



From left to right: Alex Traut and Hans Brutscher, Company Directors of Natural Pools NZ

# Natural Pools NZ

Savvy, health-conscious swimming sorts are attracted to natural pools, but Mother Nature gives her approval too. Swallows dive and dip; a frog shelters in the reeds; dragonflies skitter across the surface.

Sitting in the garden of Hans Brutscher, one of the co-owners of Natural Pools New Zealand, and looking across to the native bush backdrop with its welcome wildlife, this swimming pool is totally sympathetic to its environment.

The use of clever filtration techniques and plant zones alongside the pool area eliminates the need to add toxic chemicals. What would have been ‘dead’ water is instead crystal-clear and healthy – more akin to the free-flowing streams and rivers of our childhood memories.

“When you have a public pool you have to make sure there are no bacteria present,” says Hans, a retired GP who ran his own health spa on the Kina Peninsula. “The only way to do that is by killing everything with chemicals such as chlorine. But some clever guys in

Europe noticed that people were swimming in lakes and swimming holes and no-one was dying.”

Hans’ business partner is landscape architect Alex Traut. Both men come from the same area in southern Bavaria, Germany, although they met in New Zealand.

“The concept of natural pools is 30 years old in Europe,” Alex explains. “Austria, Germany and Switzerland are highly urbanised, landlocked countries and people there want to bring some nature back to their gardens. That’s where it all started.”

Regulations changed in Europe to allow public pools with a controlled level of natural bacteria. “There are now Olympic-sized natural pools with up to 3000 people swimming in them each day, and it works,” says Hans. “Here in New Zealand that law isn’t in place, but you can build them in private gardens.”

Alex had worked on natural pool construction in Germany in the 1990s but it wasn’t until 2009, when a lady in Wanaka asked for help to complete a natural pool, that the business really began. The pair then spent six months building a show pool in Hans’ garden. The terrain was challenging and access

difficult but after a back-breaking effort, they had a stunning showpiece.

“It was a risk starting a business in a recession selling such a luxury item,” he says. “So far it’s proved to be a good decision as we’ve now built eight pools and three more are planned.”

The idea of using plants and a large sand reservoir to naturally filter and maintain clean water sounds simple, but beneath the ground is a complex and clever system run from two pumps beneath the ground. The only regular work required is lifting the pool-cleaning robot into the water for its two-hour meander.

“All the people coming to see the show pool are amazed by the look and the feel of the water and the sounds of the environment,” says Hans. “We tell them to bring their togs, but whereas in conventional pools you have to shower afterwards, here we like you to shower before you go in the pool!”

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## The Living Pool:

For those who like a more traditional style pool the Living Pool is the ideal solution. No plants are required. The biological filter is either neatly hidden beneath a deck or can be separate as an ornamental pond. You get the look of a conventional pool but the fresh water biology of a natural pool.



1 -3. Riwaka pool heated with heat pump 4. Kina pool 5. Motueka Living Pool 6. Kaiteriteri Showpool. Photos by Lisa Ball