



## Treating Algae

Algae are the most common pool water problem only because it is the most visibly obvious one. Algae in itself is not dangerous - in fact it is the main ingredient in many health supplements and tablets. Algae's danger is that it converts sunlight into food, releasing wastes that become the feeding grounds for unwanted and harmful bacteria and other micro-organisms.

There are well over 20,000 species of algae, only a few of which are encountered in swimming pool water. Algae are almost constantly entering the pool, and as soon as the sanitizer level drops too low, the algae begin to take hold and multiply. It takes as little as a few hours on a warm sunny day for your sparkling pool to develop an algae problem. The algae "spores" found in the air are from algae that has dried out (at a nearby stream, from a neighbor's pool...) and become airborne with the breeze.

### Types of Algae

Algae in swimming pools are referred to by its color.

- Green algae - by far the most common and relatively easy to treat;
- Yellow/ mustard algae - troublesome to treat but also relatively susceptible to treatment;
- Black algae - can be a nightmare to get rid of, especially in plastered pools;
- Pink algae - not algae at all, but is a fungus called *Paecilomyces lilacinus* that causes slimy white, pink or grey colonies.

### Preventing Pool Algae

Maintaining proper water balance and minimum sanitizer levels will ensure that any algae spores entering the pool water cannot take hold. Most pools use chlorine, which should be kept at a minimum level of 1.0ppm. Using a mineral system may allow you to keep the free chlorine level at 0.5ppm without the risk of developing an algae problem.

### Destroying Pool Algae

Once algae have been allowed to bloom, it is quite tiresome to destroy. The common steps to get rid of an algae problem are:

1. Shock treat the pool. If you are using chlorine, aim for at least 10ppm free chlorine (10 times the recommended minimum level).
2. Circulate the water round the clock if possible.
3. Brush the pool and vacuum.
4. Add a commercial algaecide prepared for the algae you have (green, mustard or black) according to the instructions.
5. Repeat brushing and vacuuming daily if possible. Add more chlorine if the level falls below 5ppm.
6. Clean or backwash your filter regularly.