

The Appeal Of Outdoor Living Areas Reaches An All Time High

by Sara Sobota

Now, more than ever there is a much higher emphasis on staying at home and having a very functional outdoor living area that the entire family can enjoy. Both new construction and remodeling building contractors have seen an uptick in homeowner requests for the design and installation of amenities typically found in resort areas. *Building Industry Synergy* reached out to seven local companies that can provide and service everything needing to bring the comfort and luxury typically enjoyed in top resort areas to your own back yard.

Family-owned **Southern Scapes Landscaping and Garden Center** is focused on helping both residential and commercial customers meet their garden and landscaping needs. Both branches of the business – a garden center and a landscape design/installation center – each offer both stand-alone and comprehensive products and services.

Jenna Hudson, co-owner with husband Nick, said the garden center has recently enhanced its offerings, partially in response to changes in market demand.

“In our garden center, we sell a large variety of plants, palms, outdoor décor,



Nick & Jenna Hudson

outdoor furniture, pottery, planters, landscape materials, mulches and rocks,” said Hudson. “We’ve expanded this year with a number of outdoor furniture options. We sell poly furniture made out of recycled plastic in many color options and have added several planter lines. With an outdoor kitchen model and landscape lighting on display, we’ve enhanced our outdoor living showroom. Since many people have postponed summer travel plans, we’re trying to offer everything that can help folks enhance that outdoor living space and create a perfect staycation.”

Jenna said many residential customers choose to do part of their projects themselves but come to Southern Scapes

for design advice and installation of larger items. It’s quite rewarding, she said, when she’s able to help customers who have moved from other areas of the country to master their own Southern space.

“Many of them do have a gardening background, and they’ve spent a tremendous amount of money and time trying to transfer that hobby here,” said Jenna. “To help those folks with a little bit of guidance as to what works best in their space, whether it’s light conditions or soil conditions – to give them knowledge that



can be so powerful is really enjoyable for us. Then they’ll call and say, ‘I failed so many times, but with the recommendations you gave me, I finally have a Southern garden that I can maintain and enjoy and take care of.’”

Part of that knowledge comes from the



Southern Scapes Landscaping & Garden Center is located @ 1310 Hwy. 501 in Myrtle Beach.



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Braxton Butler (Nursery Sales) talks with Ashton Hudson (Office Manager / Sales).

maintenance of Southern Scapes’ own 22-acre farm.

“We are doing lots of our own growing, and that sets us apart because we’ve got that growth space, and growing in that larger capacity, we learn things about which plants struggle and which grow and thrive,” said Jenna.

On the commercial side, Southern Scapes helps builders,



work with boards and also design.”

Jenna added that the family touch is noticeable at Southern Scapes.

“Our team cares,” Jenna said. “We’re more than a mom-and-pop business, but we still have that mom-and-pop feel.”

It’s hot outside, and the pool business is booming. A clear, refreshing, beautiful backyard pool has always been a valuable asset, and **Sunco Pools and Spas** can make your dream oasis a reality.

Sunco Pools and Spas builds custom, gunite, in-ground pools for residential and commercial properties and brings more than 35 years’ experience to the task.

“We design them with customized software right here in our showroom that offers a wide range of options,” said Sherri Gray, vice president of sales at Sunco Pools & Spas.

Doug Smith, a 20-year veteran with Sunco Pools, is head of all construction, overseeing projects from beginning to end. “He’s amazing. His work is just incredible,” said Gray.

Some of the commercial pools Smith has built include those at Island Vista, North Beach Resort, and Ocean 22 by Hilton Grand Vacations.

“We’ve built pools on top of hotels, we’ve done water parks, we’ve done commercial pools all up and down the coast here,” said Smith.

For individual homeowners, designing and building a pool with Sunco is an enjoyable experience.



“A pool is fun,” said Gray. “You get to design it because it’s custom. My favorite

contractors, and property management companies navigate the complex requirements of HOAs and architectural review boards in individual communities to ensure the needs of both the homeowner and the community are met.

“We work hand-in-hand to do design for a lot of the construction side of the industry,” said Jenna. “That’s been beneficial to our customers in that arena. They may have the crew to do the installation but not have the people to do the



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part is picking out the tile color with the customer, the plaster, the decking. They might do stone; they might do glass tiles – I enjoy going through that process with them.

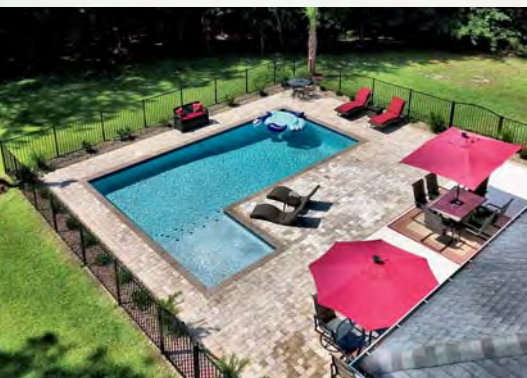


Sunco Pools & Spas construction manager, Doug Smith, has been with the company for over 20 years.

