



Water Gardening in the Summer

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Water gardening is a year round project, but in the summer, you tend to have more work to do. Algae are the cause of most problems.

- 1) Excess nitrites and nitrates caused by decaying dead algae and leaves are the food for your algae. Try to keep dead leaf matter out using a net. You can use beneficial bacteria called



SPRING/SUMMER CLEANER by **MICROBE-LIFT** that will help seed your filter and control excess nitrates. It will naturally remove the excess sludge and debris on the pond floor.

- 2) A lot of sunlight adds to the problem. Add plants to your pond starting the first of June until the end of September. These plants will help shade your pond and remove excess nitrates from the water. Your goal is to shade 60% of the water. For naturally clean clear water, use the following recipe. For up to 400 gallons of water you will need.
 - 1 water lily (tropical or winter hardy) *Nymphaea* spp (18" to 24" deep)
 - 2 bog or marginal plants (tropical and winter hardy) I advise at least one Cattail (average depth is 6" to 8" deep depends on the plant).
 - 1 to 2 floaters (tropical)-Water Hyacinth or Duckweed plants float on the water surface.
 - 1 oxygenator for every square foot of water surface, usually found in bunches of five. (Usually winter hardy)-Hornwort or Anacharis (bunched and planted in pea gravel about 18" below the water surface).

Another way of removing the sun from your pond is to use a blue/black (shading compound) that will shade your pond until the plants are big enough to shade the pond naturally. Using algaecides may help reduce the green cloudy problem for a short time but they can hurt your plants, so read the directions carefully.

I use **MICROBE-LIFT/PL**; this is a flocculent which is a natural bacteria and enzyme that controls algae that make the pond look cloudy. Clean your filter media when the water looks cloudy (algae blooms). Be careful not to clean your filter too much, only clean 2/3rds of the media, so you won't kill off all your beneficial bacterial. You need to have a little patience. The average pond takes up to 2 years to become ecologically stable.



Another problem with algae is excess waste from the fish. If the water is green- cloudy, don't feed your fish. This will encourage the fish to feed on algae and insects. When the water clears up, start to feed about every other day. Then build up to feeding once a day. Be careful of over-feeding. Only feed the amount of food that the fish will eat in about 5-10 minutes and then remove any excess. Feed with a food that is high in protein and color enhancing agents when temperatures are between 65 and 80 degrees F. water temperature.

Once the water clears, mossy string algae start to appear. This is most commonly seen on the waterfall and where the water is shallow. These algae are called filamentous algae or string algae. Remove string algae by hand using a toilet brush, or you can use anti phosphate or other types of string algae controllers, like barley straw or **GREENCLEAN** to help control the growth. You can use scavengers such as trapdoor snails to graze on the sides of your pond. Remember that string algae are a sign of a good eco-system and that everything is okay.

As the temperature rises, the oxygen level will go down. Make sure you continue aeration or recirculation of the water to prevent still water. You need to recirculate the volume every two hours (minimal).

Remove any dead or yellow leaves from the plants throughout the season. If they start to grow out of their pots, divide or transplant into bigger pots. Use a heavy clay soil, not potting soil. Remember to feed your plants about once a month with **pond tabs** (one tab per 6" pot). Keep a lookout for unwanted pests like aphids on the water lilies and spider mites on the Taro. Simply hose off the pests so that fish can eat them. If the pests keep coming back, use more drastic measures.

As the water evaporates, top it off. Set a timer as a reminder to shut off the water! Dechlorinate the water at this time.

Nothing is more disheartening to a water gardener than finding that one's prized fish is missing or has been terrorized by herons (big blue birds) or raccoons. Some recommendations would be to try decoys, but don't forget to move them around. Install a monofilament (fishing line); make a shallow fence by putting bamboo shoots around the pond and stringing it with the fishing line around the outside of the pond. Hang Mylar tape from trees and bushes around the yard; this will scare away the raccoons. You can use a **HERON SCARE**, which is a motion detector that shoots water (this works on raccoons too). Install safe havens for the fish. Hide underwater tunnels made from black PVC pipe, rock ledges, or other hiding spots. Last but not least, put a radio in the pond area and turn the dial to an AM talk show, which works, especially if Rush Limbaugh is on. Ha Ha.

Good luck and enjoy!