

Being waterwise with your swimming pool and spa

Water is a precious resource and needs to be conserved now and for the future. Every drop of water we save can make a difference. As pool and spa owners, it is your responsibility to help reduce water consumption. By following these water-saving tips you can enjoy your pool or spa and still be waterwise.

Pool covers

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

A cover can prevent up to 97 per cent of water evaporation, decreasing the amount of water and chemicals that you will need to maintain your pool or spa. It also reduces the need for general cleaning, by catching debris and leaves. Any rain that accumulates on top of the cover can be drained into the pool.

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 town water use by topping up your pool or spa with rainwater from a rainwater tank or downpipe diverter. This will save on town water use and 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 large rain events that would require you 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. If your pool drops more than 3 centimetres within 24 hours, investigate for problems and consult a professional
- ◆ 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 you suspect that your pool is leaking:

- ◆ try placing 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 mark 24 hours later. You may have a leak if there is a greater drop in the line 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, inserts into the pool walls (e.g. lights) and wall interfaces (e.g. 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 intending to redesign your pool area there are things you can do to make it as water efficient as possible.

Wind breaks

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

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 are waterwise and don't have invasive roots that will damage the pool, or produce excessive leaf litter which will require continual pool cleaning.

A shade cloth over the pool area will reduce evaporation and reduce the risk of sunburn while enjoying your pool.

Rainwater tank

Install a rainwater tank to collect and supply water to your pool, garden or home. If rain is forecast, wait for the pool to refill naturally.

Maintaining your pool

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 filter

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

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.

When cleaning around the pool, use a broom not a hose.

More information

For more information about being waterwise around your home, visit the Department of Environment and Resource Management website <www.derm.qld.gov.au>.

For more information about saving water in your local area, visit <ourcairnswater.com.au>.

