

Fiberglass Gains Greater Market Share

Improved materials please homeowners

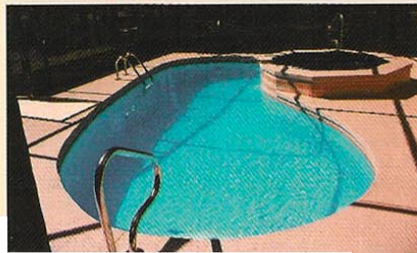
BY CATHERINE TAYLOR

In a society that demands fast food, rapid refunds and a quick fix for everything, it makes sense that there would be a rise in consumer interest in "fast" pool installations. Although no pool provides the instant gratification of a new car, the one-piece fiberglass pool comes close.

Fiberglass units are installed in just a few days as opposed to the months it takes to construct a custom-designed pool. This is an instant selling point for many consumers, causing more manufacturers to offer the pools than just a few years ago.

Their popularity is growing rapidly. "According to National Spa and Pool Institute research in 1992, in 1987 fiberglass pools were 4 percent of the market. In 1992 it changed to 20 percent, and there now are 25 manufacturers of one-piece inground pools in the United States," according to George Sullivan, president of San Juan Products, Eaton Park, Fla.

MARKET REPORT



Water features, spas and decking can be combined with fiberglass pools to create attractive backyard settings, as shown in the photos from Viking Pools, above, and San Juan Products, left.

uct. This gives the consumers a clear view of what the pool will look like when installed.

"Whenever anybody comes on-line as a dealer, they can park the product where people can walk up and

look at it. It beats the Yellow Pages or advertising," Stahl said.

Sullivan suggests this approach as well. He actually does it himself at trade shows, where dealers also can get a direct view of the product. What many dealers or builders like about fiberglass one-piece pools is the fact that the quality is controlled.

Quality Control

Because there are fewer parts to fiberglass pools, there are fewer parts to potentially malfunction. This benefit helps everyone involved in the industry.

"The quality control is in-house. There is no dealing with subcontractors. It comes straight from the factory, not off the street," Stahl commented.

"Everything is controlled in the manufacturing process. Everything leaves the facility, is inspected, checked over, etc. It is installed in place and attached to all the fittings," Erdelac said.

"Unlike a lot of other pools, it can move with soil conditions if installed properly. There are no callbacks, so it doesn't come back to haunt you. The fewer callbacks you have, the more money you save," Erdelac said.

Fiberglass definitely has improved over the years, and the expanding market reflects this. For dealers who are involved in this growing field, the future is looking bright. ■