

# POOL SCHOOL









Before you take the pool plunge, it's important to understand what you're signing up for. With the help of Peter Kudlata at Flagstone Landscaping Inc. in Cedarburg and Jeff Schuelke of Pool Park Inc. in Menomonee Falls, we've broken down some of the options available to homeowners looking to create an aquatic oasis in their own backyards. Options vary in cost and maintenance, but no matter what you choose, you're certain to find a water feature you can enjoy for years to come.

"Having a pool becomes a lifestyle, and a great one at that," Kudlata says.

And both Kudlata and Schuelke agree — pool maintenance is easier than most people realize.

"Homeowners sometimes have a preconceived notion that pool maintenance is so hard," Schuelke says. "But after a year, they're complete experts, telling their friends how to run their pools. It's really not as hard as you think."

BY LAUREN SIEBEN

 <b>POOL TYPE</b>	 <b>AVERAGE COST</b>	 <b>MAINTENANCE</b>	 <b>INSTALLATION TIMELINE</b>	 <b>LOOK AND FEEL</b>	 <b>PRO TIPS</b>
<b>ABOVE GROUND — STEEL</b>	\$3,500 to \$5,500	Check chemicals and vacuum weekly	One to two days	Circle or oval shape with various liner options	Steel pools are the most popular and economical above-ground pool, according to Schuelke.
<b>ABOVE GROUND — ALUMINUM</b>	\$4,200 to \$6,200	Check chemicals and vacuum weekly	One to two days	Circle or oval shape, with the option to choose liner design and add details like Romanesque columns to create visual interest along vertical supports	Aluminum is a sturdy option that's less susceptible to rust than steel.
<b>SEMI-IN-GROUND</b>	\$8,000 to \$12,000	Check chemicals and vacuum weekly	Several days	Circle or oval shape. Semi-in-ground pools require fencing; most homeowners also build decks around the pool to create an in-ground appearance	Many homeowners who want the look of an in-ground pool without the price tag opt for this middle ground, Schuelke says.
<b>IN-GROUND GUNITE — A MIXTURE OF CEMENT AND SAND</b>	\$80,000 and up	Check chemicals weekly and check the skimmer box twice daily	Three months or longer	Unlimited options for shapes and colors; customize with upgrades like invisible edges, underwater benches and chaise lounges in shallow areas	Work with a landscape designer to walk through considerations such as placement, size, color, auto cover and lawn grade, Kudlata says.