

WINTERIZING YOUR POND IN THE FALL

Step 1. Hang the tube of the pond pump over the edge of your pond and begin pumping water out onto the ground. If you have fish, pump some of the old pond water into a large container to hold your pond fish while the pond is being cleaned.

Step 2. Pull the oxygenating plants (anacharis) off the bottom of the pond while the water level is high. Lay the anacharis in your yard and rinse with fresh water to clean them up. Then, store them in a bucket of clean water until plants are ready to be returned to the pond (keep oxygenating plants wet).

Step 3. Remove all potted plants, including water lilies, from the pond at this time. Clean the pots by trimming the roots that have grown out of the pots, and pull away all debris that has collected around each pot. Then, cut most hardy plants back to the top of the pots, 2" - 3" above the dirt. Tropical bog plants must be brought indoors before the first frost, and tropical water lilies must be moved indoors before the first hard freeze; they will die if left outside.

Step 4. When the water has drained below the shelf level, collect your fish (and snails) with a net and keep them in the holding container you prepared with the old pond water. Remember, be very gentle while collecting your fish because they are very sensitive to stress and changes in their environment.

Step 5. Hose down the sides and shelves of the pond. Do not scrub and scour. Just remove the loose mud and debris.

Step 6. When the water level is too low for the pump to pump out any more water, begin removing the black debris (sludge) from the pond bottom. A broom and dustpan or a shop vac will work well for this task. Remove as much debris as possible, but again, do not scrub the bottom or sides.

Step 7. After pond is cleaned and empty, put the hardy plants back in the pond (after the pots have been cleaned up, and the plants cut back). Place lilies, anacharis, and most bog plants in the deeper section of the pond for winter (remember: anacharis is placed on the bottom with a rock or weights to hold it there; it isn't necessary to pot it in dirt).

Step 8. Now begin refilling the pond with fresh water, and while your pond is filling, clean your water pump. Then, store the pump inside for the winter, in a container of water. (The water prevents the seals from drying out.)

Step 9. When the pond is completely filled, if you have fish, you must use a de-chlorinator to remove all chlorine from the water before returning the fish to the pond. The de-chlorinator available at Aquatic & Garden Decor is safe for aquatic plants. Always read and follow the directions on the package.

Step 10. After the pond has been de-chlorinated, place your fish and some of the old pond water in a plastic bag and close it. Then, float the bag on top of your pond. This allows fish to acclimate themselves to the new water temperature. After about 15 minutes, open the bag and let the fish swim out into the pond.

Step 11. In order to keep falling leaves and other debris out of your pond during the winter, place a piece of netting or a screen over pond. Stretch it tightly and anchor the edges with rocks, bricks, etc. It is also a good idea to place a few pieces of wood, rigid PVC pipe, etc. across the pond, under the netting, to prevent the netting from sagging into the pond.

YOUR POND IS NOW READY FOR WINTER!

Also Keep In Mind...

In the fall, continue feeding floating food to your fish until they quit eating. They usually stop eating after the water temperature lowers and their metabolisms slow down. They will sustain themselves in the pond during the winter, eating vegetation and other pond life.

During mild winters, like we typically have in the Cincinnati area, most hardy bog plants will do quite well on the shelves during the winter months, if you choose to leave them there. However, if the winter does become bitterly cold, lift the edges of the netting and drop most bog plants to the bottom of the pond. Make sure to re-cover the pond with the netting and stretch tightly.

Remember, no matter how mild the winter, anacharis and hardy water lilies must remain in the deepest portion of the pond (18" minimum). All tropical water lilies and tropical bog plants must be brought inside for the winter or they will not survive.

In the winter, it is quite acceptable to use a pond de-icer to maintain an open hole in the pond's surface. This will allow toxic gases to escape. The pond de-icers available at Aquatic & Garden Decor float on the water surface and are thermostatically controlled.