

# WATERWORLD

**WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE... NO, THAT'S NOT A DESCRIPTION OF LAST MONTH'S WEATHER – ROBERT COOK HAS BEEN IN SEARCH OF WATER FEATURES TO GIVE YOUR PROPERTY A TRULY SUMMERY FEEL**

It might seem hard to believe after the washout that was July, but water features are actually fantastic assets, whether inside the home or out in the garden. Like an exotic specimen plant or eye-catching item of furniture, water features form focal points that add a touch of class to otherwise uninspiring backdrops. They also provide benefits beyond their obvious aesthetic qualities. The sound of trickling water soothes the mind, whilst evaporating spray cools the body - perfect for hot summer days!

Water features are surprisingly diverse, both in terms of design and materials. The most obvious choice of material is, perhaps, stone, and it is easy to obtain formal multi-tiered fountains, of the type found in public squares. Other stone water features are shaped to imitate the forms of nature, or consist of a single, uncarved block (a 'monolith').

Stone is far from the only possibility, though; modern water features utilise a plethora of materials, some of them quite surprising: terracotta pots, converted wooden barrels, pyramids of glass... But the most fashionable option at the moment seems to be stainless steel. It is strong and easily-moulded, allowing it to take on all kinds of shapes. Tall, thin columns contrast with squat, rounded spheres, whilst cups cascade into one another and water trickles down the face of solid metal walls. Some of these designs can be emulated in other materials, but stainless steel possesses special qualities



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that enhance the effect, the gleaming surface of the metal adding to the light that reflects off the water. A few centuries ago, installing a water feature meant, for some, having a lake excavated in one's grounds. However, modern city dwellers rarely have the luxury of space, often possessing only small gardens or, indeed, none at all. Fortunately, water features are able to accommodate this. Some stand in the middle of ponds, but people who do not have room for a substantial body of water (or simply do not want one) can set their features on top of pebble pools - stone-filled basins that collect the runoff and make the unit slim enough to fit within decking or a patio. Water features housed in tubs provide another suitably compact solution. What's more, some can be used indoors as well as out, and many are designed especially for interiors. The space-conscious will be particularly attracted to examples that are wall-mounted or miniaturised for the desk-top. Although moving water has been the primary focus of this article, it does not have to flow to provide a worthwhile feature. Stationary pools may lack the melody of fountains or roar of waterfalls, but make up for that with entrancing mirror-like properties, faithfully reflecting their surroundings to create beauty and symmetry. This quality is perhaps best exploited by keeping the pool pristine and clear, but can still be appreciated in ponds stocked with fish or colonised by wildlife.

So many options are available that consumers may have trouble deciding which is best for them. Of course, some might consider swimming pools the ultimate domestic 'water feature', but that's a whole different story. ■

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