



Ken Matthews Garden Center

WINTERIZING YOUR POND

WINTERIZING HARDY AQUATIC PLANTS

- MARGINALS

By the end of September you should have stopped fertilizing ALL plants. Marginal aquatics should be cleaned up as soon as frost has turned foliage brown. Before you trim the plants, lower the pots so that the crowns of the plants are below ice level. Then trim to just above the water level, usually about two-thirds of their height. Many marginals have hollow stems and will die from being completely submerged. However, umbrella palms and rush-like grasses look good dried in the pond over the winter. If the fronds break and drop into the water, be sure to remove them.

- SUBMERGED

Remove excess hornwort and anacharis and repot healthy ends into gravel pots. Most year's hornwort and anacharis will successfully over-winter although these plants will sometimes break up as winter approaches and over-wintering buds or pieces will fall to the bottom to regenerate in the spring.

- HARDY WATER LILIES

Hardy Water Lilies do not need winter preparation and will die down naturally. Keep leaves that have turned yellow trimmed. **DO NOT ALLOW THE DEBRIS FROM THE TRIMMINGS OF YOUR PLANTS TO REMAIN IN THE POND.** If it looks like the ice will reach the pots, then lower the pots deeper in the pond.

WINTERIZING TROPICAL PLANTS

Tropical and tender aquatic plants should be kept in a greenhouse pool all winter; but lacking that facility, some plants such as dwarf papyrus and umbrella plants may be kept as houseplants if their roots are kept moist. You can set the pots inside a decorative, watertight container filled with water. Set them near a sunny window, as they need lots of light. Plants like elephant ears and variegated cannas may be stored in the garage, out of the water, as long as they do not freeze. Water lightly once a month to prevent plants from completely drying out.

Tropical water lilies are not hardy in this area. They can be kept inside a greenhouse pond in a full light situation. If a pond is not available, there are three methods of over-wintering tropical lilies. One is to remove the lily, treat with a fungicide, and pack in wet sand. The other is to let them die back naturally and then dry the plants by placing on a shelf in an area that doesn't get cold enough to freeze. The third method is to let them die back and store in distilled water in a cool (60 degrees) dark place. To rejuvenate, float in water 70 degrees or above and pot when the plantlets sprout.

FLOATING PLANTS

Remove water hyacinths and water lettuce from the pond after the first frost. Do not allow them to break down and fall to the bottom of the pond.

WINTERIZING YOUR PUMP

It is not necessary to operate a circulating pump or fountain during the winter. However, it is quite pretty running in winter. Just take a few precautions. In order to avoid lowering the water temperature too much (which could be detrimental to your fish), raise your pump so that it is below the ice level but not at the bottom of the pond. If you have a waterfall, put the pump directly under the fall, thereby allowing the smallest amount of water circulation. Never store your pumps dry or in the spring, you may have a broken pump. If you are not going to keep your pump running, store at the bottom of the pond or in a bucket of water.

CLEANING YOUR POND

Fall is the recommended time for cleaning your pond. To clean, empty your pond storing all plants either in buckets or covered with wet newspaper. Keep them out of the sun and douse them with water to keep them wet. A kiddie swimming pool works great to house both fish and plants. Catch the fish when the water level is low so as not to stress them. Put them into the kiddie pool or bucket with water from the pond. Make sure there is a pump in the container to provide oxygen for the fish. Also, test the pH of the water you are removing from the pond and the pH of the new water the fish will be going into once the pond is clean. There should be no more than 1/2-degree difference between the two. If there is, adjust the new water's pH level.

After catching fish and removing the last bit of water, scrub sides with a brush and water. DO NOT use soap or bleach as this can harm your plants and fish. Rinse and remove any excess water. A wet-dry vacuum works well for water removal. Remember to add Tetra Aqua-safe or Stress Cost to condition your water and remove the chlorine and chloramines from your water. If you're not going to change your water, remove all debris from the bottom and do a 20% water change. (Helen Nash, author of The Pond Doctor, says that if your pond does not have a buildup of sludge or leaves your pond does not need cleaning out. Just vacuum bottom and then cover with a net to prevent leaves from settling to the bottom.) The net, which is available at the Garden Center, is used to prevent leaves and other debris from accumulating in the pond.

FEEDING SCHEDULE OF FISH

Feed your fish normally with either Tetra Koi Food or Pond Food until water temperature drops below 60 degrees. From 60 degrees to 50 degrees, feed with Tetra Spring and Fall Diet, preferably in the middle of the day. Many people worry about their fish going hungry in winter and want to feed them on warm days. This is not recommended. Cold weather makes the fish's digestion slow down and feeding when temperatures are below 50 degrees may cause the fish to become constipated. By the time cold weather hits, healthy fish should have enough stored fat to carry them through the winter with no feeding until spring temperatures arrive to stimulate activity. Come March or April, your fish will be hungry again. Do not feed them anything except Tetra Spring and Fall Diet until their metabolism is up and running fully. If your pool containing fish is completely covered by ice for more than a few days, the fish may suffocate because gasses get trapped beneath the ice. This happens more quickly when decaying plant debris lies on the bottom of the pool. The fish need only a small air hole to survive. If the pond freezes, do not pound on the ice to break a hole. This will create shock waves, which may injure or kill your fish. It is better to provide a hole before the pond freezes by floating a log on top of the pond or by running your pump.