

Before you take the plunge, know what type of pool is best for you

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So, which type of swimming pool is best for you?

Vinyl-lined pools don't seem to be as popular as they once were; most contractors install either concrete or fiberglass pools.

Predictably, contractors who specialize in one or the other express a preference for that type.

A. B. Reynolds, owner of Lehigh Pool Service, in Fort Myers, Fla., uses a shot-concrete product in his pools.

"It's regular concrete, but high strength," Reynolds says.

Prices, he says, range according to what you want the pool to look like and the area you live in.

"You can build a small pool complete with a screen enclosure, ready to swim; for \$13,000," Reynolds says. "You can build a fancy pool that will go to \$28,000," or more.

"The cost is quite variable," he says. "A lot of the cost depends on the size of the deck, type of finish on the deck and the screen enclosure size."

Reynolds, who started his business in 1976, says the shape of concrete pools is variable, from rectangular to square to kidney-shaped to oval.

"They're actually free-formed, which means if a customer wants a dog-leg-shaped pool, we can form it that way," he says.

Reynolds says he generally gives customers a maximum time frame of about 45 days until completion.

That covers "digging, forming, setting the steel, shooting the concrete, setting tile, setting the beam of the pool, top coping, pouring the deck, finishing the deck, setting all the equipment, the plumbing, all the electrical work, setting the screen

Buying tips

Here are some things to consider when you purchase your pool:

Type: Fiberglass or concrete are most popular.

Shape and size: Your pool can be formed to meet your needs.

Extra features: Extra luxuries, such as electronic remote control add to the pool's comfort and cost.

Budget: A small screened pool could cost about \$13,000; a fancier one could cost \$28,000 or more. Costs can vary, depending on the deck size, deck finish and screen size.

Time: It can take up to six weeks to get your pool installed.

Contractor: Be sure to research your pool contractor. Are his or her customers satisfied? Also, make sure your contractor is licensed.

enclosure"

Besides the myriad pool shapes and features available to homeowners today, there are all manner of lights, spas, spa jets and other features. . .

Another feature, Reynolds says, is electronic remote control of the various functions of the pool, such as the lights, pump and spa.

Reynolds says the reason he prefers building concrete pools is that he thinks they're more stable "than a vinyl liner or fiberglass," Reynolds says.

"With a concrete pool you've probably got a maximum of 40 tons of material, including the water, in a very small spot. The concrete pool, to me, is a much more stable pool."

He says a new pool finish, called Diamond Brite, cuts down on refinishing the inside of the pool, which generally is required every seven years or so. "That seems to be an improved product for

waterproofing the inside of the pool," he says.

"There are some disadvantages; it makes a little rougher surface. The advantage- is it's guaranteed for a longer period of time and it seems to hold up better against stains and water chemicals."

Greg Ibrahim, owner of Blue Dolphin Pools, specializes in fiberglass pools.

"There are a number of advantages" to fiberglass, Ibrahim says, "as far as maintenance and as far as chemical use.

"Fiberglass is 17 . times stronger than concrete. It has a smooth surface, so it doesn't harbor any kind of algae, unlike concrete, which has pores."

Fiberglass, Ibrahim says, "gets stronger as the years go by, instead of weaker. A lot of boats are made of fiberglass. British Navy ships are made of fiberglass. After, years of being in the harsh elements when they cut out different portions of it, they found that fiberglass had actually strengthened over time.

"Fiberglass is just so much more resistant to the elements," he says. "Concrete is very unreliable' fiberglass is not."

Ibrahim pointed out that during severe storms - and especially during California's earthquakes - land shifts can cause concrete pools to crack, but the more flexible fiberglass doesn't, he says.

"The pool stays intact," he says. "'The (concrete) deck will crack, but the pool will remain intact'"

Ibrahim says his pools are installed with a wellpoint beneath them, so if there's heavy rain that causes flooding, the water can drain away from beneath the pool.