



Algae Control

Algae Background

Probably no other plant can throw North Texas Water Gardeners into a panic like Algae. During the Spring and Fall, we nearly always have a good size algae bloom. For the most part, this is a natural process. The fish are just coming out of hibernation and the plants are just starting their growth cycle. In North Texas, the weather can fluctuate dramatically from freezing to 90 degrees in the spring, however, the water temperature changes much slower. So there is always a period of time that Algae runs amuck, even in our show ponds. It is a natural cycle. Once the water begins to warm and the fish and plants help return the pond to a balanced system.

Algae problems are caused by an unbalanced ecosystem. It takes all the elements of filtration, plants, animals, bacteria and rocks and gravel to balance any pond. Assuming you have an efficient filtration system, the next steps to help control algae are plants, animals and bacteria.

Plants

First, algae is a plant and all aquatic plants feed off the same nutrients in the water. The more plants, the less nutrients are available for the algae. Algae also thrives on sunlight. Lilies and floaters play an important role in shading the water, thereby controlling algae.

Fish

Koi that are at least 10" long will eat algae IF they are not overfed.

Bacteria

Bacteria live on the rocks/gravel and filter media. They feed on excess nutrients in the water, starving the algae. Adding bacteria is probably the single most important, and overlooked, element of pond ownership. We suggest that you add bacteria on a regular basis such as once or twice a month depending on which type of bacteria you use. However, new ponds, after a whole pond clean out, heavy filter cleaning or when you have a big algae bloom we suggest adding bacteria to your pond 1 X per day for two weeks.

Bacteria needs as much surface area as possible to thrive. Additions to the pond like gravel or small rock in the bottom can give bacteria even more surface area. Additional surface area enhancers, like bioballs, can also be an easy way to provide an amazing amount of surface area for bacteria.

Products

There are a wide variety of products available that can either help prevent or eliminate algae. There is no once single solution that works for every situation. Beware of products that are not specifically made for water gardens! Look specifically for products made for use in ponds. If it doesn't say SAFE FOR AQUATIC PLANTS AND FISH, do not add it to the pond. Bleach, for example, is not an option. Each year someone adds bleach and floats a few koi! For more information see ALGAE CONTROL PRODUCTS at www.backyardconcept.com.

Simple Tips

1. **Do NOT OVERFEED FISH.** In fact, when during an algae bloom, fish feeding should be reduced dramatically or eliminated until the algae is under control. This forces the fish to feed on the algae.
2. **Do NOT OVERSTOCK** pond with fish. More fish, more fish poo, thereby adding more nutrients to the pond, which in turn, feeds the algae.
3. **Clean out only once a year.** Your biofalls, rocks and gravel house good bacteria. Washing it out repeatedly reduces the amount of bacteria in the system.
4. **ADD Plants** and not just because they are beautiful. They compete with algae for nutrients and are the most important addition to a pond. Lilies and floaters block sunlight to the water's surface which in turn starves algae.
5. **Physically remove string algae** from pond.
6. **Fix leaks.** Constantly adding water to the pond also constantly adds nutrients.
7. **Control Run-off.** Lawn fertilizers or insecticides that may run into the pond will feed algae growth and can threaten the aquatic life in the pond.