



The large infinity pool is surrounded by boulder cliffs fashioned from sandstone, a more cost-effective and natural-looking material than brick.

BELOW RIGHT: Informal groupings of colorful plantings enhance the tranquil setting, while a Pennsylvania sandstone wall adds structure.

hillside paradise

behind the scenes

Landscape designer: Chris Cipriano, Cipriano Landscape Design, Ramsey, NJ, plantnj.com, 201-785-0800

Challenge: Almost 30' of elevation change from the house to the top of the waterfall required a lot of planning to site the pool and terrace

Best outcome: The sight and sound of moving water creates a tranquil setting

Main plants used: Sedum (*Sedum spp.*); Morning Light maiden grass (*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light'); weeping Norway spruce (*Picea abies* 'Pendula'); Anthony Waterer spirea (*Spiraea x bumalda* 'Anthony Waterer'); leatherleaf viburnum (*Viburnum rhytidophyllum*)

Zones: 4-10

The slope accommodates a number of waterfalls

Even big budgets sometimes need to be reined in and designs altered. Such was the case when landscape designer Chris Cipriano was asked by a couple with a 10,000-square-foot house in Saddle River, New Jersey, to design a pool and landscaping. The husband hoped to swim early each morning during the warmer months of the year. But any design had to take into consideration the backyard's almost 30' slope and also incorporate the formal brickwork and waterfall features the couple desired.

Cipriano's concept incorporated a series of brick walls to provide support for the waterfalls as well as for the infinity pool, where water would spill over the sides and into a catch basin at the patio level and then be recirculated back. The design appealed, but the proposed \$450,000 cost did not, and Cipriano went back to the drawing board.

"I often have to develop multiple designs over a period of time to meet the look as well as the price," he says. What he eventually came up with was a much more informal design, with vertical boulders fashioned from sandstone-like building blocks that were inspired by Cipriano's image of the Palisades cliffs along the Hudson River. "It was a unique design that was a lot less expensive since sandstone is so much more inexpensive than brick, and the boulders would be kept in place by setting them without mortar and footings," he says. Because of the slope, the design also would include waterfalls at different levels of the slope. Plant materials would be grouped in masses of pockets all around the pool to add a softening effect and tie together the upper and lower levels. Wide stone steps would provide more of a link between the pool levels and also link the pool to a slate terrace. Winter-time interest was another requirement, and Cipriano's design features more than 20 varieties of ornamental grasses that he doesn't recommend cutting when the weather turns colder, since their shape and color keep the site from being bare; he also added cabbages and kale for winter months.

Photography: Cipriano Landscape Design

Developing a concept—from drawing board to reality show

Designs can change dramatically, from formal and all brick to casual and stone, depending on the budget, site and homeowners' preferences. What happened here:

Started with a concept and plugged in the numbers. The dollars estimated hit a staggering \$450,000 due to the formal brick walls and concrete footings that were needed to support the infinity pool and waterfalls. Besides the expensive materials, the labor added up.

Made adjustments. When the cost exceeded the budget, Cipriano made design changes and came up with the idea for less costly stone boulders set in the grade—they're less time consuming to execute, too (\$100,000 less).

Plants changed to match the new concept. Instead of formal and expensive hedges, Cipriano shifted the plant material program to more casual, less costly items such as impatiens and grasses.



waterfall wanted

To gain a waterfall, a flat backyard was built up



BELOW: Landscape designer Chris Cipriano took advantage of the flat backyard to create a freeform pool surrounded by lush plantings.

BELOW RIGHT: The family wanted a natural waterfall and a diving perch, so the back of the site was elevated with large boulders and smaller elements.

behind the scenes

Landscape designer: Chris Cipriano, Cipriano Landscape Design, Ramsey, NJ, plantnj.com, 201-785-0800

Challenges: Raise flat property to create an upper area for a waterfall and a diving perch for kids; install enough plantings to screen neighbors' homes

Best outcome: Natural waterfall

Main plants used: Anthony Waterer spirea (*Spiraea x bumalda* 'Anthony Waterer'); Japanese silver grass (*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Silberfeder'); blue hosta (*Hosta sieboldiana* 'Elegans'); red flowering astilbe (*Astilbe x arendsii* 'Fanal'); Serbian spruce (*Picea omorika*); river birch (*Betula nigra*); panicle hydrangea (*Hydrangea paniculata* 'Tardiva'); dwarf oriental spruce (*Picea orientalis*); Japanese snowbell (*Styrax japonicus*); Fat Albert blue spruce (*Picea pungens* 'Fat Albert')

Zones: 2-8

Enhancing a pond-like pool

Here's what was done to make this setting look natural and work at night:

Plantings reflect the natural approach. Cipriano used an Oriental spruce with short needles, a hosta with big leaves, River Birch trees, Japanese Snowball, and grasses such as Miscanthus and pink Spirea. Selections were massed in groups, except for the hosta, which Cipriano wanted to highlight as an anchor for the spa.

Rocks were massed. Freeform shapes were picked (both large boulders and smaller elements) and assembled by hand to look as if they had always been there.

Illumination was installed. To light the area for night use, Cipriano added a variety of bulbs for path lights and in trees, lighting the latter from the ground up and from the top of the trees down, but always subtly.

Photography: Cipriano Landscape Design



A flat backyard can be idyllic. But in the case of a Colonial-style brick home in Mahwah, New Jersey, the homeowners wanted a sloping site so they could incorporate a natural-looking waterfall that would tumble into a new pool they also desired, along with an adjacent spa and play area for their children. Landscape designer Chris Cipriano was hired to transform the 1-acre site.

