



Planning the Perfect Spa

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Discovering Your Spa Type.....	4
Make Your Health & Wellness a Priority.....	6
Choosing the Right Seating.....	10
Selecting the Right Jets.....	13
Exploring Different Spa Features.....	15
Setting the Budget.....	17

Introduction

Having a spa or portable spa, otherwise known as a hot tub, in the comfort of your backyard is akin to having your own personal hot spring. These warm pools of water not only help ease sore muscles and promote recovery, they also create an atmosphere of rest and relaxation. Whether you're looking to incorporate a hot tub for recreation, fitness, relaxation or medical purposes, creating a plan for your purchase will help make the buying process go smoothly. The two most prominent types of spas and hot tubs available today are custom & built into a pool or are "portable" hot tubs which are more common in seasonal climates. Both offer so many benefits to those looking to incorporate one into their backyard oasis. In our eBook, we will cover everything you need to know about spas and hot tubs before you buy, including the differences between a custom spa and portable hot tub, the amazing benefits you'll enjoy from warm water immersion, the array of features and seating available to you, and an overview of associated operating costs.





Discovering Your Spa Type

First and foremost, while the words hot tub and spa are often used interchangeably, the pool industry typically associates hot tub with a portable bubbly tub of water, and a spa as an inground custom built body of water. When it comes to determining whether a spa or hot tub is right for you, you'll need to consider why you want it, how you'll use it and where it will be located, whether indoors or out.

For those looking to buy their first hot tub, this can feel like an overwhelming experience, as there are multiple options to choose from. However, when you determine the answers to the questions above, you'll find making the right decision for your backyard isn't that difficult at all.

The Permanent Inground Spa

An inground spa is the perfect complement to an inground swimming pool, as it is typically made of concrete or fiberglass. Because of their ability to be completely customizable, concrete or gunite spas can also be finished with glass tile, integrated with other water features such as waterfalls, scuppers and spillovers, LED lighting and fitted with built-in seating, creating the ultimate outdoor oasis. Inground spas are often added during new pool construction, and are wonderful additions to backyard.

The inground spa and pool combination creates an aesthetically pleasing seamless design, giving you a beautiful backyard you can enjoy for years to come. However, most homes in seasonal climates normally opt for something that can give relaxation year-round.

The Portable Above Ground Hot Tub

Portable hot tubs are self-contained units, typically situated above ground, that are not only more affordable than permanent spas, but are also more versatile when it comes to where you can put the tub. Portable hot tubs come with an array of optional features and can be plugged right into a household outdoor 110-voltage, 220-voltage or mixed-voltage outlets. These hot tubs are often available in an acrylic shell, but vinyl, resin, roto-cast polymer, and wood are also common materials. These are more common than custom spas due to their performance during the colder months and ability to be insulated properly.





Make Your Health & Wellness a Priority

Although warm water immersion has been enjoyed for centuries, it was not until the mid-1970s when the very first spa with an advanced filtration system and jets came on to the market. Since then, hot tubs and spas have greatly evolved, giving bathers the opportunity to greatly improve and care for their health and wellness.

Soaking in a hot tub or spa brings a bathers' well-being into focus and can help soothe a sore body and ease a troubled mind. Not only does the temperature of the water help improve your health, but hydrotherapy (slow, controlled movements and relaxation exercises performed in hot water) help stimulate health and healing.

So how can you expect to most reap the benefits of soaking in a hot tub or spa? Whether you're looking to experience more of the physical or emotional benefits to warm water immersion, there are many ways in which you'll be able to enjoy your hot tub or spa.





The Physical Benefits

Well over 40 million people in the United States suffer from one or more forms of arthritic pain, while lower back pain is the second leading cause for adults to frequent their general practitioner. Many recent medical studies have documented the positive effects warm water immersion can have on those who suffer from arthritis, back pain, joint pain and more.

The British Journal of Rheumatology recently published research that also revealed hot tub therapy has both short and long term health benefits for those with lower back pain. Sitting in a hot tub was so useful that patients who sat in a hot tub or spa used less anti-inflammatory medications and analgesics than non-soakers, a benefit to those who want to tackle their health with a more holistic approach.

A separate study found that patients who had knee replacement surgery, and who enjoyed regular soaks in a hot tub, found pain relief and increased recovery time than those who did not soak in a hot tub. Their range of motion improved more rapidly and they used less pain medication.

When it comes to warm water immersion, the joint supporting buoyancy combined with the warmth of the water makes a hot tub or spa the ideal environment for soothing those common aches and pains while easing tight muscles and stiffness. The warm water also raises your body temperature which increases your circulation and blood flow while promoting healing. The increase in circulation and blood flow is also known to help reduce blood sugar levels in diabetics, as well help those who have high blood pressure.

