



Wondrous WATERFALLS

Positive vibes, negative ions and the wonders of water

As the essence of life, water has no shortage of fans. Health experts speak endlessly of its soothing properties and benefits to body and soul. We bottle it, bathe in it, drink it, dangle our toes in it and even snooze to the sound of it.

The trendiest talk about water is in reference to the positive effect it has on the air we breathe. It turns out there's something to that sense of mental and physical revitalization people frequently report during seaside holidays and in the

presence of natural phenomena like awe-inspiring waterfalls. Poets refer to these moments spent awash in the wonder of our environments in terms of awakened senses and feeling more alive; moms keep it simpler and say the fresh air will do you good.

The focus of all this talk is a little something called negative ions — odorless, electrically charged air molecules found in abundance in nature. Near the pounding surf and after a summer rain, the air is charged by molecules broken apart by disrupting factors like

sunlight and moving air and water. Further from the crashing waves and spray, these same energizing effects are noted on a scenic ride in the country or a zestful hike in the mountains.

Bonding to impurities in the air, negative ions attract dust, pollen, smoke, pet dander and even germs, filtering them out from the air. People get a positive vibe from them as increased oxygen levels flow to our brains, causing the biochemical reaction of raised serotonin levels for stress-relieving, energy-boosting results. Some studies even point to negative ions as a medication-free way of combating depression.

RENEWED RELAXATION

In our urban environments, the amount of negative ions is reportedly hundreds of times lower than in rural, natural settings — air conditioning is said to deplete the atmosphere of them. Positive ions are credited with contributing to that groggy feeling you might get after a day spent in an enclosed space, parked in front of a computer screen or at the wheel of a car. Our homes and offices seal out negative ions with fluorescent lighting, air conditioning, computer terminals and other electrical appliances generating those inappropriately named positive counterparts.

To control them, negative ion filters are popular, but it turns out that one of the best enhancers of negative ions is running water — another reason why your shower is considered one of the healthiest places in the house.

Now there's another reason for adding that cool waterfall or fountain feature to the pool or patio area and why the downsized option of a wall-mounted waterfall or small fountain may be the most energizing choice for your favorite room.

"An indoor waterfall is the best air-washer ever," says Scotty Sutker, owner of H2O Walls, Inc. The company produces a line of architectural waterfalls that, besides being sources of sparkling conversation, cleanse the air when negative ions



ABOVE Bring a fresh feeling into your home with a wall-mounted indoor waterfall. *Photo courtesy FountainCrafters.com.*

LEFT A wall of water serves as an air-purifying partition between a home's living and dining areas. *Photo courtesy H2O Walls Inc.*

WHAT THE HECK ARE NEGATIVE IONS?

