

Organic Waters

Experience the beauty of natural swimming pools

Now you can bring the natural world right to your home with the brilliant design of the natural pool. With this smart alternative to the traditional chlorine pool, you can swim in fresh water that is purified and cared for by an ecosystem. To get a better understanding of how natural pools work, we spoke with the Biotop Natural Pool Group who told us more about the fascinating concept of this ecologically-friendly paradise.



Chemical-free waters

Just a few years ago, water in the garden was associated with a light-blue swimming pool in a geometric shape; a foreign body that went unused most of the year. That the ecologically-friendly variety is a lovely alternative in any season has been proven time and again by the "Biotop Natural Pool Group" in Europe over the last twenty-five years. Even in England, the home of garden art, the idea was introduced years ago and recognition for this alternative to the traditional swimming pool continues to expand further. Last year the Austrian company Biotop introduced a pool to the market that makes it possible to swim in natural water even without a space-demanding regeneration zone.

A walk along a lake, river or stream – water holds a certain fascination for people and pulls them under its spell. There are many people who would like to be able to swim in their own gardens to cool off on hot summer days. Now, finally, there is competition for the classic light-blue swimming pool.

A natural swimming pool visually enhances the

garden all year long. Besides being able to enjoy it in summer, this combination of natural pond and swimming pool opens up a whole new world to the user: dragon flies, frogs, newts and aquatic beetles populate the natural pool just a few days after the planted zone is completed. And in winter the frozen "pond" can turn into a private skating rink.

How does it work?

The idea of a natural swimming pool, that is as close to nature as possible is already 25 years old and comes from the Austrian company "Biotop". Since its beginnings there have been many technical developments, yet what has remained the same is the basic principle of the natural pool, which has proved itself since the very first pool was constructed.

There are unlimited possibilities for designing the natural pool. Each pool is planned and calculated in line with the customer's ideas. For stable biological balance, however, it should be at least 40 square meters in size, which can be realized in almost any garden.

The total water surface of the natural pool is divided into a swimming area and a regeneration zone. The swimming area, which ideally is two meters deep, provides room for splashing, diving in, and swimming underwater. In the shallow regeneration zone the water is cleaned naturally by the plants and warmed by the most natural heater in the world, the sun. Thus, early in the season the natural pool achieves comfortable bathing temperatures, in summertime even up to 28 degrees. A wall separates the regeneration zone from the swimming area, which does not reach quite up to the surface, so that water circulates easily.

The natural pool is sealed with a UV-resistant synthetic liner, free of heavy metals, which covers the dividing wall between swimming area and regeneration zone right up to the edge of the pool.

In addition, each natural pool owner can have supplementary equipment if desired: underwater lighting makes even swimming at night time a delightful experience. An automatic water refilling



Right: The technical equipment is concealed under the sundeck and runs soundlessly; **above:** Even a natural swimming pool can offer clear water; **opposite:** A natural swimming pool is even possible in garden terrain. On the upper level the regeneration zone, on the lower level beside the terrace, the swimming zone.



mechanism replaces any water loss, which can be up to a centimeter of evaporation on hot summer days. The Curved Sieve Skimmer cleans the water surface from even the smallest impurities, and is animal-friendly. A newly-conceived pump house provides continuous water circulation without any pump noise and with low energy consumption.

The natural pool has to be filled only once. After a mere six weeks the biological balance and self-cleansing mechanisms adapt to conditions in the pool: floating matter drifts to the sides and sinks, nutrients are reabsorbed by the plants, and micro organisms destroy harmful bacteria. The amount of cleaning that remains for the natural pool owner is more of a relaxing activity than an unpleasant task. The natural pool is far more than a private swimming paradise: It provides new living space

for animals and plants that are threatened with extinction. And the mosquito prejudice, that worries many people when they think of having a biotope in their garden, should be clarified once and for all: the pool abounds with enough predators that simply love to eat mosquitoes.

Cost and construction

The construction time for a natural swimming pool is two weeks. The costs are similar to those of building a conventional pool. A pool 100 m² in size – according to its technical equipment – will cost from approximately € 30,000 to € 40,000. The larger the pool, the less it will cost per square meter of water surface, as the pump house is dimensioned for operating pools up to 500 m² and only the performance of the pump has to be

adapted to the size of the pool. The running costs for its upkeep, however, are much lower, primarily because no chemicals for the filter are needed.

After 25 years of the "Biotop Natural Pool", in 2008 the company presented an innovation that caused the sector to prick up its ears: a natural swimming pool without a regeneration zone. Following construction of a prototype and the first Biotop Swimming Pool in private gardens, the new product was ready for the market in 2009 and was met with great interest in both the public and private sector.

Sanitation

Optically a classic pool and yet a fully-fledged biological natural pool - the Biotop Swimming Pool has neither chlorine nor any other toxic

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Right above: A natural pool in a romantic garden in the UK; **below:** In contrast, a natural pool in northern Germany in a garden completely designed down to the last detail; **opposite:** This natural pool has become the trademark of Hotel Marini in Italy.



Right: The perfect example of a natural swimming pool compared to...; **below:** ...a Biotop Swimming Pool, which can do without a regeneration zone; **opposite:** A natural pool that is almost twenty years old, as beautiful as ever.

chemicals and offers pure swimming enjoyment in crystal-clear water. Instead of the regeneration zone which classic natural pools need together with the living plants and animals, a bio-filter and a specially-developed phosphorus filter take care of the biological and physical aspects of the water, keeping it pure and clear. The "PhosTec Ultra" serves to draw phosphorus out of the water, thus depriving algae of its nourishment and "starving" it. This method has been so successful that in the future it will also be used in Biotop Natural Pools, particularly in countries where the filling water is very high in phosphorus.

In countries with sub-tropic climates the water to be used for filling the pool must be examined in a laboratory. Here it is important to determine whether the water contains pathogens that do not exist in Europe, but which could be dangerous for swimmers in sub-tropic climates.

Going natural

Biotop Natural Pools are becoming increasingly popular in the commercial sector, for hotels and wellness resorts that wish to distinguish themselves from their competitors by showing that they are "different". A perfect example of this is the natural pool at Hotel Marini in Dorf Tyrol in South Tyrol (Italy). The natural pool, which was built in 2005, is particularly impressive at night with its underwater lighting, and has become the hotel's trademark. Or, as hotel co-manager Isabel Marini said about the hotel's new attraction: "The natural pool is our pride and joy." The statement is true of many Biotop Natural Pool owners. While at the outset the primary reason for building the pool was to be able to swim in their own garden, soon most natural pool owners simply appreciate the presence of water in their gardens, which raises the quality of life in their private paradise considerably. **AH**



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Source: Biotop
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