

Water, Water, Everywhere

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Lake of Dreams - Wynn Casino, Las Vegas I joined my wife in Las Vegas recently where she was attending a conference. If you have been before, I'm sure you have noticed that water abounds in this desert oasis. From the dancing fountains at Bellagio, to "O" a Cirque du Soleil show touted as an "aquatic masterpiece of theatre," to the Lake of Dreams at the Wynn casino, to the gondoliers at the Venetian and the Pirate Show at Treasure Island, and even the volcano at the Mirage which is set in the middle of a giant waterfall ... Virtually every attraction on The Strip has some sort of water feature that attracts the crowds. As far as esthetics, these aquatic extravaganzas are a bigger draw than the gambling. A cleaner, more elegant side to Sin City. In the real world, I believe we are under-selling the power of water.

As retailers and installers we need to be aware that people enjoy and appreciate the effects of water. Vegas is testimony to that. Have you ever stopped to think how water truly impacts people? Physically we cannot survive without it. But we should not under-estimate the powerful emotional draw of water features. What can we do to make those features more readily available to the common consumer?

First of all, diversity is the key. Customers don't necessarily want the same pond and fountain as their neighbor. The possibilities are limited only by the lack of an imagination. My home has no less than seven unique water features: three bubbling urns anchor the patio; a corner fountain is on the screen porch; a wall fountain in the front courtyard; a fancy three-tier fountain over a recirculating reservoir out front; a man-made stream; a small lily pond with waterfall and a bubbling boulder bird bath. And we live on a lake. Yet, it's all very subtle --- no Vegas glitz, just plenty of water options that blend naturally into the surroundings. The idea is that we can see or hear water from a 360° angle wherever we are in the house.

Our stores offer a similar smorgasbord of options and ideas. The sound of water bubbling, trickling and splashing can be heard throughout from all the streams, urns, fountains and ponds. On any scale, water can be a feast for the senses.

But the feast ought not cost a fortune. To alleviate homeowners concerns with the perceived high cost of operation, offer environmentally-friendly, low maintenance water features. Simply increasing the plumbing size to reduce head pressure can make any water feature more energy efficient. Correctly designed recirculating reservoirs can actually conserve and recycle rainwater. While 'green' building is the current darling of the construction industry, most pond builders do not put enough emphasis on ease of maintenance. Too frequently homeowners can be scared away by the perception of too much fuss. Almost all of my personal water features are virtually zero maintenance. The last thing I want to do when I come home is work. Like everyone else, I want to sit on my back patio, relax and simply enjoy my yard.

Some things that happen in Vegas shouldn't stay in Vegas.