



Information Sheet
“Fall Pond Tips”

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What to do In Your Pond This Fall

Autumn can be the glory days of water gardening

Tropical water lilies and other plants have reached their maximum potential. Temperatures have cooled a little, so you can enjoy being outside without sweating. Water clarity is usually at its best in the fall because of fewer battles with algae. It truly is an enjoyable time of year. Here are some things that you can do to keep your water garden looking good.

Leaves

When the leaves begin to fall and blow, cover the water’s surface with a net to catch them. The net discourages the debris build up on the pond bottom, which would otherwise decompose, create toxic gasses, and prove harmful to the fish during their hibernation period.

Fish

Watch for the 55°F mark. Before that time, avoid missing any fish feedings because the fish are in the process of packing on nutrition, and getting ready to hibernate. But when the temp starts to regularly dip below 55°F, it’s a sure sign to stop feeding your fish because their metabolisms have slowed down to a point where they can no longer handle the nutrition safely.

Plants

As with terrestrial, perennial plants, dropping temperatures alert your hardy aquatic plants to prepare for their winter dormancy. You should stop fertilizing them as you see leaves begin to yellow and brown. It’s ok to leave these plants where they are in your pond to weather the cold of winter, just be sure to trim the dying foliage of your marginal plants down to 2" above the water level. Remove any excess plant material as needed. At this time, dying foliage on your aquatic plants should be removed. This helps to minimize debris build up on the pond bottom. If you have potted tropical aquatic plants that you want to save for next season, this is the time to remove them from the pond, and take them indoors for the winter

Winter Shutdown

Owners of ponds in climates that reach and stay below the freezing mark for extended periods of time have a decision to make each winter - keep the pond running or shut it down. Either option will work, but both require steps to be taken in order to insure your pond comes out of its winter slumber healthy and happy.

If you decide to shut your pond down for the winter, you'll need to remove the pump from the skimmer box, place it in a bucket of water, and store it somewhere that is protected from freezing.

You'll also need to remove the filter mats from the skimmer and the BIOFALLS™ filter and clean them off. Saving this task for spring could delay your spring cleanout. The water in the skimmer and BIOFALLS™ filter takes longer to thaw and the filter mats could be frozen inside. Place a small re-circulating pump (at least 150 gallons per hour) on the top shelf of the pond. This will agitate the water's surface, oxygenating the water and helping keep a hole in the ice, which will allow gasses to escape while the pond is iced over. This keeps the fish safe during their hibernation phase.

In extremely cold temperatures, a pump may not be enough to keep a hole open in the ice. Under these conditions, it may be necessary to supplement the pump with a floating heater. A low voltage heater runs only enough to heat the water that surrounds it to 32°F, ensuring that a hole will remain open during most frigid part of the winter. Floating heaters should never be used alone, as they do not oxygenate the water.

Keeping It Running

If you choose to keep the pond running all winter, you're in for a treat when the ice formations begin to take shape in and around the falls. This scene is tailor-made for an ambitious winter photographer. You'll also need to keep an eye on any slow-moving streams where ice dams can form, diverting water out of your pond and creating potential problems you'll want to avoid.

You'll still need to employ a re-circulating pump or floating heater in order to keep a hole in the pond's surface for the sake of fish safety.