

Dive into swimming

If you sweltered through last summer but have been put off installing a pool in your backyard by thoughts of the costs and maintenance involved, it's time to act, writes **Polly Simons**

Backyard pools have come a long way since the standard kidney-shaped pools of your childhood. Today's generation of pools are as stylish as they are convenient, come in all shapes and sizes, are self-cleaning, self-maintaining and can be operated from your mobile phone. Thanks to developments in technology, they can even be used all year round – which means you could be enjoying your new outdoor space well before summer arrives.

BE AN INDIVIDUAL

Once upon a time, swimming pools came in only two varieties – rectangular or rounded. Not anymore. Today's pool is as likely to be square as it is L-shaped, a lap pool, plunge pool, designed to wrap around an outdoor space or even form a wall of your home. Essentially, anything goes.

"People are personalising their outdoor spaces a lot more," says Janine Bellifemine, director of Sunrise Pools.

If you're thinking of installing a pool, your first step should be to think about your backyard and how you use it, as this will determine the style of pool that will suit you best – and the best location for it.

Getting the experts involved from the beginning will save you time and money down the track. They can tell you what you can and can't do with the space, and many pool builders will also look after the complicated approval and certification process.

GO CUSTOM MADE

While fibreglass pools are still an option, more and more people are choosing concrete pools custom created for the space.

"Concrete can be pushed and pulled into any shape and to any length," says Janine. Particularly popular for families with young children is the beach-entry pool, which becomes progressively deeper. "It has a shallow end for wading and is great for kids," she says.



She says infinity edge pools are still popular, particularly if you have a view behind them, and for smaller pools, installing a ledge where people can sit and relax is a popular request.

"Smaller sizes can usually be worked around," Janine says. "If we can't get the equipment in, we'll dig it by hand."

The crème de la crème is the glass feature pool, where a wall or section is constructed from glass or polycarbonate to form a stunning decorative feature. "You can have a window or a complete wall of glass depending on space and budget – we even once installed an egg-shaped pool over a client's dining room table," she says. It's limited only by your imagination – and your budget.

TECHNOLOGY IS KING

Pools are no longer the energy, time and water guzzlers they used to be, says Spiros Dassakis, chief executive of the Swimming Pool and Spa Association of NSW (SPASA).

New generation pools now have the option of complete automation, using smart technology and sensors to control pool pumps, heating, lighting and cleaning from your computer, iPhone or iPad.

"Thanks to technology, such high-level products are not as expensive as they used to be," says Spiros. "They're now within everyone's reach."

They're also more eco-friendly than ever, with some pool pumps saving owners between



Concrete pools such as this lap pool from Sunrise Pools can be built to fit any space. Inset: A pool from Landart Landscapes.

60 to 80 per cent on running costs.

"A swimming pool when it's set up correctly should take very little maintenance," says Spiros.

Want to outsource your commitment? Licensed pool and spa service technicians are a popular choice for busy pool owners who want to keep it in peak condition. Check spasa.org.au for details.

TURN UP THE HEAT

As a country we're blessed with some of the best weather in the world, but there's no denying that when the weather cools down, taking a dip can look less than appealing. Developments in technology are extending the swimming season and making it possible to swim all year round.

"When it comes to heating, you have the option of solar heating, heat pumps which work like reverse cycle air conditioning and gas heating," says Spiros.

What works best for you will depend on your pool and budget, but as a rule, Spiros recommends heat pumps for heating pools

consistently over a long period, and gas for a short-term, quick option.

Alternatively, pool covers can help retain heat naturally and reduce maintenance when the pool is not in use. A retractable cover means you can have the best of both worlds, with the benefits of an indoor pool in winter and retracting it as the weather warms up.

"There are so many pools in Sydney, but we find that when people put a blanket on them, they stop using them, and they still fill up with leaves" says Vit Vana, director of KBL Pool Enclosures. "(Retractable awnings) do the same job as a fixed pool awning, but you also have the option of having an outdoor pool in summer." The cover is attached to the side of the pool via railings, allowing you to retract it fully or uncover only a section of the pool. Each cover is fitted with child-safe locks.

"Depending on how much sun it receives, it retains heat to extend the swimming season all year round," he says. As a bonus, the UV-treated polycarbonate structure protects pool coping from harmful UV damage, and can be easily hosed free of leaves.

The name behind this award winning pool

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Above: Glass pool fencing is popular for its subtlety, as this outdoor space from Landart Landscapes demonstrates. Below: Water features are a popular addition at Sunrise Pools.

BE SAFE AND STYLISH

Drowning is one of the leading causes of death for children under five, so safety is paramount. Strict fencing and safety guidelines are now in place which pool builders and owners must adhere to, including restrictions on fence height, location and landscaping. Failure to comply can lead to fines up to \$5500, or on-the-spot fines of \$550.

Safe and compliant fencing need not be an eyesore however. Matt Leacy, director of Landart Landscapes and president of the LNA Master Landscapers Association, recommends selecting pool fencing as soon as you know the location of your pool, and then designing the rest of the space around it to ensure it recedes into the background.

"A lot of customers are surprised that we may start with the consideration of the pool fence when designing pool and garden spaces," he says. "But pool fences shouldn't be a division of spaces rather it should seem like the pool fence disappears and doesn't create an obvious barrier between."

Glass fencing is still the most popular option for its unobtrusiveness.

"But even with glass, there can be a sense of separation," says Matt. If you're worried about this, he recommends avoiding having pool fencing butt straight up against the pool coping, which can make the fence look more pronounced. You could also consider planting garden beds along the line of the fence to soften it, avoiding any trees, shrubs or pot plants that might be climbed over.

Matt also recommends avoiding deciduous trees close to the pool, or opting for a spillover feature, where any leaves are channelled into a second, smaller reservoir that can be cleaned more easily.

He recommends star jasmine, gardenia and palms as hardy varieties that can survive the occasional onslaught of pool water.

"But always plant with the style of the garden," he says.

Words Polly Simons

More Sunrise Pools sunrisepools.com.au; SPASA spasa.org.au; Landart Landscapes landart.com.au

Pictures Sunrise Pools; Landart Landscapes

ARE YOU COMPLIANT?

All pools must be registered on the NSW Pool Register. As of April 29, all properties sold or leased with a pool need a certificate of compliance, a relevant occupation and registration certificate or a certificate of non-compliance issued by the NSW Pool Register

POOL FENCES MUST BE:

- 1) At least 1.2 metres high (as measured from finished ground level)
- 2) Not leave a gap at the bottom of more than 10cm from ground level
- 3) Not have gaps of more than 10cm between any vertical bars
- 4) If containing horizontal bars, these must be spaced at least 90cm apart
- 5) A 90cm "non-climbable" zone must be maintained around the pool, with no climbable trees, shrubs, or items such as pot plants, barbecues, toys, ladders or chairs within the zone
- 6) Pool gates must swing outwards and be fitted with self-closing and latching devices

For more details, visit swimmingpoolregister.nsw.gov.au



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Small Internal 1050w x 1000d x 1100h External 1100w x 1055d x 1180h	Small unit can easily be expanded at a later date to accommodate for more equipment. Enclosure requires minimum 75mm clearance at rear to allow lid to open and air circulation.
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