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## It's official: the great British back garden is a hot tub hotspot

With everyone spending more time at home, the appeal of a relaxing warm soak in the garden is driving a sales boom

By Arabella St John Parker

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Twelve weeks of lockdown living and the driest spring and early summer on record so

far have encouraged even the most reluctant of us to pull on our bathers and jump into a hot tub, it seems, as British suppliers are reporting the kind of sales boost that most business managers can only dream of.

According to the [British and Irish Spa and Hot Tub Association](#), its members have seen a 480 per cent surge in sales during the period – Jacuzzi UK saw a year-on-year rise of 300 per cent in May alone – and the home spa market is now worth more than £350 million.

“With our freedom to roam and going on holiday curtailed we’ve all had to find new ways to disconnect from our homes and from the stresses of life,” says Julie Young, UK Retail Sales Manager for [Hot Spring World](#).

“Our personal wellbeing has become a priority and 20 to 30 minutes spent relaxing in a hot tub helps you discover peace of mind, a little world of your own, in the privacy of your own garden.”



Natural fit: Andy Sturgeon designed this hot tub to blend into the garden surroundings

Chris Curtis, of Jacuzzi UK, agrees: “With fewer people able to take holidays abroad this year and the uncertainty surrounding travel, combined with the good weather and more time spent in our gardens, people have decided to use the money they’d usually spend on a holiday to create a luxury outdoor experience at home instead.”

From hammams, saunas and steam rooms to touji (bath cures) and onsen therapies, hydrotherapy treatments, flotation tanks and lap pools, the healing benefits of water are undisputed.

Many gardeners may still be reluctant to spend time “sitting in a giant, fizzing paddling pool” ([Sophia Money-Coutts](#), The Sunday Telegraph, June 7 2020). But, for the converted (Alan Titchmarsh admits he’s a fan), the challenge is how to incorporate a hot tub into a beautiful outdoor space.

“Most are designed to sit on the ground’s surface and their bulky shape, heavily moulded interiors and huge, flat lids to keep the heat in can make hot tubs pretty unattractive to look at,” says garden designer Andy Sturgeon.

“Timber-clad models are easier on the eye, but we usually build the tub into a slope or surround it with perennial planting to help make it sit more comfortably within the garden.

“You also want to avoid making a hot tub the main focus of your space. Even in a small garden, I would position it on one side or in a corner, and use a vertical structure or hedging to screen the tub, turning it into a destination, a point of interest within the wider landscape; the hedging will give you a bit of privacy too.”

Getting the location right will also help should you decide to sell your home in the future, says Mark Gregory, managing director of landscape architect [Landform](#).

“If you put it too far from the house or down a muddy path, in full view of the neighbours, or in the part of the garden that is the coldest or darkest just when you want to use it, the odds are it’ll never even be switched on. You want to make the tub a treat that you stumble across unexpectedly and enjoy using.”





Water stimulation: Traditional wood-fired tub by Skarsgards | CREDIT: MARKOGBJERRE.DK

Inflatable or rigid electric-heated hot tubs, and especially those at the luxury end of the market, can give you a professional spa effect at home with multiple jet, water movement and heater speeds, high quality in-water music, video and lighting systems, energy-efficient pumps and filtration and ultra-comfortable moulded seating.

And as the weather outside heats up, you can lower the water temperature and turn your hot tub into a cool one to splash around in.

The Scandinavian-style wood-fired versions, meanwhile, have a simpler, picturesque charm that suits a more gently paced lifestyle.

“The difference between wood-fired and electric tubs is rather like the difference between streaming music and putting on a favourite LP,” says Mark Holloway, of [Holloways of Ludlow](#).

“Collecting the logs, lighting the fire and letting the natural material heat your water lends the whole experience a magical quality that a plastic tub with water jets and

flashing lights cannot compete with.

“Convenience, however, is not one of the main selling points. Be prepared to wait for the water to heat up and remember to enjoy the journey as much as the destination.”

## Do...

Think about who, why and how you will use the hot tub so you buy the right size, with the right voltage, jets, heat, filtration and additional features (lighting, music, video) for you.

Try a test soak. Many authorised hot tub dealers offer “wet tests” so you can try before you buy.

Consider all the costs. In addition to the cost of the hot tub, factor in the cost of keeping the water clean (around £300-£400 pa based on average use, says Bishta) and energy use (£1-£2 per day for 30 minutes in an electric hot tub, says Bishta).

Buy the best insulation, a high-density cover, energy-efficient water pump and water heater to help keep costs down.

Plan where the tub will stand and how you will get it there, and make sure the mechanical elements are easily accessible.

Decide who will take care of it. It needs to be regularly maintained so it functions safely and correctly.

Save water. Hot tubs are filled by hosepipe and draining and refilling will depend on how often you use your tub. Use a hose that complies with water regulations, refill outside peak hours and use drained water on the garden.

Shower every time before you enter the water. Make-up and body and self-tanning lotions can create an oily film that will affect the jets and filters.

Aromatherapy oils create a spa-like experience, but check your tub's warranty first.

Consider your neighbours and abide by noise and anti-social behaviour regulations.

## Don't...

- 1 Eat while in the water. Clogged filters add maintenance costs and reduce time spent



enjoying the tub.

- 2 Turn yourself into human soup. Most experts recommend spending no more than 30 or 40 minutes at a time in the water. And remember, the massaging/pummelling of the jets is exercising and can leave you feeling dehydrated, so do take care getting out.
- 3 Let the water cool too quickly. If necessary, invest in a floor protector; to retain heat and keep water clean, keep the tub cover in place whenever it is not in use.

## Spa surround



Spa at home: this design from Ann Marie-Powell is the ultimate in relaxation | CREDIT: MARKOGBJERRE.DK

“The owner of this hot tub wanted a serene, spa-like space surrounded by nature, but not too far from the house,” says garden designer [Ann-Marie Powell](#).

“We set the tub so that it rises up out of a paved floor to give an edge just wide enough to perch on so you can swing your legs over before sliding down into the water.

Once you’re sitting down, the planting is at eye level, so you can relax within the space

but not feel subsumed by it, while the frosted glass screen creates privacy without blocking the view of the trees.”

## Deck with a view

Start House, Salcombe | CREDIT: Jason Ingram

“Having a body of water near your house is good feng shui,” says landscape architect [Marian Boswall](#). “A hot tub is ideal as it’s a natural gathering point.

I like to use wood for its natural cleansing properties; this one overlooking a bay in Devon stands on a chamber beneath the deck so that maintenance can be done from below. The water drains into a soakaway, where it neutralises before being used on the garden, and the fireplace makes the hot tub a party magnet all year round.”

## Time travel

Romanesque Facade by Redwood Stone | CREDIT: Redwood Stone

Inspired by travels through Italy and Provence, and Bath's Roman thermal baths, this garden folly doubles as a screen and bath house. A wall of Romanesque Facade by [Redwood Stone](#), £2,825. Hot tub by [Softub UK](#), from £5,290.

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**Have you bought a hot tub during lockdown? Share your experience in the comments section below**



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