



Brightening Up the Nighttime Skies

Written by Elaine Sisko, Reynolds Landscaping

Nothing draws people together more successfully during evening hours than a fire—encouraging animated conversation among friends, quiet introspection over a glass of wine and communal stargazing with loved ones and children. A fire feature—firepit or outdoor fireplace—is the icing on the cake of any outdoor living design on LBI and a key accessory for perfected nighttime entertaining.

As the popularity of fire features on LBI has risen in recent years, however, so has the regulations and restrictions surrounding their installation—a necessary safeguard against potential harm to property and life. Most Townships across the Island now ban open fires on both public beaches and in private residences. Stringent setback requirements from not only property lines and buildings but also swimming pools and water features can make the design and location of a fire feature on already small-scaled property lots both challenging and frustrating.

“To save time, energy and the very realistic possibility of Township rejection” Luke Reynolds of Reynolds Landscaping advises “it makes perfect sense to hire a professional to not only design the best location for the fire feature but also to maneuver the maze of paperwork and regulations required by the different municipalities on LBI.”



Nestled into a garden niche for intimate evening relaxation, abutting a bayside bulkhead to capture views of the setting sun or bordering an alfresco living room to combine interior and exterior living—the location of the firepit is determined by the intentions, needs and lifestyle of the homeowner and their family. “Analyzing the site flow of the property, asking the right questions of clients and really listening to their answers” Reynolds states “are essential keys to creating the perfect environment for the fire feature”.

Round, square or rectangular—the shape of the firepit will need to be selected along with the materials for the structure itself. The architectural style of the residence along with the layout of and hardscaping materials of existing patios and walkways will assist in this deci-

sion. If curvilinear patios and serpentine pathways of tumbled paver stone are present on site, a round firepit of irregular fieldstone or natural stone façade would complement this naturalistic and rustic environment. If the design of the residence and hardscaping configures to a more modern and rectilinear style then a square or rectangular firepit built of natural marble or travertine composite materials would blend in more favorably and create a cool, contemporary ambiance. Finally, for a truly custom, one-of-a-kind firepit design, consider concrete—a material that can be molded into any shape and exterior façade design imaginable.

To create the perfect alfresco entertainment room and, if space and budget constraints will allow, consider the installation of a combination double-sided fireplace/

open-sided cabana structure. “We have designed and built several of these multi-functional fireplace-cabana structures in recent years, Luke Reynolds informs, “and they are an ideal way to bridge interior living into an open-air environment protected from the elements”. “Add a flat screen tv or an adjacent outdoor kitchen to the design scenario” Reynolds concludes, “and there will be little incentive for homeowners and guest alike to venture indoors”.

The majority of fire features on LBI, and just about all of the units installed by Reynolds Landscaping, are powered by natural gas with a switching system that enables reliable, safe and convenient electric/gas ignition and disconnect. As a result, their installation requires the services of both a licensed electrician and plumber along with corresponding permits approved by the Township. All units are equipped with stainless steel hardware and components for longevity and durability along with a stainless-steel cover for both safety and protection from the outside elements.



The presence of small children or budget constraints need not put a permanent damper on plans for a firepit in the outdoor living area. Based upon the original design plan, gas and electric conduits for future utility lines can be incorporated under the hardscaping of a new patio installation making a future firepit installation relatively easy and hassle-free. “Proper planning and foresight along with a sound design concept”, Reynolds assures, “allow a project, including a firepit installation, to be installed in phases to accommodate not only the budget constraints of the homeowner but also the requirements of their growing family.”

Despite initial hurdles, the ethereal and therapeutic qualities of a fire feature and their intangible ability to create relaxation, reflection and comfort quickly negate the initial administrative red tape surrounding their installation. Their ability to foster community and create an outdoor environment for congregating and entertaining, make the firepit and outdoor fireplace a highly valued and sought-after feature along the coastal towns of LBI.

If you are considering the installation of a firepit or fireplace or to find out if a fire feature is viable on your property, contact Luke Reynolds of Reynolds Landscaping at 609-597-6099. Likewise, for more information on firepit styles and material selections, please visit the photo gallery of the Reynolds Landscaping website at www.reynoldslandscaping.com. Reynolds Landscaping and Garden Shop is located at 201 East Bay Avenue in Manahawkin, NJ.