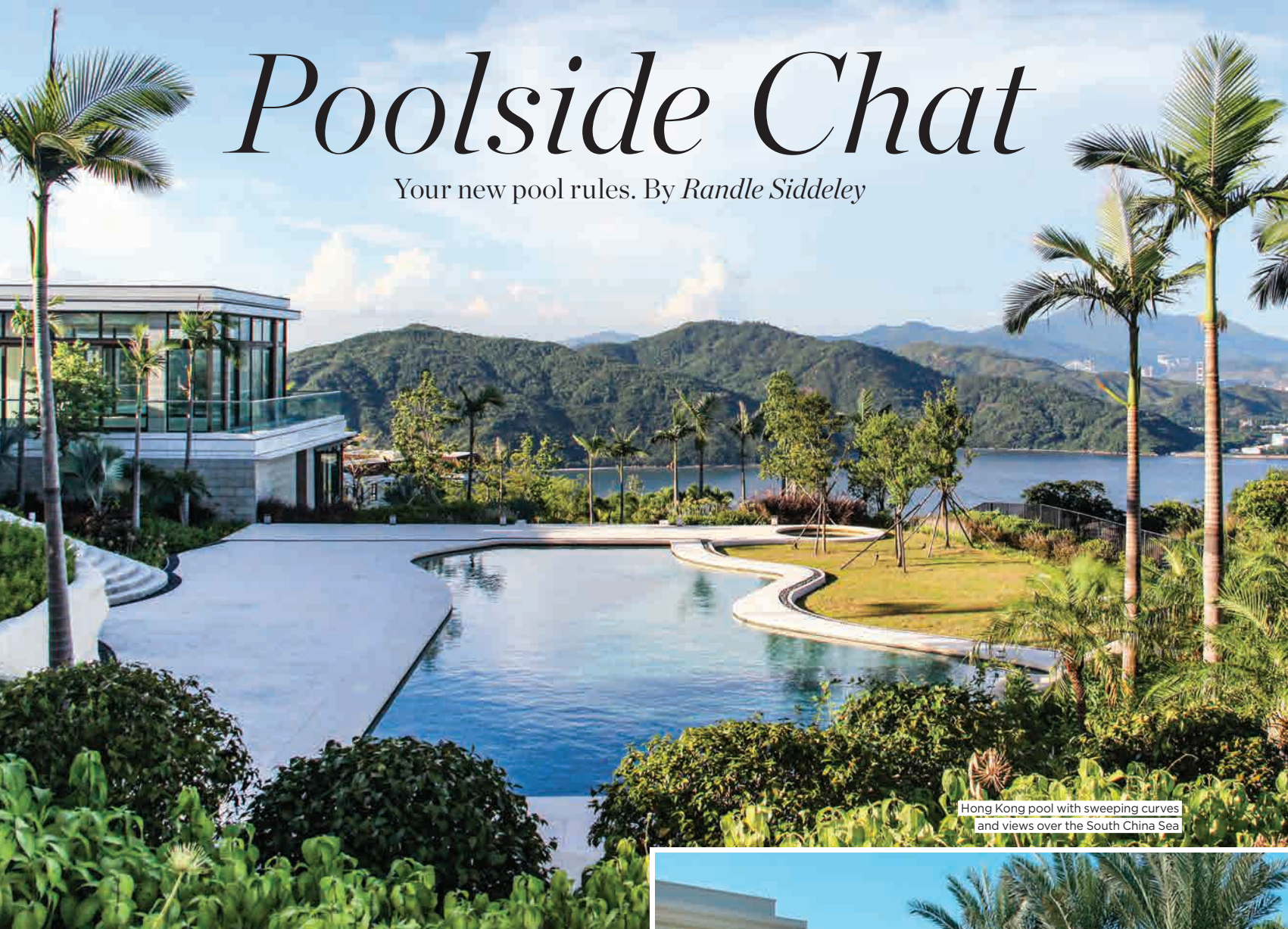


# Poolside Chat

Your new pool rules. By *Randle Siddeley*



Hong Kong pool with sweeping curves and views over the South China Sea

Many people still shrink from the complications and expense of building a swimming pool, but the process can be much simpler than you think. Currently I am installing a pool from Compass that comes as a ready-made carbon ceramic one-piece shell ([compass-pools.co.uk](http://compass-pools.co.uk)). It's created similarly to a yacht in reverse, with an antibacterial layer to allow freshwater swimming. Its mould comes in 12 colours – in this case we've chosen Nova Anthracite. You still have to dig an enormous hole and it certainly isn't cheap (between £60,000 to £180,000) but we're going to be able to lower it into place with a crane. Simple!

