

Backyard Escapes

SPRING/SUMMER 2019
R&R Pools

HOW TO ACE (POOL) CHEMISTRY

Experts share easy steps
for clear, safe pool water

ARE YOU READY TO TREAT YO'SELF TO A POOL?

We dive into the financial aspects
of adding a pool to your home

ROBOTIC CLEANERS

What's worth it, what's not
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Welcome to the 2019 pool season! We can hardly wait to get this summer started. If you're counting the days, as we are, here is a little something for you to read over while anticipating the warmer weather.

We've been busy this winter. With time on our hands and some good old-fashioned hard work, the R&R team has been exploring new ways to create a more relaxed leisure experience for our customers, as well as enhancing current programs. We're excited to show you some of the changes we've been working on!

In response to customer feedback, we've added some services that will allow you to spend more time in the pool and less time working on it. Check out our new auto delivery for chemicals and an enhanced Works Opening option called Works +, which includes not only a cleaning, but balancing as well. Don't worry, we are still offering our once a month on-site balancing service and weekly cleanings. These popular mainstays are not going anywhere.

We've grown our wonderful team by adding new customer support roles, as well as putting a number of new processes in place, to ensure we're giving you, our customer, the best leisure experience possible. You will be able to book in-store appointments for certain services. All our in-home services can now be booked online, which

allows us to schedule our clients quicker and with more relevant information to your specific request. No need to wait for one of our staff to call you back; all the service questions to get your appointment booked are right there 24/7 at your fingertips.

We love the feedback we get from customers as it allows us to grow and adapt to what is needed. Change can be good! We hope you find the improvements helpful in enhancing your backyard enjoyment.

To learn more about the R&R Pools team, meet our new family members and see the changes we're making, you can follow us on Facebook.

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Here's to an unforgettable summer!

Kara, Ryan and the R&R Family



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Escapes

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ARE YOU READY TO TREAT YO'SELF TO A POOL?

We dive into the financial aspects of adding a pool to your home



Photos: I23RF



BY

Heather Laura Clarke

“How much would a pool cost me?”

It's a question Bill Brady hears daily at Cobra Pools & Spas in Perth, Ont. Brady says he's currently working on five pool quotes for homeowners. When he's finished, he'll invite each of them to come in so he can explain the quote — from the initial dig to the final equipment installation.

“There's so much to discuss with a prospective pool that it's really not fair to just answer their inquiry with what it would cost for a certain size of pool,” says Brady. “That's just a very, very small part of the equation.”

Brady says a full estimate includes accessories the person may need or want, like safety covers, winter covers, variable-speed pumps to conserve electricity, robotic pool cleaners, ladders, handrails and more.

Kara Redden with R&R Pools in Timberlea, N.S. says it's important to talk to reputable pool companies about exactly what a pool — and everything in it and around it — might cost.

“Sometimes we hear ‘So-and-so is \$20,000 cheaper,’ but what do they include with that? What hidden costs are they not telling you about?” says Redden. “They want to get people into the door with a really low price, and then ‘Oh, by the way, you also need electrical and fencing and a pool permit and ...’”

Redden says she doesn't enjoy phone calls about a competitor's pricing because she knows either the customer is either going to be upset by an unexpected bill down the road or, sadly, they'll wind up with an unfinished project.

Once you understand the full cost of your pool and everything it needs, Redden says you can decide how you'd like to pay. After a down payment, she says you can often choose to finance the pool either through the bank or through the pool company's financing company. Just like when you build a house, there are stage payments required along the way.

A pool is a big investment, so what's the return on the thousands you might spend creating a backyard paradise?

Jennifer Gannon with BonaVista Pools in Markham, Ont., says the value of real estate in Canada is "secure and going up," and a well-designed outdoor spaces can certainly contribute to a home's value.

"A beautifully-appointed home that flows into a beautiful backyard expands the footprint of the home," says Gannon. "It makes the interior and the exterior feel connected and gives a buyer more living space to enjoy."

But if you're considering a pool because you think it will increase the value of your home, Redden doesn't believe that's a good enough reason.

"You should buy a pool to increase the value of your lifestyle, not your home," says Redden. "There are costs associated with it, yes, and as much as you want to get the money back for it, it's more about how a pool will create that experience you have in your head — whether it's having a backyard retreat outside your door, bringing family and friends together or keeping your kids active at home. It's a lifestyle, so to get the most out of it; you have to embrace it and want it."

