



Information Sheet
“Spring Pond Tips”

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Spring Pond Opening Tips

For those of us in more northern climates, spring brings a time of anticipation when the ice disappears from the water garden and you get the first look at your pond in the spring to see if your favorite aquatic friends survived the winter. If you took proper care to remove all the leaf litter in the fall, the spring pond cleanup should not be too difficult (you did do your fall cleanup didn't you? Of course you did!)

One of the first urges you have is to clean up the debris that may have gotten into the pond during the winter months but resist this urge for the first few weeks until spring has really arrived and the water temperature has risen to at least or above 50 degrees. I learned a lesson with this few years ago and lost 4 very nice 3 year old Koi and about 50 of my 6" long Goldfish. I evidently stirred up some type of bacteria from some dead frogs and other things I couldn't see and that in essence "poisoned" the water and I lost all of my fish that year. It took me the two years after that spring to restock and maintain a living population of fish because I was in a hurry to get things going.

Another urge you need to resist is the urge to feed your fish too soon. They have been hibernating all winter and are still very sluggish until the water reaches about 50 degrees. They will start becoming more active after this time. Besides, it gives your "fat winter fish" (you did feed them well before winter didn't you? Of course you did!) a chance to "slim down" into their spring form, which is necessary for spawning so your pond can restock itself right?

Once the water has warmed up thoroughly to at least 50 degrees you can start feeding your fish a light diet of flakes or cheerios as they start becoming acclimated to the warming weather. A heavy diet too early can be fatal to your fish as their digestive systems are still very sluggish and can't process a lot of heavy growth foods at this time. Once the water has warmed, then start removing any algae and leaf litter that may have accumulated over the winter, remove any dead aquatic matter, restart the water fall pumps to get everything circulating, and clean the filters to get everything off to a good start. This is also a good time to split and re-pot (if needed), your water lilies in order to get them off to a good start, and a good pellet fertilizer should be added at this time as well. This is also a good time to start adding your barley straw pouches for algae growth prevention.

Now is the time to make a trip to your local pond supply store to stock up on items you need for the spring and summer of the year. Following these few

simple tips will help you get your pond and fish off to healthy start for the upcoming season. Enjoy!

- **Add more plants:** The more the merrier! If at all possible, try to cover at least a third of the pond's surface area with water lilies. Also, make sure you have plenty of marginal and floating plants around the pond to blend the pond's edge with your landscape.
- **Trim those plants:** The plants that survived the winter, that's a plus, now keep them lookin' good. Routine maintenance, including removal of spent blooms, yellowing leaves, and excess growth will get rid of nutrients in the pond, reducing the possibility of algae blooms. If you devote just a few enjoyable minutes each day to this task, it never becomes "the big chore" that encourages procrastination.
- **Feed your fish:** But be careful not to overfeed them, especially when the water temperature is still low. A good rule of thumb is not to feed your fish more than they can eat in a period of two to three minutes.
- **Fertilize lotus and lily plants:** To encourage more prolific blooming during the summer months, use lily fertilizer tabs near the base of the plants throughout the growing season. It's not really necessary to fertilize marginal plants if they're planted right in the pond gravel—they will easily pull the nutrients they need right from the pond.

Other tips.....

- Add bacteria. It will compete with the algae for excess nutrients in the water, and effectively help to starve the algae into submission.
- Make sure you have plants in your pond. They will absorb and use excess nutrients from the water, and starve even more algae out of your pond.
- Control runoff. Avoid using fertilizer in areas that may drain towards your pond. Fertilizer will cause a surge of excess nutrients in your pond and actually encourage algae blooms.
- Avoid dependence on a UVA sterilizer to keep your water clear. Not only does it destroy the algae, but it also destroys every other living microorganism in your pond. In other words, the very thing that helps keep your water clear (the bacteria) is killed off by using these unnecessary, and unnatural gadgets!

And remember, your water garden is there for you to ENJOY! Take time to appreciate all that it has to offer you. Nothing is a better reward after mowing the (remaining) lawn than to have a seat in the cooling waters of the pond. Also, plant some tropical water lilies - either day or night blooming. Their beautiful fragrance will cover the whole pond area and they are visually stunning. Lastly, relax. Don't worry about your pond. For the most part, all you have to do is sit back and allow Mother Nature to do what she does naturally.