



FREE IN-GROUND
POOL BUYING GUIDE

CRITICAL IN-GROUND POOL PLANNING QUESTIONS



ARVIDSON
POOLS & SPAS

EST. 1958

MAKING YOUR LIFE BETTER AT HOME

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Why ask the questions?

Your own backyard swimming pool is one of the best decisions you can make to enhance your home life. Experienced swimming pool owners agree that benefits include a healthier, more peaceful lifestyle, increased entertainment options, and wonderful family memories.

Arvidson Pools & Spas knows that investing in a swimming pool is a big decision that involves planning and careful consideration of the balance between features, design and cost. We bring more than 50 years of design and construction expertise to every project, and we never forget that our family name is attached to every one of them for many years after our job is done.

So pardon our pun, but please DIVE IN to this information. It should address many of your concerns and help to educate you as you begin this process. Surely, you'll have questions after you read this and we welcome the opportunity to discuss any and all of your questions or concerns.

What is the best way to choose the right pool company?

Experience and industry studies tell us that most people reference two primary sources of information in their decision making process; referrals and the Internet.

1. REFERRALS

Talk to your neighbors, friends and business associates to see if they have experience with any local pool builders. If you don't produce some builder names in this process, then at least ask the pool builder you are considering to provide you with a list of some recent customers you can contact. It is unlikely that a pool builder, or any contractor for that matter, will give you a list of unhappy customers, but there is tremendous merit in speaking with people who have been through the process. You should ask them what went right and what to watch out for throughout the process as well as how the pool builder resolved any issues along the way. Some questions to consider asking include:

How long did the total project take from start to completion? All things considered - was everything completed in a reasonable amount of time?

- What did the contractor do to educate you on the construction process? Was this done at the time of sale, at a pre-construction meeting, or both?
- Did any unforeseen or unexpected costs arise that you weren't warned about up-front? In other words, did the pool builder complete the entire project at the original contract price? And, if there were changes (deletions or additions), were they handled via a written contract addendum or change-order?
- How was the communication throughout the process? Were you kept informed as the job moved ahead, and were you advised of unforeseen delays, inspections, etc?

What is the best way to choose the right pool company? (cont.)

- Was a final walk-through conducted giving you the opportunity to address any/all concerns prior to completion? Did all of your concerns get addressed to your satisfaction?

- Lastly, are you satisfied with your pool builder to the point where you would not hesitate to recommend the builder?

2. INTERNET

You are reading this document because your search, whether from of a referral, curiosity, or whatever reason, brought you to our website. You then completed the web form to request this information. We recognize the Internet as a very valuable tool to help people conducting research.

Our goal is to provide some educational assistance in your decision, on your time and on your terms. If your research leads you to the decision to acquire your own backyard pool, we hope you give us an opportunity to earn your business. We would like nothing more than to help you achieve your backyard dream as we have done for many other families.

Does your pool builder have a web site? Is it useful to your research? Does it provide helpful information? Does it convey the company's stability and expertise in a convincing manner?

TIP:

Investigate local consumer opinion sites. Does your builder have any consumer reviews? If so, are they positive or negative? Did they handle the review in a professional and reliable way?

What does the contract process typically consist of?

The research process should allow you to narrow your choices down to two or three pool builders. At this point, each of the builders should, at a minimum, do the following activities for you:

1. Consult with you to determine your needs and desires regarding pool usage, your design preferences and to educate you about feature and benefit options. The builder should use this information, combined with the specific information about your available backyard space to do both a design and cost estimate.
2. Measure your yard accurately and conduct a site survey to determine the best access into the yard. The “net” size of the yard (after factoring in all existing obstacles such as existing landscaping, fencing, A/C units, fireplace bump outs, etc.) determines the size of excavation equipment to be used. The builder also assesses how much existing fencing (if present) must be removed and replaced.
3. Design a detailed and scaled drawing of the pool and any other items related to installation. This process is not complete until you are 100% satisfied with the plan, and it may require a few revisions to get to that point. While it's really at the builder's discretion, the builder probably won't leave the drawings for other, less talented designers to copy. This is the work product for which he is paid, and it is not a standard practice to leave it behind. When a decision is made and the final plan is prepared, you are entitled to a complete set of copies soon after the contract signing and verification process is completed.
4. Produce a written contract that defines all of the features included in the project. This document should define the responsibilities of both the contractor and you. A typical proposal should include at least the following information:

What does the contract process typically consist of? (cont.)