Redden says a pool could increase your property value if you're in an area that can accommodate that increase, but it could also decrease its value slightly depending on where you live.

"It may take longer to sell the house someday, but the people who are looking for that house are looking for it specifically because they want a pool but they don't want the hassle of putting one in themselves," explains Redden. "You're honing in on a specific type of buyer."

So which buyers are looking to build a lifestyle around a beautiful, sparkling pool? Gannon she's noticing "a real movement towards wellness" as families choose to put in pools — or buy homes with pools — so they can engage in fitness and spend quality time together.



Photo: 123RF

"People are looking for alternatives to screen time, and water has a way of pulling a family together," says Gannon. "You're soaking in the hot tub having conversations or swimming together or relaxing poolside."

Gannon says there's also a movement towards "simplification," so some homeowners like the idea of investing in a swimming pool instead of a cottage.

"With your own pool, you're not stuck in traffic trying to get there, and you don't have two sets of property taxes and two homes to maintain," says Gannon. "You're making your home into a castle — a place where you can relax, far from the crowds."

Craig McNutt with Holland Home Leisure in New Minas, N.S., agrees a major benefit of having a pool is "a lot more time at home, and a lot less time travelling around."

"Everybody's lives are getting busier. We have less and less free time," says McNutt. "With a pool, you have the ability to take your kids to the backyard to go swimming because you've generated leisure in your own backyard."

When it comes down to it, a pool is about bringing people together. Rhett Bradshaw

“You're not just spending money on a product. You're investing in memories and time spent together.”

— Rhett Bradshaw,
Vantage Pools, Langley, B.C.

with Vantage Pools in Langley, B.C., says investing in a pool is a great way to keep your family connected — and maybe even widen your circle of friends.

"You're not just spending money on a product. You're investing in memories and time spent together," says Bradshaw. "We only have a limited amount of time, so to be able to spend it socializing without having to leave your own home? What greater investment can there be?" ■

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A SAFER PLACE TO SWIM

How to make your pool area safer for your family and your guests

BY

Heather Laura Clarke



You can spend thousands on strong fencing, locking gates and pool safety equipment, but none of it matters if the right person isn't in the right place to prevent a disaster.

Kara Redden with R&R Pools in Timberlea, N.S. says there's "absolutely no substitute for adequate adult supervision."

"A drinking adult doesn't count. An adult who can't swim doesn't count. You need an adult who is competent to supervise swimming and knows they're the one in charge," says Redden.

She says it might seem silly to have a lanyard the person wears when they're in charge of watching the swimmers, but it's actually very useful because it reminds the person of their responsibilities.

"It's like 'OK, here you go. You're now the designated adequate adult supervision' or 'I'm going to the bathroom so here, you're up next,'" says Redden. "It's so much better than 'I thought you were watching the kids?!' 'Oh no, I was barbecuing' or 'I was getting people drinks.'"

Even with proper adult supervision, it's still important for children to know how to swim. Jennifer Gannon with BonaVista Pools in Markham, Ont., says one of the most important safety decisions a pool owner can make is to put their children in swimming lessons.

"I recommend swimming lessons for every family, whether you have an instructor come to the house or you bring them to a different pool for lessons," says Gannon. "Any children who are not strong swimmers should be wearing a life jacket to support them."

“Gates and covers only work if they're closed!”

– Jennifer Gannon,
BonaVista Pools, Markham, Ont.

She says pools should be surrounded with fencing that has self-closing, lockable gates, and swim spas and hot tub should be covered when they're not in use, but adds that "gates and covers only work if they're closed!"

Redden agrees, adding that having a four-sided fence around a pool "can lull people into a false sense of security."

"They assume the fence will prevent children from wandering into the pool area alone, but don't take into account that a gate may have been be propped open," says Redden.



Photos: I23RF



While commercial pools are required by law to post a list of pool rules, it isn't the same situation in a backyard pool. That means it's up to the owners to make it clear what's expected and what's not tolerated in — or around — their pool area.

"Communication is key. The more you talk about it, the more it's ingrained," says Redden. "Kids, especially, need to know what they're not allowed to do and why."

Bill Brady with Cobra Pools & Spas in Perth, Ont., says "the onus is certainly on the parents," but he and his team are happy to help lay down the law, too.

"If parents want us to sit down with their kids and explain some of the rules of the pool, we can do that," says Brady.

