

WINTERIZING YOUR POND IN THE FALL

In our decades of experience at Aquatic & Garden Decor, we've found that it is not necessary to completely drain and clean your pond every year. However, you do need to remove leaves and sludge that have accumulated throughout the growing season. The following steps are the process we use to prepare our ponds for winter.

Step 1. Remove all potted plants, including water lilies, from the pond. 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, and then set them aside. Please refer to our 'Aquatic Plant Care' tip sheet for winterizing instructions for specific plants, including which to cut back for winter.

Step 2. Remove the oxygenating plants from the bottom of the pond. Lay these plants in your yard and rinse with fresh water to clean them up. Trim away all of the nicest, greenest oxygenators (discarding the rest), and store them in a bucket of clean water until plants are ready to be returned to the pond.

Step 3. Dredge your pond with a fish net that has a flat edge. **Slowly** drag the net along the pond shelves and across the bottom of the pond to remove as much thick debris, leaves and sludge as possible. Place the debris in a bucket and discard it. If you move the net slowly enough, your fish will naturally swim away from it. If you accidentally catch one, simply pull it out of the net and place it back in the pond.

Step 4. After the pond is dredged, place cleaned and winterized plants in the correct winter location per our 'Aquatic Plant Care' tip sheet. Bunch all of your trimmed stems of oxygenators together, and tie them with fishing line, dental floss, etc., and secure them to a rock or weights. Then place them back in the deep section (18"-36") of your pond.

Step 5. Larger waterfall pumps, that are deeper in the pond where the water will not freeze, can remain in place for winter. If your pump is located inside a 'pump bag', clean off any algae or debris that has accumulated on the bag. Smaller pumps located on shelves or in shallow water should be moved to the deep section (18"-36") of your pond for winter. **Please remember: We do not recommend running your pump in the winter.** Running a pump in the pond to keep a hole in the ice will only make the pond water colder and encourage a thicker layer of ice on the pond. Also, as the perimeter of the pond and/or waterfall freezes, the ice can divert the moving water out over the edge of the pond, thus draining it!

Step 6. During the winter months, it is recommended to maintain an opening on the surface of the pond, rather than allowing it to completely freeze over. This allows gases harmful to fish to escape and oxygen to enter. The best way to accomplish this is by using a water garden aeration kit. They are extremely energy efficient and offer year-round benefits to your pond and its inhabitants. A thermostatically controlled floating pond de-icer can also be used. Please be advised that an aerator or de-icer is not a substitute for properly cleaning and winterizing your pond.

Step 7. 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 the pond. Stretch it tightly and anchor the edges with rocks, bricks, stakes, 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 the winter.

In the event that your pond has excessive sludge and debris, or is deeper than 30", a partial draining may make it easier to perform a more thorough cleaning. You can drain your pond down to just below the shelf (approximately half the depth of your pond). This also allows for easier access to plants, especially lilies and oxygenators on the bottom of the pond. At Aquatic & Garden Decor, we carry a utility pump that you can attach a garden hose to, which works very well for this.

When re-filling, if you have fish, you must use a de-chlorinator, based upon the amount of new water added. The de-chlorinator available at Aquatic & Garden Decor is the same one we use in our ponds, and it is safe for water plants. It removes chlorine and chloramine, while protecting and repairing the fish's slime coat. Always read and follow the directions on the package.

All products and accessories discussed in this tip sheet are available at Aquatic & Garden Decor.