

# Spring Pond Tips

by Ray Jordan, Texas

**S**pring is almost here. Soon our pond's water temperatures will be staying above 65–70°F and our fish will become more active. Let's all hope that our fishy friends will have a happy and healthy 2005. Here are some suggestions that will hopefully help you get your pond off to a trouble free start this spring:

## ***Start with a clean pond***

Remove leaves and any sludge that might have accumulated this winter. *Never* stir up any muck in your pond with fish still in the same water. Use a holding tank for you fish while you clean your pond. It is especially important to remove any acorns that might have fallen into your pond, as they can be toxic in large quantities. Do not over clean and do not use chlorinated water or you will kill the beneficial bacteria.

## ***Clean your filters***

Hopefully your pumps and filters were kept running all winter. Be sure inspect and backwash thoroughly to get them ready for the growing season ahead. Do not over clean or use chlorinated water.

## ***Feeding your fish***

Watch your ponds water temperature. You can gradually increase the number and daily amount fed to your fish as the water temperature rises into the 70's. Do not over feed your fish. Everyone does!! Do not feed more than your fish can eat in 90 seconds. I promise they will not starve. My suggestion would be to increase the amount of food very slowly watching your water tests and feed small amounts once or twice a day until the temperature stays above 75°F . Try to feed between 9:00 am & 5:00 pm so the fish have a better chance to digest the food before the pond temperature drops at night. If there is a significant cold front that greatly lowers the water temperature stop your feeding temporarily.

## ***Continue to do regular water testing and water changes***

Remember your ponds biological filtration will lag behind your feeding schedule. Also ammonia-fixing bacteria develop faster than the nitrite-fixing bacteria. Test your water for both ammonia and nitrites at least weekly during the spring season as you slowly increase the feedings. Make water changes as often as necessary to keep tests within normal levels. Regular

5–15% water changes each week are the usual recommendation. It is better to feed smaller amounts of food several times a day than one large feeding.

## ***You should be feeding a lower protein pellet food such as wheat germ***

Throw away any left over food from last year. Get and keep fresh food stored in a cool dry location. It is also a very good idea to add extra Vitamin C to your fish food. Buy Vitamin C powder at a health food store and dissolve a teaspoon in a small amount of warm water for every one to two pounds of food. Stir into food until absorbed spread out on something until dry then keep in a cool dry airtight container.

## ***Watch your fish carefully***

Look for changes such as not swimming or eating with the other fish. Be aware some may start flashing (Rub themselves against the sides of the pond). This might be a sign they have parasites that will need treatment. You will need to get a skin and gill mucus scrape to view under a microscope. You might need a more experienced club member or a Koi Health Advisor to assist you with this. If parasites are identified treat with specific remedy for that type of parasite. Again a more experienced club member or a Koi Health Advisor can help. Be sure to do a recheck to confirm after treatment that the nastie's have been eradicated. On very cold days fish will be slow or inactive but they should all act similar. Watch for cuts or sores that might develop. Spawning season can cause some cuts and bruises. Wounds on fish will not heal well in water below 75°F and when we get a few days of warmer temperatures the bad bugs can wake up and cause big problems. You should disinfect any significant scratches with iodine. If high ammonia or nitrites appear do a water changes and reduce or stop feeding.

## ***Quarantine tank***

If you do not yet have a quarantine tank please get one and set it up. You will be very glad you are prepared next time you have a sick, injured or new fish to take care of.

## ***Move any sick or injured fish to heated/salted hospital tank***

Remember a fish's immune system is temperature dependent. Moving a sick fish to a warm hospital tank treated with 1–2 lbs.



Of salt per 100 gallons can work wonders. After they recover you can put them back in the pond.

### ***Buying new fish***

Spring is a time when every pond owner starts to think about buying some new fish. Be sure the fish you buy are healthy. Hopefully you have a quarantine tank where they can be observed in water temps of 72–78°F. Koi Herpes Virus (KHV) is sure to reappear as water temperatures rise into the 70's. The only way to currently protect your koi are to place all new koi into a Q-tank with a few small koi from your current collection. Hold at a water temperature of 72–78°F for three weeks to be sure your new koi is not infected with or a carrier of KHV.

Read and learn more about how to care for the special needs of your pond during the spring season. The club library is a great place to start. The more effective you are in minimizing the problems that can occur with the spring warm up period the fewer problems you will have the rest of the year.

Good Luck and Happy Pondering!! ❖

## **MAKC Hotline Volunteers**

Tom Burton	Middletown, NJ	732-671-7045
Lenore Cotler	Union, NJ	908-687-7289
Jan & Bill Fogle	Wayne, PA	610-687-3105
Floyd Broussard	Woodbridge, VA	703-491-4921
Wendy Maris-Sullivan	Woodbridge, VA	703-491-0159
David & Debby Hester	Manassas, VA	703-791-5939
Allan Hobron	Staten Island, NY	718-356-3131
Jeff Nicholson	Odenton, MD	301-912-1928

All members have microscopes and health books. Loaners are available in Middletown, NJ, New Brunswick, NJ, and Woodbridge, VA. In the event of a recorded message, please suggest a time when you're home to receive a return call or when you'd like to call back.

**Please remember that advice is given based on your input — the ultimate responsibility and treatment must remain with you.**