Redden offers a safety checklist for pool owners so they know what to check for on a regular basis, like cracks in the deck or breaks in fencing or gates. She also recommends letting guests know about the specific pool rules to keep everyone safe, and stresses that it's important to always have rescue equipment that's actually accessible.

"People will buy it and shove it in their shed, but what's the point of having a rescue

“ Kids, especially, need to know what they're not allowed to do and why.”

— **Kara Redden,**
R&R Pools, Timberlea, N.S.

hook if it's in your shed?" says Redden. "It's also not a toy!"

Diving boards and slides are also not toys and they can pose serious safety concerns. Brady says that's why Cobra Pools & Spas decided, years ago, not to sell them anymore.

"We don't do them and we don't promote them, but if we come across a client who already has a slide or a diving board, we will explain that there's a proper way to use these pieces," says Brady. "There can't be any clowning around on them or someone will get hurt." ■

QUICK TIPS: Pool safety

- Make sure everyone in the pool area is aware of your pool rules
- When children are in the pool area, make sure there's always designated adult supervision. You might want the person in charge to wear a lanyard so they remember their duties.
- Strongly consider enrolling your children in swimming lessons
- Don't prop open gates to the pool area, and don't trust the fence is enough to keep people out
- Keep swim spas and hot tubs covered when not in use
- Be sure your safety equipment — like a rescue hook — is easily accessible in case of an emergency, not shoved somewhere in your shed.
- Be extra cautious around slides and diving boards.

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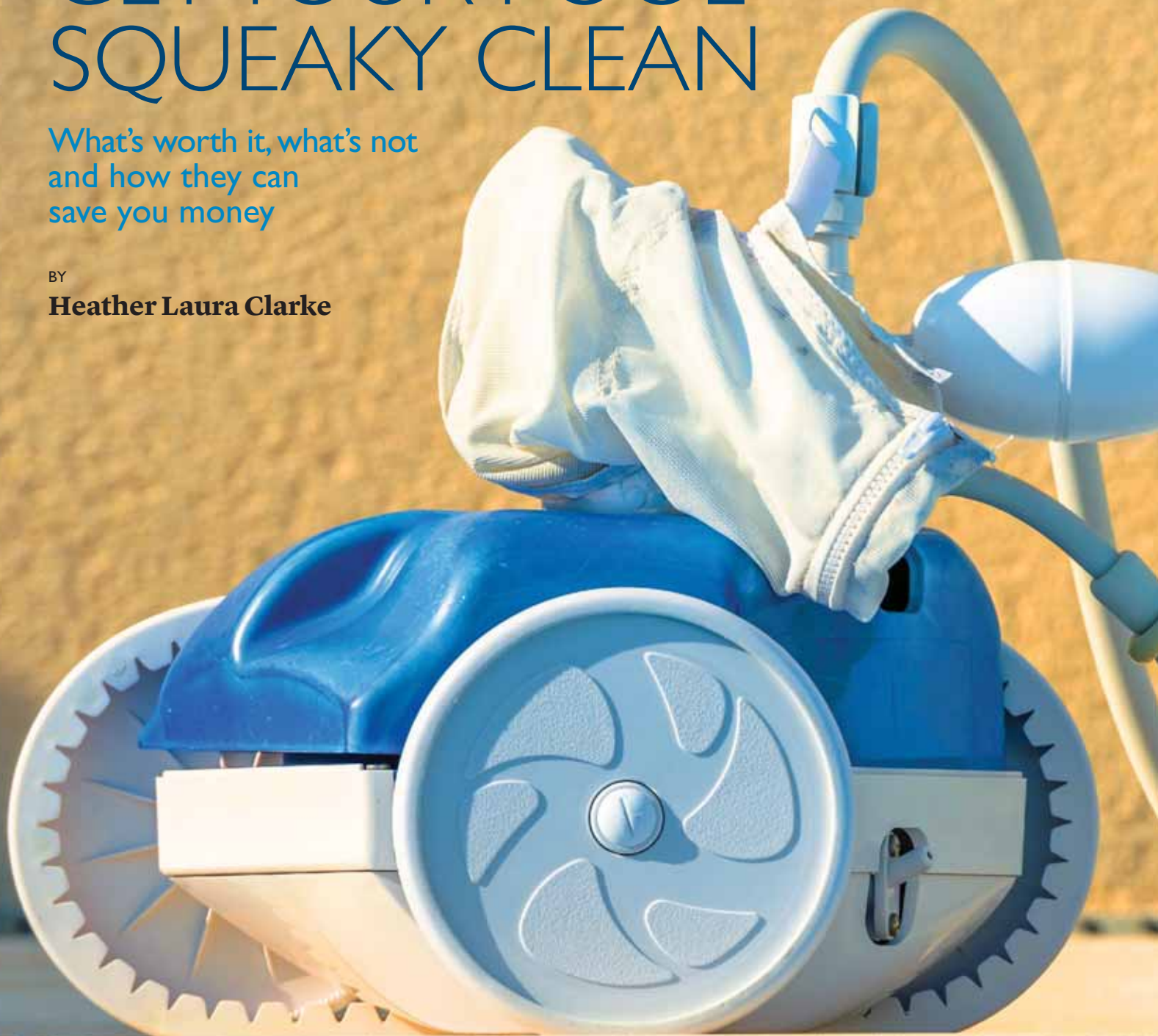
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ROBOTIC CLEANERS GET YOUR POOL SQUEAKY CLEAN

