

Spa Surrounds

Harmonized designs in fencing, steps and decking

by Jason Cramp

Whether it is for a small, round, soft-sided spa or a large, acrylic portable hot tub, surround systems allow bathers to make the most of their hot water experience. Fencing, steps, decks, wrap-around countertops and bar stools – as well as waterfalls, outdoor fireplaces, wine racks and planters – are now packaged and sold as harmonized, co-ordinated systems that integrate the spa or hot tub into the backyard environment, giving the entire installation a ‘finished’ look.

One company specializing in spa surround systems is Outback Essentials of Welland, Ontario. Their product line includes maintenance-free, weather-resistant modular products such as interlocking molded resin patio tiles, prefabricated privacy fencing, anti-skid step systems and side countertops for spas.

“These accessories are made from weather-resistant composite materials similar to what many spa cabinets are now being made of, which is the reason they were introduced,” says David Wright, president of the company.

Shift Away From Traditional Cabinets

“There has been a shift away from traditional redwood and cedar spa cabinets toward maintenance-free composite materials – so our company decided to offer a full range of composite spa accessories that are colour-co-ordinated with each other and the spa cabinet,” states Wright. “Our tan-coloured surrounds, for example, are designed to work with redwood-based spa cabinets, while our light grey surrounds are designed to work with grey-based cabinets.”

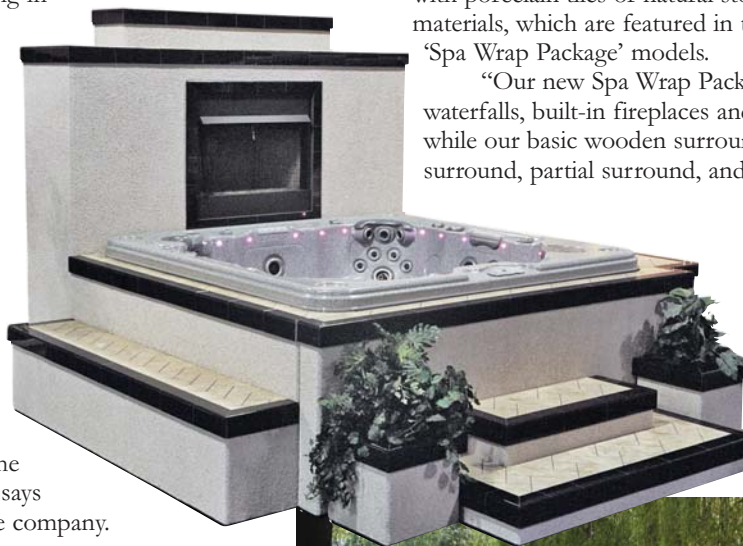
He also says that these types of accessories – especially fencing – have become more popular as backyards have become smaller and less private, and because they enhance the overall look of the spa.

“Our spa pad looks like slate and has an upscale look that hot tub owners are looking for,” says Wright.

“The pad also co-ordinates with the slate colour of the step riser and the clamps supporting the side bar, while the top surface of the steps and the side bar co-ordinate with the colour of the spa cabinet. The spa surround/windbreak also co-ordinates with the spa shell, creating a complete, harmonized outdoor ‘suite.’”

Also offering a wide range of customizable spa surround systems is Cal Spas of Pomona, California. Their ‘spa packages’ come in traditional wooden designs, as well as in a combination of rich-looking, reinforced stucco walls topped with porcelain tiles or natural stone or two-tone stone tile materials, which are featured in the company’s new high-end ‘Spa Wrap Package’ models.

“Our new Spa Wrap Packages are available with waterfalls, built-in fireplaces and seating for up to 10 people, while our basic wooden surrounds come in a choice of full surround, partial surround, and partial wall designs,” says Cal



Left: Spa Wrap Packages from Cal Spas are available with waterfalls, built-in fireplaces and seating for up to 10 people.

Below: Spa surround systems from Outback Essentials feature a spa pad with the look of slate that co-ordinates with other components in the surround.



Spas' Shiva Noble. "These surrounds add extra seating, privacy and seclusion around the spa without requiring anything extra to be built."

Popular options on Cal Spas' new Spa Wrap Packages include LED accent lighting, LED block lights installed inside two corner columns, stereo systems, Ameristone™ two-tone tile and colour-co-ordinated stucco used in the fireplace walls, spa skirt, step base and planters.

"People like gathering around a hot tub and relaxing – not just sitting on the side with their feet dangling in the water. They want a comfortable place where friends and family can relax outside and sit and talk – in other words – an extension of the home," explains Noble. "They also don't want a 'box' just sitting in their yard – so the entire hot tub area has to be pleasing to the eye – and a hot tub with a surround is certainly more attractive than one without."

Another company that offers spa surround systems is Essentials of Monrovia, California. Their All Seasons™ thermoformed composite spa steps feature skid-resistant surfaces in grey, tan and brown colours in monochromatic or two-tone versions to match the spa skirt, with some models also featuring an integral storage cabinet for suntan lotion, towels, and sunglasses.

Essentials also offers Woodland™ wooden steps in grey or cedar stain in simple riser models or in deck-style 'surround' models that wrap around the base of the spa along two sides.



Essentials offers elevated countertops that align with the lip of the spa – allowing bathers to enjoy a spa-side dining area while remaining in the water.

For round, soft-sided spas, Essentials offers a modular, wooden surround system with semi-circular deck-style steps in redwood, grey and cedar stains, as well as elevated countertops that align with the lip of the spa – allowing bathers to enjoy a spa-side dining area while remaining in the water.

"Our surrounds for soft-sided spas enhance the enjoyment of a spa because they provide an outdoor entertaining area that can be enhanced with a towel holder, additional seating areas and planters – everything you need to make the hot tub bathing experience more appealing, enjoyable and comfortable," says Ann Spires, president of Essentials.

Easier To Sell At Time Of Sale

These systems are much easier to sell at the initial spa sale as Spires points out. "Consumers are often enticed by the spa setting and by the fact that the surround can be included with the spa financing package. Dealers can also offer the consumer a discount in delivery and installation fees by delivering everything at one time."

Noble agrees that selling a surround system is most often done at the time of the initial spa sale, when the customer is looking at a display model and can appreciate how attractive the surround system makes the hot tub look.

"It's not difficult for a dealer to sell the benefits of a surround system at the time of sale because consumers are visual and can see how eye-catching these systems are," says Noble. "Consumers looking for a spa also want the added seating capacity, storage and privacy that surround systems offer, which also makes them easy to sell." PSM