

Six Ways to Green Your Pool

It's always a good time for pool owners to think about ways to save both money and water. Not only are utility companies offering rebates for "green" upgrades to existing pools, also many states, including California, are on the verge of droughts and the state will soon call on homeowners to ration their water usage. In response, we've compiled a few ways you can green your pool, which will benefit both your pocketbook and the environment.

Variable Speed Pumps

The hottest product on the market right now is the variable speed pump. It helps that both Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) (<http://www.pge.com/myhome/saveenergymoney/rebates/seasonal/poolpumps/>) and Southern California Edison (SCE) (<http://www.sce.com/residential/rebates-savings/pool/pool-pump-motor.htm>) are offering rebates to install such pumps. The pumps act similar to a light dimmer so that the speed can be adjusted as needed, thus saving both energy and water. With these pumps, pools that were using 2,000 watts of energy per hour are now down to 200 to 300 watts. They also cut down on noise, which means you can run it at off peak hours.

Solar Heaters

Using solar technology (<http://www.epa.gov/cleanenergy/energy-and-you/affect/non-hydro.html#solar>) has been touted most recently by the federal government as one of the best ways to conserve energy. Solar heaters for pools have been around for decades, but in time have become less expensive and better made. Essentially, a solar heater uses a pool's water, pumps it through a solar collector, warms it, and pumps it back into the pool. Installation costs between \$2,000 and \$4,000, and homeowners can see a return on their investment anywhere from a year to seven years, depending on the climate and location of a pool.

Pool Covers

Evaporation is the number one cause of energy inefficiency for pools without covers. By using a pool cover, you can conserve water by reducing the amount of make-up water needed by 30 percent to 50 percent. In addition, covering a pool when it is not in use is the single most effective means of reducing pool-heating costs, with a possible savings of 50 percent to 70 percent. There are several types of pool covers: Costs will vary with pool size, type of material used, and whether or not a manual or automatic cover is installed. Check out the U.S. Dept. of Energy Web site at http://www.energysavers.gov/your_home/water_heating/index.cfm/mytopic=13140 for more information.

LED Lights

By replacing a pool's standard light bulbs with LED (Light Emitting Diode) light bulbs, homeowners can save a substantial amount of money on their energy bill. A typical pool light uses 500 watts. The LED light uses 70 watts. Replacing your pool light is one of the least expensive ways to go green. A new LED bulb can range from \$500 to \$1,000. If you want to find out how much you can save each

month with LED lights, go to Pentair Pools' calculator (http://www.pentairpool.com/led_calc/index.htm).

Automatic Timers

Installing an automatic timer for a pool's pump and filter allows homeowners to run them in several short cycles during the day, thus conserving energy; manual timers are usually run once continuously for several hours a day. You also can run them at non-peak hours, and set them to automatically adjust your pool filter to run your pump more in the summer and less in the winter.

Organic Materials

First check your pool for any leaks; this can save money and conserve water. If your pool needs new paint, lining, or textiles, replacing them with organic materials is another way to go green. Good for the environment and your health, waterborne acrylic paint emits little to no VOCs (volatile organic compounds) (<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/voc.html>) and is strong enough for pool use. You also can install insulating concrete form (ICF) (http://www.energysavers.gov/your_home/insulation_airsealing/index.cfm/mytopic=11640) made with recycled materials. Tiles that use recycled materials, such as bottles made into glass, can be used for a pool's walls or floors.