- Pool and Spa (when applicable) lengths, widths and depths.
- Materials to be used for the interior finish (liner pattern or shell color), any water features, rock materials, etc.
- Type and amount of decking
- Utility runs and hook-ups as applicable (electric/gas)
- Equipment to be installed (Pumps, Filter, Heater, Controller, etc.)
- Cleaning system
- Water sanitation system
- Responsibilities of homeowner
- Contact information, which includes project managers, project coordinators and office personnel (mobile numbers and email contact)
- Warranty information

Each of the tasks noted above help give you a clear picture of what the pool project will cost and how to complete the project effectively.

If a pool builder skips any of these basic requirements, you have good reason to be concerned about the accuracy of the estimate and the true final cost.

CAUTION:

Take caution with any builder who gives you a piece of paper with a price written on it or a “bid” that is not specific. Remember, a substantially low bid might indicate a mistake or lack of knowledge or experience. A bid that is “too good to be true” may cost you in the long run.

How do I choose a design?

Choosing the design that is best for you is one of the most critical parts of the process. A custom designed swimming pool and spa can take on just about any form. There are some basic categories and terminology that should help you along the way.

GEOMETRIC is a pool with straight lines and/or more geometric curves. A geometric type of pool usually takes on more basic shapes such as rectangular and/or “Grecian” - It usually takes on a more “classical” look. Homes with more symmetrical property lines accommodate geometric pools quite well. A simple geometric design in the right setting provides a very elegant look.

FREEFORM POOLS have “non-symmetrical” curves. This style of pool design is often used to create a more “natural” look. Bullnose brick or cantilever trim and darker interiors are often used to accentuate a freeform pool. Homes with Irregular and non-symmetric property lines accommodate a freeform pool nicely.

LAP POOL is the term applied to a swimming pool that is used for swimming laps for exercise or training. Most lap pools are geometric (for example, rectangular), but can also take on a freeform shape with enough length left in one direction, perhaps on a diagonal lines, that lap swimming can still be accomplished.

VANISHING EDGE/INFINITY EDGE/NEGATIVE EDGE: You may hear any one of these terms, and they all basically refer to the same style of pool. A portion of the pool is left just slightly below the water level allowing water to flow over that area into a catch basin – creating the illusion that the water is flowing into whatever the backdrop view consists of. In the right setting, typically where the backyard falls away, perhaps into a steep cliff or a lake, the effect can be extremely dramatic.

How do I choose a design? (cont.)

Even smaller yards or those looking for “just something to get wet in” can be accommodated. So depending on your available space and your intended use you may also find the following designs of interest:

SWIM SPAS are a fairly new term that describes an oversized spa or small pool that can be used for parties, entertainment and relaxation. Many people choose a swim spa (aka “spool”) to accommodate a smaller space. These products can range from simple to extravagant depending on the features incorporated. In northern climates, swim spas are frequently designed and installed as indoor water features.

HOT TUBS are often included as an important part of a year-round backyard living plan. Hot tubs may be completely separate from a pool design, incorporated within or attached to any swimming pool. In cold weather climates, hot tubs are often included in backyard designs as separate, stand-alone water features that can provide year-round impact even when a swimming pool is not in usable condition. Hot tubs provide another means to enjoy your “body of water” whether it is for the therapeutic value, relaxing end to a busy day, or after an exercise session.

There are many other design considerations that can arise based on the terrain, your desire for water movement/water features, lifestyles, etc. A good designer assists you through this process while insuring that what is conceived is build-able, durable, practical and enjoyable.

What other questions should I ask a pool builder before choosing that builder to build my pool?

If you feel comfortable that a builder is qualified to build your pool, and they have provided you with an estimate, there are some additional questions you might ask prior to signing a contract. Your builder may have already addressed some or all of these items during the process, so just focus in on the areas that weren't covered.

WHO WILL OVERSEE THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS?

Does the builder have a full-time construction superintendent that will oversee your job? Some companies insist that the sales representative or company owner will manage the entire job. This is not necessarily a problem depending on how busy everybody is. If an issue on your job needs immediate attention, but your sales representative is engaged with another project, who can you turn to for information and assistance? Some companies employ very competent construction coordinators who primarily handle coordinating the people involved with the various phases of construction and can address issues that may arise. Be clear on what you can expect from the pool builder you choose.

HOW MANY QUALITY-CHECKS WILL BE MADE THROUGHOUT THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS?