It's sort of like you're designing a house: it can be designed any way they want."

Gray said sun shelves are becoming popular as an element of a new pool build.

"They can be 8' x 8', 10 inches deep, and you can have lounge chairs in there and lie



in your pool and have water on you. That's become very popular, and I think it has to do with the heat in the summertime," said Gray.

Other popular trends include saltwater pools.

"On the front end, salt water requires less chemical cost for balancing your pool," said Gray, "but it's also a different feel on your skin than traditional pool water."

Sunco Pools & Spas also offers remodeling projects of all kinds. Gray said recent customers have been interested in adding outdoor kitchens,



updated decking, or concrete pavers instead of traditional cement around the pool.

Another reason for the recent surge in pool builds is the COVID-19 pandemic, Gray said.

"A lot of people want pools in their backyard," said Gray. "People are entertaining at home more."

When the pool build process is complete, the homeowners' satisfaction is clear.

"I find them to be very happy," said Gray. "They love it -- they love



it for the entertaining end, and that their kids have something to do. A pool's a little bit of a luxury too, like a boat. I have not met one person yet that is unhappy with our pool build."

Regardless of the scope or size of the project, Sunco Pools and Spas can make your vision a reality.

"The most rewarding part of my job is after the pool build is completed," said Gray, "just to see the smiles on their faces and their happiness, the enjoyment they get from their pool build."



Palmetto Brick Company, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2019, continues to set trends and offer state-of-the-art products as well as provide stellar customer service throughout Horry and Georgetown Counties.



Palmetto Brick Company general manager, Chad Redwine in front of the showroom located @ 305 Greenleaf Circle in Myrtle Beach.

Chad Redwine, general manager of Palmetto Brick Company in Myrtle Beach, said he's noticed several area trends within the outdoor landscaping and living industry.

One bestselling item is Techo-bloc, a concrete manufactured product that's been popular in the Northeast for decades.



Techo-Bloc has been one of Palmetto Brick's best selling items.

Palmetto Brick Company offers a full range of Techo-bloc products for both commercial and residential use as well as a display of offerings at its showroom.

"We have pavers for pool decks, driveways, patios, and walkways. We have retaining walls for landscape, parks, pools, kitchen areas, and other outdoor component features," said Redwine. "They manufacture different styles, colors, and textures that stand alone. They really pride themselves in being a specialty manufactured product."

Techo-bloc brings a distinctly modern look to outdoor areas, Redwine said.

"They have products that have a large



color palette and different sizing for slabs: large areas, octagonal, diamonds – it's not your standard square and rectangle. It gives you a whole different look that's more modern than classic."

Customers are very pleased with the fresh look of the finished product and the relief from the heat of traditional concrete.

"People are loving the size of the products and the slabs for pool decks and patios that cover larger areas rather than your standard K pattern or I pattern," said Redwine. "They like the consistency of the color and ease of installation and enjoy the



Marmiro Stone

coolness of the product."

Another popular item is Marmiro stone, natural cut travertine mined from the earth in Turkey, which is also cool to the touch, used for pool decks, and offers a unique look.

"They have a myriad of colors, and they're all natural colors, so the color changes even among stones of the same name. There are color swirl patterns that fade

darker to lighter depending on the run they



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have in the earth," said Redwine.

Long considered an expensive product, Marmiro stone has come down in price because of new mining and distribution processes.

"People have always liked it. It's always had the aura that it's priced really high," said Redwine, "but that is not the case today.

Some companies are finding they can mine the travertine and get it to the States in a more economical way, so travertine has become more abundant of late."

Redwine has noticed another trend related to the recent pandemic.

"Firepits have always been popular, but they've been super popular since COVID-

19," Redwine said. "People are staying home, either furloughed or wanting to stay home and to enjoy their home. Fire pits are easily manufactured, easy to put together, and don't cost that much to have for the entertainment. People are also incorporating grill islands, grilling stations - just something to be outside."

"Isn't It Time to RELAX?!" Everybody wants to have outdoor fun and enjoyment in the summertime, so why not all year long? The Award-winning dealership **Elko Spas, Billiards and Pools** is ready to serve both commercial and residential customers to help create or enhance their outdoor or indoor living space.



Elko Spas Billiards & Pools is located @ 4718 Hwy. 17 Bypass South in Myrtle Beach.

The experts at Elko will handle projects from beginning to end, through the design, planning, installation and maintenance phases.

There is no budget too big or too small. Elko Spas, Billiards & Pools is the areas only Olhausen Billiards & Game Room Specialist, in addition to carrying HotSpring Spas, Jacuzzi Spas, Finnleo & Custom Cut



Saunas, Alaglas Fiberglass Pools and more.

