



# LANDMASTERS

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## Fall Pond Care

As the cold weather approaches, our ponds need to rest for the winter. These are instructions to help you get your fish and pond ready for the cold winter months ahead.

First, clean out all the debris from your pond including sludge and leaves to prevent them from decomposing at the bottom of the pond. As they decompose precious oxygen is drawn from the pond water, robbing it from the fish and other aquatic life. Decaying organic matter is also prime ground for harmful bacteria and parasites to spend the winter. During a warm spell or early in the spring they can quickly attack your fish before their immune systems are reestablished.

Generally, it is advisable to completely drain and clean the pond if there is more than 2-3 inches of sludge on the bottom. Otherwise, we advise you to drain 25% of the water for the cleaning process. During the cleaning, you will stir up toxins so by adding fresh water, you will dilute any that are present in the pond.

Pull your plants and trim back the leaves from the hardy marginals and lilies to within 1-2" from the soil surface. If needed this is a good time to divide your plants. For the winter, place your hardy plants (lilies and marginal) on the bottom of pond in the deepest area. Bring your tropical plants inside for the winter and treat them like houseplants. Discard onto the compost pile the remainder of the plants like oxygenators or floating plants.

We recommend that you pull the pump and filter. This is optional, but our severe winters can cause many problems if you do not. This is a good time of year to clean, examine, and **READY THEM FOR SPRING**. Clean your pumps and store in a dry place. Filters need to be taken apart and/or flushed out, ultra-violet lights drained, cleaned and stored; remember to change the bulb in the spring if needed.

Refill the pond, add a dechlorinator such as **Stress Coat**, add fall bacteria treatment, check salt level (**Salt level Test Kit**), add **pond salt**, and add a flocculent (**Accu-Clear**) to settle the suspended particles in the water.

Our severe winters ice over the ponds and "seal" the surface. To ensure the survival of your fish add a **pond de-icer**. This will create a hole in the ice so that gases can escape and oxygen will be available for the fish. Do not be tempted to simply pound a hole in the ice. The resulting shock waves can seriously injure and even kill your fish. The de-icer placed on a timer can be regulated to turn on 2-3 hours in the morning and afternoon. This helps to reduce your energy bill and is ample time for the exchange of gases. It may be necessary to extend the amount of time for the heater should the

temperatures drop for an extended period. The water will also create a source for other wildlife including birds.

There are other methods of keeping the pond open in the winter such as running the pump, using an aerator, using a bubbler or an air stone. **We do not suggest these methods for several reasons.** Heaters do not release the ammonias in any anaerobic sludge that may still be present on the pond bottom. Aerators, agitating the water closer to the bottom, stir up existing sludge, releasing gases. Aerators can allow ice doming where heaters will not. Heaters, unlike aerators, do not elevate the warmer water on the bottom and expose it to colder temperatures. Aerators very often create poor water quality problems in early spring that contribute to significant fish loss.

Finally, if your pond is in an area with trees, then you should cover your pond with **netting. Bring in your pond dimensions and we will custom cut the net for you.** (Regular garden netting will not work because it is not strong enough to sustain moisture and will eventually breakdown in the water). Get the net on before the leaves begin to fall to reduce maintenance. When the net becomes full, empty it. **Once all the leaves have fallen, remove the net before it snows.** It is important to do this as the leaves on the net may trap gases and cause fish loss. Depending on how many trees are in your yard and how severe the winter, you may need to place the net on the pond in early spring to capture any remaining leaves.

Feed your fish a low-protein, high carbohydrate food when the water temperature dips below 70 degrees. Low-protein food is good because it is easier for fish to digest and helps them store fat for winter consumption. **Stop feeding the fish once the pond temperatures drop below 50 degrees.**

**You can start feeding them again in the spring when the water temperature reaches 50 degrees.**

Happy pondering!