A few basic rules will prevent a pool from being either a headache or an eyesore. Landscape a pool so you feel you're stumbling across it rather than having it dominate the garden and thrust itself into your eyeline. You'll always need a paved or decked area for sunbathing but keep some lawn to soften the edges. Ornamental grasses frame a pool beautifully. Avoid scented plants like lavender that attract bees – always a mistake in hindsight around bare feet. Choose creamy (I like Italian Botticino mosaics) instead of blue tiles, as they turn your water a beautiful aquamarine. Use a cover, particularly near trees. Finally, find a sheltered spot, as no-one wants to catch a blast of icy air leaving the pool.

Pools can be full of individuality and are far from the garish, over-bright blue rectangles that people dread. In Hong Kong I created a majestic 25-metre pool for a garden that echoed the terrain's natural contours by creating sweeping curves and wavy lines with views over the South China Sea. Even the steps down to the pool and the hand-crafted Jesmonite walls



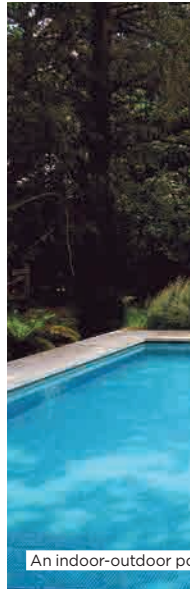
A theatrical waterfall splashes into this Tel Aviv pool

around it were wavy. In Stanmore, I created an indoor-outdoor pool, divided by a sliding glass screen and I continued the grey limestone bordering the new house round the pool to blend exterior and interior. At one end of a St Tropez pool, I placed a stone wall with a modernist mural designed by Tim Gosling, providing a focal talking point. In Montreal, I kept the pool design very simple so as not to distract from the views over the lake. There was a pool house with on-tap chilled beer, so I created a big stepping-stone in the pool as a water bar. In Tel Aviv the challenge was to create an area of privacy and tranquillity in an overlooked garden. I created a cascade of water that fell theatrically from a French limestone basin, down central steps to the pool in the lower garden. In Chelsea, I transformed a tiny, bijou garden into an urban oasis with a quirky but elegant perfume-bottle-shaped pool, with a jet-stream to swim against.

Some of you might be shouting at this column by now. It's one thing to have the space and the budget to build an exquisite swimming pool but how about those of us who only have a patio? The wonder of garden design is that products are constantly being invented and this summer the hot tub has come into its own. They used to cost at least £3,000 to install but now a handful of budget brands have replaced the rigid acrylic versions with inflatables. You need to move fast as they're flying off the shelves at Asda, Argos and B&Q. The Lay-Z-Spa models range from the Maldives Hydrojet Pro at £1,299 to the St Lucia at just £310. The St Lucia needs 605 litres of water and has a small heater and pump (around the size of a vacuum cleaner) that inflates the tub as well as

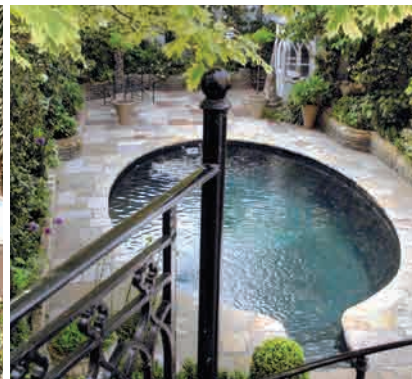


Simple and elegant in Montreal



An indoor-outdoor pool in Stanmore

## Trend agency WGSN predicts our CRAZE for hot tubs will SOON be superseded by 'COCKTAIL POOLS'



The perfume bottle-shaped pool in Chelsea

providing the bubbles. The downsides are that the pump is noisy and it takes about eight hours to heat the water to 35°C, ruling it out for anyone ecologically aware. Nevertheless, if you can argue it's better than taking a plane, it will bring hours of fun for the kids and Instagram opportunities for adults. Trend agency WGSN predicts our craze for hot tubs will soon be superseded by 'cocktail pools' – small water features, ideal for sweltering summers, and big enough to sit with your feet in and drink cocktails.

Hot tubs aside, there's no need to shy away from building a pool if you have the budget and are well prepared. I am known for being practical and my number one piece of advice would be to choose your pool supplier carefully – try Splash International ([splash-international.co.uk](http://splash-international.co.uk)) or Tanby ([tanbypools.co.uk](http://tanbypools.co.uk)). Many suppliers promise much and deliver little. Don't trust written testimonials but make sure to speak in person to at least three customers first. If you can, go and have a good look at the pools they've installed too. Then follow my guidelines and you'll create a pool that enhances your garden and reflects your personality. It will bring you summers of happiness.



Lay-Z-Spa St Lucia. £310, [diy.com](http://diy.com)

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