



Vanishing edge is also referred to as negative edge, disappearing edge, and knife edge.

September Swimming — The Latest in Pool Design

BY KURT KRUEGER

Homeowners are expanding their horizons, quite literally, with vanishing edge pools (also known as infinity edge pools). The edge of the pool disappears as the water blends into the horizon, often revealing a mesmerizing view. Although this design technique has been around for a few decades, we are seeing more calls for this high-end feature among our Brentwood clients. Vanishing edge pools require the property to have a slope. Usually a grade change of at least 2' will facilitate this look. In addition to being necessary for the mechanics and engineering of the design, the change in grade is what creates the dramatic effect. The lack of a walkable area at the outer (vanishing) edge of the pool, and no guard rail, further opens up the view.

If the property is flat, a vanishing edge is still possible, and can be achieved by raising the entire pool out of the ground. A raised deck to access the pool is then built to connect to the main house or pool house.

Catch Pool

When designing a vanishing edge pool, the water appears level to the naked eye, but the vanishing edge side is ever so slightly lower than the rest of the pool. This ensures that the water flows to the edge to create the desired look. On the underside of the vanishing edge is a lower level catch pool.

The catch pool 'catches' the excess water overflowing the edge — whether from rain, the water that is displaced when people swim in the pool, or water that is blown out of the pool by wind. It is critical to calculate the maximum amount of water the catch pool needs to be able to accommodate these events. The catch pool also acts as a reservoir to replace water in the main pool from water lost due to evaporation. Improper engineering and undersizing, or not making the catch pool wide enough, will create spillage. Plantings below it will be constantly wet with pool water that is dis-

placed and misses the catch pool. This can lead to erosion and very costly problems.

Water Leveling

Continual water flow helps create the vanishing edge illusion. An electronic water leveling system recirculates the water from the catch pool up to the main pool using a pump. Jets at or near the bottom of the main pool funnel the water in. This allows the surface of the pool to remain still — another essential feature of vanishing edge pool design. There are various manufacturers of these systems. From experience, this isn't a place to skimp on costs since it is essential to the design. It is best to purchase a system from an established manufacturer with a reputation for lasting quality.

Zero Edge

Another emerging trend in Brentwood is zero edge pool design. This is when there is no outer edge of pool coping and a drop of a few inches down to the water level — what you see in traditional pool design. Instead, the water level is at the same level as the surrounding pool deck. The defining characteristic of this design is that the pool surface looks like a sheet of glass. A small channel of less than two inches wide and as small as half an inch wide, is inset at the edge of the pool deck to catch water overflow. The water is then funneled into a hidden basin. The mechanics are similar to a vanishing edge where an electronic water leveling system is used to keep the pool at the proper level. If you combine both a zero edge pool and a vanishing edge pool, overflow for both is funneled into the catch pool.

Other trends in pool design include multi-tiered, multiple bodies of water with different activity zones, including a spa or exercise pool that spills into the main pool. A zero entry area that gently slopes into the pool (also referred to as a Baja Shelf) and large, flat sun decks with space for lounge chairs are more luxury features. If the property has a steep slope, features like swim up bars and waterfalls are fun. The possibilities are endless as we think outside the rectangular "pool" box!



Surrounding the zero edge is an opportunity to use different materials.

Kurt Krueger is the principal architect at Kurt Krueger Architects, specializing in Brentwood homes.