

Cabanas provide privacy, convenience

By Tara Marion

People who have a pool expect the water to stay outside rather than be tracked through the house by guests and children. To prevent this inconvenience, three-season rooms and sheds can be easily converted into changing rooms or cabanas.

A cabana is a small shelter used as a bathhouse for changing or relaxing by the pool. One way to create a simple cabana is with an 8-by-8-foot or 8-by-12-foot shed. While this structure is functional as is, it can also be modified.

Unless people want to heat the shed in winter for other purposes, it doesn't need insulation, and windows provide ventilation. Some people even add shutters and flowerboxes around the windows to give the structure a cozier look.

While the shed's plywood floor is more than adequate, Richard Byers, owner of Byers Manufacturing Inc. 828 N. Main St., in Lawton, said paint and tile are other options. "It just depends on how they want to do this," he said.

Most people install a partition in their sheds to provide both a changing area and a utility area. "The pool pump and all that stuff is in there, so it's out of the weather," Byers explained. Pool supplies, toys and lawn furniture can also be stored in the utility area. "They can put them in there so they don't blow away or deteriorate," he said.

Expense often determines the amenities and interior design of the changing room. The simplest furnishing could include a small bench and dresser, while plastic chairs are another option.

If homeowners have children who entertain friends, six to 10 cubbyholes can be constructed to provide storage space for their clothes and shoes. In the winter, those cubbyholes can be used to organize pool supplies or toys.

Interior hooks are excellent for hanging wet bathing suits up to dry. Large hooks on the exterior can hold the skimmers and hoses used to wash the pool's hardscaping. "It's nothing to convert a shed into a changing room; a lot of them are sold for that purpose," Byers said.

He added that cabanas are often built in the same style as the house, such as a chalet or a Cape Cod design, to make them less obtrusive.

Because they're so attractive, Byers said cabanas are very popular. "People who have a nice pool, and don't have something like this are kind of missing the boat, because it would just make the pool look much nicer without a lot of effort."

Because three-season rooms provide ventilation and protection from insects and inclement weather, they are another good poolside option.

Because of these benefits, a three-season room could also function as a changing area. "You wouldn't have any moisture or mildew problems because they'd have a very difficult time taking hold using these kinds of material," said Michael Shields, president of Blackberry Systems Inc., 6477 W. KL Ave.

Three-season rooms are primarily glass, and Shields said interior and exterior wall finishes are impervious to water. Because glass is the primary material, it does pose a problem with privacy, however.

"If you're going to change in it, you'd have to have it partitioned off using a blind system to provide privacy," Shields said.

Building a three-season room with selective windows or no windows is another option.

Whether the three-season room is constructed of glass or solid wall panels, it can be connected to the house with a sliding glass door or be a freestanding structure.

Freestanding units incorporate a swinging or sliding glass door as well.

Incorporating a shower is another possibility. This might require partitioning it off with traditional wall frames, however, because the design of the three-season room contains only exterior walls.

Lastly, decide on a water-resistant flooring. Popular choices include the three-season room's existing concrete slab, indoor/outdoor carpeting and ceramic tile.