

Pond Winterization Tips



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The Water Garden Experts

We winterize our ponds to maintain the health of the fish. The fish are at their healthiest right now. They have spent all summer playing and eating. As the weather gets cold, they will slow down and prepare to go dormant in the bottom of the pond.

Plants- Cut back hardy plants 2-4" above the pot and lower them to the deepest part of the pond for winter. Oxygenating plants should be trimmed back to 6-8" in length.

Tender plants such as Umbrella Palm, Canna and Papyrus should be brought inside and placed in a watertight container.

Hyacinth and Water Lettuce should be discarded or composted.

Sludge Removal- The bottom of the pond should be cleaned of decaying plant material and sludge.

This can be done with enzymes, skimmer net, vacuums, or by emptying the pond and cleaning it completely-see Total Pond Clean Out sheet

Debris Prevention- A net is usually needed to keep leaves and blowing debris out of the pond in the fall and into winter. If you live in an area with many leaves, you should "tent" the net so that the weight of the leaves doesn't make "leaf tea" in your pond.

Keeping A Hole In The Ice- We have over winterized fish successfully year after year without keeping a hole in the ice-however, an escape hole for gasses could be an extra form of insurance for your fish.

There are several ways to keep a hole in the ice. –

Heaters- Heaters work best if kept on the side of the pond and sheltered from above by a piece of insulating material. Most units are 1200 – 1500 watts (ouch) This keeps the heat close to the waters surface, instead of dissipating to the air.

Pond Breather- Though a bit more expensive, they make up in electric savings the first season. These are 40 watt systems that keep a hole with air and little heat.

DO NOT POUND ON THE ICE TO BREAK OPEN A HOLE!

This will damage the fish's equilibrium and can cause death.

To Run The Waterfall Or Not- We advise against it as a constant throughout the winter. The movement of the bottom water to the cold air is one reason. String algae growth in ponds is rampant in winter when the pump runs and it can put undo stress on the pump if it's cold enough to make an ice sculpture.

Additives For Winter- If you are doing a total or partial water change, don't forget the de-chlorinator. Keep enzyme and bacteria in the pond to continue liquefying any accumulation of sludge. Salt added to the water will protect the fish by keeping their slime coat healthy.

Quit feeding your fish after water temperatures fall below 50 degrees and don't feed the again until temperatures are consistently over 60 degrees in the spring. Ponders feeling sorry for the poor hungry fish after winter's first thaw will feed their fish, get them up and active, only to have them die when trapped in the ice during the next freeze.