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THE GREAT OUTDOORS DEFINED

Family gets an outdoor space
that really rocks.

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PHOTOGRAPHY JEFFREY BEBEE

WOW FACTORS

- A pool deck with 3,300 square feet of honey gold Yorkstone pavers and 34 slabs of Brentwood quartz that's a dead ringer for petrified wood
- A gracefully curved custom concrete pool with a swim-up bar and two infinity edges spilling pool water above gigantic boulders on the backside
- A hot tub and sunning deck
- A fully equipped outdoor kitchen
- A trellis area with a fire table and chairs for al fresco dining
- Three fire boulders
- A fire pit and conversation area





Mountains of massive boulders, hand calluses and aching joints put a residential project in rural Papillion on a plateau of its own for Jason Decker of Elite Landscaping.

The design-build contractor and his crews spent nearly a year sculpting, stacking and shifting earth and natural stones. From it would emerge a serene tableau of rugged and smooth stone, placid water and dancing fire – a place where a family can truly enjoy an outdoors that envelops their home.

In all, Decker's plan for this deluxe outdoor living space, framed by a lush, park-like landscape, would require 1,100 tons of boulders, crushed rock and sand, nearly 2,000 pavers and miles of underground pipe and electrical wiring.

But before all of that could happen, Decker needed a road that could bear the load of the materials and supplies. When it was apparent that an old trestle bridge spanning a creek under the main road to the house wouldn't support the weight of the massive trucks required for the job, Decker went in through rolling farmland and thick woods, cutting a mile-long road to the project site.

"We unfortunately had to tear down some huge trees but there were no other options," Decker says of the supply road carved through the homeowner's 150-acre property not far from Platteview Country Club southeast of Papillion.

The scale of the project presented significant challenges. "Each phase necessitated its own detailed logistics plan," Decker says.

In the home's front yard, water from a boulder waterfall flows across a circular drive and into a rock bed that meanders along the side of the house and down a gentle slope of lawn toward the creek some 100 yards away.

You don't create an outdoor living space like this on a budget, Decker says. "It restricts your creativity." His best work always emerges from drawing a plan (freehand to capture the nuances that pop into his head), getting the client's buy-in and then pricing out the project at a later date.

Inspiration comes in many forms, from studying the work of great pool builders worldwide, to his own experiences while traveling.

"I was at a resort in Mexico and found myself enjoying the swim-up bar," Decker offers as an example. "So when a client gives you free rein, why not work a unique feature like that into the design?"

His interpretation includes four submerged stone stools, carved to look like tree stumps. "It turned out sweet," he says, smiling.