

GOOD THINGS IN SMALL PACKAGES

As Cindi and Marty Irons have proved, nearly any yard can accommodate a pool.

In November's Spotlight, we featured one version of the pool and spa of the future. Installed at a dynamic prototype home in Minneapolis, Minn., the tiny vinyl-liner pool and adjoining spa were squeezed into a very small yard. Such space restraints, say housing experts, will challenge builders in the 21st century.

Well, they do today, too.

Take Marty Irons' pool, for example. He and his wife Cindi, co-owners of Unicorn Pools in Clovis, Calif., have installed pools in spaces some builders might have said were impossible. "We can accommodate a pool in just about any backyard," Irons says, and he proved it at his own home.

The 12-by-26-foot Viking freeform fiberglass pool is typical of the 35 to 40 pools Unicorn Pools installs each year in the Fresno/Madera market. "There definitely is a trend, because the houses are getting bigger and the yards are getting smaller," Irons says. "We sell to a lot of people with small backyards who don't think that they could get a pool in. It's a big sell for us." The 12-by-26 model isn't the smallest they offer, either. Viking recently introduced a line of "mini pools," which measure just 8½ by 16 feet.

Diminutive size doesn't mean his pools lack character, however. "Ours has more curves than Raquel Welch," Irons says.

The pool is complemented by puckercrete decking, a product that seems to have divided his clients a bit. "People either love it or hate it," he says. Quite a few seem to like it — after he in-



Cindi and Marty Irons build pools in small places — including their own backyard. The puckercrete decking allows just enough room for a bit of landscaping and a few chairs.

stalled it in his own yard, his next 15 jobs requested it. "I took clients to our house and showed them our pool," Irons says, "and people buy what they see."

What they see, Irons tells them, is poured concrete, custom-cut as it hardens, which is less expensive and easier to install than the flagstone it sometimes mimics. Irons says he likes working with puckercrete because it's flexible (it can be designed in symmetrical or geometric patterns) and because "the homeowner can tell you exactly what lines they want," he says. "You can do it at one house, and an-

other right next door, and they're not going to be the same."

Irons installed the pool three years ago, primarily so he and Cindi could cool off after a hot California workday. While the pool is obviously short of Olympic length, Unicorn does install swim jets and harnesses in similar pools for clients who want a workout, as well as a quick dip in a small oasis they can call their own. ■

