

SPRING CLEAN OUT OF PONDS

We recommend that your pond be cleaned out every spring. Cleaning out a pond in the spring simulates the normal flushing action that lakes fed by streams and rivers experience during heavy spring rains. Generally, leaves and other debris have blown into the pond and settled, tinting the water a tea color. Cleaning out the debris and replacing the water with fresh, clean and clear water gets rid of this color and the excessive nutrients that have built up in the pond over the previous year.

Pond cleaning should be done in March or early April before the water gets too warm. This will give the pond time to allow a bacteria colony to get reestablished before the algae has time to get the upper hand. The following is a step-by-step explanation of how to clean your pond:

1. If you have a stream, remove any filter pads and bags of lava rock from the BioFalls (if you didn't do that last fall when it was easier), connect the pump (if it was disconnected for the winter), and plug it in. With the water running, clean out the stream, removing sticks, leaves and other debris by hand. Shuffle your feet through the gravel (boots on) and allow the dirty water to be carried to the pond. With your garden hose and spray nozzle, spray into nooks and crannies to flush out dirt that had settled into them. You will remove much more dirt with the pump running than you will trying to just spray the stream down with the garden hose alone. When the stream is clean, unplug the pump and disconnect it from the check valve. This will allow the BioFalls to drain. Spray out the Biofalls with your garden hose, and if the water left therein seems pretty dirty, bail out the dirty water with a flexible plastic container, such as a whipped cream or ice cream container.
2. Begin draining the pond using either a small pump or the pump from the skimmer and a tube long enough to get the water out and away from the pond. Pull some gravel away from the lowest spot in the pond and set the pump there. Fill some containers with some of the pond water to put the fish in.
3. As the water is going down begin washing down the rocks around the perimeter of the pond. It is easier to get the dirt to go to the bottom of the pond if you spray as the water is going down than if you wait to spray it all down after the water is out of the pond.

4. When the water starts getting low, catch the fish (You will need a net.) and put them in the containers of pond water you have saved.
5. Remove any solid waste, such as twigs and leaves, by hand. Cut off any dead foliage of the aquatic plants that are growing in the pond.
6. Finish washing down the pond rocks with either a jet type sprayer or a garden hose sprayer, starting with the top of the pond, and then continuing from the pond water line and working your way down. Don't use excessive pressure, especially when aimed at gravel or plants, or try to scrub all of the string algae off of the rocks. You are not trying to sterilize the pond. After the initial spraying, then use the garden hose to channel dirt to the bottom of the pond, where the pump continues to pump out dirty water. You will probably have to unplug the pump a few times when it starts sucking air. Plug it back in when you get some more water built up.
7. Drop the clean-out pump into the skimmer, and clean it out as you did with the BioFalls.
8. Wash off the filter pads from the skimmer and BioFalls and put them back in place. Replace the pads if they are starting to deteriorate. We figure that a filter pad should last three years, maybe more.
9. Sprinkle EcoBlast all over the stream bed and pond bottom. This will help break up any organic matter that remains.
10. Start filling the pond with a garden hose. Transfer the fish to smaller buckets of the old pond water and float them in the pond as the water fills. Add Dechlor to the tap water to remove chlorine before returning the fish to the water if you are using city water. Release the fish when the temperature of the pond water feels like it is around the same temperature as the water in the buckets.
11. Use Beneficial Bacteria just as you did when the pond was new. You want to get a healthy growth of bacteria going right away.
12. If you seem to have a fair amount of string algae, use SAB to get ahead of it. If you sprinkled EcoBlast, it is recommended that you wait 48 hours to treat with SAB. You can use this product on a monthly or an "as needed" basis with very satisfactory results.