

Being waterwise with your swimming pool and spa

Water is a precious resource that needs to be conserved now and for the future. Also, by using water wisely, you can reduce your water bill. As pool and spa owners, you can reduce your water consumption by following these tips.

Pool and spa covers

Fitting your swimming pool or spa with a cover is a simple way of saving water and money.

A cover prevents up to 97 per cent of water evaporation, decreasing the amount of water and chemicals that you need to maintain your pool or spa. It also reduces the amount of general cleaning, by catching debris and leaves.

You can drain any rain that accumulates on top of the cover into the pool or spa to help top it up.

A cover may also reduce the electricity costs for heated pools and spas by preventing heat loss when not in use, especially at night.

Maintaining water levels

If you have installed a cover, you should only need to top up your pool or spa occasionally.

Here are some other ways to save water:

- ◆ Make sure the water level in your pool is only halfway up the skimmer box. Overfilling the pool stops the skimmer from working efficiently and wastes water.
- ◆ Reduce your consumption of town water by topping up your pool or spa with water from a rainwater tank or downpipe diverter. This will also help to reduce your household water bills.
- ◆ Minimise splash outside the pool by discouraging rough play.

Backwashing

Backwashing typically accounts for 30 per cent of a pool's water use. Make sure your backwash cycles are kept to a minimum and are in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications.

- ◆ Backwashing too often wastes water, while not backwashing enough wastes energy by forcing the pump to work harder.

- ◆ Where possible, backwash after heavy rainfall (when you would usually need to lower the water level of your pool).

Leaks

Checking for leaks is an important part of a pool owner's maintenance routine. A tiny leak could result in a large amount of water loss.

Signs of a leak include:

- ◆ a rapid drop in water level
- ◆ unusually rapid algae formation soon after chemical treatment
- ◆ loose tiles or a cracked pool deck
- ◆ gaps and cracks in the pool shell
- ◆ ground sinking around the pool structure
- ◆ constantly damp soil around the pool or house.

If the water level of your pool drops more than 3 centimetres within 24 hours, investigate for problems and consult a professional.

If you suspect that your pool is leaking, follow these steps:

- ◆ Place a bucket filled with water on a pool step (weight it with a rock or brick). Mark the water level on both the inside and outside of the bucket. The starting points should be about the same. Check the water levels against the marks 24 hours later. You may have a leak if there is a greater drop in the water level on the outside of the bucket.
- ◆ Check the skimmer. Skimmer leaks are quite common and are caused by a separation between the plastic skimmer and the concrete pool. This leak looks like a crack, gap or tear and is easily repaired with pool putty.
- ◆ Check for leaks in the pump and filter equipment and on the shell of the pool, around inserts into the pool walls (for example lights) and at wall interfaces (for example tile lines).
- ◆ Check the return lines when the pool pump is running. If there are bubbles, there may be a leak in the suction side of the filtration system.

Once you have detected a leak, make sure you repair it quickly!

Designing your pool area

If you are in the process of designing or intend to redesign your pool area, there are things you can do to improve water efficiency and reduce energy costs.

Shade

Shade from trees or structures shields the pool from direct sunlight, reducing evaporative losses and helping to create a cooler environment.

Before buying your shade or windbreak plants, check with your local nursery to be sure the species you choose don't have invasive roots that will damage the pool or produce excessive leaf litter that will require continual pool cleaning.

A shade over the pool area will also reduce the risk of sunburn while you are enjoying your pool.

Windbreaks

Strategic placement of trees and shrubs can give your pool protection from wind, helping to reduce evaporation. Consider planting or constructing windbreaks along any aspect from which your pool is exposed to strong winds.

Rainwater tanks

Install a rainwater tank to collect water for use in your pool, garden or home.

If rain is forecast, wait for the pool to refill naturally.

Electrical wiring

Consider connecting the pool pump and chlorinator to an off-peak electricity tariff such as Tariff 33. Running the pump on an off-peak tariff can save you around 32 per cent in electricity costs compared with the standard tariff.

Remember that it is much easier to have your electrician carry out the necessary wiring work when the pool is being built rather than later on.

Maintaining your pool and spa

Chemical balance

Always maintain the correct chemical balance. Pool and spa water is wasted when it becomes contaminated and has to be drained away and replaced.

If you are uncertain about chemical balance or sanitiser levels, take a water sample to your nearest pool shop or call in a pool service technician.

Pool filters and pumps

When purchasing a new filter, look for a water-efficient model. This can significantly reduce water loss through waste disposal.

An energy-efficient pump can also significantly save on energy costs. Compared with fixed-speed pumps, new-model 5-star (or better) energy-efficient pumps can save up to 80 per cent in running costs. Discuss your options with your pool professional.

Cleaning

Regular manual cleaning of the pool, skimmer box and other collection points will reduce the load on the filter and also reduce the need to backwash.

Use a broom (not a hose) to clean around the pool.



More information

To find out more about being waterwise around your home, visit www.rdmw.qld.gov.au.

Smart Approved WaterMark
www.smartwatermark.info/home

For more information on energy efficiency for your pool, visit www.energy.gov.au/household/pool-pumps.

To see the latest water restriction status, visit www.douglas.qld.gov.au

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