Troy Ashburn with The General Pool Company.

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noted. A hot trend on the east coast now is larger and more upscale deck pavers. “The traditional 6” x 6” or 6” x 9” pavers have been upgraded to 12”, 18”, or 24” ones. In fact, 85% of new pools are going with the larger pavers,” Tommy said. Some of the more fascinating ones are woodgrain that look like planks but are made of cement with little maintenance required.

Backyard spaces are all about ambiance now, and fire creates that well. According to Tommy, “People are not only calling us for swimming pools, they also want a fire bowl, a fire pit, or a fireplace.” Other ambiance add-ons are: LED light bubbles, built-in speakers, outdoor kitchens, and TV viewing areas. Tommy added, “We are also creating a lot more sitting areas and using quite a bit more



stacked stones on raised surfaces. Large stonework with a natural face is huge right now too. Last month, we completed a natural waterfall with a 700-pound stone. It’s beautiful.”

Local builders appreciate working with The General Pool Company, and Tommy shared his secret to those successful relationships, “By communicating clearly and often with other builders in joint ventures, we can avoid more work for both

sides. And mutual courtesy in business helps everyone in the end.” Plus, Troy Ashburn, construction-lead for the company, ensures every pool is built to code every single time. That alone develops an ongoing trust-factor for builders and homeowners alike.

Tommy and Troy Ashburn at The General Pool Company are ready to help you make a great investment in the lifestyle you’ve dreamed about—it’s time to design and build your private backyard retreat.

Palmetto Patio and Hearth partners John Gaddy and Stevie Bryant have nearly 50 years combined gas experience in sales and servicing the needs of the Grand Strand area. John said, “We have an advantage for homeowners and contractors, because when we arrive at a location, we can connect the power, water, and gas as we are licensed in all three fields, and can complete the job from start to finish.”



John Gaddy (left) & Stevie Bryant (right) with Palmetto Patio & Hearth / Palmetto Propane, Inc.

The design and installation of outdoor kitchens and customized patio areas with outdoor fireplaces has become a niche for Palmetto Patio & Hearth. John and Stevie take pride in working with the local building contractors and homeowners to create a very appealing, functional extension to their outdoor living area.



For areas without access to natural gas, Palmetto Patio and Hearth’s sister company, Palmetto Propane, Inc. can provide customers with a propane tank to accommodate their needs, whether they lease or purchase a tank. John said, “We strive to offer our customers competitive prices, and look forward to providing them many years of continued service.” Palmetto Patio and Hearth also offers residential and commercial gas piping for new and existing applications.

Palmetto Patio and Hearth has a showroom in downtown Conway that offers customers a display of, gas logs, gas and charcoal grills, cast iron stoves, fire pits, gas lamps, patio furniture, as well as tankless water heaters. ■

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