The Emotional Benefits

The combination of sitting in heated water and increasing your blood flow with a therapeutic massage working out muscle tension and soreness makes the hot tub the ideal place to reduce stress. Sitting in a hot tub has also been known to stimulate the release of endorphins, otherwise known as our "happy hormones."

Improved Relationships

Lounging in the warm water and socializing is another way to lessen your stress and reconnect. Hot tubs are a great place to entertain and chat with your friends or a loved ones after a long day.

Better Sleep

A good night's rest can be hard to come by at times. A hot tub will help lull your body into a state of relaxation, making it easier for you to enjoy a solid eight hours of shut eye.

Experts recommend that you sit in the tub for anywhere from 15 to 20 minutes an hour or two before bedtime. This will help prepare your body and your mind for sleep, which in turn will make you a more productive person during your waking hours.





Enhanced Self Esteem

Having a bad day or a tough time? Climb into a hot tub for 10 minutes or more. Because the hot tub makes you feel better, those negative thoughts tend to turn themselves around.

Another benefit? Hot tubs and spas are extremely easy to maintain. Unlike a pool, you may only need to spend 10 minutes a week maintaining your hot tub or spa (this includes testing your water and adding chemicals, if necessary). As long as your unit is covered when it is not in use, you will spend little to no time each day taking care of it.





Choosing the Right Seating

When it comes to choosing a spa or hot tub that fits your needs, seating is one of the most important things to consider, as it will help determine the size of your spa and what additional features you'd like to add.

Spas can be small enough to accommodate two to three people and spacious enough to fit 12 individuals or more. If you entertain regularly, having a larger spa is more ideal. If you're looking for something just for yourself, a smaller size may be the way to go.

You will also need to consider the layout of the tub. For example, is the foot well large enough to accommodate the number of individuals who will be using the tub? Do you like your personal space or are you comfortable with cozying up with other guests? An advantage of larger spas is that they give you more space to stretch out and relax, no matter your bather load.

It's important to note, if you decide on a portable above ground spa, the size of your tub will be dependent on the outside power source you dedicate to the new tub. Be sure to check and see that your outdoor outlets are equipped to handle the voltage required for a portable hot tub.





Different Seating Types

There are many different seating options available for your new hot tub or spa. While each type of seating has its own unique advantages, and will help make your selection more custom fit to your needs and wants, the seating type will also help determine the layout of your spa. Understanding the different types of seating are beneficial when making your selection, however the best way to truly determine which type of seating you'll most enjoy is during your in-store test soak. Experiencing the ergonomics first hand will help you decide how your body reacts to the different types of in-tub seating.

So what are the different types of seating available for a hot tub? Read on below to learn more about the many different seating types available and if they'll fit your personal preference.

Open, Barrier-Free Seating

The biggest benefit to open seating is that there are no obstacles. Bathers can easily move from one area to the next, and you may be able to squeeze a few more people into this type of tub as there is space between the seats. While open seating does not allow for many additional or targeted therapeutic benefits, it is a great option for those who are looking to use the hot tub for a more social atmosphere.





Captain's Chair

The captain's chair is a comfortable seating option featuring massage jets that target the neck, the shoulders and the back. These seats are contoured and feature armrests, perfect for those who want experience all the benefits of warm water immersion. Captain's chairs can create a minor obstacle in the tub, making it difficult for multiple bathers to move around. The contouring of certain captain's chairs may also not accommodate your body type, so it is important to test the seat before you invest in a spa.

Lounge Seats

These reclined seats provide the ultimate hydrotherapy experience and are the most popular option for those who are interested in purchasing a spa strictly for its health and relaxation benefits. The molded lounge seats feature more jets for deeper relaxation and muscle therapy, allowing you to have a true warm water therapeutic experience. The only issue that could pose a concern is the size of the seat itself. Taking up the equivalent space of two standard spa seats, lounge seating may not be suitable if you are planning on investing in a compact spa.

Step or Cooldown Seat

These seats are designed to elevate the body before you exit the spa so that you can comfortably cool down before you leave the tub.



Selecting the Right Jets

Your hot tub jets are what deliver that luxurious spa experience that will help ease away tensions and relax your body and mind. There are a number of factors to think about when it comes to jets, including:

- The number of jets you'd like to include,
- The placement of the jets, and
- The performance of the jets

You can find spa jets that range from small to large in size, and you can even find specialty jets, such as volcano jets. But all jets will fall under one of the following two categories, Directional Jets or Spinning/Massage Jets.

