



DEAN HOFFMEYER/TIMES-DISPATCH

David Cottrell watches over the construction of a pergola in his back yard that's based on an original Charles Gillette design for the home.

Rooms with a view



The 14-by-34-foot structure was put together using wooden pegs in a "historically correct construction," according to Dreaming Creek Timber Frame Homes.

No 'cookie-cutter' designs for these outdoor spaces

BY JULIE YOUNG

TIMES-DISPATCH STAFF WRITER

Behind David and Christy Cottrell's elegant Tudor home on St. Andrews Road is a spectacular new landscape design made even more enchanting by its historic roots.

When they purchased the 80-year-old home four years ago, the couple came into possession of a noteworthy set of landscape drawings.

The Cottrells were astonished and delighted when the previous owner presented them with an original Charles Gillette layout that had been designed but never executed for the home's back yard.

The plan included a pergola, reflecting pool, ponds and landscaping for the yard, which adjoins the Country Club of Virginia property. The Cottrells hired an architect to bring the pergola design up to modern building codes and add some touches to the work of Gillette, Richmond's renowned master garden designer.

"As soon as we knew we had the plans, we wanted to execute them," said Christy



The finished project also included a Gillette reflecting pool salvaged from a renovation project at the governor's mansion.

Cottrell. "It's pretty much as authentic as we could make it."

Construction on the project began in January. Work is nearly complete, although the Cottrells are awaiting delivery on a bronze statue of their daughter, which will become the centerpiece of the reflecting pool. The pool is a Gillette piece that the Cottrells salvaged from the governor's mansion during a recent garden renovation. Stepping stones that wind through their lawn's ponds and waterfalls also have

regional and historic origins.

"We tried to use as much old stone as we could, and we were able to get a lot of granite from The Jefferson [hotel] while it was in the process of renovation," Cottrell said. "My husband had been searching everywhere he could for old stone for about two and a half years. A good portion of it is river stone."

The centerpiece of the lawn is the new

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View

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pergola, measuring 14 by 34 feet. "It's historically correct construction, heavy white-oak timbers held together with wooden pegs," said Roe Cole, sales manager for Dreaming Creek Timber Frame Homes, the local firm that built the structure.

The Cottrells' renovation reflects a national trend toward "outdoor rooms" that are furnished with expanded decks, gazebos, trellises and arbors, gardens and ponds.

Throughout Richmond, back yards are becoming extensions of indoor living spaces. Homeowners in all price ranges are using lawn ponds, garden ornaments, comfortable furniture and neatly landscaped flower beds to create an inviting place for relaxing, entertaining, cooking and playing.

Staying home, remodeling

A growing number of builders and homeowners have begun to think outside the box when it comes to enlarging or replacing standard decks, many of which have become splintery gray eyesores that require frequent cleaning, sealing or staining.

"The trend does seem to be that more people are staying in their homes and remodeling what they have," said Don Weaver, sales director for Archadeck, an international custom deck and porch company based in Richmond.

"Since outdoor living space is



CALIFORNIA REDWOOD ASSOCIATION

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bility, particularly in areas of

an extension of the home, people want to make it look as nice as possible. We've tried to get away from the basic cookie-cutter decks."

Some of Archadeck's projects truly can be called exterior living areas. The company specializes in multilevel decks with unusual angles, closed risers, built-in hot tubs, benches, planters and screened gazebos.

All the comforts

Upscale decks also can be outfitted with mood lighting, stereo speakers, freestanding fireplaces and plush furniture, all of which helps to blur the boundaries between indoors and outdoors.

Some homeowners are requesting sheltered kitchens equipped with grills, smokers or rotisseries that are surrounded by all-weather countertops, storage and pop-up work trays.

"Some people have an idea of what they want, maybe a picture they've seen in a magazine, but most are kind of open for suggestions," Weaver said.

The company has a software program that allows homeowners to see prospective designs in 3-D.

One of Archadeck's more elaborate projects is a four-level deck cascading from a contemporary home down to the river in Kilmarnock. "It goes from nine feet (above ground) down to ground level and has 1,500 square feet," Weaver said. "It has a screened gazebo on one end and the whole thing faces the water."

Professional deck builders recently surveyed by Thompson's, makers of waterproofing products, note a surge in multilevel decks. Some of the more spectacular projects include a seven-level deck totaling 22,000 square feet,

Tips for building a deck

If you're thinking about expanding or building a deck, consider the following tips from the Southern Pine and California Redwood councils:

- Fit the design to the house rather than just building a boxy platform.

- To provide suitable drainage, keep the level of the deck about an inch below interior floors.

- Allow for air circulation under the deck and between deck boards.

- Research the stability, endurance and moisture resistance of the deck timbers, posts, beams and other structural pieces.

- Use corrosion-resistant hardware, preferably stainless steel or hot-dipped galvanized varieties. To avoid nail stains and popping, consider special deck screws or hidden fasteners.

a five-level deck with a pool on the third tier and decks shaped like a baby-grand piano and the state of Texas.

Another growing trend is toward manmade decking materials, particularly recycled products.

Wood composites, plastics, aluminum and fiberglass are among a growing number of alternatives to traditional lumber, according to the Deck Industry Association. Homeowners now have more than 40 decking materials from which to choose, the association reported.

About 80 percent of Archadeck's designs are made of pres-

- Obtain necessary permits and follow local requirements to be sure your deck is up to local code. Check with local utilities before digging.

- Follow safe construction practices. Use ladders properly, wear eye goggles and dust masks when sawing and do not burn scraps of treated lumber.

- Check seasoning requirements of the lumber you have chosen before staining or painting. Apply a protective water-repellent finish, preferably with a mildewcide and ultra-violet-light inhibitor.

(For best coverage, apply the sealer to all sides of lumber pieces before construction, then add a second coat when the deck is completed.)

Reapply finish about every two years.

sure-treated Southern yellow pine and the other 20 percent is composite products such as Trex, Weaver said.

Trex Easy Care Decking, based in Winchester, is made from recycled plastic grocery bags and pallet wrap. It provides a splinter-free, maintenance-free surface that will not rot, crack or split from moisture or sunlight.

It is not intended for structural pieces, such as joists, beams or posts. For information on Trex, call 1-800-BUY-TREX or visit www.trex.com.

Composites are becoming increasingly popular because of their low maintenance and dura-

high heat and humidity.

Another composite, Weather-Best, is part plastic and part excess wood products. It has the look and feel of real wood but is resistant to carpenter ants, rot and decay.

For information on Weather-Best, call Louisiana-Pacific at 1-800-648-6893 or visit www.WeatherBest.LPCorp.com

Composite products cost about 30 percent more than treated lumber, Weaver said, although homeowners do recoup some of the expense by not having to clean and treat the deck every year or two.

NOTE: Be sure the alternative decking material you choose is code-listed by your local building department. Ask for a list of contractors who are experienced in working with alternative materials. Check to see that enough of the material is available to complete your project.

• Call Julie Young at (804) 649-6732 or e-