



In this outdoor space designed by ecodesign, a compact circular hybrid spa and plunge pool makes optimum use of the small space.



*Expert tip*

Lighting plays a pivotal part in a small pool's role as a water feature. A clever lighting plan can ensure that the body of water is beautiful at night and a pleasure to view from inside the home.



# Plunging ahead

*Planning a compact swimming pool? Well, here are a few tips to get you started*

**WORDS:** Adrian Swain

**1. Think outside the box**

The squeeze of the great Aussie backyard has seen the advent of the compact hybrid swimming pool in new developments, inner-city suburbs and areas of urban consolidation. While space may have decreased, the desire for a refreshing summer dip in the backyard pool hasn't. The challenge has been set: reinterpret the backyard pool. Make it compact yet maximise its functional features.

**2. Use innovative features**

With compact pools the rules have changed: hybrid pools have features of both plunge pools and spas. When designing a compact pool, you need to consider how the users will interact with each other and consider non-traditional approaches. Imagine oversized bench areas that operate like a chaise, circular or square spaces more like a conversation pit than a spa, or theatre-like seats so you can watch your favourite Blu-ray on a balmy summer evening.

**3. Think relaxation, not exercise**

If you're planning a compact pool, you need to abandon thoughts of using it for exercise (unless you include swim jets) or for more active pool play. With the removed expectation of swimming laps comes the opportunity to approach the internal design of

your pool in a more creative way and to ensure it is custom-designed to cater for all your needs.

**4. Consider the construction**

When designing a compact pool, you need to give special consideration to the construction of the surrounding structures as, usually, the pool interfaces with foundations or walls associated with the home or other structural features. Extra engineering or salt-tolerant masonry may be required to ensure the longevity of the construction.

**5. Splash out on finishes**

Compact pools give you more freedom when selecting materials. Finishes such as mosaic tiles, honed concrete and natural stone become more achievable because, with less surface to cover, your costs are kept down. You will also be able to afford other special features and technology, from integrated glass walls to inbuilt pool-cleaning systems, gas heating, spa jets, LED lighting features and swim jets.

**6. Use creative fencing solutions**

Normally, compact pools are built in small spaces, so complying with pool fencing regulations can require a creative approach, such as elevating the

pool out of the ground by 1200mm so the pool walls become the pool fence. Spas are allowed lockable covers, permitting the implementation of innovative solutions, such as a cover that doubles as a day bed.

**7. Integrated outdoor living**

With compact pools we usually see adjoining spaces that are intrinsically linked with an internal living area. Make the most of the opportunity to integrate outdoor and indoor spaces and carefully consider what you will need for poolside entertaining, such as a day bed or sun loungers, a cooking space, shade structures or an outdoor television. ■

*Prepared by Adrian Swain and the ecodesign team on behalf of the Australian Institute of Landscape Designers & Managers (AILDM). [www.aildm.com.au](http://www.aildm.com.au).*

**The benefits**

If you think a small outdoor space limits your choices when it comes to swimming pools, think again. Thanks to modern technology and design, there are many ways a pool can be integrated into a modestly sized outdoor area. All you need is a space-maximising layout and some clever landscaping.

Not only are compact pools cost-effective and easy to install; they're also low maintenance. Plus, if you have a small backyard or courtyard, it makes good sense to leave some space for the garden and an entertainment area rather than have a pool take up the entire space.