

What To Do in Your Pond This Summer

Summer is here and you've put your time into getting the pond ready this spring. You cleaned out your pond, kick-started the ecosystem, and counted your fish to make sure they all got through the winter. You've earned some quality time with your pond and what better time than summer?

While the majority of the hard work is behind you, there are some summer maintenance items that still need to be addressed if you are to have a season of clean, clear water to enjoy. By keeping up on these tasks, you should have a healthy pond all season long.

Keep your pond "topped off": Making sure the water level stays where it should be will ensure that your pump and/or skimmer is able to operate properly. This will help keep your pond free of debris while providing plenty of oxygenated water for your fish. The summer heat can be tough on oxygen levels.

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: You've added the plants, now keep them looking 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. In the extreme heat of the summer, this can lead to oxygen depletion and possible algae blooms. A good rule of thumb is not to feed your fish more than they can eat in a period of two to three minutes.

Do not clean your filter pads: If you have a biological filtration system, cleaning off the filter pads will destroy the algae fighting bacteria that live there, resulting in excess algae growth.

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.

If you have followed the tips above, and have installed a pond filtration system that encourages a natural and healthy ecosystem, algae blooms should not be a concern. Along with having a proper filtration system and creating balanced ecosystem there are a few additional tips to ensuring an algae-free summer:

- 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.