

## Using Chlorine & Salt Pool Water on Plants and Hard Surfaces

When it's necessary to drain your pool, there are two primary options for Montage residents. You can drain your pool into the curb and gutter along your street or use the water on your landscape to irrigate your plants or on your hardscape to clean driveways, walks, and patio areas. Using swimming pool water for desert landscaping can be an eco-friendly way to conserve water, especially in arid regions, and with a bit of care in doing so, it's also a great way to reuse the water you already paid for. However, proper preparation is required to ensure the water won't harm plants or the environment.

Because any chlorine in the water is rapidly inactivated by sunlight, it's usually safe and beneficial to discharge pool water onto your landscape. Most desert-adapted plants can tolerate an occasional soaking with water from the pool, while others may be more sensitive to salts, chemicals used to control microorganisms, and the pH level of the water. Watering the same area repeatedly with pool water could build up an excessive salt level in the soil. To avoid salt buildup, move the discharge hose to different yard areas each time. Use a small sump pump, hose and nozzle or power washer to apply water to hard surfaces.



### Preparing Pool Water for Reuse

Tips for using pool water on how to safely prepare swimming pool water for use on a desert landscape:

#### 1. Stop Adding Chemicals

- **Chlorine** and other pool chemicals can be harmful to plants and soil. If you plan to use pool water for irrigation, stop adding chemicals (chlorine, bromine, algaecides, etc.) at least **7-10 days** before draining or using the water. These chemicals can cause discoloration or damage to some hard surfaces.
- Chlorine dissipates over time, but you should monitor the levels to ensure they drop to a safe range for plants.

#### 2. Test Chlorine Levels

- Before using the water on your landscape, the **chlorine level** must be below **0.5 parts per million (ppm)**, as higher concentrations can damage or kill plants. Exposure to sunlight will help lower chlorine levels faster, and the water will become safer to use after several days without added chemicals. Higher chlorine concentrations could cause corrosion or discoloration on certain surfaces, such as concrete, brick, or stone.
- Use a pool testing kit to measure chlorine levels regularly. Chlorine levels will naturally decrease over time, especially with exposure to sunlight, but this can take several days to weeks.

#### 3. Check for Salt Levels (If Using a Saltwater Pool)

- If you have a saltwater pool, the salt content can be harmful to plants. High salt levels could cause staining, etching, or deterioration on certain types of stone or concrete over time.
- Pool water should be less than **1,200 parts per million (ppm)** in salinity before it can be safely used for irrigation and cleaning.
- If the salt concentration is too high, it's recommended to avoid using this water or only use it on salt-tolerant plants like certain succulents and desert natives.

#### 4. Balance pH Levels

- Ensure the **pH level** of the pool water is within a neutral range (ideally **6.5 to 7.5**) before using it on plants or hard surfaces. Highly acidic or alkaline water can harm plant roots and alter soil chemistry. Water that is too acidic or alkaline may cause erosion, staining, or weakening of hardscape materials.
- You can test the pH of the pool water with a simple test kit. You can adjust the pH by letting the water stand and equilibrate naturally if necessary.

#### 5. Dilution with Fresh Water

- To further reduce any potential chemical concentration, **dilute the pool water** with fresh water before applying it to your landscape. This can help mitigate any residual chlorine or salt content.

#### 6. Avoid Sensitive Plants

- Even when pool water is properly treated, it's best to avoid using it on sensitive plants such as vegetables, fruit trees, or acid-loving plants. Instead, use it on hardier desert plants such as cacti, agaves, yucca, native grasses, and succulents. See a more complete list below.

#### 7. Let Water Sit (Optional)

- If time permits, let the water sit in a holding tank or container for several days to allow any remaining chlorine to evaporate and for any sediment to settle.

#### 8. Use a Soaker Hose or Slow Application Method

- When irrigating with pool water, it's best to use a **soaker hose** or slow watering method to avoid quick runoff and allow the water to penetrate deeply into the soil. Make sure pool water doesn't drain onto your neighbor's property.

#### Some things to watch out for when reusing pool water

1. Observe soil for symptoms of salt accumulation, such as dry or dense soil with a cracked appearance or a grayish-white color.
2. Check plants for dry, dead areas or a blotchy appearance on the edges and tips of plant leaves.
3. Avoid spraying pool water directly onto leaves to prevent yellowing/browning of leaves and leaf fall.

#### See Plant List Below

## List of Plants Suitable and Not Suitable for Pool Water Reuse

The list of sensitive, moderately sensitive, and salt-tolerant plants is derived from various publications by the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Service.

### Sensitive to Salt

DO NOT use Treated backwash and saltwater

- Algerian Ivy
- Chinese Hibiscus
- Fraser's Photinia
- Fruit Trees
- Hopbush
- Jojoba
- Queen Palm
- Roses
- Star Jasmine
- Willow

### Moderately Sensitive to Salt

LIMITED USE of backwash and saltwater

- Acacia - Most Species
- Baja Fairy Duster
- Bird of Paradise - Red
- Bottlebrush
- Chinese Pistache
- Citrus
- Creosote
- Eucalyptus
- Glossy Privet
- Juniper
- Lantana
- Palo Verde
- Pyracantha
- Sissoo
- Vitex (Monks Pepper)
- Xylosma
- Yucca

### Salt-tolerant Plants

CAN USE backwash and saltwater

- Aloe
- Bear Grass
- Bermuda Grass
- Bougainvillea
- Date Palm
- Deer Grass
- Desert Broom
- Evergreen Euonymus
- Ice Plant
- Japanese Honeysuckle
- Mesquite
- Natal Plum
- Native Mesquite
- Oleander
- Olive
- Red Eremophila
- Rosemary
- Saltbush
- Texas Ranger (Texas Sage)
- Yellow Bells