What's worth it, what's not
and how they can
save you money

BY

Heather Laura Clarke





The Jetsons had a robot maid named Rosie and now many pool owners across Canada have their own cleaning robots — except these ones go underwater.

Bill Brady with Cobra Pools & Spas in Perth, Ont., says they include a robotic pool cleaner with almost all of the pool packages they sell.

“People realize that if they’re putting in a premium pool, it makes sense to spend a little bit extra for a robotic cleaner,” says Brady. “We really like the Polaris automatic robotic pool cleaners. They all have an easy-clean filter canister.”

If you aren’t using a robotic pool cleaner, Brady says you’re likely using a traditional side-suction filtration system that winds its way around the pool — and these can cause issues.

“Any debris that’s on the bottom is being sucked up and deposited into your pool filter through the backwash system. Then you have to top the water back up,” explains Brady. “A lot of pool owners are in rural settings and maybe on wells, so it’s not ideal to put all that water back in — and because the water’s around 55 degrees, you’re then required to turn the heat on to heat it up. All because

you were using a side-suction filtration system!”

With a robotic pool cleaner, Brady says things are much simpler. Robotic pool cleaners’ built-in filtration system means you’re preserving the life of your pool filter by sparing it from all the junk the robot picks up.

“You just put it in the pool, it does its job, you clean its filter and then you’re good until next time.”

No matter which pool-cleaning robot you and your family decide to “adopt,” Brady says you’ll probably end up giving it a name.

“Most pool owners name them. It’s fun to say ‘Go get Charlie! Put Charlie in the water!’”

Kara Redden with R&R Pools in Timberlea, N.S. agrees that robotic pool cleaners aren’t meant to be left in the water constantly. She compares them to the robotic vacuums that zoom around the house and dock themselves when they’re done, except robotic pool cleaners aren’t quite there yet.

“They all have cords so they won’t go ‘home’ and dock. They do come with caddies for when you want to put them away properly, though,” says Redden.

Robotic pool cleaners range in price depending on how high-tech and fancy they are, but Redden says only the people who are “very into gadgets” tend to opt for the priciest models. She says robotic technology is now “very much the standard” and much more affordable than it was five years ago.

“Every single pool we install gets a robotic cleaner, and we have different ones based on different footprints,” says Redden. “Some are better for curvy pools and others are better for large rectangles, so you want the one that’s going to work for your pool.”

Traditional suction cleaners may do an OK job on the bottom of your pool and touch on the sides, but they’re prone to missing spots — whereas robotic pool cleaners are programmed to scrub every inch.

When it comes to robotic pool cleaners, Craig McNutt with Holland Home Leisure in New Minas, N.S., says Holland Home Leisure has carried the Hayward eVac Pro for the last few years and finds it does “a spectacular job.”

“It uses smart steering technology to scour the pool floors and walls,” says McNutt. “It also goes all the way to the water line and scrubs.”

Jennifer Gannon with BonaVista Pools in Markham, Ont. says they’re new to selling the Maytronics robotic cleaner and they’ve always been strong supporters of Polaris’ robotic cleaners — both of which have good warranties. Her advice to pool owners is to always ask about the warranty of a robotic cleaner.

