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In keeping with the natural pool trend, many homeowners are opting for saltwater or mineral spring pools. These systems aren't new to the market, but they are gaining popularity as people are starting to understand them better.

Curtis Ague, owner of Natural Salt Pools, says that over the past 30 years there have been some misconceptions about saltwater pools. He clarifies:

- o Saltwater pools are not sea water.

- o "Salt" is not a four-letter word. It is not corrosive to anything in a swimming pool. Pools are made out of non-corrosive elements: plaster, tile, plastic, PVC and stainless steel handrails.

- o Saltwater pools are not salty. Their salinity, one-ninth that of the ocean, is so low you can barely taste it. Human teardrops are twice as salty as the pool water.

Okay, so we know what saltwater pools are not, but what are they?

- o Saltwater pools are affordable. According to Ague, the operating costs drop about 75 percent when a tablet pool is converted to a saltwater system. For example, the operating costs at a facility pool in Kailua was estimated to be \$1,700 a month. After Natural Salt Pools converted the pool, operating costs dropped to \$300 a month (with service.)

- o Homeowners switch because the water is healthier. You're not swimming in the toxic chemicals. Say goodbye to burning eyes, irritated skin and harsh, chemical odors.

- o The feel of the water is wonderful. Ague says, "I get more calls back from customers saying that they love the feel of the salt pool than calls about the money they are saving."

The secret to saltwater pools comes down to basic chemistry. A salt-chlorinator cell is installed between the pool filter or heater and the pool return. Then, salt is added to the pool to meet the salt-to-water ratio needed for the size of your pool. The cell shocks the saltwater into its natural elements, chlorine gas and sodium. The natural chlorine that is produced helps control pH levels and kills bacteria, algae and other contaminants.

"To verify that it's not magic, we use the exact same test kits to measure the chemistry in a tablet pool and a saltwater pool," says Ague.