Directional jets can be positioned so they reach a specific and exact area you want to target. Spinning jets, as the name implies, spin through the force of the water and deliver a wonderful massage. There are roto jets and twin roto jets which fall under the "massage jet" category, both of which deliver a different type of massage.





It is important that you choose customizable jets so that you can change their direction and strength as necessary for your personal needs. The number of jets you choose will also be a personal decision, though keep in mind that more does not necessarily mean better. The most important factor is to ensure that the jets target all of your major muscle groups, including:

- Neck
- Shoulders
- Upper back
- Lower back
- Legs

Jets placed near and around these muscle groups will deliver the best, and most effective, hydrotherapy experience.

A Note on Bubblers

Bubblers are not jets, but they are a feature in many spas. A bubbler creates an ongoing stream of champagne-like bubbles, which some bathers enjoy. Before choosing a bubbler, keep in mind that these additions do add noise to your soaking experience. They also draw cold air into your hot tub which reduces the water temperature and wastes energy.



Exploring Different Spa Features

There are a lot of fun features available as add-ons to today's portable hot tub models. One of the most popular are water features, such as outside jets, which create arcs of water. Inground spas can accommodate a number of custom water features, including knife edges, spillovers, and waterfalls. Other additional features available to enhance your spa experience, include:

- LED lighting (both interior and exterior)
- Bluetooth audio equipment like digital TVs and surround sound speakers
- Spa-side coolers and cup holders
- Spa covers





Keeping Your Spa Water Clean

Water maintenance is an important part of spa and hot tub ownership. Outfitting your tub with certain equipment allows for a more stress-free ownership experience.

Ozone purification systems are a popular choice to help keep your spa water clean and clear. Ozonators create ozone gas which, when mixed with your spa water, will destroy microorganisms and break down harmful chemicals.

Another leading option for keeping your hot tub clean is through ultraviolet light. These purification systems damage the DNA of microorganisms so they cannot reproduce. This type of cleaning system does not lose its effectiveness over time like an ozonator.

Filtration also plays a key role in keeping your water sanitary. These filters can remove large particles from the water to protect your plumbing, as well as remove small particles to maintain the clarity of your water.

The best filters on the market today feature media with antimicrobial protection. These inhibit the growth of microorganisms and allow for easy cleaning. Depending on the size of your spa, you may need one or two filters which should be replaced annually.





Setting the Budget

Incorporating a hot tub or spa into your backyard is an investment, but when you have a budget in mind, you'll easily be able to find a model that best meets your needs. Hot tubs will cost anywhere from a few thousand dollars to \$10,000 or more depending on what you're looking for. Other factors that play a role in the cost of your spa or hot tub purchase include:

- Site preparation
- Concrete pouring
- Electrical installation
- Plumbing

To get an idea of the lifetime cost of your spa, you will need to consider items such as spa accessories, chemical expenses, operational utility bills and necessary repair and maintenance fees. While these costs are constantly changing, they are important to include for budgeting purposes.





Warranty Work

Most new spas and equipment will come with a warranty from the manufacturer. As an authorized dealer, we will work with you to fix any issues that may arise with either the hot tub or the equipment and ensure that it is fixed and operating correctly.

Financing Your Spa

Not all interested spa and hot tub owners will have the capital on hand to invest in a spa, but you may be able to finance your spa in a number of ways. Here are a few options to ensure you can make your backyard dreams come true.

- **Dealer financing.** We may offer the option of an installment plan payments. These plans require a downpayment and allow for the remaining balance to be repaid over a scheduled period of time, interest included.
- **Home equity loans/lines of credit.** A home equity loan will provide you with a lump sum, while a line of credit works similarly to a credit card. These loans typically come with a lower interest rate than other financing options.
- **Credit card.** Some builders and dealers offer their own credit cards for financing, but proceed with extreme caution. These credit cards often carry a higher than average interest rate.

There are a number of choices to be made when deciding on the perfect spa. Whether you're looking for a permanent inground option or more versatile portable option, finding the perfect tub will make all the difference in how you enjoy your bathing experience. From the backyard location to size to shape, seating options, and accessories, choosing the right spa for your lifestyle will take some research and planning. But it's worth it!

For further assistance with planning, building or purchasing a spa or hot tub, contact us today to schedule your test soak so you can experience first hand all the wonderful benefits of warm water immersion. This is a great opportunity to spend some time together and ask our experts any questions you may have prior to your purchase. Taking the time to experience a hot tub before you invest in one will give you the ability to see which features you will most benefit from and enjoy for years to come.

Contact Your Valley Pool & Spa Hot Tub Specialist Today!

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