“They’re driven by computerized technology and a lot of robotics products are imported from China, so it’s best to do

your research,” says Gannon. “We don’t like getting involved with cheap products because they just cause aggravation when they fail. We’d rather carry better-quality items with longer warranties.”

When you’re comparing prices, Gannon says it’s often the warranty that will give you that longevity.

“If you pay \$1,000 and it only lasts one season, you might be better off to pay \$1,800 and buy one with a warranty.”

McNutt says there’s a big push towards automation as homeowners choose systems that will allow them to control most aspects of their swimming pool from their smartphone.

“We use one that controls up to four different devices, so you can adjust your pool heater from your phone,” says McNutt, adding that he’s a fan of the Hayward Omni system.

Redden says some pool owners like to have their entire backyard running on a home automation system they can control from their phone or using a keypad. It’s easier than ever, she says, because now many systems integrate with Google Home and Amazon Alexa.

“You can say ‘Alexa, turn on the pool lights,’ or ‘Alexa, turn on the back deck lights,’” says Redden. “For our company, that’s also a standard. Basic automation goes with every pool we do — and automation is only going to get bigger.” ■

Photo: 123RF

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Great ideas to make your pool or hot tub more enjoyable this season



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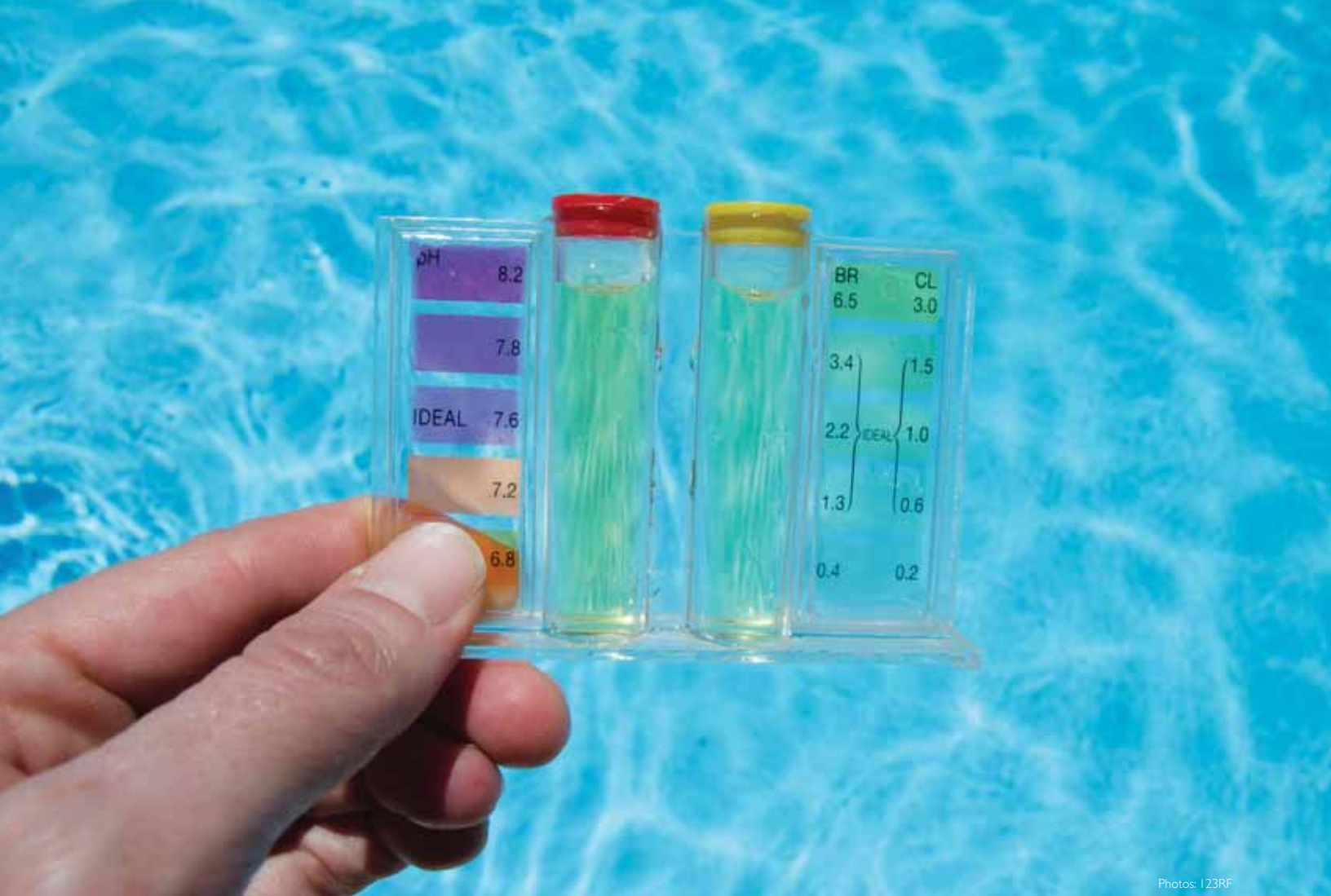
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HOW TO ACE (POOL) CHEMISTRY

