

2010's been quite a year for your pond

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POND CARE



Caption

It's been quite a year for your pond; after a very mild autumn we started 2010 with several extreme periods of prolonged ice and snow with temperatures falling below 14 degrees centigrade, this took a very long time for the water to warm in the spring.

Many of our customers reported large numbers of amphibians including frogs and newts found dead in the bottom of their ponds once the ice had melted. This phenomenon is called 'winterkill' and occurs when ice forms a complete seal over the pond; gases that are caused from decomposing material at the bottom of the pond and ammonia that is excreted from fish and invertebrates build up to toxic levels, overwhelming fish and any frogs that may be hibernating in the water.

Aquatic plants that should be growing in early spring helping to reduce the build up of nutrients had a late start due to the colder and longer winter; species like *Cyperus involucratus* or umbrella grass which has thrived in our climate, were one of the many plant casualties that perished in the prolonged cold. In many ponds; *Elodea crispera* or oxygenating weed was lost or has struggled to get going.

Sadly the same can't be said for algae, whether it's been green water or blanket weed; as plants struggled to get going, algae species took advantage of the sporadic warm, sunny days and the lack of competition from plants for light and nutrients. Ponds, which have had little or no problem with algae in previous years, found the spring and even early summer a battle of wills to get on top of it. The lack of rain also meant that many ponds needed topping up and where untreated tap water was used this only exacerbated the algae problem.

Though some fish keepers suffered a few losses over the winter there was some good news – the cold does kill off many of the pathogens that frequently cause disease and death in spring. In most ponds; summer water temperatures only just made it to over 20°C so there were few problems with oxygen deficiency.

Dos & Don'ts for the winter:

Do - Feed the fish Wheatgerm between 4-10°C as it is easily digested at lower water temperatures.

Do - Keep an area of the pond surface ice free so gasses can escape.

Do - Move pumps off the bottom of the pond so the warmer water can settle giving fish and wildlife a suitable environment to over winter.

Do - Introduce new fish before the winter comes - there are fewer pathogens around, thus reducing stress in the colder water temperatures.

Don't - Leave UV units that have been switched off outside, any ice will crack the Quartz sleeve.

Don't - Break the ice if it does freeze over, this can kill the fish and damage the liner.

Don't - Repot lilies, leave it until spring. They do better if left untouched once they start preparing for winter dormancy.

Don't - Cut back all marginal plant vegetation. Remove leaves in the pond but leave some grasses to give cover for pond wildlife.



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