



HOW TO MAKE AN OUTDOOR OASIS

TECHO-BLOC USES PERMEABLE
PAVERS TO TRANSFORM
OUTDOOR SPACES.

BY COLLEEN DEHART

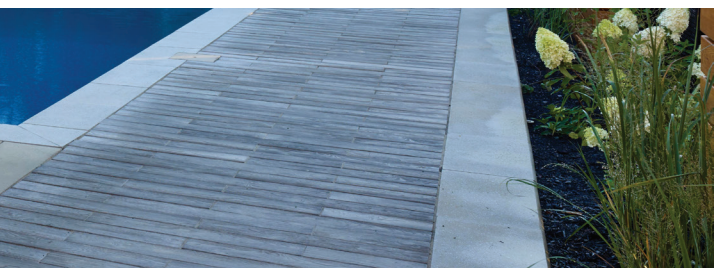
A challenging space does not have to be a death sentence. Turning a once unusable backyard into a relaxing, beautiful outdoor retreat can be accomplished with a little creativity. Just look at the Tricinci's home in King City, Ontario, just north of Toronto.

Larry and Angelica Tricinci live in an upscale neighborhood, with upscale homes, but their backyard was anything but. They had a concrete slab porch off of the back of their house, followed by an open, sloping yard—squished between neighbors—that ended in a ravine. It was time for a change, so the couple turned to **Techo-Bloc, Inc.**

Landscape product supplier Techo-Bloc met the challenge, turning their backyard into a functional, outdoor entertainment oasis. “There was always one cool idea after another,” Larry says. “At some point we just said, just show us and I am sure we will



Techo-Bloc's Borealis pavers gave the fire pit a wood-like feel, and a cedar screen added a level of privacy.



like it ... There was some really neat stuff they put together. The whole thing came together beautifully.”

Avid entertainers, the couple wanted a pool and areas to accommodate guests of all ages. “They wanted a space that was easy to navigate while still creating distinct areas that were interesting to explore and hang out in with different groups of people,” says **Alex Cadieux**, director of B2B marketing for Techo-Bloc. “They wanted people to always have something to do and not be bored being in one space all day.”

Techo-Bloc designers used their Raffinato collection to extend the porch, building a wall and widening the steps leading off the back porch to the pool deck—the steps were originally compact and short, making travel to the yard uninviting. “We wanted to make one big uniform space, taking into

consideration the age of the visitors, such as grandparents, and make it as soft and transient as possible,” Cadieux says.

The pool deck was designed with texture and comfort in mind. They went with their large Blu Grande slabs to limit seams. A pool house and cabana was constructed to the side of the property with an outdoor kitchen—complete with a built-in grill and bar area.

The designers on this project decided to embrace the yard’s severe grade, rather than waste resources trying to flatten it. This allowed them to install a fire pit area beyond the pool without having to dig deep into the ground. “The pool naturally gave us about four feet offset from the existing grade,” Cadieux says. “Rather than building up and adding stone to get to the same elevation as the pool deck, we used the ex-

isting grade point and built a wall to create an intimate space.”

They used Raffinato wall block to build the wall beyond the pool and added aesthetically pleasing touches like natural gas burners. The wall is also designed to be a bench seating area around the sunken fire pit, which sits at the lowest grade point of the hardscape construction. The fire pit was constructed out of Techo-Bloc’s Borealis pavers to give it a wood-like feel. “It adds a level of intimacy to the backyard,” Cadieux says. A cedar privacy screen was installed around the fire pit and corners of the pool area to frame in the area and offer an even cleaner, more modern look.

Stormwater drainage was a huge concern when designing the space. “The property was naturally pitched down to a conservation area that could not be touched, and it

had to stay like that forever,” Cadieux says. The proximity of the surrounding homes made it impossible to drain water into the side yard, and of course they wanted to avoid bringing water toward the home—leaving the only place to funnel water at the very back of the yard. “That is a long way to go,” he says.

Ultimately, the design team decided to go with a permeable paving system. Layers of open-graded stone were installed under the slabs in the pool deck and in the joints to serve as a natural filtration system. A pipe was installed under the deck—between the pool and the pool house—to send any water not absorbed into the ground down to a dry well at the back of the yard. The back porch and downspouts from the pool house were designed so all water would flow to the pool deck. “All water is absorbed through

the surface and sent away to another area where it won’t cause any problems,” Cadieux says. “There are no surface drains. Every joint between every slab is a place for water to infiltrate. We managed the grade change and the drainage challenge and gave them a uniform and smooth surface.”

The permeable pavers and slabs are also environmentally friendly, Cadieux says. “All the debris in the water are captured by the material itself; it is being naturally filtered. It is cleaner and soaked back into the ground gradually,” he says. “It is not flooding the street or neighbors’ backyard. It is controlled. There are tons of benefits.” The homeowners will also save on maintenance costs, as the stone will not be affected by temperature changes that can often lead to structural movement. **gb&d**

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF TECO-BLOC, INC.