He and his clients decided on natural-style elements, both in the rock choices, hardscape and new plantings. To gain the height, Cipriano elevated the site in one area by 7'. To tie the entire new design into an existing dining terrace, he chose materials in a similar palette. He paved the dining terrace in random regular slabs of Pennsylvania bluestone for a formal effect, but used irregular gray Tennessee crab orchard for the

steps that lead up to the diving perch, as it's less formal. It also has a gray palette that complements the blue of the bluestone.

To fit with the natural theme, Cipriano designed the pool in a freeform shape that extends 55' at one point; a sun shelf at one end is just 1' deep so children can play. Gray mosaic stone tiles rim the edge of the pool, and Cipriano plastered the interior with dark gray marcite so the water appears to be dark blue.

The coping of the pool is also Tennessee crab orchard.

The eight-person spa was designed with the same plaster, tile and stones and installed with eight therapeutic jets. Cipriano selected plant materials with the same natural effect in mind; some taller elements screen neighbors' houses. What gives the yard its most natural touch are Pennsylvania fieldstone boulders—more than 120 tons were brought in.

entertainment central

Hosting a crowd meant adding a kitchen, music system and lights

BELOW: A second patio was added to extend this home's entertaining space.

RIGHT: The cloth-covered pergola provides shade and shelters a complete self-contained kitchen with bluestone counters, a sound system and lights hidden in the rafters.



Landscape designer Chris Cipriano was hired to add more entertaining space to a home on 2 acres in Saddle River, New Jersey, which already had a back patio, grill and swimming pool. His solution was a second patio 30' from the existing one and a step down from the pool. To tie the design to the existing landscape and home, he aligned his new "entertaining center" with the center line of the pool, designed its floor in the same Pennsylvania blue flagstone as the other patio, and built low sitting walls and columns from brick and precast limestone, used on the home's exterior.

He repeated the Pennsylvania bluestone in 12'-long countertops, honed and given a bull-nose edge. A pergola provides shade and is supported by thick columns that echo some used in the home.

Since the clients wanted to entertain outdoors much of the year, Cipriano made weather-wise choices. Two refrigerators, two warming drawers, a sink and storage drawers are stainless and rust-proof. He incorporated a sound system and lights into the pergola's rafters. To inject color and softness along the hardscape's edges, he planted pink Knockout shrub roses, variegated lillyturf that produces a purple flower as well as some texture, and white azaleas that flower in spring and summer and keep their green foliage all winter.

behind the scenes

Landscape architect: Chris Cipriano, Cipriano Landscape Design, Ramsey, NJ, plantnj.com, 201-785-0800

Challenge: Add a new entertainment patio that fits existing structures

Best outcome: Complement of textures

Main plants used: Pink Knockout shrub rose (*Rosa 'Knockout'*); lillyturf (*Liriope 'Muscari Variegata'*); Delaware Valley white azalea (*Azalea 'Delaware'*)

Zones: 4-10

Picking outdoor kitchen appliances

Almost everything that goes into an indoor kitchen can now be used outdoors. A kitchen can feature stone corbels and balusters, mosaic tile backsplashes, paper towel dispensers, dishwashers, under-cabinet televisions, under-counter lighting, multiple refrigerators, warming drawers, sinks and storage.

Photography: Cipriano Landscape Design



vacation at home

An architectural feature separates dining, relaxing and swimming zones

ABOVE: The impressive pergola acts as both a canopy and a divider between the pool and the patio below.

ABOVE RIGHT: Close to a back kitchen door, the three-zone outdoor center can easily accommodate family and friends year round.

Photography: Cipriano Landscape Design



A Colonial-style home in Mahwah, New Jersey, was the perfect backdrop for a couple's entertaining needs. "They're constantly having people over," says landscape designer Chris Cipriano, who was hired to make the outdoors as much of a gathering-eating-cooking zone as the indoors. To do so, Cipriano designed a freeform pool on a higher part of the sloping yard; close by, but nearer to the back doors, he constructed a patio that features three zones for cooking, schmoozing at a bar and eating. Altogether, the couple can accommodate 32, seated.

But the real eye-catcher is the big pergola Cipriano's colleague, landscape architect Bill Moore, designed using a metal frame and fiberglass exterior.

To create a natural look, Cipriano paved the patio in different-sized stones laid in patterns to differentiate the zones, but he bordered all in bluestone. The table is a custom design, with a honed granite top and a base of Adirondack granite veneer, which was repeated in the cooking and bar counters. One lesson from this job that Cipriano offers is to add everything from the get-go, like built-in lighting and enough electrical outlets. "It's much more expensive to go back and retrofit than to install them from the start," he says.

behind the scenes

Landscape designer: Chris Cipriano, Cipriano Landscape Design, Ramsey, NJ., plantnj.com, 201-785-0800

Challenge: Homeowners had narrow, long backyard and wanted to accommodate facilities to swim, cook, eat and entertain graciously

Best outcome: Ability to entertain as many as 32 at a seated dinner without using fold-up tables

Main plants used: Katsura tree (*Cercidiphyllum japonica*); Hinoki cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtuse* 'Aurea'); Hoopsi Colorado spruce (*Picea pungens* 'Hoopsi'); cranberry viburnum (*Viburnum* 'trilobum'); catmint (*Nepita*)

Zones: 2-8

Making a pergola work in a backyard

Pergolas add shade, structure and style, but before you build, consider these guidelines:

Use the right scale. This pergola has large 2' x 3' columns that stand atop stone piers, and the beams and rafters were detailed with intricate purlins. Everything

is in proper scale with the large Colonial-style home.

Use the right materials.

Instead of using wood that can be damaged by the elements and requires re-painting, Cipriano now prefers fiberglass or plastic, painted to fit the home's palette.