



## **SPRING POND START-UP**

**Please refer to your owners manual for more detailed information. Briefly, here is what needs to be done once the snow and ice are off your pond:**

With smaller ponds and pondless systems, a full pond cleanout is many times recommended so as to remove all leaf debris that has collected over the winter months. If you don't live around many trees, you may not have to do this. If there is minimal organic debris in the pond you might simply use **Microbe-Lift Spring Cleaner** (or similar product) and/or a sludge reducing bacteria to breakdown this material.

1) A full cleanout is accomplished by removing potted plants and fish and pumping out the old water. It's best to pump some of the pond water into your fish holding tank and then drain your pond down to about 6" deep. This will make it much easier to catch your fish. If you can't seem to find your fish, they may be hiding under the leaf debris on the ponds bottom, or behind some of the rocks (you might need to flush them out of the rocks with a garden hose - **See #5 for more info on fish**). Once your fish are out & and the water is drained, remove all leaf debris etc. and hose down all the rock surfaces. You can power wash if necessary. Though this may remove some of the moss from the rocks, don't worry, more will grow on the stones this season to give your pond it's "natural" look. Pump out this dirty water using your pond pump or a sewage-type pump. Rinse again if necessary to get all the muck etc. out of the pond and drain it down again. (We usually keep the pump in the lowest spot in the pond and leave it running while rinsing) *If you use your pond pump and you do not have a screen on the bottom of the pump, you will want to make a temporary hardware-cloth screen to prevent any rocks or large debris from being sucked into the impellers.* Hand pick as much leaf debris, twigs, etc. that you can. Next, add a good dechlorinator and start refilling the pond.

2) If you have a bog you should clean it out every 3-5 years depending on how much debris accumulates. Simply install your trash pump into the "cleanout" vault of your bog basin and pump out the water. Wash down the bog with a hose as you continue pumping out the dirty water. Once the water coming out is clean, you can refill the bog, being sure to add some dechlorinator.

3) If your plants spent the winter in the bottom of the pond, you can place them back where you would like them to be for this season. Do not place *new plants* in the water too early in the season, especially if they are tropicals. Wait for the water to warm up a bit: 75 degrees is the ideal temperature for tropicals and 60 degrees is good for hardy plants.

4) While the pond is filling, install your pump, filters and debris net into your skimmer box or pondless vault. Place the Biofalls filters and lava rock (or bio-ribbon) back in the Biofalls. Be sure to rinse the filters and lava rock off before installing, especially if this wasn't completed last Fall. **(Filters should be replaced about every 2-3 years or whenever they show signs of breaking down or tearing.)**

5) If your fish spent the winter in the pond, they should be put in a bucket (*filled with original pond water*) while the pond is being drained and cleaned. Don't try to catch the fish until the water has drained down to a 6" depth. Once you start refilling the pond, set the bucket containing the fish into the dechlorinated pond and let the fish get acclimated to the new water temperature for about 30-45 minutes before "introducing" them back into the pond. If you must put your fish into a larger tank while cleaning the pond, try to do the cleaning when the pond water is around 50-55 degrees. This is about the same temperature of the new water you will be adding. Since you won't be able to lift the big holding tank into the pond to get the fish acclimated to the new water temperature you want the temperatures to be no more than 5-7 degrees difference. (*If you have smaller fish that hide behind the stones and you cannot catch them, you might want to try draining your pond down only half-way. Clean the debris out and refill. You won't get the pond quite as clean, but your fish may have a better chance of surviving.*)

**NOTE: you will need to immediately put dechlorinator in your pond to remove the chlorine in the newly added water (unless you use well water). Follow instructions that come with the specific product. If you fail to do this the chlorine will burn the fish's gills and possibly lead to death.....not yours, but the fish's.**

6) Once the pond is filled, you can start the pump & begin adding the bacterial enzymes per product instructions. These are the bacteria that "eat" the nutrients, keeping your water clear. Bacteria does poorly in cold water, so you might get a brief algae bloom in early spring, especially if your pond is located in a sunny location. You may choose to use an algacide or liquid barley extract during until the pond water reaches warmer temps. Once the water warms up, with regular bacteria applications, your water will become clear in short order. You still may wish to use **Microbe-Lift Spring Cleaner** to more quickly break down any organic matter that you were not able to remove. Should this organic matter stay in the pond it might increase the chances of an algae bloom or the growth of string algae. REMEMBER: The best way to keep your algae in check is to have 40%-60% of your pond surface covered with plant material. Plants remove nutrients from the water, reducing the amount of "food" available to the algae. It takes several weeks for plants to actively start growing, so early on you might still see some algae growth. But as the plants begin to thrive they will pull nutrients out of the water and help reduce the algae.

**HAPPY PONDING**