Experts share easy steps for clear, safe pool water

BY

Heather Laura Clarke

“‘Chemicals’ sounds like a scary word, but it really isn’t.”

– **Kara Redden,**
R&R Pools,
Timberlea, N.S.

Pools need chemicals to keep the water balanced, but it doesn’t matter if you got a C (or worse) in high school chemistry.

Kara Redden with R&R Pools in Timberlea, N.S. says taking care of a swimming pool isn’t hard — as long as you have a plan and stick to it.

“‘Chemicals’ sounds like a scary word, but it really isn’t,”

says Redden. “If you’re making mistakes, it’s usually because you’re not following the routine the pool store has set out for you.”

Bill Brady with Cobra Pools & Spas in Perth, Ont., says they start their new customers off with a chemical kit and a plan to follow. After that, they ask them to bring in water samples and they’ll advise them on what to add and when to add it.

Redden says pool owners sometimes make the mistake of listening to a neighbour’s explanation about what they’re using in their own pool, and that can lead to the pool owner messing around with their chemical routine. Brady agrees it’s not a good idea to take your neighbour’s opinion into consideration.

“Everyone has a different situation and a different water source.



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“ Chemicals from a trusted manufacturer may cost more upfront, but they’ll cost you less in the long run. It can take two to four weeks to clear up algae from using the wrong chemicals, and that’s two to four weeks you’re missing with your pool.”

– **Craig McNutt**,
 Holland Home Leisure, New Minas, N.S.



Even the depth of the pool can make a difference,” says Brady. “That all has to be taken into consideration when you’re doing a water test and making a plan.”

Redden agrees that it can be a problem when pool owners try to “play chemist.”

“They might say ‘I know how to fix my water by how it looks!’ but 99 per cent of the time, it doesn’t work,” says Redden. “Clear water doesn’t mean it’s safe water.”

Even if a pool owner managed to finesse their way to “safe” pool water, Redden says it could be eating away at their liner and destroying their investment

because it still isn’t properly balanced.

R&R Pools is selling a new product called pHin that you drop in your pool to monitor the water. It sends an alert to your smartphone when the water needs attention and instructs you how to add the chemicals it needs.

When it’s time to purchase new chemicals, beware the inexpensive brands that promise big results.

Craig McNutt with Holland Home Leisure in New Minas, N.S., says big-box retailers often sell “ineffective and impure” chemicals but pool owners



think they're getting a great deal because the price is right.

"Those chemicals contain a lot of things you don't want to be swimming with," says McNutt. "Chemicals from a trusted manufacturer may cost more upfront, but they'll cost you less in the long run. It can take two to four weeks to clear up algae from using the wrong chemicals, and that's two to four weeks you're missing with your pool."

Algae isn't usually harmful but it can cloud your water and make surfaces slippery. Your pool sanitizers work hard to control it, which means the sanitizers can't do their job properly — and bacteria and viruses can multiply.

But even a crystal-clear swimming pool can be housing microorganisms like bacteria and viruses, which can cause infections and rashes to the swimmers and costly damage to the pool and its parts.

Rhett Bradshaw with Vantage Pools in Langley, B.C., says maintenance is key to the longevity of any investment and how well it functions — and the

same is true with pools.

"Staying on top of your water chemistry will probably have the greatest impact on how the pool and its related equipment stands up over time," says Bradshaw.

He says Vantage Pools stands behind the BioGuard line, but it's all a matter of finding a program that works for your pool and sticking with it. He says it's important for pool owners to bring a water sample to their pool store each month for testing because "so much can happen to a body of water in a month."