Each phase of construction; from layout, to excavation, to plumbing, etc., must be completed correctly to insure the project comes together as per your expectations. Have the builder walk you through the construction process and the procedures they have in place to insure quality. It is important that a detailed and documented process is in place to insure that the construction is completed on time and avoids future problems as a result of oversights during construction.

What other questions should I ask a pool builder before choosing that builder to build my pool? (cont.)

WHAT STANDARDS WILL THE POOL BE BUILT TO AND WHO IS ACTUALLY BUILDING THE SWIMMING POOL?

Does the builder have written construction standards? The reason for this question is that many pool builders use subcontractors to build their projects. Without construction standards, pool builders essentially allow their subcontractors or laborers to build your pool. The problem is that no “one” subcontractor or laborer can see the entire pool project. They do not have a “vision” for the entire plan that was initially presented to you. Instead, they see only their own individual responsibility.

Pool builders who employ in-house construction crews generally have less likelihood to “cut corners” as the construction standards are repeated on a daily basis, and the company that they are building swimming pools for does not change from week to week.

Clear construction standards assure not only that each stage is done correctly, but also that consecutive stages fit seamlessly together.

It is common for subcontractors to “cut corners” if they don’t have a code of quality standards against which their performance is consistently evaluated.

What are some factors that can affect construction costs?

Due to a number of potential factors another very similar swimming pool built in your neighborhood may not necessarily cost the same as your pool. For this reason, no one can give you a reasonable cost estimate over the telephone. Many factors impact the cost that a pool builder must assess prior to giving you an accurate estimate for building a pool in your yard.

These factors include:

- Amount of room for the excavation equipment (referred to as access space)
- Any obstacles in the excavation access area (air conditioning units, gas meters, fencing, etc.)
- A “hard dig” meaning rock or hard soil conditions
- Proximity of the nearest legal area to dump the dirt removed from your site
- Demolition of existing landscaping, concrete walkways, etc.
- Will grading be required prior to pool layout & excavation?
- Overhead or underground utilities that might require re-routing
- Size of the pool
- Amount and type of decking
- Electrical service panel upgrades
- Retaining walls and other masonry work
- Make and quality of equipment and construction materials

Remember that in most cases, your pool builder has no way of knowing what lurks below the surface. Unforeseen issues can arise, such as:

- Septic tank or sewer lines
- Fill soil that will not bear the weight of the pool
- Rock or hard-pan conditions that require special digging equipment
- Underground water

A pool builder must assume that you have more knowledge of the property than anyone else, and no one likes surprises. To mitigate unexpected costs during construction, let your builder know of any conditions you are aware of before construction begins. Ask your contractor what costs might be assessed if problems are encountered. Most importantly, if a pool builder says prior to signing a contract, “We don’t need to worry about that right now,” you might want to look for somebody else.

What are some factors that can affect construction costs? (cont.)

Any unforeseen construction costs should be handled with a Change Order or Contract Addendum). This is a legal, written change to your construction contract. Some unscrupulous builders might try to lure you into signing a contract with them by “low-balling” the price of your pool with the intent to later make changes to your project during construction in order to recoup money they would lose if they stuck to the original contract price. Before you sign a contract with a pool builder, ensure that he has a process and policy for executing change orders. Do not allow any changes to your construction contract without written agreement.

Take caution when a builder quotes you a low “over the phone” price...because without completing a design and seeing your yard, a blind estimate is rarely a realistic one. Familiarize yourself with the market and be prepared to adjust your plans as necessary to accommodate the budget you have in mind.

What do I need to do to prepare for the start of construction?

Your pool builder will explain to you what you need to do. Before construction actually begins, your builder should:

REVIEW THE FINAL DRAWING

You should review this carefully and sign off that it reflects everything on the contract. Some builders have their customers sign off on the drawing at the time of sale. Others may have a more detailed drawing created within a few days (or even weeks – depending on the complexity of the job) which they will provide to you. Some details on your pool may require structural engineering. In that case plans or details relevant to a particular element of the plan may be prepared by a licensed structural engineer.

2. Be prepared to help your builder in obtaining permits. Permitting requirements can vary from town, to county, to state and your builder will typically handle this. However it may be necessary for you to assist the builder. Permit responsibility should be spelled out in your contract. Important: Disclose all easements/setbacks, etc. that you are aware of to your builder prior to getting permits. This will help to avoid plan conflicts or design changes.

