



# “How To” Series: Steps for Winterizing Your Pond

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Pond owners in winter climate states need to begin preparing for winter in early fall. Pond winterization should begin when water temperatures are in the mid-60s and before the leaves begin to fall. Starting now means less stress on the fish as well. (Also see – *The Water Temperature Guide*.)



## STEP 1: Clean Up the Pond

Remove leaves and dead organic matter from the pond with a skimmer or leaf net, or one of the Pond Vacuum systems sold by EasyPro®.

**Remove organic matter.** If left in the pond it will decompose. This will lower available oxygen and increase toxins to dangerous levels for fish going into the long winter months. If they make it through the winter, they will be more prone to diseases come spring. (Photo 1)

**Keep the skimmer clean.** Clean out the mechanical net, filter pads/brushes with a garden hose. DO NOT use harsh cleaners like soaps, and bleach. Be sure to check the skimmer daily through out the fall and clean the debris out as soon as possible. Any leaves left can release tannins in the water, which will contribute to the water having a tea color to brown or even black appearance. In the event of tannins, you may perform a 25% water change to regain clear water. (Photo 2)

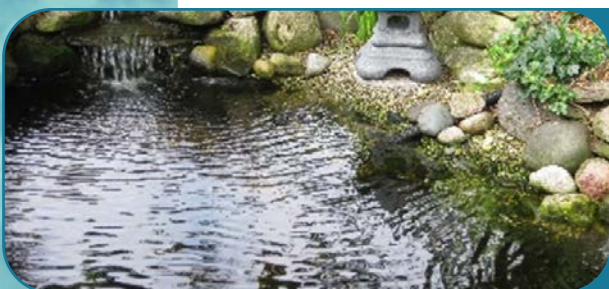


**Check and clean your AquaFalls filter pads** more frequently this time of the year due to the increase of free floating organic matter in the water. Again, use a garden hose only. Leave the biological media in your AquaFalls box alone until you completely shut down the pumps as the winter temperatures start to set in. (Photo 3)

## STEP 2: Water Changes

Prior to the winter freeze, it is advisable to perform a 25% water change. Over the summer months, toxins and pockets of sludge build up can become elevated. Performing a 25% water change along with a pond cleanup will reduce the toxins and provide a much healthier ecosystem for your fish over wintering.

Prior to adding new water, be sure to add EasyPro® Water Conditioner that will remove chlorine and chloramines and detoxify heavy metals. Although chlorine and chloramines are only found in city water, heavy metals are found in all water sources including well water. EasyPro® Water Conditioner Plus provides the added benefits of essential electrolytes, and enhances skin slime coat reducing stress. A big boost to fish health.



**TIP 1:** It is best to perform these steps earlier in the fall season than later for three important reasons:

1. Weather can change unpredictably quicker than expected
2. When completed early, the fish are less stressed and have a cleaner environment for the winter.
3. Fish that go into winter all stressed out will show more disease and health issues come spring.



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## TIP 2: THERE ARE A FEW EXCEPTIONS!

We need to keep the stems of plants with hollow stems above the water line. This would include plants like Rushes, Reeds, Iris, Sweet Flag, Ribbon Grasses, and Cattails. If not, water will get down the stem and rot out the crown of the plant. You may cut them back, and set them in deep water, but leave enough stem length to stay above the water line.

## STEP 3: Plant Care

Plant care in the fall is a process that is OK if done in steps. Again, if you start early in the fall, you will have the convenience of time to complete the process over more than just one "got to get it done today" days.

After the first frost, cut back the tops of plants, remove them from the plant shelf, set them in deeper water. (See TIP 2)

If needed, divide and repot water plants. The exception would be water lilies. Tropical water plants should be moved to inside for the winter, winterized or disposed of.

**Water lilies should be divided in the spring once water temperatures are consistently in the mid-60s.** If water lilies are divided in colder water, you run the risk of root rot. Also, when dividing water lilies, make sure you never bury or cover the crown of the plant.

Plants in bog areas or planted in the rocks do not need to be moved – unless they are tropicals.



## STEP 4: Pond Tent & Leaf Netting

You will want to get pond leaf netting up as soon as you see the leaves starting to turn color. The **EasyPro® Pond Tent** is available in three sizes; 8'x 10', 10'x14' and 13'x17'. These tents include a zipper for easy access. Also, great for gardens, come spring, to protect your favorite vegetables. The other netting option for larger ponds, is **EasyPro® Premium Pond Netting**. (See TIP 3)



## STEP 5: Winter Pond Treatments

Water treatments, that are added going into the winter months, are all about keeping the water quality and fish health at its highest level.

EasyPro® makes this easy with its **Seasonal Boost Cold Water Bacteria**, which works in late fall, or early spring, in water temperatures as low as 38 degrees.

**TIP 3:** Some areas that receive a heavy snow load will have difficulty keeping a pond net up all winter due to the weight of the snow. Once the fall leaves and debris are removed, before the first snow hits, store your net/tent in a safe area. Return the net or tent in early spring to catch the leftover leaves, debris that may still fall in your pond.





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## STEP 6: Fish Care in Cold Water Temperatures

As water temperatures drop into the mid-60s, start feeding your fish EasyPro® Cold Water Food with wheatgerm. This is a low protein, low fat diet that is easy to digest since the fish metabolism has slowed down.

**When water temperatures drop to the mid-50s – STOP FEEDING YOUR FISH.** Comets, and smaller fish do fine if water depth is at least 18" or deeper. If you have koi, once they reach 8" to 10" or larger they require depths of 3 to 5 feet to over winter.

If you have too many fish, or they are stressed going into winter - larger fish will show signs of stress first.

## STEP 7: Closing and Winterizing the Pond

Disconnect pump(s), water fill valves and UV lights. Place pump(s) in a bucket of water and store in an area that will stay above freezing. This will help prevent the seals from drying out and cracking. (Photo 4)

Drain all water lines and open all ball valves to prevent ice damage. (Photo 5)

## STEP 8: Properly Position Aerator and/or De-icer

Keeping a hole in the ice throughout winter, so toxic gases can escape, is extremely important for the health of the pond and your fish. It may even prevent fish loss due to lowered levels of oxygen and stress from toxin build up. Larger fish will be negatively impacted first.

If you have a diffused aeration system with the diffuser positioned in the deepest location at the bottom of the pond it is time to move it. Place the diffuser on one end of the pond and position it about 8" to 14" below the surface. (Photo 6)

Moving the diffuser to the shallow end of the pond will prevent super cooling the deeper water. The new location will be deep enough to stay below the ice and still provide enough diffused air to keep the ice open.

Think of it this way. If we put air under the ice it has to come out somewhere and it will bring toxic gases with it. Most of the time there will be enough agitation to keep the ice open. But, even if it looks like it has frozen over the ice formed above the diffuser will be honeycombed. If this happens, go listen and you will hear the air escaping.

