

by Tom Troxell



Designer Michelle Troxell created distinct areas to meet all of the clients' needs.

# FAMILY-FRIENDLY OUTDOOR RETREAT

KEEPS TEENS SAFE AT HOME

Designer: Michelle Troxell of Grace Thomas Designs

- Pool and fire pit design: NVBlu of Chantilly, Va.
- Furniture: JANUS et Cie, C.R. Plastic Products, Aira, IMAX, Pottery Barn
- Fabrics: JANUS Fabrics, Sunbrella

Photo credit: David Meaux Photography



IF YOU ASK MICHELLE TROXELL, OWNER AND senior designer of Grace Thomas Designs, she will tell you that the biggest challenge when designing outdoor spaces for a family is satisfying the diverse needs and tastes of both parents and children, particularly if the children are teenagers. Everyone wants to use the space for different reasons and has their own unique sense of style as

A few "sanctuary spaces" provide quiet, relaxing spots.

well. Pulling it all together in an integrated and coordinated way is the challenge and the fun for these projects.

Troxell and her design team were recently engaged by a family in northern Virginia to design an outdoor space that included a new

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For end-of-the-day relaxation, the Adirondack chairs from C. R. Plastic Products cozy up to the fire pit.



pool and fire pit area that had been designed and built by NVBlu of Chantilly, Va. The owners wanted a simple and elegant design that would be both stylish and functional and would complement the colorful landscaping of the outdoor space. The family wanted to be able to enjoy the raucous fun of a family pool but then to relax in the beauty and quiet of their three-acre property.

Troxell's idea was to create a design based on distinct areas designed with specific purposes in mind that would stand alone as attractive spaces yet complement each other in a cohesive overall design.

One of the main reasons the owners added the pool was to provide an environment for the family to spend more time together and to encourage their children to have their friends gather at their home. With that in mind, the first need for the pool area was ample seating

for two teenage children and their many friends. This was achieved with sling lounge chairs, in a neutral nylon color from Aria, that are lightweight and easily moved and grouped in multiple ways. These chairs are also easy to clean, a requirement for messy teenagers. Black-and-white patterned pillows add a little style to these basic lounges. Troxell also added small side tables from Pottery Barn that feature inlaid tile tops.

With the kids' basic design needs met, the next objective for the parents was to create areas that could be peaceful sanctuary spaces when the teenagers were not around, perfect for getting out of the sun to read a book, sip a cool beverage or to take an afternoon nap.

For this design phase, Troxell introduced a touch of formality with an Amalfi daybed from JANUS et Cie, chosen for its classic lines and its simple elegance. This

piece is constructed from powder coated stainless steel and features an extra-thick reticulated foam seat cushion for luxurious lounging that is finished in a white JANUS fabric that is both stylish and practical. Pops of color were introduced by covering the throw pillows in solid and patterned green fabrics. This same solid green fabric also covers pillows on the Adirondack chairs that sit on the pool's tanning ledge.

The furniture in this design area is accented by a white ceramic table from IMAX Corp. Additional adult seating is provided by a JANUS et Cie Wing lounge chair and Vino ottoman woven in Lava JANUSFiber. The cushions for these pieces were covered in the same white fabric as the daybed and accented by beige and black solid and patterned pillows.

Evening activity for this family often centers on the fire pit where they wind down

with friends after a busy pool day, enjoying conversation and making s'mores around a crackling wood fire. Here Troxell provided ample seating in the form of black Adirondack chairs with striped Sunbrella headrests. These chairs from C.R. Plastic Products are made from recycled plastic and are built to withstand exposure to the elements year-round, as well as the spills and messes from teenagers and adults alike. The colors and textures blend well with the stone in the hardscape and fire pit.

This fashionable and functional outdoor design provides distinct spaces for each family member to enjoy in his or her own way, with each area flowing to the next with coordinating and complementary fabrics, colors and materials. The end result is a family-friendly yet sophisticated backyard retreat for all ages. [ct](#)