3. Your builder may ask to schedule a pre-construction meeting with you, the salesman and the construction supervisor. This meeting should prepare you for construction and is essential to making sure your project runs smoothly. The following things are typical of what could be discussed at this pre-construction meeting:

- Exact location of the swimming pool, equipment, access (etc.)
- A review of all material selections
- Realistic expectations of backyard construction
- Responsibilities of the homeowner (if applicable)

What do I need to do to prepare for the start of construction? (cont.)

There are also things that should be completed by you, the homeowner such as:

- Get Home Owners Association approval (if applicable). Failure to do so could lead to fines and delays on the pool project. As the homeowner, you are usually responsible for obtaining HOA approval.
- Have all financing completed. Contractors should not be expected to start any work until financing has been approved. and/or appropriate payments have been made.

What are considered normal delays?

Even though many pools are built according to the original schedule, it is not uncommon for delays to occur. Unfortunately, many things outside of a pool builders control can delay a pool project.

Some of the more typical things that can lead to construction delays include:

- Work by others, not part of the pool contract
- Change Orders
- Weather
- Natural disasters such as fires or floods
- Delays by Township inspectors
- Economic/supply shortages such as cement or steel
- Missed delivery dates by vendors beyond your builder's control.

Your builder wants things to run just as smoothly as you do so don't assume the worst if a delay occurs. Your pool is something that will provide you with many years of enjoyment. A few days or even weeks delay along the way is well worth the wait.

Why not just build my own pool?

Building a swimming pool is not a simple construction project. The process requires coordination of a minimum of ten different specialized trades. Even most general contractors, with extensive experience at home building, do not have the skills or experience with subcontractors required to build a pool. In fact, it is very common for general contractors to hire pool companies as the contractor for their pool projects

If you are willing to accept all of the responsibility, and you have the required knowledge, experience and the time, then you might consider it. Just keep in mind that in addition to the complexities of design, supervision and construction, there are also many liability considerations. Most homeowners don't realize they assume total liability for every subcontractor (and his employees) while he works on your property.

Some people may attempt to talk you into being your own general contractor, or "owner/ builder" as it is referred to. "Owner/builder" describes a situation in which the homeowner becomes the general contractor. As an owner/builder, you (not the person you hire) assumes responsibility for the whole job.

Your responsibility may include such things as state and federal taxes, worker's compensation insurance and other legal liabilities. You may be required to hire various subcontractors for your project, scheduling their work and supervising the job. If a worker is injured while working on your property, you could be asked to pay for injuries and rehabilitation through your homeowner's insurance policy.

By signing a building permit application as an owner/ builder, you assume full responsibility for all phases of your project and its integrity. While it may appear cheaper at first glance, hiring an unlicensed 'consultant' to manage the project does not save you money in the long run. By hiring a licensed (where applicable) and experienced contractor for your project, the contractor becomes responsible for all phases of construction. Unless you are very experienced in construction, it is best to leave these matters to an experienced and professional pool builder.

Summary

A swimming pool is an investment that keeps providing many happy returns year after year. Those returns are in the form of family fun and family memories in a beautiful, private setting.

You've worked hard to get to a place in your life where you can make your backyard dreams a reality. We hope this report has provided you with some very valuable information.

We would love to work with you when you are ready to build your backyard dream. Let us know if we can be of any assistance.



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Yes. There is a Difference...

Arvidson Pools & Spas began in Crystal Lake, Illinois in 1958 as a family owned and operated construction company, Ben Arvidson & Sons. The name changed to Arvidson Pools & Spas in 1988 to better reflect what had become its core business... building pools swimming pools, servicing and selling portable hot tubs.

Arvidson Pools & Spas has grown to become northern Illinois' premier all-around pool and spa provider. We have installed over 2,500 pools, sold over 3,500 hot tubs and have expanded to three retail locations in Crystal Lake, Palatine and St. Charles. Our retail stores provide free computerized water analysis and recommendations, water balancing chemicals, and an extensive parts department with knowledgeable staff for DIY projects. Finally, we have trained and certified professionals to provide comprehensive service and renovation to existing pools and hot tubs.

We are proud members of APSP, NFIB, local rotary clubs, and chambers of commerce. We have received numerous Design and Customer Service Awards including APSP Gold Award, Carecraft Design Excellence, NSPI Design Award, SEE (Safe and Energy Efficient) Award, Aqua 100, Best of the Fox and Watkins Outstanding Service.

The company is now owned by three grandchildren of the original owner, Dennis Marunde, Doug Marunde and Dan Arvidson.

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