

# Lots of options to wade through when buying a swimming pool

(NC)—So you've decided to take the plunge and buy a swimming pool. Now comes the hard part; deciding which type to buy.

Outdoor pools come in just about every size and shape imaginable, says Bill Dvfgala, executive director of the Canadian Spa and Pool Association (CANSPA).

Your dream pool could be rectangular, oval or shaped like a teardrop; it could have a vinyl liner or be lined with concrete; and it could be inground, onground or above ground.

Before making any plans, Mr. Dvfgala suggests you check with local building and health authorities. Rules about the size and siting of swimming pools, fences and drainage lines vary from one municipality to the next.

When planning the siting of your pool, the CANSPA director recom-

mends it be placed to the side of your backyard, rather than in the centre.

This leaves room for other recreational activities and could be important in terms of resale value, especially if prospective buyers have young children who need room to play.

Generally speaking, the most expensive type of pool is the traditional inground variety, which can have a vinyl liner or can be lined with concrete (gunite) and trimmed with ceramic tile.

Mr. Dvfgala says concrete is the most expensive version of the inground pool, with prices starting at about \$15,000. All pools were originally made with concrete and its advantage is that you can custom design any shape you like. Liberate, for instance, had a pool shaped like a piano.

One type of pool that's usually custom built is the "swimmer," a low

and narrow model about 3.0 metres (10 feet) wide and 18.3 metres (60 feet) long. Like its name suggests, this pool is for athletic types who are serious about swimming lengths.

Mr. Dvfgala says the vinyl-lined pool is now the biggest seller on the market. "It was developed as a means for people in the middle-income bracket" to be able to afford backyard swimming pools. Prices start between \$8,000 and \$10,000.

It's estimated there are close to 60 different shapes of vinyl-lined pools available, including various versions of the rectangle, kidney, oval, teardrop, keyhole and L-shape. The smallest pool available is about 3.6 by 7.3 metres (12 by 24 feet).

### Concrete

Discussing the merits of concrete versus vinyl, Mr. Dvfgala says although

concrete can heave and crack in the winter, it may still be cheaper to maintain in the long term. But replacing a vinyl liner may be slightly cheaper than having to resurface a pool, he adds. A vinyl liner has a life expectancy of 15 to 20 years.

Another type of inground pool available in North America but not popular in Canada is the fibre-glass shell, which comes in one or two pieces.

Mr. Dvfgala says it can be difficult to manoeuvre the large pieces into a backyard.

Onground pools, which start between \$5,000 and \$6,000, are usually built on property that's rocky or has a severe water problem. "They sit on the ground but they usually have a deeper end that goes into the ground."

Most onground pools are rectangular and they come with decks. The shallow end of the pool is usually about 1.2 metres (4.0 feet) deep and the deep end can be as deep as 2.3 metres (7.5 feet). In comparison, inground pools

can be 2.6 to 3.0 metres (8.5 to 10 feet) deep.

Above-ground pools are completely raised above the ground and are usually oval or round, a shape which provides structural strength. The metal shell has a vinyl liner and a frame of aluminum or steel.

"They make it affordable for a young family to have the pleasure of water in their backyard when they're just starting out."

A 3.6-metre (12-foot) "splasher" starts at between \$600 and \$700. Above-ground pools are usually a maximum of 1.2 metres (4.0 feet) deep.

Whichever pool you decide on, Mr. Dvfgala advises you purchase it through a CANSPA dealer. The national association of pool and spa retailers, builders, distributors and manufacturers follows a strict code of ethics.

As well, "Should a misunderstanding occur and it is not resolved, (customers) have a recourse to call on us." For the name of a CANSPA dealer in your area call 676-1591 in Toronto or 1-800-263-6103 toll free.

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