

Our New Serenity

By TJ Greaney

A favorite destination today sits carved into the earth just fifty steps from our front porch. I enjoy sitting on our porch swing daily and allowing my mind to wander, relax, and dream.

For more than twenty years I've had one recurring thought—a pond project. I contemplated what it would look like, the external features, internal structure, biological elements, platforms and decks. How would I ever do it? What equipment would be needed to get it done correctly? Today, after years of planning and procrastinating, (more procrastinating if I am truthful), I have a pond in my front yard. It has plants, fish, and a deck. The kids can fish in it. It is there and I built it. Wow!

Then the motivator came.

My little piece of pond heaven was actually a divine appointment when it finally began to happen. A friend gave me an old Bobcat tractor with a bucket on front. It worked just well enough to begin scraping a big hole in my front yard. “You can't have a tractor and not dig a hole somewhere,” I told myself. So there began the pond project. I would dig a few hours, and then weeks would go by as I repaired or saved up to get parts for the old tractor. One year, two years slipped by. My wife was getting pretty frustrated, and every kid in my neighborhood had been collecting a free buffet lunch outing because I continually missed self-proclaimed deadline bets. I knew it would get done, but the first two years were slow.

Then the motivator came. One night I got caught up looking through the Pond Boss web site. I explored styles, gear, liners, depths, and details on how I should finish. I caught the Pond Boss, Bob Lusk, himself as he was passing through my area one week, and he stopped in for a consultation. He gave me guidance on specific requirements for depth, contour, and liner installation.

I have a smaller pond at 35' x 40'. I picked an open area that captures the majority of my yard's runoff. Looking at the front of the pond to the



Filling the new pond.

back, the drop did not seem very drastic, and I was shocked when I ran a string line level. From front to back there was a drop of more than two feet. This required me to build a berm to make the pond level. The soil was also a hard caliche (a type of crumbly, rocky clay) that would not retain water. To get the full 6.5 feet depth, I rented a small trackhoe for a half day, and broke up the hardest parts. This allowed me to come behind with the Bobcat and scoop the dirt out.

One of my biggest issues was what to do with the dirt that came out. I first built the berm. I made it wide and the height slightly varies for design appeal. I used some extra dirt on the front side to build up part of the yard to direct runoff where it needed to enter the pond. The rest went all over the place—in piles, or spread and mixed with what little topsoil we have. I staged much of it just outside the construction zone as I contemplated where to move it. It was a lot.

Don't forget, if you have to use a liner you need enough room to get a trencher around the entire perimeter of the pond. The liner has to drop into a trench, be backfilled and compacted with enough liner to exit the outside of the trench, to

make sure water pressure can't pull it out. I had to work this over several times because I was too close to existing trees and fencing. A little better pre-planning on my part would have eliminated this hiccup. I used a liner by Colorado Lining International (www.coloradolining.com). Tonya, sales support, helped me estimate the materials and type of liner. Their product is not a sheet of plastic, it is incredibly durable and tough. This is one place you absolutely need to follow their installation requirements. Do not go cheap here. Colorado Lining was of tremendous help. If left to my own resources, I would have messed it up, simply because I didn't know some of the techniques and pitfalls to make this project work. One of those crucial points was to make sure the pond bottom was smooth and not rocky. Rocks can puncture the liner.

It is also recommended with a liner that the sides allow a slope, which provides an exit. They (liners) are very slippery. At one end of the pond, I had a slope for tractor access that provides a gradual slope. But, the top end of the pond does not. On the end where I had a more aggressive drop, I built a sunning dock/deck for the wife. I



used treated materials and extended it just a few inches over the edge of the pond. I put posts on the backside, outside the liner, to assure it would stay in place.

We used topsoil scraped off in the beginning of the project on the finished berm and outside edges of the pond. A pallet of sun-friendly Bermuda turf surrounds the perimeter, and provided a quick, clean edge that is wonderful to bare feet. We used several pallets of flat limestone on top of the liner ditch and edges as well, to form an attractive stone-patio look and to minimize the possibility of puncture from one of the neighborhood deer. We also brought in four yards of fine sand to help cover some of the slopes as well as to hold the stone in place. Landscaping will be an on going project we will enjoy and create as we sit and contemplate the look and ecology of our pond.

We chose not to add any sort of fish structure to the bottom of the pond yet nor a permanent aeration element. We are considering the different options. We did order a couple dozen small sunfish, some goldfish for color, some minnows, and small catfish. I, of course, most likely over-populated the pond, but we don't want to have a mosquito problem, and for me part of the fun is the learning curve. I am managing a pond—our pond.

Everyone tells me the pond took three years to build. In actuality I spend about 100 hours on it. One night, the blood moon was rising as my wife and I walked the 50 feet out to the pond, our new evening destination. We lit the small lantern hanging off the deck pole. Our son came out and fished for the small catfish. We laughed and enjoyed the breeze across the yard and pond. The moon reflected as the fish nipped at the top of the water. It was amazing.

I dreamed for 20 years what we could do out there in the middle of the front yard, and today the once-bare spot is a destination—and we love



Peace and serenity.

it. There is just something about water, a pond. Thanks Pond Boss and all your writers and forum experts for the input. Thanks Colorado Lining International for your top line customer service and product. Thanks God, for the provision.

Yesterday evening as I relaxed in the lounge chair by the pond I dozed off. I awoke to my wife calling from the porch that dinner was ready, she had been calling me for minutes. Ah yes, this is good.

TJ Greaney is a writer from Austin, Texas and is founder of Kids Outdoor Zone Youth Outdoor Adventure Ministry (KOZ). KOZ is a program for men in churches to hold regular meetings with boys and other like-minded men using hunting, fishing and outdoor adventure as a teaching tool. It is the fastest growing outdoor ministry in the country. All trainings and materials are included for each month. For more information go to www.kidsoutdoorzone.com or email TJ@kidsoutdoorzone.com

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*LeighAnn Skipworth, Advertising & Marketing Director, Pond Boss Magazine, INC
www.pondboss.com, 800-687-6075*