

Piquantly Poolside

Blending a panoramic view with a stunning combination of contemporary and traditional styles, architect Tom Adams and landscaper Pratt Brown create a perfect recipe for seasonal entertaining.

Text by CARA D. CLARK / Photography by JEAN ALLSOPP

Architect Tom Adams chose sleek outdoor furnishings for the poolside, using neutral mesh and brushed chrome, along with a beige market umbrella, to complement the vibrant flowers in the garden designed by Pratt Brown.

FOR THE GOURMET, a bland dish needs new flavor to imbue it with verve. For the architect, the same rule applies to a nondescript structure. Architect Tom Adams of Adams Gerndt Design Group teamed up with landscaper Pratt Brown to add just the right amount of seasoning to a pool house in need of some zest.

What began as a remodel project to make the structure more appealing for owners Doree and Tony Nelson soon became a total makeover that changed the relationship between the house and its environment. "The original pool house was an enclosed structure



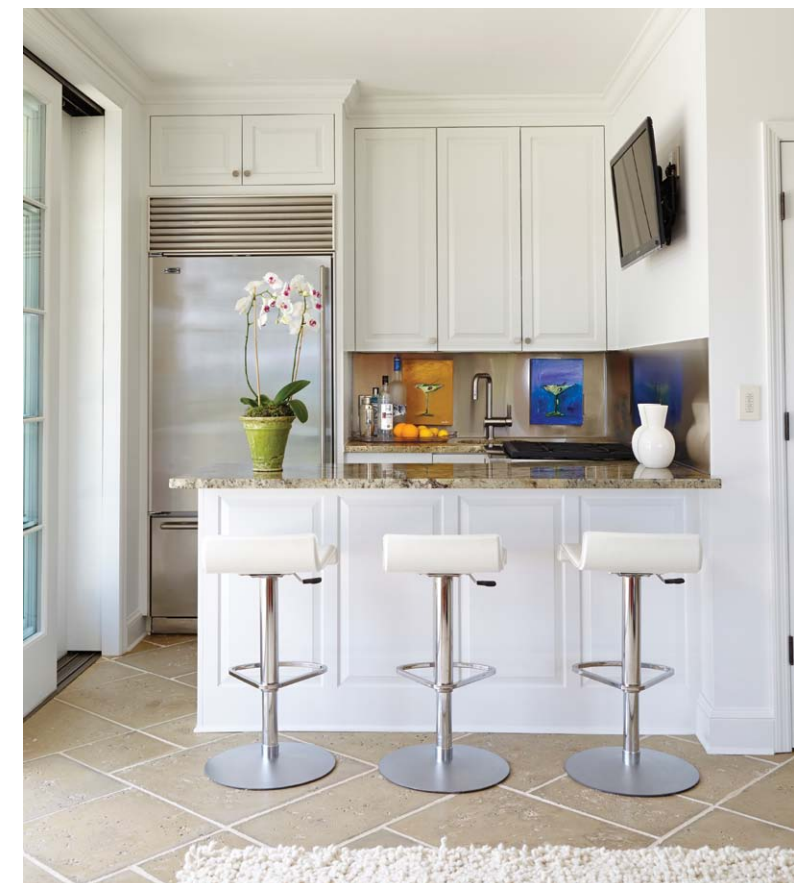
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Tom took the existing pool house down to the studs, replacing a flat roof with a pitched slate one to match the main house. The pool house interiors include custom furnishings in bright colors to create a fun atmosphere for entertaining. Custom cabinetry, Italian barstools in white leather, and polished chrome create a sleek, contemporary design and a light atmosphere. When Pratt Brown reworked the landscape of the Nelson home, he added modular panels of boxwoods, in keeping with the traditional style of the house.

with a small living room and not a lot of space for entertaining,” Tom says. “We gutted it so we could start over.”

He began by adding sliding pocket door systems so the pool house can be opened up in the warmer months. “Now they have a space that relates to the outdoors,” Tom explains. “You can slide all the doors open and feel as if there’s no difference between the inside and outside.”

On the north side of the structure, a solid panel of English ivy rises from the boxwood hedges, hinting to its traditional origins. However, the plan for the interiors was extremely different. “The main house is very traditional on the inside,” Tom says. “We wanted the pool house to be much more contemporary and playful—a breath of fresh air.”

As part of the makeover, Tom replaced the flat roof with a pitched slate roofs to echo the main house. Inside, he chose custom pieces such as a designer sofa upholstered



The space around the existing pool deck wouldn't allow for a table and chairs. Instead, Tom used Peacock Pavers in slabs to make a fitting place for the teak-top table, interweaving the grass between and "creating a relationship to the pool, but more to the view."



"Birmingham has **beautiful private gardens**, and when people from all over the country tour them, they're **amazed at the scale and color** they see. When you incorporate color in a garden, you're **giving people a show** in the landscape."

—Pratt Brown



resources: architects and custom furnishings: **TOM ADAMS AND ADAM GERNT OF ADAMS GERNT DESIGN GROUP** • adams-gernt.com • 205.939.1113 • landscape: **PRATT BROWN of Pratt Brown Landscapes, Inc.** • 205.951.3384

in lime green and Italian chrome-and-white-leather bar stools. A white wool rug with 2-inch nap adds a soft, luxurious touch. "I credit Doree with helping make the project a success," Tom says. "She wanted to tie in colors of the furniture with the colorful garden." To create more entertaining space outside, Tom laid paver slabs interwoven with grass to anchor a rectangular table, chairs, and a market umbrella. The area offers a panoramic view of Red Mountain. Nearby, loungers by Barlow Tyrie combine brushed aluminum with vanilla-colored mesh, a perfect complement to the blue-gray water in the pool and the changing hues of the sky and landscape.

When the Nelsons moved into their home several years ago, landscape contractor Pratt Brown began work on the new surroundings. "Behind the house, we changed out everything except the large Burford hollies," Pratt says. "They are majestic specimens and are probably original to the house."

To the existing pool and patio, Pratt added modular panels of boxwood hedges—kept crewcut short—to line the red-brick steps and complement the traditional boxwood-and-flower borders. He continuously keeps the garden alive with color, changing the mix of annuals and perennials twice a year with different plants so the garden is never the same.

"I like tall and short flowers and having flowers spilling over the wall," Pratt explains. "It looks like more of a border than just a bed. We've used 50 or 60 different flowers, incorporating different textures with the foliage as well."

At the top of Pratt's priority list was opening up a view which had been obscured by trees and brush. He earmarked select trees to remain to create a visual effect, with the vista unveiled between the trunks of those trees. For Tom, the reward from the project is its timelessness. "It could have been built 50 years ago, because it fits its environment so well and fits the proportions of the space."