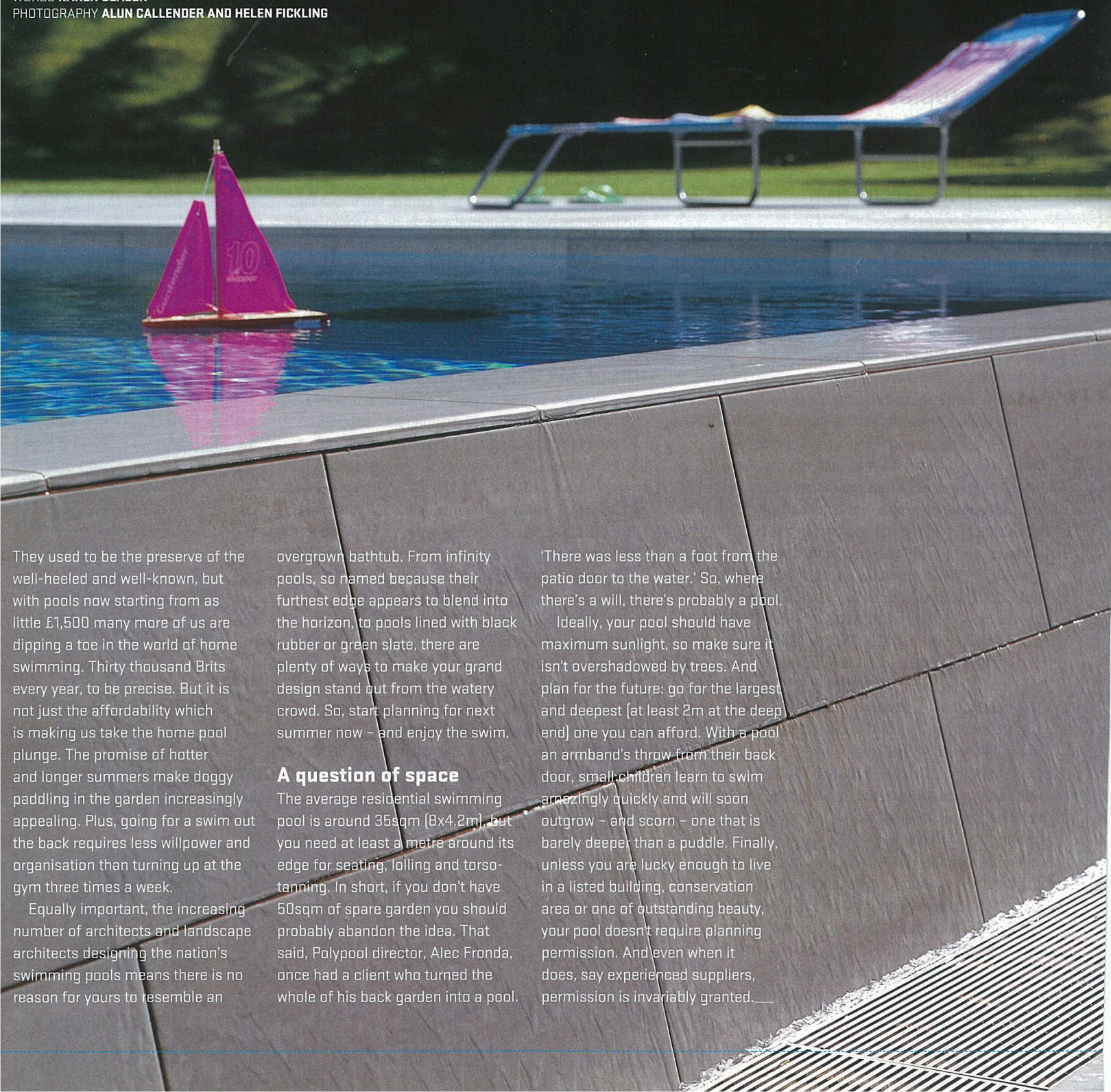


Swimming pools

With British summers predicted to get longer and hotter, many of us are tempted into building a home pool. Read on to find out if you too could be splashing around in your back garden

WORDS **KAREN GLASER**
PHOTOGRAPHY **ALUN CALLENDER AND HELEN FICKLING**



They used to be the preserve of the well-heeled and well-known, but with pools now starting from as little £1,500 many more of us are dipping a toe in the world of home swimming. Thirty thousand Brits every year, to be precise. But it is not just the affordability which is making us take the home pool plunge. The promise of hotter and longer summers make doggy paddling in the garden increasingly appealing. Plus, going for a swim out the back requires less willpower and organisation than turning up at the gym three times a week.

Equally important, the increasing number of architects and landscape architects designing the nation's swimming pools means there is no reason for yours to resemble an

overgrown bathtub. From infinity pools, so named because their furthest edge appears to blend into the horizon, to pools lined with black rubber or green slate, there are plenty of ways to make your grand design stand out from the watery crowd. So, start planning for next summer now – and enjoy the swim.

A question of space

The average residential swimming pool is around 35sqm (8x4.2m), but you need at least a metre around its edge for seating, lolling and torso-tanning. In short, if you don't have 50sqm of spare garden you should probably abandon the idea. That said, Polypool director, Alec Fronda, once had a client who turned the whole of his back garden into a pool.

'There was less than a foot from the patio door to the water.' So, where there's a will, there's probably a pool.

Ideally, your pool should have maximum sunlight, so make sure it isn't overshadowed by trees. And plan for the future: go for the largest and deepest (at least 2m at the deep end) one you can afford. With a pool an armband's throw from their back door, small children learn to swim amazingly quickly and will soon outgrow – and scorn – one that is barely deeper than a puddle. Finally, unless you are lucky enough to live in a listed building, conservation area or one of outstanding beauty, your pool doesn't require planning permission. And even when it does, say experienced suppliers, permission is invariably granted.