

How many options are there in choosing a backyard pool?

(NC)—How many times have you pictured yourself swimming early morning laps in your own pool, or wished that the kids had a backyard playground where you could keep an eye on them, or even imagined parties around the pool on summer evenings?

How many times have you thought about buying a pool but dismissed the idea because of the cost? Perhaps it's time to take a second look.

The cost is within reach of many families according to the Canadian Spa and Pool Association (CANSPA) which estimates that many people who buy pools each year earn less than \$30,000 a year.

And pool ownership is an investment that pays off by making the home a more inviting place, adding to its resale value and providing an alternative to a crowded beach, resort or commercial pool. **The basics**

A basic inground pool starts at between \$8,000 and \$10,000. The final cost will depend on its size, the materials used and the landscaping required. Even if you live high atop a mountain, deep in a valley, or only have a small amount of space in which to build, these obstacles can be overcome.

Name your fantasy! A desert oasis, tropical paradise, oriental garden, or Spanish courtyard are not out of reach. It's up to you to create an aquatic environment that reflects your personality, lifestyle and budget.

One distinct trend in pool design is to add natural materials and elements to enhance the natural setting - stones, boulders, bricks and wood combined with colourful foliage can create a delightful effect.

Challenging sites such as sloping backyards, difficult landscaping or limited space shouldn't deter you from buying a pool. Cliff-hanging pool, kidney-shaped pools and aboveground pools can handle even the most de-



(NC)—Pools with fountains add an exotic touch to your backyard.

manding needs. And remember, pools can be custom-fitted to a lot in almost any shape you desire.

The most practical shapes are simple geometric designs that complement the lines of your home, won't compete with landscape and allow for creative use of the surrounding area.

A rectangular pool is best for serious exercise. An L-shaped pool is ideal because adults can swim laps in the long end while children can play and be taught to swim in the shorter leg of the L.

An unusually shaped pool may be the only way to save a favourite tree or conform to the natural terrain. You can create your own fantasy island by building a free-form pool with a waterfall churning from an underwater ledge and a bridge crossing to the raised deck, spa and barbecue.

If you do a lot of swimming, but are short on land - small pools are the answer. The long, narrow shape of a lap pool is ideal for tight spaces or sloped properties. It may measure 10 by 40 feet

and range in depth from three to five feet.

Another option is a play pool with shallow depths of one metre at both ends. It's perfect for adults who want to play water basketball and volleyball at one end while children play at the other and swimmers do their laps in between. **Create a haven**

If your family does a lot of outdoor entertaining, design a pool area that is picturesque. Gazebos, sunscreens, cabanas, pool houses and barbecue pits can create a total outdoor living area.

Have a barbecue on your patio deck. Use your pool house to dry off after a swim or to enjoy a late-afternoon refreshment. Create a haven for your family and friends.

If your budget is flexible and you do a lot of entertaining, build an enclosed hospitality centre. It allows you to dine and lounge without having to run in and out of the house to get your food and beverages. Consider equipping your pool area with a guest house complete with kitchen. Or build a greenhouse to use as a pool house and dining room.

Even for a limited budget, the list of moderately-priced extras is long: heaters (or as an option, solar panels); automatic pool cleaners which do over 80 per cent of the job of cleaning a pool; heat-retaining pool covers; slides; whirlpool spas and hot tubs and additional fencing and landscaping items.

Whatever your dream, there's surely a pool that can match it. But don't wait for the heat of the summer to make your dream come true - now's the time for thinking about the hot days that lie ahead.

For the name of a CANSPA dealer in your area contact: Canadian Spa and Pool Association, 6303 Airport Road, Suite 305, Mississauga, Ontario L4V 1R8, or call Toll Free 1-800-263-6103.



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