

# Some Practical Advice On Startup Techniques

*Jana Auringer writes the "Dear Pool Lady" column that appears in the Independent Pool & Spa Service Association's Dallas Chapter newsletter each month.*

*Last summer, she wrote about pool startups and offered advice that we thought was well worth passing along to our readership. Some of her advice differs from other methods described in an accompanying article, but this points out the fact the professionals need to find a method of startup that works best for themselves and their pools.*

*On to Auringer's advice:*

Each pool is unique — no two are the same in flow rate or equipment — even the plumbing. Each water municipality is different — they have standards to achieve, but the water is never exactly the same from day to day.

So it is next to impossible to have universal startup instructions! However, if you learn to read the results of water testing, you can provide a successful startup service to homeowners and builders.

Auringer's 11-step process for a traditional startup begins with an admonition to test the water prior to adding anything to the pool. Then, it's on to the steps:

1) Make sure the pool is circulating. Calculate the gallonage.

to advise to adjust the pH to 7.2 over the next few weeks.

*Each pool will balance differently. You must take your readings each visit to determine when the pool is beginning to fall into range. The final water balance you leave the homeowner with should reflect the type of sanitizer that will be used in the pool.*

*Trichlor tablet feeders should have a lower cyanuric acid level (30-40 ppm) and a higher total alkalinity level (100-120 ppm). Salt generated pools should have a high cyanuric acid level (60-80 ppm) and a lower total alkalinity (80-100 ppm).*

Auringer follows up her 11 steps with a series of "Do Nots," which include:

- Do not add salt for 30 days. OK, I'll go 2 weeks if you can monitor the pH very closely.
- Do not think that a startup can be done with one, two or three visits.
- Do not use a wheeled vacuum head on a freshly plastered pool.
- Do not install a pool cleaner for 2-3 weeks.
- Do not add a sequestering agent to the pool with only a few inches of water in the bowl.
- Do not add any chemical without dissolving or diluting first. The stabilizer should be added through the skimmer and not broadcast into the pool.

2) Test and record the water readings.

3) Add a sequestering agent. If metal readings are over .02 ppm, double the amount of sequesterant.

4) Lower the pH to 6.8-7.0. When adding acid to the pool, always dilute in a bucket of water prior to adding to the pool.

5) The total alkalinity needs to be kept below 70-80 ppm during the startup period.

6) Test, but DO NOT RAISE the calcium hardness level.

7) Brush, brush, brush!

8) Set the equipment for continuous operation for the next 4-5 days.

9) Repeat steps 4-6 at least every other day while brushing at least twice daily and recording test results.

10) If you must add chlorine, add no more than one pound a day. Make sure it is dissolved in a bucket of water prior to adding to the pool. Dichlor is pH neutral and stabilized — a good choice.

11) Once the plaster residue is gone, backwash and add more sequestering agent. The pH will rise on its own. Adjust the total alkalinity to 90-100, but do it slowly. If the calcium hardness level is less than 150 ppm, add only enough calcium increaser to reach 200 ppm. Add stabilizer after all the residue is gone and the calcium level is in range.

12) Explain to the homeowner that the balancing of the water will be required twice a week for the next 6 weeks. The curing of the plaster is going to constantly drive the pH up, and scaling will occur if it is not monitored regularly. It is also best

• Do not add calcium chloride (calcium hardness increaser) and bicarb (alkalinity up) at the same visit without lowering the pH first.

Auringer concluded a follow-up article with more sage advice for the startup professional:

One of the biggest fallacies about using a sequestering agent is that if added to a fresh pool, the it will last for months. The sequestering agent effectively performs its job and is depleted rather quickly, so it is always best to replenish it after 2 weeks.

The No. 1 cause of staining on fresh plaster happens after the startup has been completed. The homeowner is convinced the pool is now perfect and only goes out to check the water chemistry once a week.

The plaster is still curing and is forcing the pH up on a daily basis. When you leave your startup, you must convince the homeowner to test the pool twice a week for the next month to help prevent staining. This is especially so if there is a salt generator on the pool.

If you are ever unsure about a startup, try to find written instructions from the plaster manufacturer, the builder, the local representative/distributor or call the plaster company.

Each time you perform a startup, keep records of your readings and the amount of chemical additions made each visit. Also, make a note of the daily appearance of the pool. If the pool looks good at the time you complete the startup, these records and a signoff from the homeowner can be your protection from staining and discoloration that might occur later on.