

Koi Joy – The Pleasures of water gardening

Throughout nature there is a series of checks and balances that serve to maintain a vibrant environment. Plants take in carbon dioxide and produce oxygen, while animals take in oxygen and produce carbon dioxide providing a healthy balance that keeps the world spinning. Albeit that keeping the world spinning is another set of checks and balances. So let's consider that a colloquialism rather than an analogy. When we create an artificial environment, such as a water garden or Koi pond, achieving the desired checks and balances require our help. I mention desired checks and balances because left alone, nature may develop a different plan for your pond.

In the spring when the temperatures start to raise it is natural to experience an algae bloom. This occurrence, if kept under control, is not harmful. Algae thrive as a result of an abundant supply of nutrients in the water, mostly phosphates and nitrates.

So what are the elements required to keep the algae controlled? Balance the environment. All plants are nitrate users. Having a variety of plants in the pond makes the Algae compete for nutrients. Aquatic plants are one of the best ways to help maintain clear water.

Aeration is another method we use constantly. A high level of dissolved oxygen is essential for the health of your pond and to maintain clear water as alluded to in the opening paragraph. Decaying debris and fish waste all produce nitrates, so aggressive aeration combined with aggressive circulation achieves the best results. If possible circulate the water through mechanical, UV, and biological filters.

Keep up those water changes. Small water changes twice a week will remove nitrates from the water and dilute other problems that begin when the temperatures start to rise. Have the new water enter the pond slowly to allow the fish to acclimate to the water temperature change

Bundle loose barely straw or barley pellets and float them in the pond. I purchase paint straining bags at the home supply store, fill them with barley straw and place in the water. The decomposing barley produces peroxide which inhibits algae growth. Just replace it when it has broken down, generally a couple times a year.

Ultra violet sterilizers are a small UV light bulb enclosed in a glass tube. As water is pumped through the sterilizer, parasites and plants [algae] that pass through the tube are zapped by the UV rays and are killed. However do not depend completely on this to manage parasites. They may just prefer to stay on your fish.

As a temporary measure you can use chemical clarifiers. These products are designed to clump together algae floating in the water so it falls to the bottom to be filtered out by your bottom drain or vacuumed out. It is not long term and works only on the application day.

Sunlight is essential to growing algae. Providing some sun protection for your pond will be a big help in controlling algae.