

Pool and spa

Pools and spas can add great value to a property. However, if allowed to deteriorate or if not maintained properly, they can also greatly decrease the property value. So here's some helpful information concerning taking care of pools and spas.

I usually cannot determine the builder or the age of the pool, so check with the seller to see when the pool was built, who built it, and whether or not there is any remaining warranty on it. If such information is not available, an experienced pool professional can usually provide a good estimate on the age of the pool.

Pool sweeps and other pool equipment are usually considered personal property under the terms of real estate purchase contracts and do not convey with the pool. Check with the seller to make sure that all pool equipment conveys, or get appropriate cost estimates before close of escrow for replacing the pool equipment.

Control panels and remote controls are usually programmable. Try to get from the seller any programming guides or user guides for control panels and remote controls. If none are available, they might be available as downloads from the manufacturer's web site or available at a local pool supply store or pool builder.

Running filtering equipment during daylight hours will increase water loss, resulting in higher water use and higher chemical use to balance the additional water. Thus, set your filtering equipment to run sometime during the night.

Plumbing valves and electrical switches and outlets should be labeled. If they are not labeled, have them labeled by a qualified pool professional, a licensed plumbing professional, or a licensed electrician. Playing with the valves, switches, and outlets to try to determine how everything works can cause significant damage or personal injury.

As water and chemicals are added each week, the water will eventually become saturated, meaning that the addition of any new chemicals will have little or no effect and that the pool needs to be drained and refilled. Depending on the size of the pool, as well as how often it is used and by how many people, it takes about 3-7 years for water saturation to occur. Check with the sellers to determine if the pool has been drained during their ownership. If it has not, have the water quality tested before close of escrow since draining and refilling can be expensive.

Algae can take over a pool very easily and very quickly if proper pool maintenance isn't practiced regularly. Depending on pool and spa use (daily versus weekends, etc.), weekly pool maintenance to check pool chemistry and saturation levels typically is enough. Bromine and chlorine are typically added to the pool to prevent algae from growing. Chlorine floats are quite popular but I recommend not using them. While the theory behind chlorine floats is good, in practice they do not work well. Chlorine floats hold large chlorine tablets and are meant to be moved about the pool by the wind and pool filtration currents. In practice, they tend to get stuck in corners, and as the solid tablets dissolve, bits of chlorine fall to the bottom of the pool and cause pitting in the pool surface—remember your high school chemistry where you learned that chlorine and water combine to create hydrochloric acid, which eats away at just about everything? Okay, so you skipped that day. Anyway. . .



Recommendations

- Ü Recommend asking seller about builder, if known, and any remaining warranty period.
- Ü Recommend verifying that pool sweep (and/or other pool equipment) will convey and/or getting cost estimate for new pool sweep and/or other equipment before close of escrow.
- Ü Recommend asking seller about any pool, spa, and equipment installation, maintenance, programming, or user guides that are available.
- Ü Recommend running filter equipment during periods of darkness.
- Ü Recommend having water quality tested before close of escrow to help determine proper pool service and maintenance.
- Ü Recommend having a qualified pool professional provide weekly pool maintenance (water testing, pool, and equipment) to ensure proper water conditions and care and maintenance of pool and equipment.
- Ü Recommend weekly pool maintenance to prevent algae build-up and subsequent damage.
- Ü Recommend using liquid chlorine or liquid bromine instead of solid chlorine/bromine tablets in floating devices, or having an in-line distribution system installed in the plumbing lines at the pool equipment.
- Ü Recommend regular homeowner monitoring and maintenance by a qualified pool professional.