

FEDERATION OF BRITISH AQUATIC SOCIETIES

POND CARE SHEET No 11 : POND PROBLEMS

17/10/2003

GENERAL: If you have a mild problem with your fish and need a general cure-all or wish to disinfect the pond without removing the fish then 'Medifin' pond treatment can be used.

BLANKETWEED: Airborne microscopic thread algae spores which attach themselves to the sides of the pond and or fountains, pumps, plants etc.

TREATMENT: Quite difficult to eradicate once established. Remove as much as possible by spinning a rough stick within a clump. Check the level of Ammonia, Phosphate and Nitrate present in the water with a commercial test kit, try and get these as low as possible as this feeds the Blanketweed.

Introduce more broad leaf plants into the pond. Ensure you are not over feeding the fish?

If all fails, try Commercial Treatments 'Algofin Blanc Kit' 'Algofin Plus' 'Algin P' 'Blanc-Kit' 'Phos-Kit'.

GREEN WATER: Airborne algae spores representing a large group of microscopic plant organisms which turn pond water into "Pea Soup", clogging filters and preventing you seeing the fish. Heavy infestations can kill fish by producing too much oxygen in sunlight causing "Air Embolisms" by day or "Asphyxiation" at night by absorbing the oxygen in the water.

TREATMENT: If possible reduce the sunlight reaching the pond; add more pond plants into the pond, or consider putting a Pergola over a formal pond. Check levels of Phosphate and Nitrate present, try and get these as low as possible as this feeds the algae.

Have you too many fish? Are you over feeding them?

If you filter the pond, fit a UV tube in the filter line before the filter.

If all else fails then try a Commercial Treatment: 'Algae Kit' 'Algiclear' 'Algizin A' 'Algorem' (may effect other plants) 'Barley Straw' and 'Excel' (will not).

HERONS: Herons have absolute protection, it is illegal to kill, injure or maim one. This said, they are a major problem if attracted to a garden pond. A garden pond stocked with fish provides easy pickings for a Heron and it will visit time and time again until all the fish are gone. You have to convince the bird that there are no pickings to be had.

The initial action is to completely net the pond over with a heavy duty netting, it is made to give support to such plants as peas or beans and will be made up of 100mm/4" x 100mm/4" squares and is available from the larger Garden Centres.

Suspend 150mm/6" above the water level; it may require supporting in the centre of the pond.

Of course, a Heron can fish through netting with squares of this size but it is only used to take the weight of the Heron without sagging and to support a covering of fine fruit netting. After a few fruitless trips to the pond the bird soon gets the message and stops coming. The netting can then be removed. Bird Scarers are also said to be effective against cats and seagulls.

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PROTEIN FOAM: Foam formed by waterfalls or fountains, often with a Brown, Grey or a Greenish scum in the bubbles or at the edges of the foam. Caused by protein in the water from overfeeding fish, fertilizers leaching into the pond from the surrounding land or a rockery and from protein released from the decomposition of dead animals/fish or plant material.

TREATMENT: By removing the protein, Phosphates. Ammonia, Nitrite and Nitrate.

You are most likely overfeeding the fish. If you filter, check that it is working efficiently - get it working by priming with 'Cycle' or 'Bio-Start' bacteriological agents that promote and speed up natural biological action.

When treating Blanketweed or Green Water with a chemical treatment, the release of protein from the dead cells can cause foaming, however, this will settle down.

If all else fails try Commercial Treatments: 'Algae Kit Phosphate Remover' 'Antifoam' 'Clarifin'.

SNAILS: There are several species of freshwater water snails native to Britain. None are to be welcomed in an ornamental pond.

TREATMENT: Once established only Commercial Treatments will have any effect. All of which will kill the fish and most damage plants.

**Thoroughly check all plants for snails and snail spawn
before introducing into the pond.**

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NITRATE: Bacteria converts Ammonia into Nitrite and then Nitrite reconstructs into Nitrate. If you suspect high levels of Nitrate use a test kit to determine the water quality. A good natural way to reduce nitrate is by growing Water Cress in the cascade. Regular harvesting the crop will remove nitrate from the system. Commercial Kits: 'Aqua Test' 'Nitrate Pond Test'.

NITRITE: Bacteria converts Ammonia into Nitrite. If you suspect high levels of Nitrite use a test kit to determine the water quality. Commercial Kits: 'Aqua Test'.

UNDERSTANDING THE AMMONIA/NITRITE/NITRATE CYCLE

Garden pools and formal gardens are completely unnatural man-made constructions to bring order and pleasure into our lives, and require some attention if they are to maintain their appearance and add to one's pleasure.

If you understand what is happening with a pond, and why, then you are able to resolve any problems that may occur or even before they occur.

All living organisms when they die are returned to their base chemical compounds, add to this to the waste material that living all organisms produce and one can see that, in an enclosed artificial environment (a garden pond), unless measures are taken to either remove or treat the excess waste material, problems will ensue.

Bacteria converts all dead and natural waste material into chemicals that can be used by proceeding life forms. At the basic level, Ammonia into Nitrite, then Nitrite is reconstructed into Nitrate. All is re-used time and time again.

Left to its own devices, Nature will attempt to effect a balance of sorts in a garden pond, unfortunately one that is so close to the margin, that it requires little interference from man or some minor natural catastrophe to tip it over the edge. In the typical garden pond one has little chance of effecting a natural balance simply because one wants to see fish, plants and maybe a selection of Water Lilies.

To achieve this one over-stocks the pond with both fish and/or plant life to produce a pleasing effect. Therefore provision must be made to deal with the excess waste material produced by overstocking, otherwise nature will attempt to do it for you. The advent of green water, or Blanketweed, cloudy or unpleasant smelling water are sure signs of excess nutrients in the pond and, if no action is taken soon, the fish will show signs of illness and eventually die.

This is Nature's way of attempting to create a balance. The green water, or the Blanketweed is taking up the excess nutrients in the water. Fish become ill and then die. This is Nature's way of removing some of the major waste producers. Unfortunately, unlike a natural pond a balance can never be truly achieved because all the nutrients are trapped within a man-made pond and are unable to leach out into the surrounding soil because of the pond lining.