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HOME COUNTIES MAGAZINE

Surrey Edition

Swimming Pools

YOUR GUIDE TO THE PERFECT SWIMMING POOL



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Different Strokes

*Planning to add a swimming pool to your home? Choices abound but there are serious considerations to take into account before you dive in. By Niki Schäfer
All images courtesy of London Swimming Pool Company Ltd.
www.londonswimmingpools.com*

People are instinctively drawn to water. Be it the repetitive sound of waves, the reflection of light on the water's surface or simply its cool and refreshing nature, it attracts us all. However, as the Home Counties are without coast and only the fortunate have riverside properties, how can we introduce some of this captivating element into our homes?

From a fish tank to an Olympic-sized swimming pool, introducing water into your home can come in many different guises. For those with the desire to watch the antics of tropical fish then an aquarium is a (relatively) simple solution but for those who dream of daily laps or, more likely, a fabulous summer party by the pool then there are some serious considerations to be taken into account before diving in.

You might be surprised to learn that planning permission for an outdoor pool is only required if you live in a listed building or area of outstanding natural beauty, if the proposed pool is to be larger than 50% of the garden area or is within 5 metres of the property's edge. Given how stringent the regulations are in our area, I would still double check with the council though, and obviously the water authority will need to be notified. However, despite the

seeming lack of bureaucratic involvement, there are still a number of considerations.

As with all design projects, the first question is always: how will it be used? Is the pool in mind for an athletic early morning swimmer or someone who prefers more leisurely exercise? Is the pool designed for exercise at all or is it more the accessory to the season's glamorous bikini and some glorious outdoor furniture? In contrast, perhaps the pool is an eco friendly semi pond designed to attract nature and be home to stunning aquatic plants. Or maybe it's a splash around for the kids and a cool soak after a long day in the office.

According to SPATA (the Swimming Pool and Allied Trades Association www.spata.co.uk), the average sized family swimming pool is 32 feet by 16 feet (9.75m x 4.87m) and 3 feet at the shallow end and 6 feet at the deep end. For serious swimmers, it can be longer and less wide and for divers it should be longer (at least 34 feet or 10.36m) and deeper at 8 feet (2.43m) or 10 feet (3.05m) with a springboard.

How will a structure of such a size work in your garden? Obviously, it will want to face the sun and be sheltered from the wind with trees or a wall, which will impact on your choice of location. Power lines and waterlogged ground are also best avoided if the pool is to be 'in ground' (as opposed to above ground).

Your choice of location might dictate the

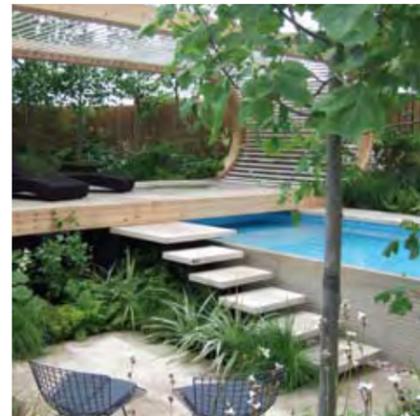


shape – a kidney shape to work around an obstacle, otherwise your choice here is purely aesthetic and the shapes are endless – from Classic, Grecian and Roman to more obscure shapes and designs.

The next major consideration is the cost. Outdoor swimming pools can cost from £20,000 to £60,000 in construction alone. Ease of access and type of construction will have a bearing on this cost (also recent increases in haulage costs will impact the costs of removing excavated soil). Types of pool include; a reinforced concrete shell with a tile, marble or specialist paint interior; a prefab panel supporting a tailor-made PVC liner; a fibreglass or ceramic one-piece shell or an above-ground pool. Each will have its own cost implications. Added features such as diving boards will also cost extra.

Running costs should also be thought about. Typically a pool will cost between £400 and £800 a year to run, though this will vary according to your particular tastes in pool temperature. Heating the pool is best achieved with a combination of approaches; the sensible – a night cover (which should retain 80% of the water's heat), the environmental – solar panels, and the practical – the right heat pump.

Sanitising the pool also requires both money and time (approximately 15-30 minutes per



week to clean). For those who are not keen on chlorine there are other methods of keeping the pool clean and safe.

Safety is as always of vital importance in particular if small children are to use the garden. Covers, fences and nets can all help in this area and there is plenty of advice to meet the safety regulations. The most important advice could be to teach kids to swim (visit www.sta.co.uk for lessons near you).

Most of these considerations will also apply to an indoor pool though here, planning permission is always necessary. Construction time and costs will also be considerably higher,

as will pool maintenance costs as the water temperature will need to be comfortable as will the air which will also need to be de-humidified.

Water is one of the key elements in Feng Shui and its theories suggest that water can bring strength into existing relationships and prosperity to the home or building. However, introducing a swimming pool isn't the only means of bringing water into the home. Indoor water features can not only look spectacular but will add a certain tranquillity to a space. With the right lighting they can look very dramatic and become a key feature to a room or hall. They are also attractive ways of adding

humidity into a stale room where central heating can sometimes work a little too hard.

An idea with a hint of California about it is the 'water walkway' - glass flooring over water can have a stunning effect. The water might be part of the swimming pool below (and will therefore have the added interest of the occasional swimmer to walk over too) or may be an extension of the pond or 'waterway' from the exterior. Once the imagination gets going and with some internet research of homes in warmer climates who incorporate such features into their houses more readily than you can dream up something really spectacular.

