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SWIMMING POOLS



COULD YOU HAVE YOUR OWN SWIMMING POOL?

It's never been cooler to have a pool. And whether you've got £5,000 or £25,000 to spend, here's how to get the dream home improvement.

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Which is nearest to your dream? Getting home after a long hot day and unwinding with a few leisurely lengths of your own pool? Chatting with friends over a glass of wine while the kids happily entertain themselves leaping in and out of the water? Keeping fit (at last!) with a vigorous daily swim? Or reflecting on an undisturbed liquid blue surface in the early-morning quiet of summer?

A swimming pool of your own conjures up all sorts of lifestyle fantasies and there's no better time than now to make them come true.

FIRST STEP

Firstly, property values have gone up much faster than the cost of pools, so they have become a far "cheaper" home improvement as a percentage of your property's worth. Secondly, they've never been easier to install: you could be swimming in under a week (see step-by-

step on p125). And thirdly, at the start of this summer, water stocks had replenished after two dry years so you needn't feel like a "water guzzler".

They're also in demand. Around 210,000 homes in the UK have a swimming pool – that's about 1 in a 100 houses – and 3,000 more a year are being added. On top of this there are indoor pools, above-ground pools and something like 100,000 spas or hot tubs. The UK is definitely splashing out!

That said, to ensure this is an improvement that will maintain or add to the value of your home, you need to think carefully about what sort of pool you really want and can afford. And then what

affect it will have on your home and garden in design terms. Estate agents agree that it's how it looks in the setting of your home that most affects value, rather than the chance to get wet. The wrong pool could even reduce the value of your home.

ADDING VALUE

Before you dig into savings or take out a second mortgage you might ask for an informal current valuation by local estate agents. You can show them sketches of your pool idea and ask what difference it would make to their valuation. It will help you clarify whether the pool is →