

## YOUR HOME

# Selecting the best location for your above-ground swimming pool

By Annette Stockley

At this time of year, we are often inundated with numerous requests to check backyards for the best location to situate swimming pools. If you plan ahead, your pool will be a very attractive addition to your yard for many years to come.

## 1. Situate your new pool within your town's restrictions and obtain a building and electrical permit:

This seems so obvious, but you would be surprised how many individuals fail to research their town zoning, boundary and fence restrictions, or fail to obtain the necessary building and electrical permits - all of which are responsibilities of the homeowner.

Restrictions vary from town to town, so do your homework. For instance, Coventry requires that new swimming pools be situated 10 feet from a resident's back and side boundary lines. They also have a five-foot fence code, which means a five-foot fence needs to surround your entire yard or be attached to the top seats of your pool. In comparison, Exeter's back and side boundary restrictions vary depending on how many acres you own, while Gloucester's restrictions vary between 10 and 100 feet, depending upon what part of town you live in. Also, some towns have a four-foot fence code, which ironically means no fence

is needed as long as the wall of the pool is at least four feet high (they consider the wall height a barrier to the pool).

Your building permit protects you in two ways. First, obtaining a building permit protects you from any neighbor that may not be happy with your new addition. Your neighbors just might anticipate loud, late-night parties. You can bet that if you don't research your zoning and boundary laws, they will. If you are not in compliance, they may enforce these restrictions resulting in the dismantling and re-installing of your new swimming pool, all at your own expense.

Second, obtaining a building permit can protect you from an unscrupulous or sloppy subcontractor or installer. Your town will ask for a State of Rhode Island Contractors' Registration Board license number when you pull your building permit. For your protection, this number should always be the retail store's number and not the subcontractor's number. Why? The license number listed on your permit dictates who is fully responsible for the proper installation of your new swimming pool. If the subcontractor's license number is listed on your building permit, they (not the retail store) take full responsibility for the entire installation of your new swimming pool. What's wrong with this scenario? Well,



the retail store is not legally responsible for its subcontractor's work. If the retailer does not want to take responsibility for the subcontractor's work, why should you?

To ensure a safe swimming environment, your town will carefully inspect all electrical work to and from your swimming pool. This is not a job for a handyman or homeowner, so take the time to hire a licensed electrician. Also, in the interim between the completed installation and upcoming electrical hook-up, never run your filter system on an extension cord. This practice will void your motor warranty (it causes the motor to work harder) and - more importantly - creates an electrical hazard inside and outside your swimming pool.

## 2. Do not place your pool over any underground utilities, septic systems or leach fields

Underground utilities always need to be accessible for repair. In addition, underground utilities may not be able to bear the weight of your swimming pool, since an average 24-foot round swimming pool - filled with water - weighs more than 100,000 pounds!

## 3. Do not place your pool under any overhead electrical lines

Electrical lines may fall during severe weather, creating an extremely dangerous situation if your swimming pool is placed directly underneath them.

## 4. Select a location where your pool will receive the best exposure to the sun

Solar energy will help heat your pool water and extend your swimming season. A swimming pool that is not exposed to any sunshine is always chilly. Therefore, observe the movement of the sun and the shadows that are cast throughout the day and situate your pool in a sunny location with long sun exposure. If this is a problem, at least situate your pool in a sunny location for at least part of the day and use a solar blanket cover to maintain water temperature.

## 5. Shield your swimming pool from frequent winds

Windy pool locations are not desirable for several reasons. Frequent winds make us chilly, blow debris into the pool, expose your pool site to excessive weather (such as rain and snow) and contribute to water evaporation. Subsequently, water evaporation contributes to cooler water temperatures. A body of water is in a constant state of evaporation as water turns from a liquid into a gas. This transformation doesn't happen effortlessly - energy is needed. And what kind of energy could possibly be contained in your pool water? Water heat! So as water evaporates, your pool water temperature decreases, then you replenish this lost water with cooler tap water and further lower your



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pool water temperature.

This cycle occurs over and over again - so always shield your swimming pool from frequent winds with fencing, plantings or buildings.

## 6. Locate your pool on a solid, firm and level surface

Situating your new swimming pool on a solid, firm and level surface ensures its structural integrity. An above-ground swimming pool that is more than one inch out of level will create uneven and undue pressure, potentially causing your pool wall or uprights to buckle or your pool to collapse.

## 7. Tree stumps must be pulled and removed

Do not make the unfortunate mistake of grinding tree stumps that stand in the way of your pool location. Ground tree stumps decompose and contribute to future sinkholes. Your swimming pool must be set on a solid, firm and level base. If your swimming pool is situated over such a spot and a sinkhole develops under the pool frame, your swimming pool structure will be compromised.

New homeowners purchasing a home less than 20 years of age need to be especially careful about the placement of their pool. A common practice of homebuilders is to bury vegetation after clearing the land. This is a perfect spot for future sinkholes to develop.

## 8. Locate your swimming pool so that surface water drains away from the pool

A sand, clay or foam pool base creates a soft and cushy pool floor and protects the liner from swimming pool hardware and undesirable ground surfaces. If surface water washes away this protective clay or sand pool base, the liner will come into direct contact with the bottom track of the swimming pool or the patio blocks that are placed under each pool upright causing your liner to fail. There-

fore, make sure that surface water drains away from your new pool.

## 9. Avoid placing your pool under trees or near shrubs

Trees and shrubs shed their leaves during the entire year, not only in autumn. Also, in rare instances, vegetation roots may gravitate toward the moist underside of the liner. For easier pool maintenance, do not situate your swimming pool directly under trees or shrubs.

## 10. Place the filter system in an easily accessible location

Your pool equipment (filter, pump, motor, heater, ect.) will need to be maintained and serviced from time to time. Locate this equipment in an easy accessible area and not under a low deck. Also, take into consideration the placement of your filter system in relation to your patio area. A noisy or humming filter system can be annoying if placed directly near your entertaining area. In addition, don't forget that your electrical line will need to be brought to the filter area.

### How to measure for a round pool:

- Place a stake in the center of desired pool site.
- Measure a rope (or use tape measure) one-half the diameter of desired pool size and tie end of rope to stake. For instance, to measure for a 24-foot pool, cut rope to 12 feet.
- With the rope extended, walk in a circle and pour flour onto the ground (the flour is a great visual aid for determining desired pool size).

### How to measure for an oval pool:

- Put a stake in the center of desired pool site.
- Measure a rope one half the width of desired pool size width and tie to stake.
- With rope extended, pour flour onto the ground at width

edges (the flour is a great visual aid for determining desired pool size). Don't forget to include side support extensions.

- Repeat above step for length measurements.

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