

A GARDEN FOR NATURAL WELLNESS AND YEAR-ROUND USE

NATURAL SWIMMING POND GARDEN • DEURNE • NETHERLANDS



A Dutch garden featuring a natural swimming pool and outdoor sauna is designed for year-round pleasures.



Designed for year-round enjoyment, this garden design celebrates natural wellness at its finest. Landscape designer Noël van Mierlo, of the Dutch landscape design studio Van Mierlo Gardens, embraced his client's wishes to create an outdoor wonderland inspired by his travels through Scandinavia and anchored by a natural swimming pool.

The aim of the garden was to create an outdoor sanctuary for recreation and repose, and make it one that three generations of the client's family—grandparents and grandkids alike—could enjoy. Van Mierlo began by selecting some original elements of the garden—large, mature trees and the natural pond—and layering new design elements on top. A pool house and sauna were built as two separate structures connected by a meandering path through the garden. “The idea of undressing in the pool house and then having to go outside to go to the sauna makes the natural experience way better,” explains van Mierlo. Inside the pool house,



Opposite: The natural swimming pool is surrounded by bountiful flowers like daylilies and irises, as well as ferns and hostas.

Above, left: The outdoor sauna was built with windows gazing out onto the garden to reveal views of mountain fleece.



Above, right: The sauna was situated away from the pool house so guests would meander through the garden path on the way to either destination.

a fireplace, small kitchen, bathroom, and shower create an indoor retreat for when the temperature drops. The nearby sauna is surrounded by windows, allowing for glimpses of color and an expansive view of the garden, no matter what the season.

Neighboring the water feature, repurposed greenhouse gutters were painted bright red and placed in a pathway around the garden. “They connect the whole garden and ensure that your gaze is led through the garden,” van Mierlo explains. “They are anchor points that follow the organic contours of the garden.” The effect is bold and graphic—pillars of bright red against the vibrant green of the landscape.

Van Mierlo's design also emphasizes the year-round pleasures of the garden. In the warmer months, water lilies dot the pond and tall grasses sway in the summer breeze. A large tulip tree offers shade on a grassy lawn—and branches to swing from on sunny days. Autumn foliage creates a panoramic kaleidoscope of colors to view from the warmth of the sauna when the air turns crisp. By situating the sauna and pool house at some distance from each other, van Mierlo has ensured that visitors to the garden take a stroll through the meandering path before entering the buildings to experience, as he calls it, “natural wellness at its best.”

The same principles of the immersive natural wellness experience that van Mierlo has crafted can be used to guide your garden at home. Plan for a range of temperatures or seasons. Create areas suited to certain activities: large lawns for picnics or playing, shaded areas for bright days, lounge spaces for sunbathing or reading, and a pathway that connects them all. Consider the spacing of each feature and how you would like your garden visitors to travel throughout the space.

Too often we think of gardens as purely aesthetic or visual: sculptural or wild, arid or lush, edible or ornamental. We can forget that the most important element of the garden is actually time—not only in the care you give it, but in all the moments you spend reveling in its beauty.



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Above: The entry to the natural swimming pool is right against the dock for easy access to the water no matter the season.

Opposite, top: Multiple seating areas and a pathway across the pond give access to the water from many different perspectives around the garden.

Opposite, bottom: Repurposed greenhouse gutters were painted red and installed around the perimeter of the garden as a path.





NATURAL SWIMMING POND GARDEN
DEURNE · NETHERLANDS

GARDEN TYPOLOGY

Pond garden

SIZE

19,375 sq. ft. (1,800m²)

CLIMATE

Temperate

HARDINESS ZONE

USDA 8

ORIENTATION

South

SUNLIGHT EXPOSURE

Mild

DESIGN BUDGET

\$225–270,000 (€250–300,000)

MAINTENANCE BUDGET

\$11,000 (€10,000) per year

MAINTENANCE TIME

1 full day every 3 weeks

1

The sauna and pool house are two separate, self-contained structures. The pool house offers a fireplace, toilet, shower, and even a small kitchen.

2

The red poles are reclaimed from a previous greenhouse and painted red. These visual anchors follow the organic contours of the garden.

3

A cluster of *Ginkgo biloba* trees grow beside the tiled path that connects the house with the garden.

4

The swimming pond can be enjoyed year-round. Unlike a covered swimming pool, the pond participates in every season.

5

A yellow-leaved Japanese maple overlooks the dock. A gravel path frames the edge of the garden.

6

The sauna offers its own view of the garden, meaning the residents can observe the snowy landscape while relaxing in temperatures of up to 194°F (90°C).

