

## SEASON-LONG SATISFACTION

The hard part is done. You installed your water feature with the proper pump and filtration system, included appropriate plants and fish, and you've already spent many nights relaxing by the waterfall, enjoying your backyard hideaway. But, the crystal clear water and healthy fish won't miraculously last forever. You've got to perform regular maintenance and follow some simple rules to prevent common summer pond problems.

### The number one pond question in summer is:

*Why is my pond losing water?* Chances are, it's not damage to the pond liner that's causing water loss. Instead, evaporation is the most likely culprit. Accelerated by water movement from a waterfall or fountain, such water loss is natural and is to be expected. Movement of water over and around rocks or other features will also cause a decrease in the water level of your pond, due to the wicking action of common pond materials. If your pond is on a timer, you may see fluctuation in the water level, especially during the summer. The solution: Keep an eye on the level and add water as needed.

If your pond loses 6 in. overnight, that's not evaporation—you probably have a leak. It's time to start checking for where it is. The majority of leaks occur around waterfalls or streams. Hopefully, the problem can be solved simply by adjusting the liner or fixing a splash issue. If not, you'll need to shut off your pump for a day, find the leak and fix it using a patch kit.

### Other common questions

*My pond has become all murky—why isn't it staying clear?* Although there could be a number of causes, the most common is an unbalanced fish/plant ratio. Generally, you should use the



1 in. of fish per square foot of surface rule (with a 2-ft. depth average). So, a 10-ft. by 10-ft. pond can handle 100 in. of fish (ten 10-in. fish). This allows for the fish to grow while remaining components of a balanced pond. Too many fish will quickly cause your pond to be murky.

Another cause could be the accumulation of spent flower and plant debris. Be sure to prune all of your plants regularly and remove all dead or decomposing material before it drops into the water. This will help prevent algae bloom. Also, if you use a leaf net, keep it free of debris during the summer.

If you use a biological filtration system, **DO NOT** clean your filter pads. It will destroy the algae-fighting bacteria that live there.

*Should I keep my pump(s) running 24/7?* One rule of thumb for most backyard ponds is to be sure half the total water volume is pumped each hour. If you are using only one pump, you'll most likely need to keep it running to eliminate stagnate water



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and provide oxygen for plants and fish. With more than one pump, you may not need them all running all the time.

*Why aren't my water lilies and other plants growing more rapidly or blooming?* This is most likely a fertilizer or sunlight issue. Most water plants like four to six hours of sunlight every day. And, like their land-borne brethren, water plants need fertilizer. Use fertilizer tablets specifically designed for use in ponds to prevent harm to fish, or any other wildlife and pets that may stop by for a drink.

#### **Fis-sues**

*My fish died. Why?* Unfortunately, sometimes they just die. It is just nature's way of thinning the herd. But, there are a lot of things you can do to reduce the chance of fish diseases and loss.

- Don't feed fish or plants until the water temperature reaches 50F to 55F. Early feeding of fish could be fatal because they can't digest food at low temperatures. (For the same reason, plants shouldn't be fed too early, and fertilizer build-up in your pond will lead to algae bloom.)



- Don't overfeed your fish. Only feed them what they can eat in five minutes. Overfeeding is unhealthy for your aquatic friends, and extra food in the pond will lead to algae growth. A good rule of thumb is that you can do far more damage by overfeeding rather than underfeeding.
- You may have noticed koi digging at your water lilies. This is normal, as koi are notorious diggers. You can either just deal with it and smile at their natural aggression or add rocks or stone over and around the pots at the base of the plant.
- If your fish are constantly at the surface of the water, they could be in need of oxygen. If they're gasping at the surface rather than swimming around, get them oxygen immediately or they may die. If they seem to be just looking for food, go ahead and try feeding them a little. If they eat, there you go. If not, they may just be looking for insects at the surface.

#### **Winterizing**

*What should I do to prepare my pond for winter?* It's not too early to think about preparing your pond for the winter. Even in cold climates, you can run your pond all winter.

- If you have fish, be sure to keep a hole in the ice and use an oxygenating bubbler. A hole in the ice won't provide enough oxygen by itself. You'll end up with dead fish in the spring.
- When selecting fish for your pond, make sure you choose species that are native to a climate similar to yours. Warm-weather fish won't always survive cold winters.
- You may want to remove some of the features, such as statuary, from around your pond in areas that experience freezing temperatures. This will eliminate the concern of winter damage. 🍂

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