



MASTERS
OF DESIGN

Skip Phillips Questar Pools
David Peterson Watershape Consulting



Questar Pools, Escondido, Calif. | Watershape Consulting, San Diego



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David Peterson

By Rebecca Robledo A hilly, space-constrained site didn't prevent Skip Phillips from giving his clients exactly what they wanted – a spa, moving water, a lap lane, and the special flair that has earned the co-founder of the Genesis 3 Design Group worldwide acclaim.

The hillside lot sat at the side of an angular, contemporary home, with only about 14 feet separating the patio and a side wall marking the property line. Three-foot setbacks made the space even tighter. "In terms of drawing, it was one of the more difficult projects that we've done in recent years," Phillips said.

Within those physical confines, Phillips, along with Dave Peterson, a Genesis 3 platinum member, styled this contemporary 11-by-36-foot masterpiece, cleverly positioning a spa to accommodate a lap lane and vanishing edge.

Phillips used several techniques to integrate the home and pool. To link the waterscape with a side wall, he designed four stainless steel weirs to cantilever over the coping and flow elegantly into the pool. A sand-washed concrete deck and stepping stones fused with the home's palette, and colorful glass mosaic tile accents the entire yard.

However, there were challenges along the way.



Hot spots: Three remote-controlled fire bowls punctuate the pool, and Peterson had to ventilate them from below without interrupting the tile pattern on the bases. First, he built the pedestals with 3-inch-diameter ports. Using an epoxy thinset, he affixed tile to mesh sheets, which then went over the ports. With no grout in place, air can move between the glass mosaic pieces.

With space so tight, Watershape Consulting decided to bring a surveyor onto the site, and what started as an extra precaution turned into a crucial step. The surveyors determined that the back wall actually rested more than a foot onto the neighbor's property.

"We had to shrink the width of the pool by about 13 inches," Peterson says.

This affected the spa as well, which started out as a square perimeter overflow vessel. If left that way, it would have interfered with the needed lap

Light and color: The tile fit the personality of the homeowners, who wanted everything bright and open. The material highlighted the fire-pot bases, outdoor-kitchen countertop and back of the vanishing edge wall, which could be viewed from a patio to the side.





Elegant quartet: Four cantilevered, stainless steel weirs create a visual link between the pool and side wall. Peterson worried that their unusual length would compromise their stability, so he had stainless steel bolts welded to their origination points, and cast the bolts into the concrete.

lane. Instead, the spa was narrowed to 4 ½ feet and placed lengthwise in the pool, allowing swimmers to glide past it.

As they prepared to start construction, Peterson made another discovery. While digging around the pool, he and his crews realized the footing for the side wall varied in width, and some areas were larger than they thought. As luck would have it, Phillips had caught the narrower spots during his initial site inspection.

Thus, the pool would have to be brought in a few inches, moving it farther from the wall. This affected the four weirs. Now they'd have to cantilever an unusually long 18 inches to drop into the water.

Facing these logistical challenges head-on, the team demonstrated one of Phillips' deeply held principles — namely, the importance of pairing the right designer and builder.

“One isn't any good without the other,” Phillips says. ■

Subtle rise and fall: Gentle elevation differentials have become a Phillips signature. The waterline sits just under the coping, rather than a full 6 inches below. The spa is only slightly higher than the pool. And Phillips spaced the pool about 18 inches from the wall, rather than right next to it, for a more gradual terracing effect.

