



Behind Closed Doors

If you're looking for interior design inspiration (or just an insider's view of some of the most fabulous homes at the Beaches), look no further than the **Ponte Vedra Beach Home and Art Tour**. Patrons on the self-guided tour can visit five of the area's distinct residences, and even speak to some of the homes' interior designers as well as local artists. Ticket holders will also have access to Fantasy Farm, a private reserve in Palm Valley featuring a bevy of exotic animals. The tour is April 5, 10 AM-4 PM. Tickets are \$35. ccpvb.org * BY ERIKA CAMPOS



Green Thumbs

The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens celebrates **Garden Month** through the end of March. In addition to hosting several docent-led tours of its own gardens, the museum will offer a slew of lectures and classes for home gardeners, including a terrarium-making workshop (March 9, 2-4 PM, \$75) and a floral-arranging class (March 19, 6:30-8:30 PM, \$70).

cummer.org * BY VIRGINIA CHAMLEE

READY TO TAKE THE PLUNGE?

BEFORE BUYING, PROSPECTIVE OWNERS WILL WANT TO CONSIDER THEIR OPTIONS BY JAIMIE WILSON

Flickering tiki torches. The scent of citronella candles and hickory smoke. Backyard barbecues. Sun bathing. Serenity.

All of these things played through Bethany Moore's mind when she fantasized about purchasing a home with a pool. As a newcomer to Florida in 2011, Moore was ready to embrace the outdoor lifestyle, and that meant having a pool. When she and her husband, Nate, prepared to buy their first home in March of 2013, finding one with an in-ground pool became a priority.

"A pool became more of a 'must have' as we considered our options," says Moore, an independent online contractor. "We ended up going with the house that required more work, but, because of the pool, had potential for greater value in the end."

So, they bought the house, which came with both a hot tub and salt water pool. And suddenly, Moore's poolside daydreams were shoved aside by the reality of hidden costs and unforeseen problems.

"We got the house on a short sale," Moore says. "So, we bought it knowing there was some work to do, but it was hard. The pool is pretty high end. We were worried... We knew that if something was going to break, we would be paying a lot."

They were right. The hot tub required a new light. The specialty pool needed a thorough cleaning, new salt cell and new motor. Additional expenses included a new pool heater and gas hookup. All in all, the couple had to shell out over \$5,000 to get their pool and hot tub operational.

That can be just a drop in the bucket when it comes to owning a pool, says **Jordan Clarkson, vice president of Pools by John Clarkson in Jacksonville.**

"Obviously there are many factors that can go into it," he says, "but, generally speaking, putting in an in-ground pool can range from around \$30,000 to hundreds of thousands of dollars. Design (as far as size) and building materials play a huge role in determining cost."

But potential pool buyers shouldn't



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Jordan Clarkson

necessarily be dissuaded by the price.

"One thing you have to consider when buying a pool is the enjoyment and lifestyle factor," says Clarkson. "How much is that worth to you in terms of dollars and cents? For a lot of homeowners, the level of enjoyment they get out of having a pool allows everything to equal out on the backend."

Clarkson advises potential pool buyers to think in the long-term and not get too bogged down in the immediate cost of building materials. For instance, how are buyers going to use the pool and outdoor living space over an extended period of time? The answer can help buyers determine the right pool for the right situation at the right price.

Some other things to think about when considering a pool include space and location, health benefits, safety concerns and maintenance requirements. For instance, you may have the space for an Olympic-sized pool, but if you work 60 hours a week, finding time to do the maintenance may be a serious challenge. Families may want a pool to entertain the teenagers, but what happens when the kids leave for college? Or, if there are young children in the household, what kind of pool safety measures must be put in place?

It's a lot to think about, and potential buyers should do their homework. Of course, pools bring rewards as well as responsibilities.

"Pools are just so aesthetically pleasing," Clarkson says. "People are drawn to water, so sitting by the pool, listening to a waterfall... it's pretty nice. As far as good times go, I think it's pretty high up there."

Moore agrees. Despite the cost, the elbow grease and the worry of expensive repairs, she believes the pool area helps when make the house a home. It also increases the value of her Ortega home, which may help when she and her husband want to sell the property, as they are currently trying to do. And as far as providing good times, there's just too many to count, she says.

"We've loved it. We have had so many pool parties. One of my and Nate's very favorite things to do, though, is to work out and then jump into the pool together. Relaxing in the pool on a hot day, sipping a cocktail, it's just divine." *

The Quick Law Group Heather B. Quick



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