LUCY'S POOLS

NEWSLETTER

Volume 4

Safety First: With pool ownership, comes responsibility… Drowning is the #1 preventable cause of death in children. Be aware; keep our children safe. Never leave a child alone near or around a pool. (See volume 1 for more in-depth information)

PRE-SPRING PREPARATIONS

It may seem a bit early to some of you, but from now until you open your pool for the season there are a few things you can do that will help make this year one of the best summers for you and your pool.

Because there are many aspects to properly maintaining a swimming pool, I will offer a rough checklist of *"Things to Do"* before you jump in the water. These tidbits of advice are going to be in order…to assist you in maximizing your money and minimizing your efforts.

CHEMICAL TREATMENTS

During the cold winter months it's obvious that a pool does not have to be maintained as vigorously as during the swimming season. Instead of waiting until your kids start bugging you or the weather changes and algae suddenly begins to grow, the following are some chemicals that will help get your pool in pristine condition. ***Remember…chemicals are only one part of the equation.***

Before proceeding: Check your water balance. These tested parameters are measured in parts per million (ppm) which have been proven to maximize sanitizing effectiveness; decrease scaling and corrosion; and create a safe and healthy swimming environment.

FREE CHLORINE	2.0-4.0
TOTAL BROMINE	4.0-6.0 (Usually used in spas)
pH	7.2-7.6
ALKALINITY	80-120
CALCIUM HARDNESS	*200-400
CYANURIC ACID (CYA)	**30-120
PHOSPHATES	0

*Calcium hardness varies in certain regions of the world. For instance, in Las Vegas our municipal water *starts* at around 400ppm. Thus, controlling scale is a constant battle. Below is a list of chemicals I have found work very well in reducing scale and mineral stains.

This level of cyanuric acid may be questioned by many. In extremely hot weather, high bather load, and/or when using a salt water chlorine generator cell, it is my experience that starting at a level of 70ppm reduces the expense of chlorine by more than half, without compromising the effectiveness of the sanitizing agent. In addition, *if you have a salt cell system and your CYA is too low, the chlorine that is being made has the possibility to burn off as soon as it is created.* This is very important if you are an owner of a salt cell and have found that it doesn't seem to work as you expected. **Three tips: Run your system at night; increase your cyanuric acid level; and clean your cell every few months.
(The higher levels of CYA is not recommended for commercial pools)

STAIN TREATMENTS; METAL REMOVERS and FLOCCULENTS

The first plan of action is to add a metal remover along with a stain treatment. I'd suggest adding one quart of each before spring start-up. Then, depending on the size of your pool add a few ounces according to manufacturer's instructions throughout the summer. After initial dosing, brush the surface of the plaster weekly. This will help assist in removing mineral stains and loosening calcium that may be attached to the plaster. The second phase is to add a flocculent or sequestering agent. This will bind up the particles that are too small for a filter to trap. The larger particles will remain in the filter elements. This entire process may take about one to two months, depending on the age of the water and total hardness.

Biodex Protect-All Supreme

Biodex Aquadex 50 Stain Treatment

Hasa Super Stain Out

Robarb 'Down n Out'

Sea Clear Algae Prevention and Remover

Robelle Complete Chemical Start-up and Maintenance Kit

Biodex Phosphate Remover

If you live in an area that has 'soft' water, then you will need to check that you have enough calcium in your pool. Lack of calcium can cause corrosion and pitting of plaster. Again, before adding any new chemical treatments use the above guidelines to balance your water.

After you've done the above treatments, now it's time to clean your filter.

EQUIPMENT CHECK-UP

Starting the season off with clean cartridges or grids is imperative. A quick way to see if there are tears in your filter elements or if the manifold is cracked is to pour about one cup of granular chlorine into your skimmer with the filter running. (I prefer tri-chlor as it is slow dissolving). Be sure pump basket is clean and the impeller is clear of debris. Watch the return lines in your pool or spa. If there are bits of chlorine shooting out from your filter into the pool, then you have a problem. You'll have to open your filter to clean it anyway, but by checking to see if debris is passing through the filter beforehand, you will be saving yourself time. It is difficult to find tears in cartridges. If they are older than three years it may be best to buy new ones. But *check the manifold first*, especially if you have an older model Hayward filter. Here are links to two videos in which I demonstrate how to clean a diatomaceous filter (D.E.) and a cartridge filter.

Be sure to inspect your filter 'O' ring. If you tug on it and it doesn't spring back in place, it's time to buy a new one.

Check that your pressure gauge is functioning. (This article explains in depth the value of a pressure gauge)

If you have Jandy or Pentair Compool valve, replacing the lid 'O' ring and the two stem 'O' rings is a very inexpensive preventative measure that could potentially save you hundreds of dollars down the line.

Again, I've included a link to my video on how to replace the 'O' rings, --->HERE along with an explanation on how the valves function.

Check that your pump basket and skimmer baskets are not brittle or cracked. Inspect your pump lid 'O' ring.

Because there are so many different sizes and models of pump and skimmer baskets I'd suggest you click on one of the links above then type in the name of the manufacturer. If you don't know, many times if you have an original piece of equipment, such as Hayward or Pentair, the builder usually uses their products throughout the building process.

ACCESSORIES

Automatic pool cleaners such as Hayward, Barracuda, The Pool Cleaner, etc. need to be periodically inspected for worn out parts. If your pool vac is more than one year old, you want to check the wings, feet and pods on the Caretaker. For the Barracuda, check the bottom foot pad and the large disc. The tires on The Pool Cleaner should be looked at. You do not want to wait until these parts are completely worn down, otherwise the body of the cleaner could be compromised. It's a good idea to check the hoses. With the system running, slowly pull the hoses up out of the water and listen for any air being sucked in. Toss the bad ones out immediately and replace with new ones. Check "My Recommendations" for finding replacement products quickly.

I absolutely recommend attaching a leaf canister on the hoses. The proper location should be one hose away from the wall (or skimmer if you don't have a dedicated suction line). I prefer the Hayward large canister. (If you have a Barracuda you may need to purchase a hose extension to fit into the Hayward canister)

Do not forget the vacuum-lock safety feature on the side of the wall.

I hope you find these suggestions helpful. Personally, I follow these procedures every year because taking these steps now will prevent 80% of potential issues that can occur during the summer…when you should be *enjoying* your pool!

Have a most wonderful summer! And…please never leave a child alone in or around a pool.

Lucy