



# Pond Maintenance

Because we live on the driest continent and water is such a precious commodity, it helps our peace of mind to be near water even if it be but a small pond.

The trickling sound of water over rocks, the wind rippling on the surface of a pool and the play of sunlight on a cascade, creates an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity.

Water can be a valuable focal point in any size garden. This use of water can be traced back in history to Islamic gardens. The great flowering of culture and intellectual pursuits that was centred around the trading cities of Mecca and Baghdad also extended into garden design. Water from distant melting snow was captured and transported in channels over long distances to desert cities where it was directed into gardens both to irrigate crops and for decorative purposes.

While a pond or pool can bring much joy and coolness to a WA garden there can be a downside if the water is not properly managed. It can become an eyesore. The essence of effective management is to create a balanced system so that the algae never gets to dominate the scene.

## WHAT ABOUT CLEANING

So ideally garden ponds should be cleaned as infrequently as possible. Refilling with fresh water means that the slow process of establishing an equilibrium needs to start all over again. In the short term you tend to get a build up of green water due to the rapid growth of algae.

The first pond that I owned was about a metre deep and 2 metres long. It was sited in the shade of a bougainvillea which dropped leaves and flowers all year round. The decaying plant material fouled the water and encouraged an algae build up. In order to give the dozen goldfish a chance to keep the balance; as they do by eating the algae, it was necessary to partially empty and clean this pond at least once a year.

Other reasons for emptying the pond were a build-up of silt and mud or an invasion of plants such as watercress or floating weed.

The first step is to take off some water so the fish don't get too much of a shock at being moved. Try to capture and transfer all of the fish before you start bailing out the water. Easy said - not always so easily done when the water is thick and dirty.

Water lilies, have fragile stems that need the support of water. They need to be carefully handled so that there is a minimum of breakages. Gently remove the excess algae by hand then store the lilies in a temporary holding pond. Drying out can be fatal.

If these plants need repotting, and they do become overcrowded very quickly, then the best time is spring. Like many perennial plants they can be divided up to increase your collection.

An ideal potting mix is made from loam and peat in the proportion of 3 parts loam to 1 part peat. Loam is not so

easy to obtain so a ready to use alternative is Waldecks Premium Indoor Outdoor Potting Mix. This will work beautifully but because it contains many light materials which can float to the surface or cause clouding of the water it is a good practice to cover the mix with medium and fine gravel.

When it comes to removing the water from your pond there are a number of alternatives, the bucket being the most energetic. Siphoning is a whole lot easier. You need to ensure that the uptake end is covered so that any, recalcitrant fish don't escape. In order to function, the discharge end needs to be lower than the uptake. It is best to avoid emptying the pond completely as you will have to start the process of establishing a new balance all over again.

If you can create a well balanced ecosystem then the irregular, messy, cold and unrewarding job of bucket emptying the pool can cease. Filtering and aerating the water can keep your pool sparkling clean and trouble free. You might be worried about the cost of operating a pump for 24 hours a day every day of the year..

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The annual cost of power for a 90 watt pump, which is sufficient to provide a small fountain or Frogs are likely to take up residence in the absence of predators and their night chorus is a thing to behold. Fountains, spills and jets make the play of water a more special, moving feature in the garden. All Waldecks Garden Centres have a wide selection of Formstone birdbaths, fountains and ponds that bring a classical look to a garden.

After a stressful day at work you know there is nothing quite as relaxing as a gurgle in the garden. And when you understand how to create a biologically balanced pond, the maintenance is just a piece of cake.