"There are things that impact it on a daily basis, like the bather load, tanning lotions, deodorant, makeup and things going into the water — and outside

factors like leaves, debris, fertilizers and rainwater. It all affects the chemistry of the water," says Bradshaw. "In a short time, your pool can go from looking fantastic to looking cloudy

— almost overnight — so testing it regularly helps to stay on top of it, and you're less likely to run into issues."

When his customers bring in their monthly water sample, Bradshaw says their lab runs it through various tests and provides

a print-out that walks the customer through anything they need to do.

"It takes the guesswork out," says Bradshaw. "It tells them exactly what to do, and all they need to do is follow it."

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“We want our pool owners to spend less time on their pool and more time in their pool.”

.....

— **Kara Redden,**
R&R Pools,
Timberlea, N.S.

Jennifer Gannon with BonaVista Pools in Markham, Ont., agrees it's critical to see a LeisureScapes professional for a complimentary water analysis.

"We have a deep understanding of how important it is to balance the water in addition to sanitizing it," says Gannon. "We keep up with the most cutting-edge solutions and changes in pool chemistry so we can resolve any issues in a timely fashion — rather than just throwing underperforming products at it — and be able to maximize our clients' number of swimming days in their pool."

Redden says R&R Pools sends everyone on their staff for training on pool chemistry at the beginning of every single season until she feels they know the material inside and out.

"It's the backbone of the experience that the homeowner is going to have with their pool, so we need all of our employees to understand the chemistry," says Redden. "We want our pool-owners to spend less time on their pool and more time in it." ■



Photo: Contributed by Holland Home Leisure

SWIM SPA SENSATION

Hop in and test out these versatile water solutions

BY

Heather Laura Clarke

Be sure to bring your bathing suit along if you're shopping for a swim spa, because most pool experts agree they're something you need to try before you buy.

Bill Brady with Cobra Pools & Spas in Perth, Ont., says they always have a swim spa set up on the floor of their showroom — and they encourage customers to hop in to try it out before making a purchase.

"We sell Hydropool swim spas because we feel they're the best on the market. They provide an excellent swim and there are so many different models on the market right now," says Brady.

What are swim spas, exactly? They're tanks that range between 8' and 12' wide and up to 19' long. They have a much smaller footprint than an in-ground or above-ground swimming pool, which makes them a good option for people with smaller properties.

The temperature of a swim spa can be controlled to make it feel more like a refreshing swimming pool or a warm tub for relaxing. Brady says he loves his swim spa for therapeutic reasons and water exercises, believing firmly that "water therapy is the

best therapy a person can buy."

Swim spas are easy to install — without tearing up your backyard in the process — and can often be used year-round. They're also less expensive than a full-sized swimming pool. Parents and grandparents can enjoy them for splashing around together with their children, or a person can hop in solo to get a water workout.

Jennifer Gannon with BonaVista Pools in Markham, Ont. describes swim spas as "the perfect urban pool solution."

"They're great for tight spaces, and many subdivisions these days have smaller and smaller back yards," says Gannon.

She says the adjustable water flow means swimmers of all levels can practice their strokes comfortably within a small footprint.

"Because they have a current with different levels of horsepower, they create an experience where you can swim laps without ever touching one end and needing to turn around," says Gannon. "They're a year-round swimming solution — almost like a treadmill."

Craig McNutt with Holland Home Leisure in New Minas, N.S., says people are often very

curious about swim spas and don't exactly know what they are.

"People will walk in and say 'I heard you guys carry these standing swimming pools?' I've heard a lot of names for them," says McNutt.

Holland Home Leisure has carried swim spas for about five years now, and McNutt says they're an excellent option for people who want a swimming pool but their yard simply doesn't have enough room.

They also carry a dual-tank model with a built-in hot tub that's completely encapsulated, so people can close off the pool side during the winter and use the hot tub side year-round.

He says some homeowners are primarily interested in keeping their swim spa temperature in the 90s so they can sit back and enjoy therapeutic massage jets, while others are eager to do water aerobics and swim "laps."

"They're really something you need to try because you'll be amazed by how much power you can get," says McNutt. "Some swim spas are designed so you can increase the jet power incrementally as you train." ■

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TOY STORY

Pool experts weigh in on 2019's hottest pool toys

BY

Heather Laura Clarke

Take a deep breath and prepare to exhale ... again and again. This year's hottest pool toys require excellent lung capacity, but it may be a good idea to purchase a pump instead.

