

\$5.95 US VOL. 8, No. 28

AUGUST ISSUE 2008

CUSTOM

EXPERT ADVICE FOR



DESIGNS

R BUILDING A POOL

vacationing in your own backyard oasis

Gas is \$4 a gallon...and rising. Airlines are raising prices, cutting flights, and charging for peanuts. What's a vacationer to do? Build a swimming pool! It's a vacation in your own backyard. And if you get a loan, the interest is deductible just like your mortgage. It can also increase the value of your home. With modern equipment, upkeep is quick and easy. And best of all, they're a lot of fun!

Who wouldn't want a swimming pool? That little slice of water in your backyard makes you instantly more popular. It also gives you that feeling of luxury, being able to slip out in the evening to relax under the stars while soaking your tired body. It's your own little piece of the tropics.

Let's get going! We've spoken to some pool professionals about the things you should consider when building a pool. **John Gay of Panama Pools and Spas in Panama City Beach, Florida,** and **David Galloway of Galloway Pools in Corpus Christi, Texas** were

kind enough to give helpful hints about pools. Both Panama Pools and Galloway Pools are members of the **Master Pools Guild**, an international fellowship of high-end pool builders who have been associating to share ideas, collectively solve building problems and improve their quality since 1962. Generally, there is only one Master Pools member builder in an area. Members are selected based on their market position as an elite, custom pool builder in their

region. They must be craftsmen, operating with a strong commitment to high quality, customer service and business ethics. In other words, they know their stuff and come recommended.

Who should you hire to build your pool? Both Gay and Galloway



Aransas Bay serves as a backdrop for this lovely vanishing edge pool by Galloway Pools of Corpus Christi, Texas.

STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 90



Freeform pool with octagonal spa and Pennsylvania flagstone decking. Below, the Destin West Bayside pool, winner of the 2005 Grand International Award from the Master Pools Guild.

agree: someone with experience. How do you know how long they've been in business? "So many times you see ads that say '35 years experience', but that doesn't tell you anything," said Gay. "Look at the license number, then go to your state's licensing bureau and look up the license number. It will tell you when that person was licensed."

What else should you look for from a prospective builder? How about references? According to Gay, "The thing NOT to ask is a list of references. That is useless; no contractor will give you a customer's name that is not happy with his work. If you want to get a list of customers, go to the building department and look at the permits he/she has pulled over the last year; pick out 3-4 and call them on your own."

In addition to picking a builder, you have to figure out what you want your pool to look like, and what pool equipment to install. The hottest styles these days are freeform custom designs, the ones with lots of curves, as opposed to the old rectangles of yesteryear. "We have a lot of requests for vanishing edge pools, where the water spills over into a catchway," said Galloway. He also said that waterfalls and

natural rock features are hot items. Gay says he's seeing lots of requests for zero entry (no steps, just a gradual slope down into the water) and sun shelves (shallow area, around 6 inches deep, for younger children), along with requests for upgrades on plaster, from standard quartz plaster to pearl or mini-pearl plaster. As far as what new equipment is hot, it's clearly salt chlorine generators. These new chlorination systems convert salt into chlorine, which produces



water that is comfortable and easy on the eyes, skin and hair.

Now the big question, price. Pool prices are based on square footage and perimeter. With the non-rectangle pools being popular, it isn't as easy as it used to be to calculate

square footage. You'll need to obtain the square footage, and then divide it into the price to see how much you are paying per square foot; then you can compare the prices between builders. Since pools vary considerably in size and complexity, there is no standard price. Customers of Panama Pools spend an average of about \$50,000 on a pool. Remember the tax advantages of pool building, and that home equity loans usually have a nice interest rate.

The pool industry is constantly evolving, and new equipment and styles are emerging weekly. The choices in design keep increasing, and maintenance keeps decreasing. Mortgage rates are low and new building has slowed. If you've ever thought about adding a pool, what better time than now? With \$4 gas and outrageous airfare, you'll never find a better time to rationalize your way into a nice, relaxing, shimmering oasis in your backyard. And the kids will love you for it!