

Preparing Your Pond for Autumn

When you feel the chill of autumn in the air and the leaves begin to fall, it is time to start thinking about autumn pond maintenance.

Pickering Valley Feed and Farm Store is here and ready to assist you in making the transition from summer to autumn an easy one.

We carry ***leaf netting, skimmer nets, fall fish food, feeding thermometers, autumn bacteria, aerators and pond de-icers*** for all ponds, large or small. Follow these valuable tips to help keep your pond clean, healthy and make your spring clean up easier.

- ➔ **Keep an eye on water temperature.** As the water temperature drops, we should be feeding our fish less. Their metabolism slows as well their ability to digest food. Once the water temperature drops consistently below 60 degrees you should feed only two or three times a week. At these lower temperatures, it will take 2 to 3 days for them to digest food. Feeding a cold weather wheat germ formula during this period improves digestion. We carry a number of excellent food choices for this time of year including ***Pond Care's Spring & Autumn Formula and Microbe-Lift's Cold Weather Food***. During the summer your fish have been building up fat reserves to help them through the cold winter months. When the water temperature drops consistently below 50 degrees, you should stop feeding all together until spring when the water temperature remains above 50.
- ➔ **Trim back aquatic plants.** Most hardy marginal plants and hardy water lilies will die off once cold weather sets in. Remove all leaves and move marginal plants from the shelf to a deeper portion of the pond. These should spring back to life next spring. Most people treat tropical aquatic plants as annuals but some have success in wintering them over indoors as house plants. In any case, they need to be removed from the pond.
- ➔ **Start cold weather with a clean pond.** Remove fallen leaves and other organic material from the bottom of your pond using a skimmer net. Placing a net over your pond in autumn will aid in keeping leaves out. Remember that decomposing leaves and other organic matter reduces the amount of oxygen in your pond. Starting with a clean pond in the fall results in healthier fish, and less work opening your pond next spring. Pickering Valley Feed offers a variety of leaf netting for any size pond.
- ➔ **Add fall bacteria.** Use Microbe-lift Autumn / Winter Prep to provide sustained biological activity in water temperatures even less than 55 degrees. Reduce buildup of dead leaves and organic sediment with Microbe-lifts Sludge Away.

- ← **Shut down pumps and filters.** When water temperatures are consistently below 50 degrees you should remove pumps. Your fish's metabolism has slowed to a point where filtration is not needed and oxygen requirements are reduced. Circulating water when your pond is covered in ice will super chill the water making it more difficult for your fish to survive the winter, not to mention, water at the bottom of the pond being denser will also be warmer. This is why you will see your fish hanging around on the bottom of the pond during the winter months.
- ← **Store you pump indoors in a bucket of water** or leave in the pond in the deep section where it will not freeze. Doing so will prevent the seals from drying out and will prolong the life of your pump.
- ← **Maintain a hole in the ice.** Organic material decomposing in a pond will produce gases that if trapped under the ice will become toxic to fish and other aquatic life. A floating pond de-icer will keep a hole in the ice sufficient to allow these gases to escape. Using an aerator with the exit port mounted a few inches below the water surface will also maintain a hole by causing turbulence at the surface. Do not circulate the water from the bottom of the pond as this will super chill the water. Air pumps, although are more expensive up front cost a lot less to operate than heaters and deicers. The large **Pondmaster 40 Air Pump** runs on just 40 watts.

Following these simple tips will get you through the difficult fall and winter months so your pond will be healthy and ready to go come spring.