"We are stocking literally hundreds of blow-ups," says Bill Brady with Cobra Pools & Spas in Perth, Ont. "People aren't just buying them for pools, either. A lot of people buy them for their cottages on the water. There are pink flamingos and white swans that are big enough for 10 people — you can't miss them."

Craig McNutt with Holland Home Leisure in New Minas, N.S., agrees that inflatable sales have "really taken off" over the past couple of years.

"A lot of people are using in-ground and above-ground pools as an alternative to having a cottage, so they're creating these fun backyard spaces where they can vacation at home with

pool toys and floats," says McNutt. "The food-themed ones are really big — pizza slices, stuff like that."

Rhett Bradshaw with Vantage Pools in Langley, B.C., says he was recently watching a

commercial for a reality show about young adults sharing a summer house. They were ignoring the outdoor kitchen and all sorts of expensive toys in order to clamber over an inflatable pool toy that took up half the yard.

"They had all kinds of things back there, but it was the inflatable that really captured everyone's attention," says Bradshaw.

He says they sell a lot of inflatables — everything from unicorns and swans to wine bottles and smiley faces.

Of course, inflatables from a pool store are usually very different from the cheap inflatables you can purchase online.

"Like with most things, you get what you pay for," says Bradshaw. "There are a lot of inflatables on the market now, and they're not all the same quality."

Jennifer Gannon with BonaVista Pools in Markham, Ont. says there always seems to be one inflatable that's the "it" toy of the season.

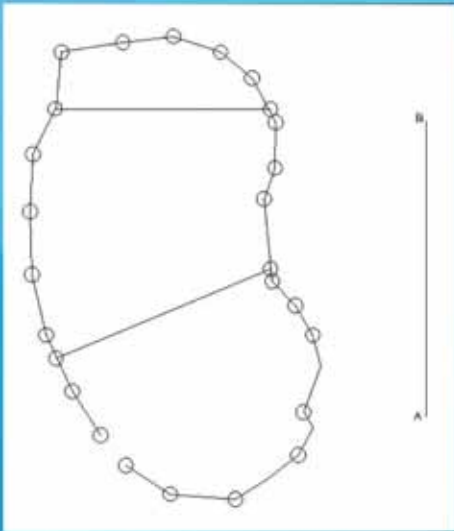
"It used to be flamingos and unicorns, and this year it's a llama with lots of sparkle and gold lamé," laughs Gannon.



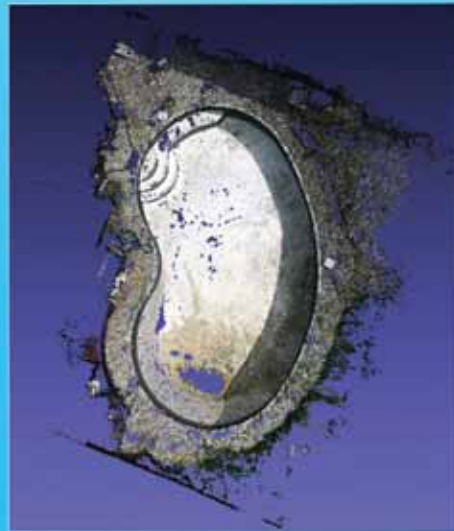
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Photos: I23RF

She agrees that many customers buy inflatables as a fun temporary toy, knowing they likely won't last very long. But BonaVista Pools sells a much sturdier toy that is designed to stand up over time: a floating bean bag chair that can be used in the pool or as a comfy pool-side lounger.

"They float, but they're not an inflatable," says Gannon. "They're a bigger investment but they last much longer."

Back at Holland Home Leisure in New Minas, N.S., McNutt says pool sports are always a classic. He's noticed a trend towards in-ground pools with a consistent depth so most swimmers can touch the bottom in any area, which makes it easier to play water games like volleyball and basketball.

While they do a brisk business in inflatable floats, Brady says Cobra Pools & Spas also sells a "water teeter-totter" that's very popular.

Kara Redden with R&R Pools in Timberlea, N.S. says pool toys can aid in your relaxation experience and even help create memories with your family. Kids may be attracted to inflatables and toys branded with their

favourite cartoon characters, but their moms and dads are drawn to different things entirely.

"Parents tend to be drawn towards retro or classic tried-and-true pool toys they played with as kids, like aqua cannons, diving rings and dive sticks," says Redden. "It pays to buy quality toys that will last season after season without fading or breaking." ■





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