

Pool Water Conservation is Simple...

A well maintained and cared for pool is more water conserving than a lawn of the same size. However, during times of drought, which is a common weather pattern in the U.S., the benefit of pools can become a point of dispute given the amount of water that these hold. Therefore, pool owners and caretakers must reassess their attitude about water and how to conserve it. We can no longer take water for granted.

How you can reduce a pool's water use:

- Reduce evaporation:

The average annual evaporation rate for Wichita, KS, is right around 5 feet. That computes out to 38.3 gallons a square foot of water loss per year. For an outdoor pool that is used only 4 to 5 months, the water loss is 23.2 gallons a square foot per year. The result is that an average private pool can lose anywhere from 10,500 to over 20,000 gallons of water to evaporation alone. Keep in mind that pool covers can also reduce chemical use, curb algae growth, reduce blown in debris and save on heating costs.

Tips—1) The pool should be covered whenever there is no one swimming.

2) Lower the water temperature if you have a pool heater, especially during those times the pool isn't in use.

3) Wind breaks such as fences and strategically placed landscape plantings which will reduce evaporation. Use plants that don't require a lot of water themselves.

- Check often for leaks:

Pool leaks are not always obvious, but the following are some signs that there might be a leak. Even one of these

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clues should be a red flag that you need to investigate for a leak. Once you suspect that you have a leak, you may have to summon professional help to find it because pool leaks can be difficult to locate. Repair leaks as quickly as possible so that these do not end up creating even bigger problems.

Tips—1) A covered pool loses 1/8-inch of water or more in 24 hours.

2) Persistent water quality issues or algae forming too soon after a chemical treatment show water chemistry imbalances because a leak prevents constant, even level.

3) If you find standing water, soggy soil or see uneven grass growth around the pool area or near the pumps or pool plumbing.

4) If you notice that the pool has settled so that cracks and gaps appear in the pool shell, bond beam or the deck, or you find loose/falling tiles.

5) If you see bubbles in the return water when the pool's pump is running, then there may be a leak in the suction side of the filtration system.

6) The automatic filler continually releases water.

7) Track the amount of chemicals you use normally. An increase in the quantity used can be a sign of a leak.

8) Monitor your water bills for changes in water use.

- Keep pool water properly filtered and chemically balanced:

Having to drain and refill your pool is a sign of neglect, so be sure to conduct routine water quality tests. Maintain-

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ing the proper chemical level and allowing for adequate circulation time will reduce the number of filter backwashes needed, as well as, require fewer chemicals to correct problems. A penny of prevention saves many dollars for the cure.

Tips—1) Sunlight can cause pool chemicals to dissipate more quickly, therefore evening is the best time to sanitize the pool.

2) Cleaning filters regularly according to manufacturer's directions can reduce the number of backwashes needed.

3) If your sand or DE filter needs replacing, consider installing a cartridge system that can be cleaned manually rather than requiring backwashing.

3) Use an automatic pool cleaner that doesn't send debris through the filtration system so as to reduce the need to backwash.

4) Backwash only as needed and just long enough for the water to run clean. A sight glass makes it easy to determine when to stop the backwash cycle.

5) If you have a filter that needs backwashing, then see if a pressure drop gauge can be installed on it. This will help you determine when it is time to backwash rather than having to guess.

6) Vacuum and remove debris frequently from the pool so that the filter remains clean longer.

7) Some water quality problems can be corrected by draining only a portion of the water rather than the entire pool.

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- Other water conserving tips and tricks:

1) Lower the pool water level to reduce water loss from splash out and boisterous play. Keeping the level around 1-inch above the bottom pool tile is a good mark to use.

2) Use decorative fountains and waterfalls only when entertaining. Otherwise, keep these shut off to reduce loss to evaporation. A timer that shuts fountains and waterfalls off is a good tool for businesses that have pools.

3) Rinse bathing suits out with clear water rather than washing with soap. Soap residue contributes to poor water quality.

4) Turn off the tile spray device on the automatic pool cleaner. Its overspray can send water out of the pool and a lot of the spray water evaporates before it hits the tile.

5) Use ice compensating technologies and chemicals to winterize a pool rather than draining it.

6) Make sure splash troughs drain back into the pool system.

7) Temporarily block the overflow pipe when large groups are swimming so as to lower water loss.

8) When backwashing or draining a pool, reuse the water by directing it into the lawn and planted landscape but be sure to neutralize the pool water chemicals first. Even better, construct a rain garden for this purpose. Also, do not allow runoff to enter adjacent properties, to pond or collect, or to run down the storm gutter.

9) During times of drought postpone cosmetic changes that require pool draining, such as painting or acid washing, until after the drought eases. Drain a pool during a drought only if major repairs are needed. Practice good pool maintenance and care. Draining and filling a pool for sanitary reasons alone is a huge waste of resources.