

Not Your Average *Shipping Container*



Is using a steel container for swimming purposes the future of pool architecture? That may be for you to decide. While I'm not sure how long this architectural fad will last, for the time being, I have to say it is pretty neat, and not to mention, environmentally-friendly. With environmental conservation at an all-time high amongst people across the globe, the question of reusing and recycling materials such as shipping containers – or “upcycling”, as it is often called – really isn't a matter of if, but when.

Shipping containers – also known as intermodal freight containers, among many other names – were invented by an American man named Malcolm McLean in 1956. As the owner of one of the largest trucking companies in the South, he took notice of the slow and inefficient cargo loading and unloading process. Shortly thereafter, he developed the first standardized container concept that was successful on a global level.

A shipping container's main function is to act as a storage unit when shipping products and materials from one location to the next across the water. These containers arrive in major port cities and are then shipped by rail to other major cities. After delivery, the empty containers are stacked up, with shipping companies forced to pay daily storage fees if they are not exported. Here in the United States, the rate at which we import is higher than that of which we export; meaning, goods are shipped into the country quicker than we ship things out. This likely means we are not going to use as many shipping containers to export goods back to where they came from, leading to a surplus of shipping containers in the United States. As containers continue to pile up, shipping



companies become more eager to get them off their hands to avoid storage fees, leaving those interested in upcycling these containers with many types, colors and sizes to choose from at a relatively fair price.

As for durability, steel shipping containers are built to withstand rough travel and weather conditions, since most of them spend the majority of their time at sea with the harsh ocean water and salty air. This makes them a perfect durable, alternative pool option for your family. While you can purchase them brand new at a higher cost from a shipping container pool manufacturer, you can also take the less expensive route and upcycle a container, which conserves materials, energy and money. Once you buy your shipping container, there are two options: use it as an above-ground pool, a cheaper option, or have it placed into the ground, a more expensive option, but also more like that of a traditional pool.

There are a few things you should keep in mind before you buy a shipping container:

- You'll either have to transport the shipping container to your house (which can be expensive unless you bargain with the seller to include delivery in the price), or rent a truck with a tilting bed to drive it to your house yourself. All in all, shipping containers will be easier to commandeer if you live near a major shipping port.
- If you're looking to save money, try looking on Craigslist or eBay (some of these sellers will even offer a 3-year warranty) before resorting to a shipping container pool manufacturing company. You can also try to negotiate with a local warehouse; but, you will need to make sure the shipping company doesn't own the container you are trying to buy.
- For a sealable and secure container for long-term use, such as a pool or a tiny home, it is smart to hire an inspector from the Institute of International Container Lessors (yes, this is a real thing) to make sure you are getting what you are paying for.
- Strike a deal with the sellers, like getting free delivery or a discounted price. Because there is a large trade deficit with other countries, shipping containers are constantly piling up; therefore, sellers need the space, which means you are actually doing them a favor.
- Do your research and figure out the price and size of shipping container you want to buy before you contact a seller. Some questions to ask yourself are: Do I want to buy a brand new shipping container or one that can be upcycled? Do I want one that is 20 feet or 40 feet in length?
- Find out the closest port to get your shipping container. If you live in the Tallahassee area, the closest ports are Jacksonville, Miami, Savannah, and Atlanta.

So thank Malcolm McLean and the innovators who decided that shipping containers could function as an affordable and eco-friendly pool option. It looks to me that this time around mobile pools are the new way to stay cool. 🌳

By Morgan Crawford

