

Balancing Ponds Naturally

Every pond is an environment unto itself; if you understand a few basic guidelines about algae and aquatic plants, you will have a healthy pond.

Algae

Algae consist of simple forms of plant life that naturally occur whenever water and light are present together. Many people think that all algae are a problem in ponds, yet you can learn to consider some algae as friends because some are beneficial.

Many people don't understand which algae are beneficial and which are not. One of these algae is called free-floating algae. It floats freely within your pond and turns the water green, usually signifying a low-oxygen problem.

Another type is hair algae; these algae grow in large clumps of long, stringy, hair-like strands. This type of algae is a result of too many nutrients in your pond.

Slime is another type, yet even though many feel slime signifies an unhealthy pond, it is quite beneficial. Slime is recognizable as the green growth on the sides of your pond; it produces 60% of the oxygen in the water. Your pond will not be healthy until a good layer of this velvety, green coating develops to provide a home for beneficial organisms.

Oxygen

All green plants (including algae), absorb nutrients that are in the water, change them to new plant tissue and give off oxygen as a by-product. Algae are nature's way of ensuring

the presence of enough oxygen to support life such as plants and fish.

Adding supplemental oxygen, such as that from a waterfall, stream, or fountain, promotes natural biological activities. Also, adding a mixture of plants that will starve algae out of existence by consuming the available nutrients will cut off the sunlight needed for algae to thrive. At the same time, these plants will produce oxygen, which is essential to a healthy pond.

Plants

A proper balance of lilies, oxygenating plants, marginal plants, and fish and snails will usually keep the water clean and control algae growth.

Normally, 60 to 70% of your pond's water surface should be covered by plants. Because ponds differ in size, depth, temperature, and light exposure, you should have two or three bunches of oxygenating plants, one medium to large water lily, 12 water snails, and two fish 4 or 5 inches long for each square yard of water surface.

A Healthy Pond

Eliminating all algae in a pond is virtually impossible. Because of sunlight, fish excrement and the warmth of the water, at least a trace of algae will grow. The best advice for creating a healthy pond is to keep algae under control while your plants have a chance to get going.

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