

Natural Swimming Pool

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Scale 1:200

Section AA

Scale 1:100

Brief

Initially I was approached by the client (my five year old son and his 3 year old brother) who wanted a swimming pool in their garden. With no intention (or budget) for a conventional chlorinated pool I began exploring the possibilities for natural swimming. The client stipulated that it was to "be deep enough for jumping and it was to have a sandy beach for digging".

A natural swimming pool works by taking nutrient poor rainwater from adjacent roofs and bringing this water into a central swim zone. Rainwater is ideal as it contains very limited concentrations of nutrients. The planting is on a thin, nutrient poor substrate. This encourages the plants to seek their nutrients from the water. However small microorganisms are also seeking their nutrients from the water. This constant competition for nutrients deprives algae of its food prevents blanket weed from forming.

The pool contains 2 zones, a swim zone and an adjacent regeneration zone. A submerged untreated Oak wall separates these zones. The swim zone is 2 meters deep and sufficient for diving into. The regeneration zone is shallow, allowing sunlight to quickly warm its waters. A low energy pump cycles the water through a filter, which is recessed beneath the untreated Larch timber deck. Only biological processes clean the water and due to Ireland's regular rainfall, no top ups are needed with tap water. The addition of water to the landscape has brought many unexpected visitors including swallows, swifts, bats, damselflies, dragonflies, moths, butterflies, frogs, pond skaters and a world of crustaceans for small children to explore.

This rigid form of the wall garden setting indicated the geometry for the natural swimming pool. This plan was worked through with the client to ensure that we were meeting the brief requirements. Even with the Irish weather, water temperatures regularly exceed 20 degrees and ensure that the pool is used very regularly from April to October. The clients (now competent swimmers) are now requesting amendments to the original design - "a springy diving board".

Key

- 01 Entrance doorway
- 02 Sheltered patio
- 03 Suspended diving deck
- 04 Sandy beach
- 05 Planted regeneration zone
- 06 Swim zone
- 07 Sunken steps
- 08 Sculpture location
- 09 Perennial meadow
- 10 Fagus hedge
- 11 Access to cut flower farm
- 12 Shed roofs (rainwater for pond)
- 13 Formal lawn
- 14 Circular planting area