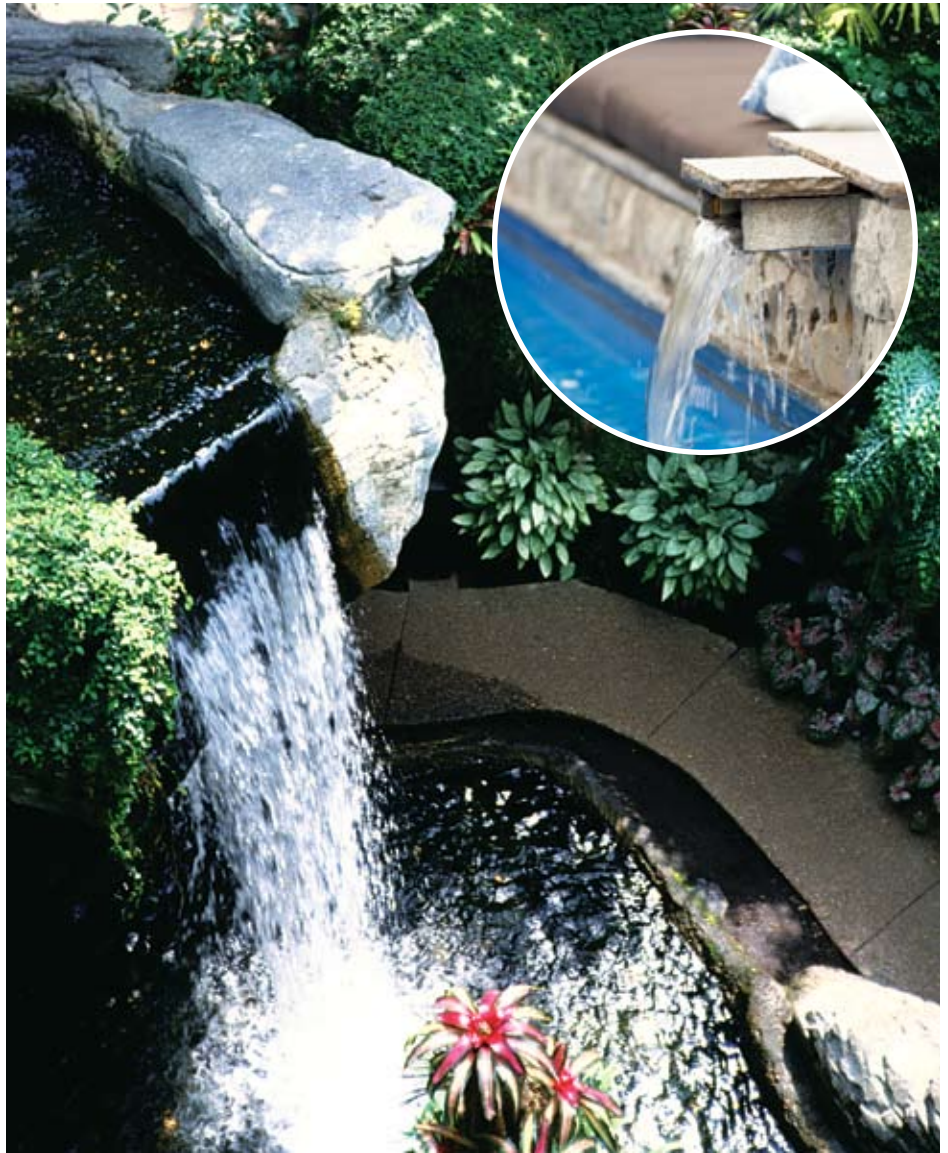
Turbulent water molecules reportedly displace electrons in air molecules, causing them to seek out other oxygen molecules. Once located, they attach, giving the new molecule an extra electron to produce a negative charge — which, atypically, is a good thing.

encapsulate particles and are drawn back into the water. “At the end of the day, you flush away the 7 1/2 gallons of water — that’s the equivalent of a couple of toilet flushes — and start again, so the water stays fresh,” Sutker says. Water-flow speeds and sound levels are controlled by a touch-screen computer, and Sutker says his products include a musical component that even synchronizes the dance of the water with music.

INDOORS AND OUT

Waterfall manufacturers tend to offer a variety of sound effects, ranging from soft, trickling streams to roaring waterfalls, and they have differing levels of maintenance requirements with filtration systems and reservoir sizes. Blueworld USA’s Gardenfall series are stand-alone or wall-mounted units with a reservoir and clear glass or mirrored surfaces, plus a more dramatic open-air unit called a RainCurtain, which creates a wall of water in an entryway or between rooms.

For outdoor living areas and urban gardens, Alden Zove, president of Cedar Run Landscapes, says the pondless waterfall has come into vogue. “This is a feature that has the waterfall and stream, but the basin is filled with stone,” he explains. “Unlike a pond, which needs to constantly be running, this type of feature can be turned on and off at the homeowner’s desire.”



ABOVE A dramatic waterfall is a splashy focal point of lagoon-style pools and smaller water features, but even a spout of softly trickling water (inset) will help to drown out the sounds of traffic and urban life.

He also notes that bubbling fountains have their merits, both indoors and out. “These can have a very modern and elegant look, as with a geometric glazed vessel, using granite urns or bamboo, or rustic, with earthen containers,” he says.

With or without enough negative ions to actually elevate your mood, waterfalls come in all shapes and sizes and promise soothing sounds, splashy visuals and, even better, a sense of refreshment, refinement and — something no one tires of — renewal. **sa**

RESOURCES

Visual Water
www.visualwater.com

Simply Fountains
www.simplyfountains.com

Brackens
410-360-7359

Carroll Landscaping
410-922-2415
www.carroll-landscaping.com

Outdoor Lighting Perspectives
www.outdoorlights.com
410-757-7515

