



Arbors Direct Fiberglass Pergolas

Create a custom line for spas you carry

BY KRISTAN HART

THE RIGHT HOT TUB ACCESSORIES can add pizzazz to the customer experience. However, you want your customers to be just as happy with the accessories as they are with the tub. One manufacturer says it has a pergola that will not only meet your expectations, but also exceed them.

Arbors Direct builds fiberglass pergolas that can be built to custom size and dimensions. A unique product in a market inundated with wood, vinyl and aluminum, the quality of the fiberglass is why Jim Conn, owner of Distinctive Designs in Chattanooga, Tenn., offers Arbors Direct pergolas to his customers. "Aluminum and vinyl pergolas...we don't even carry any of those products. Vinyl can crack and split. Aluminum can be dented. But this fiberglass...it's built to last."

Britt Russell, vice president of sales at Arbors Direct, says fiberglass pergolas stand up to the temperature and moisture fluctuation that comes with having a hot tub. Their company offers a limited lifetime warranty on the finish and the color. Russell also says fiberglass construction makes its pergolas stronger than steel but lighter than wood. "The strength to weight ratio in our product is unmatched," Russell says.

The fiberglass beams are hollow on the inside, so they're a natural conduit for lighting, heaters, speakers and other accessories

that a customer wants to add. Chad Lobdell, owner of online retailer Columns & Carvings based in Birmingham, Ala., says

his customers most appreciate the wide array of color options. "Wood pergolas have to be stained the color you want them," Lobdell says. "Vinyl pergolas come in only white or khaki, not giving customers a lot of options. But the fiberglass can be any color the customer wants. They may want to match the trim on their house or maybe their shutters...the options for the customer are endless."

Installation is short and sweet: The kit Arbors Direct creates is designed for ease of installation, Russell says. "There's no cutting; it's ready to be installed on the job site," he says, no saws or special tools required. Installing a pergola is a great do-it-yourself project for a homeowner, or a retailer/contractor can install it.

On the front lines, Conn confirms the company's claims about easy installation. "We're in, we get it installed, and we're usually out of there in half a day," he says. "The customer can start to enjoy it that same day."

Arbors Direct can make anything a customer wants. Russell says it once made kidney-shaped rafter tails for a kidney doctor. That means they can also design a pergola for any hot tub. "We're willing to design a custom line to fit over a particular spa shape and then lock that into a product offering so the retailer can order over and over again," Russell says. "Essentially, we're talking about creating a unique product line to fit their needs."

The price point of an Arbors Direct fiberglass pergola is reasonable, and it's a profitable product for businesses to carry. "The product is comparably priced to a cedar pergola, but dealers who sign up with us will receive a discount off the list price," Russell says.

Business owners can make money off the sale of the product, and they can make a profit on installation. "I don't really break it up like that," Conn says. "I guess you can break it down however you want. But at the end of the day, no matter how you split it up, it's profitable."

It's a product he can make money on, but Conn says he continues to work with Arbors Direct because of its excellent customer service and quality of their product, he adds. "I offer these products because I want my customers to be happy," Conn says. "I want to do business with them again in the future, and I want to work with their friends and their family. I know when they order one of these pergolas, they're going to be happy." ■

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