



Water Gardening: Maintenance

As with all beautiful gardens, water gardens require some maintenance. For many, the biggest stumbling block to installing a water garden is that upkeep seems overwhelming. Maintaining a water garden is not nearly as troublesome as you might think. Once the garden is set up, weekly checks, a little trimming, dredging (cleaning the pond bottom), and feeding are all that is needed.

Spring

- Clean pump, flush hoses, and start the biofilter system.
- Restart pump for waterfalls. Remove deicers and winter bubblers.
- Dredge the bottom of winter debris.

- Add barley for algae control if needed.
- Raise tender plants from deep water for the season. These are plants that can handle a light frost but have been submerged to keep them from freezing during the winter.
- Add seasonal plants and early bloomers and floaters during April and May.
- Feed rushes and sedges in April.
- Begin feeding fish when water temperature is above 50°F.
- Add beneficial bacteria to minimize sludge buildup.
- Restock submerged aquatics as needed.

- Replace UV bulbs if used and needed.
- Divide or repot plants as needed, except iris.
- Enjoy spring as the pond comes to life.

Summer

- When water temperature is a constant 70°F, add seasonal tropical and bulb plants to the pond.
- Feed plants monthly during the blooming season with water plant fertilizer tabs. Feed tropical lilies every other week, and rushes and sedges in July.
- Remove dead blooms and clean plants as needed. Lily leaves and blossoms should be removed by pinching at the crown.
- Clean pump intake screens, nets and pump filters every other week.
- Dredge the bottom as needed. A fine net on a long handle works well for cleaning debris from the bottom of the pond.

Fall

- Divide rushes and iris.
- Install leaf netting or begin skimming water surface of leaves and debris.
- When in danger of frost, remove floaters and emergent tropicals.
- Stop feeding fish when water temperature is below 50°F.



- Lower tender plants when heavy frost is imminent.
- Trim hardy submerged plants to below ice level.

Winter (November - February)

- Turn off waterfalls, streams and fountains. Clean biofilter(s).
- Winterize pumps as needed.

- Winterize UV bulbs.
- Install winter bubbler/deicer equipment. **Never hit the ice to break it.** Hitting the ice creates a shockwave deadly to fish and is also hard on the liner.
- Perform full or partial pond cleaning. Never power wash the pond liner. The patina on the sides of the pond is home to beneficial microorganisms.

- Adjust water level. Water should be below stonework for maximum life of the stone.
- Clean bubbler intake filter as needed, biweekly to monthly.

Visual inspection of the pond can identify problems. Maintenance involves getting into the pond occasionally. This is the best way to work with plants and keep the pond clean.

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