

## **It is ALGAE time!**

As the days get warmer and the hours of sunlight continue to increase, the Spring algae growth will continue to be a problem for us water garden and pond enthusiasts. It seems that if you do not have fish, the problem is ever so slightly less severe. One cannot TOTALLY eliminate algae unless you do not have or want plants and or fish. The best we can hope for is to be able to control its growth and spread.

If your water feature has nothing living except for algae (no FISH, no PLANTS like in a swimming pool) there are means to completely get rid of algae but I know that we are not talking about a swimming pool here so the discussion will be about our water features.

There are at least two things that can be done to control algae. I believe the very best way is through LOTS of filtration. One must get as much of the nutrients out of the water as is possible therefore starving the algae. There are products for sale that are touted to kill the algae. That is all well and good but what happens to the dead algae???? It becomes FOOD for a new growth unless it is FILTERED out of the water. Back to my first premise Filtration, Filtration, Filtration!

We could compare algae control with weight control??? Eat less and exercise more. Reduce the nutrient level in the water and increase the filtration processes. Both should attain the desired results.

Removal of plant material such as lily leaves and spent flowers, as well as other types of leaves and debris that may fall in the water before it all starts to decompose is another very important step to keep the nutrient levels from unnecessarily increasing.

Microbiological activity is a natural means to control nutrient levels in the water. There are several products available that will greatly improve the “health” of the water system. Granted, there will still be algae growth but it will be significantly reduced making it a bit easier to keep the water clear. I “seed” my ponds monthly with liquid bacteria. During the Fall & Winter, I use a two part product that contains liquid bacteria and water soluble blend of cellulose enzymes, cellulose-producing bacteria and a cold weather bacterium. During the summer, I use a different formula bacterial solution. It really seems to be doing a good job in my ponds so far this year. Last year, I did not do a good job of deadheading the lilies nor did I keep up with regularly adding the micro-biological material and it showed. The water was not clear all summer! Hopefully, this improved regimen will keep it nice and clear like it has been since I started the regular addition of the microbiological product and keeping the lilies deadheaded.

I put nets on the pond last fall as the leaves started turning. Very few tree leaves actually managed to get into the water. That also helped reduce the amount of “stuff” that would decompose and cause an increase in nutrients for algae to grow on.

I believe the most effective control for the remaining string algae is mechanical removal. Yes, it is a slimy mess but there will be a whole lot less dead algae to help feed the new growth that will surely appear. I have been using a brush to mechanically remove the string algae that is starting to grow in my bog. It works quite well but a bigger brush

would be more efficient The “slimy green stuff” is a great addition to the compost pile/bin. It has lots of nutrients in it – that is why we are taking it out of the pond – right?

I also use my leaf net to remove the algae that I call “sun algae” because it floats to the surface when the sun is high in the sky and drops to the bottom as the sun's rays drop to the horizon in the afternoon. This mechanical removal helps to reduce the amount of the “green stuff” that gets caught in the skimmer.

Algae have good qualities in spite of the fact that most of us wish it would just go away! Fish obtain healthy nutrients by eating algae. Granted, most of us do not believe the fish will eat enough to even keep the algae under control but we must realize that there are beneficial aspects to algae.

Water change will also help to control the algae growth. Approximately 10% of the total water volume is what most “experts” recommend. Be sure to either use a chlorine/chloramines filter or add dechlorinator in accordance with the instructions on the label.

Algae growing on the rocks in the streams and on the water falls make the “water feature” look more like a natural setting.

Our **Goal** in the process is to manage growth and not even try to eliminate all of it.

Remember, a Spring algae bloom is normal.

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