

# Piscine Di.Ro.Se. srl

## The 5 Rules to a Sparkling Swimming Pool

By *Ferrel Kenda*

You come home from a long day's work, your only thought is stripping off your clothes and diving head first into that marvelous oasis sometimes referred to as the backyard swimming pool. Your second concern at this point is whether or not to invite the family for your cool refreshing swim. You choose to go it alone, you rip back the protective cover only to reveal the thick green ooze that reminds you yesterday's lunch offering at the local greasy spoon. Yes, this is the first sign of a major epidemic scourging the ranks of middle class America: Green Algae. You suddenly find yourself in a hypnotic trance as you envision your hard earned money taking wing and flying out of your wallet or pocketbook. You could hire the neighbor's pool guy to clean up both the pool and your spare cash, or you can do it yourself by attending the School of Do-It-Yourself's class entitled Easy Swimming Pool Maintenance 101. It's easier than you might think, but the two biggest lies in the swimming pool industry are "carefree" and "effortless". It takes some attention to maintain a pool, but in the long run caring for your pool will be easier, less expensive, and less work if you follow these 5 rules.

The first course of action is to get rid of the green gook by super-chlorinating the water. This process quickly raises the chlorine level (over 10 ppm) far beyond the normal range in an effort to kill the algae. You need a quick acting powder chlorine (usually hypochlorite based so it burns off quickly) added at the rate of one pound per 10,000 gallons of water. The calculations are as follows:

Length x Width x Depth x 7.5= total gallons for a rectangular pool.

Length x Width x Depth x 5.9=total gallons for an odd shaped pool.

Make sure the filter is cleaned according to the manufacturer's directions, add the chlorine, brush the walls and floor of the pool and allow the pump to run continuously for 24 hours.

Now that the water has returned to the color Mother Nature intended (hopefully clear), we intend to maintain it in such a way that this scenario rarely happens again. Keep in mind that even the most devout caretakers will have an occasional bout with green algae, but they will be better prepared and one step ahead to rectifying the problem.

Rule No. 1: Keep Your Pool Clean. Let's face it, keeping the pool totally free of leaves and debris is an exercise in futility. You could stand guard with skimmer in hand waiting to pounce on any small leaf or insect that happens to drift in from the neighbor's yard, but this is a slightly unrealistic proposal for most of us. The major point is, don't allow piles of debris to lie in the pool for an extended period of time. Develop a cleaning schedule. Vacuum and brush the pool at regular intervals and especially after a storm or windy day. Automatic pool cleaners are a godsend, but be aware that they only "help" to keep the pool clean, and should be used for maintenance cleaning. They do not alleviate the need for occasional manual vacuuming. Pool covers come in a variety of styles and price ranges and also "help" to keep the debris to a minimum. The cleaner a pool is, the fewer chemicals will be required to maintain it.

Rule No.2: Keep the Equipment Clean. Routine maintenance of the water pumping and filtration equipment is paramount to an effective front against the stagnation of swimming pool water. Check and clean the pool's skimmer basket weekly, more on windy days. The pump's filter basket and the filter elements should be cleaned as a part of your regime. Experience will help you to choose a schedule of performing these vital operations. Clogged filter baskets and filter elements impede water flow, cutting down of the efficiency of the system and possibly damaging the equipment.

Rule No.3: Test your water frequently. Buy yourself a test kit that tests for chlorine level, pH, and total alkalinity. The chlorine level determines the water's preparedness to eliminate bacteria. Leaves, rain, debris, and body oils contain contaminants that deplete the chlorine. Think of this as your front line defense against the invading army. The pH of the water (i.e. the degree of acidity or alkalinity) is important to allow the chemicals to function properly. Maintaining the 7.4-7.6 range also matches that of the human eye, so there are less eye irritations if the pH is in balance even if the chlorine level is high. The total alkalinity determines the stability of the pH. The higher the total alkalinity, the quicker your pH level will rise, causing the addition of more pH lowering chemicals.

The opposite is true for low total alkalinity. The ideal range is 100-150 ppm total alkalinity. This level will help stabilize and maintain the pH at the correct level.

Rule No. 4: Have your water tested professionally every 3 months. Take a sample to your local pool shop. Most will test it for free. This will allow you to compare your results plus they will also test the water hardness. More minerals in the water affect the ability of the other chemicals to work properly. 100ppm to 500ppm is ideal. As evaporation occurs, the addition of more water raises the hardness, so the water should be changed every couple of years depending on the initial hardness of tap water in your area.

Rule No.5: Shock the pool weekly. Shocking the water is a preventative measure similar to changing the oil in your car. You just do it on a routine basis. As the chlorine goes to work decontaminating the water, it becomes ineffective. Shocking the water restores the chlorine to its state of readiness to disinfect. This is accomplished by different means. Shock treatments are available that raise the chlorine level above 5.0ppm but dissipates usually within 24 hours, during which no pool use should take place. Other shock treatments work without raising the chlorine level and the waiting period is reduced to a couple of hours.

There it is, the 5 simple rules that eliminate expensive cleanups, headaches, and saves money. The rewards of your labor will materialize instantly. Your water will be clearer, your swimmers will have less eye and skin irritations, and your pocketbook will smile. You will be the envy of your neighbors, the new pool pro on the block, and the person they come to for advice. It will be well worth the effort.

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