The company can also customize pool tables and shuffleboard tables with the name, logo and colors of your company or resort. An outdoor pool table and/or shuffleboard table can complete any outdoor living space. The Elko showroom carries all the accessories needed for both.

The Elko team can design your entire project. Their primary products are American made.

In addition to designing pools, the Elko team can provide a 3D rendering bringing your entire project to

life before the construction begins. Michael Elko works personally with each customer using builder's plans, drawing your home in detail including the entire back yard project in 3D CAD. Elko also can include the plant schedule which you will need for the ARC. Consultations can be scheduled with Michael and the Elko team.

Elko celebrates their SWEET 16 anniversary in September.

Elko Spas Billiards & Pools offers the following products and services for residential and commercial customers:

- Hot tub and pool repair service and maintenance



Mike Elko provides 3D CAD renderings for many of Elko's customers in advance of the project.

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Kimberly Elko (left), Mike Elko (middle) & JoAnn Luyster (right) inside the Elko showroom.

- Hot tub relocations & moves
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Great reputation and reviews, in addition to stellar products, are the reason Elko Spas, Billiards & Pools was named the HotSpring Spas Southeast Dealer of the Year in 2019, as well as winning numerous other accolades such as being voted the area's #1 Spas & Pool Dealership year after year.

The Elko Spas, Billiards & Pools store and showroom is open Monday through



Elko Spas Billiards & Pools was named HotSpring Spas Dealer of the Year in 2019.

Friday from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM & Saturday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM twelve months a year. Appointments are available. The showroom is very family friendly. Customers can have their water tested and analyzed if needed.

Elko offers discounts to all Horry Georgetown HBA members.

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With two multi-acre locations fully stocked with trees, shrubs, plants, and accessories, **Plants Direct Nursery and Garden Center** fulfills landscaping needs for both commercial and residential clients. Plants Direct is the company's commercial wholesale branch, servicing large-scale

developments, golf courses, landscape contractors, municipalities, and universities. Plants Direct Nursery and Garden Center, the retail branch, provides customized services to new or existing homeowners.

Owner Randy Gaskins, who has been in the business for 38 years, said his company's

60 years of combined experience in landscaping plus the comprehensive nature of its services make it uniquely situated to offer top products and service.

"We can take care of a project from

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Randy & Leigh Anne Gaskins in front of their nursery & garden center in Little River.

to help them visualize what the outcome may look like.

“For a typical residential job, I go to the customer’s home to give them ideas: what plant material would look the best, what would grow well in certain areas. Then, we take it from there: design, installation, irrigation, sod, rock, and mulch,” said Gaskins. “I then visit the jobsite multiple times throughout the installation and always follow up after the job is finished to make sure everything is growing properly and they’re happy with the completed project.”

Plants Direct allows customers to hand-select their plants from its 4-acre location in Conway, its 7-acre tract in Little River, or its 2,500 square foot indoor showrooms, which

concept all the way to completion,” said Randy. “This is one reason customers appreciate our service. Most customers tend to like to deal with one company versus multiple companies.

“People who have moved here from Northern areas gain particular benefit, as we can educate them on plants that do well in this area,” Gaskins continued. “The plant palate for this area may be new to some customers; therefore, meeting the customer at their home to discuss the many options they have seems

are full of indoor/outdoor décor.

“If a person wants to buy a palm tree, they can come to one of our locations, and we ask them to tag the tree of their choice, and we’ll bring it to their home and install it for them,” said Gaskins. “Residential customers really like being able to come to one of our locations and tag the actual plant materials that will go in their yard.”

Gaskins has noticed that residential landscaping projects have become more common recently, since more people are staying at home due to COVID-19.

“Many people are sitting at home looking at all these projects they’ve been wanting to do for a long time, and suddenly they have the time to do them,” said Gaskins.



The exterior & interior of the nursery & garden center located @ 2019 Hwy 544 in Conway.



The exterior & interior of the nursery & garden center located @ 1741 Hwy. 57 North in Little River.



Plants Direct services many communities, golf courses, municipalities, and builders in North Carolina and South Carolina.

In the end, Gaskins said, it’s customer service that sets Plants Direct apart.

“We always work hard to be number one in customer service, and we do appreciate our local people shopping with us instead of going to the big box stores,” Gaskins said. “We take care of all our customers.”

The General Pool Company does much more than just build pools; it creates backyard spa experiences.

Encouraging customers to “Enjoy the casual elegance of your backyard retreat,” the General Pool Company brings its 33 years of experience to every residential and commercial project. Owners Tommy and Troy Ashburn work to create not just an outdoor activity for families, but a sophisticated outdoor lifestyle environment.

