

The story of how we had a large, cement, in ground swimming pool demolished and removed from our back yard: for pictures and video and the story link to: <http://phildetweiler.net/poolremoval/index.html>

The cement, in ground swimming pool in our backyard was 36 years old and needed extensive repairs. The piping underground was broken and leaking, the plaster surface of the pool and the coping were stained and coming off in pieces everywhere. The pool fence and deck were falling apart and needed replacement. These things, along with significant safety concerns, helped us reach the decision to look into removing the swimming pool from our yard and fill it in.

The first cost estimate we received to demolish and fill in our swimming pool was just over \$10,000, which included the removal of the deck, fencing, equipment etc. This is about half what it would have cost to fix the pool up really nice, and a quarter of what it would cost to build a new swimming pool. We were not satisfied with that estimate, so we called every general contractor we could find in the area and had several more come out to look at the situation, hoping to find someone who could provide the removal service at a lower price. We avoided the companies we found who actually advertised swimming pool removal as a specialty, only because they were very expensive. I am sure however they would have done a great job, but we were on a limited budget and were willing to make certain compromises. Out of the group of more traditional contractors, one who came out was very unsure that if it could even be done at all, and he couldn't give us any idea of what it might cost to accomplish the job if he were able to do it. Several others seemed a bit more confident, however they didn't seem to have a very good handle on what type of equipment would have to be brought in, and how much damage might be done to the property in the process. I spoke to several companies who build inground swimming pools and they helped me understand better the various types of construction methods and when they were employed. This is important because all pools are not built the same way. Finally, I found the excavator we hired to do the work, and with whom we were ultimately very happy. He allowed me to do some of the preparatory work and clean-up myself, such as removing the swimming pool deck and pool fence, which helped to keep the cost in check. The Hayward diatomaceous earth swimming pool filtration and pump equipment was sold on ebay for around \$500 which also helped to defray the cost of the project. We were charged a total of \$2500 for the first two days, which consisted of the **jack hammering** of the top two feet of so of the concrete pool shell on day one, and the subsequent **grading and leveling** of the area on day two.

On day one, the jackhammering began. The breaking up of the concrete was very loud and took the better part of the day to finish. As you can see in the pictures, the evening after the first day of work had been performed, it looked as if our back yard had been the target of a **carpet-bombing air strike**. It was quite unnerving to say the least, but things looked a bit better after the second day. I have often been asked if this could be accomplished with an **air powered jackhammer**, like the ones construction workers use. I am not an expert on this type of equipment however, it would be hard for me to imagine using this on the pool shell itself. The large, powerful jackhammer attachment on the backhoe had a pretty hard time knocking some of the pool walls down. By contrast, the concrete sidewalk around the swimming pool area broke like glass, almost just from the weight of the jackhammer being applied to it. The pool shell, at least in our case, was much, much, much harder than typical sidewalk type concrete and is also full of **rebar**, the long metal rods inserted into the concrete for additional strength. Perhaps with a more recent, gunite pool, jackhammering by hand would be a possibility, but I

really don't know for sure. After what I saw, I would not try it, but that doesn't necessarily mean it can't be done. If you do try this, by all means let me know how it turns out.

On the second day of demolition he returned with the same type of machine but with a bucket attachment in place of the jackhammer attachment. He slowly **moved all the broken chunks of concrete** to the deep end of the pool, the bottom of which had been broken apart to insure proper surface water drainage at the completion of the project. The existing fill dirt, which had been built-up along the one side at the time the pool was installed, was pushed to the side, while the rougher material was buried deep in the ground. At the end of day two all of the pool was covered up, and the rough grade had been established for the area.

An additional \$1200 was charged for 8 loads (smaller dump truck) of clean topsoil to finish filling in the pool. A few hours with a bulldozer provided rough finish grading bringing the grand total for the whole project to \$3700.. This was done about two weeks after the initial demolition work was completed to allow for any settling of the area. If you are not in a hurry to complete the job, you may be able to save on this cost by waiting until your contractor has some suitable fill dirt that he needs to remove from another job site which he can then bring directly to your location. After the topsoil was delivered and the bulldozer was done smoothing it over, the area was graded correctly, but was not yet smooth enough to plant grass seed. To address this problem, I used an old section of fence (removed from the area anyway) that had wire mesh attached to it and drug it around behind my garden tractor with cement weights on top of it (similar to the way they drag ball fields). This provided acceptable **results**, although a **york rake** would have been a suitable alternative. The area has now been seeded with grass and looks **great**.

The scariest part of the process was the uncertainty of possible damage to our property, the driveway and septic system in particular. I would advise anyone considering this type of work to find out ahead of time what type of equipment they plan to use. Anything that is large and heavy with tracks (excavator, bulldozer, etc.) will need to have to have a straight line of entry and egress to the work area, otherwise when it turns, the **tracks** will severely damage whatever it is driving on (like a blacktop driveway). Try to find someone who is confident and has a plan, make sure they know what they (and you) are getting into ahead of time. The older (25 year+) pools, I have learned, contain significantly more concrete and are much harder to demolish than pools of more recent, "gunite" type construction. I would suggest you be sure to hire someone who understands the scope of the work and is prepared to follow it through to the end.

Access to the work area is another important consideration. I would not let anyone drive over a septic tank, drain field, sewer connection, etc. We were told by one contractor who wanted the job, "Don't worry, it is ok if we back our **tri-axle dump trucks** over your septic tank and sand mound area",... presumably he specialized in septic tank repairs as well. The contractor we selected used a rather small, **6 wheel type dump truck**, and did not drive over the septic area. This method took longer, but left no damage to the property whatsoever.

It is my understanding that some areas you may require a demolition permit for this type of work. If this is the case, the contractor may be required to compact the area in 1 foot layers and submit to inspections of the site. This will necessitate bringing in a roller, which may have to be lifted in and out of the hole while it is being filled. This requirement could significantly increase (perhaps double) the cost of the entire job.

In most areas I believe you will be required to disclose the existence of the remains of the swimming pool to potential buyers of your property unless it has been totally removed. If every shred of evidence of the pool has been removed, and the area compacted and inspected by the permitting authority, you may not have to disclose that there was once a pool there but if you have evidence of doing that good of job removing your pool, I would think you would want to let buyers know anyway. If they hear from the neighbors that there had been a pool there, and you didn't say anything, they will wonder and probably assume the worst. In our case, the foundation of the swimming pool, along with other debris, remains buried underground and was required to be fully disclosed when we sold our house. This may be a problem if your buyers were set on installing a new pool at some future date, as the buried remains would definitely make the job more expensive if not impossible.

Many of you have contacted me over the last few years and some have given me permission to post pictures of your projects on my site to share with others looking for information. Check out the links to these pages on the menu to the left (one guy who wrote me actually moved a pool into his basement!)

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