

OUTDOOR LIVING

CITY Oasis

A EUROPEAN-INSPIRED
POOLSIDE RETREAT OFFERS
A QUIET PLACE TO ESCAPE



STORY: STEPHANIE MAXWELL NEWTON
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PHOTOGRAPHY: RETT PEEK



Arched windows and door frames, gas lanterns, and a pair of topiaries against the home's pale yellow and hunter green exterior set the tone for the home, which is in a secluded corner of the Heights neighborhood.



Melissa works with landscapers Ruth and Jamie Vasquez to find the perfect plantings at Good Earth Garden Center, like this yellow hibiscus.

WHEN MELISSA HIXSON

and her now-husband, Walter, moved to Little Rock three years ago, it didn't take them long to find a house that felt just right. Having lived all over the country (most recently in Dallas), Melissa was happy and surprised to find a home in Arkansas that reminded her so much of some of her favorite travels abroad. "Our real estate agent showed us one house we thought we were interested in, but we didn't think it was the one," Melissa recalls. "Then he said, 'There's another I can show you, probably my favorite house in the Heights.' Twenty minutes later, we bought the house."

The home's pool and outdoor living area were what sealed the deal for the Hixsons. "It's got that kind of French feel, which is partly why we were so drawn to this house," Melissa says. "And we love that it's tucked away a little bit."

The space's focal point, a cozy loggia, has French doors leading to the living room, kitchen, and master bedroom, making it a perfect escape for coffee in the morning, a glass of wine as the sun sets, and everything in between. "We spend every chance we get out here," Melissa says. "It's our favorite part of the house."

GATHER TOGETHER

French doors from the kitchen open onto the loggia, which makes it a natural gathering place when Melissa and Walter entertain. "When you have a party, everyone wants to be in the kitchen. It's nice because it feels natural to drift out there as well," Melissa says. Another aspect that makes this space so appealing during parties is a TV hidden in the ceiling that can be lowered by remote control for partygoers to watch televised sporting events.



An outdoor daybed from Janus et Cie offers a place for Melissa and her Maltese, Coco, to perch poolside. Green Bahama shutters, another coastal detail, surround the backyard.



RAIN OR SHINE

Melissa chose upholstered and slipcovered furnishings to turn the loggia into a natural extension of her living room. Remote-controlled blinds can be lowered to protect the space against the elements (particularly during the worst of pollen season, Melissa says), and skylights above filter in natural light even when the shades are drawn. The grapevine décor overhead was installed by Tipton & Hurst.



Since much of the backyard is landscaped, Melissa relies on bright blooms planted in milk-and-march concrete urns for seasonal color.



GOING GREEK

In addition to updating the loggia, Melissa had the pool resurfaced and painted a deep royal blue, which further exaggerates the feel that you might be near the Mediterranean instead of in a landlocked state. "I've seen this royal blue on pools before and I'd always wanted to have that on our own," Melissa says. "The first place I ever saw that was in Italy, and then in Greece; both places have such beautiful contrast with the water and buildings. I wanted to recreate that feel."

Design Resources
CONTRACTOR: Jonathan Rogers, Little Rock Go Green **LANDSCAPE DESIGN:** Ruth and Jamie Vazquez A/V **INSTALLATION:** InstalAV **ACCESSORIES AND FURNITURE:** Antique Brick Outdoor, Cynthia East Fabrics, Providence Design, and Tipton & Hurst **LIGHTING:** Cobblestone & Vine **PAINTING AND POOL RESURFACING:** Little Rock Go Green **PLANTINGS:** Good Earth Garden Center **WINDOW COVERINGS:** Window Works