The General Pool Company offers all the latest trends in pool builds: LED lights with app-oriented control systems, tanning ledges complete with umbrella anchors, and



Tommy Ashburn (left) & Troy Ashburn (right)

salt generators. In addition, it offers an array of water features, an endless range of choices for pool shape, and a cohesive design that brings all the backyard oasis elements together.

“People like raised waterfall features,” said Tommy Ashburn. “It offers water agitation that’s soothing and tranquil. It’s like a river with a stream running through rocks; you can hear it. A lot of people like water agitation, whether it comes from a raised waterfall, deck jets, or a rain

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Tommy Ashburn (middle) & Troy Ashburn (right) visit with homeowner, Rob Mahon after the outdoor living area was completed.

curtain – it's the sound of running water. In addition to being peaceful, it can drown out a lot of outside noise."

The Ashburn brothers' decades of experience means they can help customers create the pool of their dreams of any shape or size.

"Homeowners like the freedom to determine their own shape," said Tommy Ashburn, "and we provide them with 2-3 drawings to choose from once they give us a direction. For example, a homeowner might say, 'I like that



Troy Ashburn (right) visits with homeowners, Kim & Zhen Ridgway after the outdoor living area was completed.

curvy shape,' and I say, 'Ok, you like lagoon style,' and we know to design a couple different pools within this freeform radius. Or, one might say, 'I like a rectangle, but I don't want just a rectangle. Is there anything else you do?' and we can do a shape with rounded corners or punch outs and different designs that will bring it up to date."

The ability to create a cohesive design among all backyard elements is another unique benefit. The design develops out from the five colors involved in the pool build with a raised hot tub: tile, coping, pool deck paver, stack stone, and quartz plaster.

"We hand-pour custom copings with particular colors that will help the whole project to modularize together," said Tommy. "We've perfected those over the

years. They look really beautiful."

Other backyard features such as fire pits can also fit the selected style and color scheme.

"We can match your fire pits to your pool and hot tub in a separate location and make it flow



together," said Tommy. "If we build that hot tub, we can create the same look in the firepit – it would be a little mini-me of the raised hot tub across the way."

With their knowledge, vision, and experience, the Ashburn brothers with General Pool Company bring luxury and elegance to any backyard space.



Troy Ashburn visits with homeowner, Margaret Weinberger after the outdoor living area was completed.

A key component of enjoyable, carefree outdoor living is caring for your lawn and landscape, yet keeping them healthy and beautiful can be a challenge. Irrigation systems are a common solution, but much depends on the quality of the system and the company.

Conserva Irrigation brings a new

approach to irrigation, offering state-of-the-art technology, customized features, and stellar customer service that make the difference between achieving a comfortable outdoor environment or wasting time, resources, and money.



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Owners Pam and Jay Griffith, along with partners Dawn and Bill Hester, brought the Conserva system to the Grand Strand last year, and they've been helping create healthy landscapes ever since.

Pam Griffith emphasized the ease and convenience, in addition to the excellent



Senior Technician, Stephen Burks (right), works with Technician Assistant, Matthew Hester (left).

performance, that comes with installation of a Conserva system as part of a home build.

"To builders, it's the ability to provide new homeowners with a system they're not going to have to put in and not have to worry about," said Pam. "It gives them a



(from left to right) Bill Hester, Dawn Hester, Pam Griffith & Jay Griffith are all partners in Conserva Irrigation.

system that is under warranty and easy to manage. Working alongside builders, our technicians can offer the quality of our work and quality of the equipment that we use."

With a Conserva installation, homeowners are provided with a



That way, whatever they might want to add – a fence, an invisible fence – they have all that information available to them to make sure they're not damaging any irrigation lines. This is a tool for the homeowner to file away with the closing documents. It's something no other companies provide."

Remote system management is another element that sets Conserva apart from other companies, allowing homeowners assurance the system is operated efficiently.

"If a homeowner is here only part of the year, they can control that whole system from anywhere

comprehensive blueprint that provides the owner with key system information.

"We create a deliberate design for each home," said Jay. "We make sure the homeowner sees exactly what we installed. As the house is built, we lay out every valve, every head, down to a drawing of their property line to line, color coded and to scale.

in the world," said Pam. "This allows them to make sure they're irrigating the right way. Instead of being set for a standard 20-30 minutes a day, for example, our systems have ground sensors and rain sensors that indicate when watering needs to happen."

The Griffiths noted another key element of the irrigation industry: maintenance and customer service. They have heard from many new homeowners who have a problem with their months-old system and are unable to obtain service and attention from the landscaping business that installed the system.

"Since that's all we do, we understand exactly what they need," said Jay.



Senior Technician, Rick Niski

"Landscapers are focused in multiple areas, so irrigation systems are not always their top priority," Pam agrees.

"We focus only on irrigation," said Pam. "We focus on one thing and do that one thing the best we can do it." ■





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