

THE INSIDER *gardens*

# GARDENER'S WORLD

*Catharine Howard extols the virtues of the natural swimming pool*

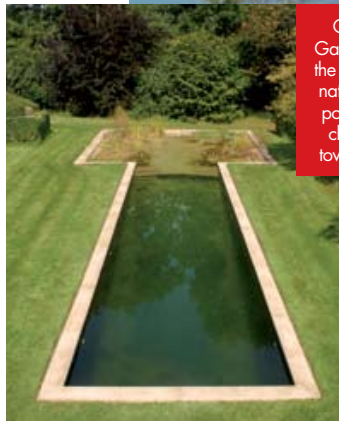
## COUNTRY GARDENER

Kate Rew's book *Wild Swim* is a celebration of the loveliness of water and of swimming at one with nature, in water free from chemicals. Truly the days of the chlorine controlled pool are numbered. So for those of us who are not for jumping into the sea or making the nostalgic visit to the concrete lido, the sensation can be replicated in the domestic garden with a natural swimming pool.

Until recently these ponds were really a water cleaning area – known as the filtration zone – with over 50 per cent of the swimming area covered with plants. The whole image was slightly 'beard and sandals' as the swimmer was expected to hop in, overjoyed to join the newts and mini-beasts.

Pumps are necessary to keep the water flowing and healthy, but nowadays they are now smaller and technology has moved on, so that the filtration zone has reduced to 20 per cent which can be sleekly contained alongside the swimming area.

Pool design has come of age and what is really gratifying is that old style-swimming pools, those ones surrounded by concrete pavers, can be converted into a crystal clear swimming pond. There is a natural aesthetic to a well-designed stretch of water, surface skimmed by the wind or still with the sun and clouds inverted in it.



**COOL POOL**  
GartenART creates the most wonderful natural swimming pools – free from chemicals – for town and country



## TOWN GARDENER

Each natural pool is unique, so the prices quoted by GartenART, the experts in creating these beautiful pools (020 7183 3333; [gartenart.co.uk](http://gartenart.co.uk)), seemed very reasonable (given that it is a bit like asking how much a carpet refit will cost without seeing inside the house). The figures



ranged from £60,000 to £200,000. But once you've disposed of the chemicals, cut down on maintenance and turned off the swimming pool boiler, you will soon recoup the costs.

Now that the overall size of these pools is reduced, they become

very well adapted to town gardens. The smallest I have seen was a plunge pool some four by five metres. Discuss it with your garden designer, those I spoke to will accommodate your desires.

Jettison your Maldives travel brochure and plan for a natural haven in your own back garden.

**MUST HAVE**  
*The perfect accessory for lounging around by the pool on balmy summer days. Runaway Coast's giant comforter in washable 100 per cent cotton, £95. ([runawaycoast.com](http://runawaycoast.com))*



◀ **TOP TIP** IF, LIKE ME, YOU ARE A IRIS AFICIONADO AND HAVE ESTABLISHED CLUMPS OF THE BEARDED TYPES, DIG RHIZOMES UP AND DIVIDE FOR REPLANTING NOW, CUTTING OUT ANY OF THE ANCIENT SPONGEY BITS.