

Soak or Swim in a Spool

The newest trend in outdoor entertainment? How about a dip in the spool? Spools are small spa pools, designed with a deeper end for swimming and splashing, as well as a spa area for relaxing. They are typically smaller than a swimming pool, and therefore easier to maintain and easier to squeeze into a smaller yard. Although homeowners who install a spool are not likely to recoup the entire initial investment, if and when they sell their home, they may recoup half or three quarters of their investment, or more.

One company, called Aquaspool now offers an above-ground, all-in-one pool/spa combination advertised as an entertainment center that is fun for adults and kids. Built-in spools may feature embedded umbrellas, bridges or small waterfalls and even a natural gas campfire. Spas and spools may start near \$10,000 installed, depending on size, and can quickly rise in cost to thirty thousand dollars or more.



What will you get in return for your investment? According to one spa reseller, a spa in an average price range will include between forty to sixty jets, three pumps, a blower and a circulating pump. There are a number of different seating arrangements, including lounge or Adirondack-style seating. However, bench seating is often the preferred choice, because it allows for the most flexible seating arrangements.

More sophisticated spas and spools now come with built-in music systems with radios, CD players and even iPod docking stations. The flat screen television option is also popular, and some customers are requesting, and purchasing, computer connections built into the spa.



Spas are for relaxing, but all code and zoning requirements must be met before a homeowner can turn on the jets. Some municipalities require a percentage of a yard be devoted to green space, and a spa or spool must meet those requirements. In addition, there are also regulations governing the installation of a self-closing and self-locking fence.

And even though spas and spools are smaller than the typical backyard swimming pool, water must be tested weekly, as well as the right blend of chemicals added to keep the water clean. A more recent innovation, a salt water spa, is now available that needs almost no additives and is less harsh to the skin.

When an outdoor space is not an option, in-home spas are also popular, with an increase of homeowners creating spa sanctuaries in the bathroom. One of the more popular choices in whirlpools is an air-jet model which creates small, gentle bubbles through a forced air process. Because the water doesn't circulate, there is less residue build up than a traditional water-jet spa. There are also no openings through which hair or other objects might be caught.

Another popular trend in a bathroom is the use of a soaking tub instead of a whirlpool. These tubs immerse the entire body in warm water. For those who want the benefits of a whirlpool or soaking tub, but don't have the space, steam showers or vertical shower spas can be an excellent substitute.

Multiple showerheads can be positioned in a variety of directions, and larger showerheads can direct water to cascade from the ceiling. Some steam showers are being equipped with a bench to simulate the experience of a sauna.