



# PondScapes Atlanta



## CLEANING SCHEDULE

A properly installed and functioning water feature will only need periodic minor maintenance and a few light cleanings to keep it going. In fact, the properly installed water feature will require less upkeep than a similarly sized section of lawn! A lot of confusion exists on the proper cleaning schedule for a water feature. The reason is there are so many types and sizes of water features that one schedule doesn't work for all ponds.

The typical pond, under 1000 gallons, will need periodic upkeep when necessary. A small pond (under 1000 gallons) will usually stay full with periodic rains offsetting evaporation. Adding a large waterfall or watercourse will greatly increase evaporation, you can expect to lose up to five inches of water a week in the harshest days of summer. A Large pond with a lot of surface area will lose water to evaporation much more quickly.

Over time, leaves and various yard debris will fall into the pond and need removal. Surface skimming whenever possible is a great idea; this prevents the debris from sinking to the bottom of the pond and decaying. You will inevitably miss some debris, but that's ok. During the fall, a leaf net to prevent all the tree leaves from getting into the pond is highly recommended.

### Filter Maintenance:

A large sand or bead filter will obviously require backwashing regularly (similar to many pool filters). This frequency will be determined primarily by fish load. As you would expect, filter pads will need replacing periodically, when they no longer rinse clean. There are so many types and styles of filters that it would take pages to list them all. Generally follow the manufacturers directions, and use some common sense. One thing to remember, the manufacturers always assume you have a minimal fish load- perhaps three six-inch fish per one hundred gallons. We all know that's no fun, so when we have more fish, we need to clean the filter more frequently!

Ideally once a week in the busy summer months, and once or twice a month in spring and fall should be enough. If you find you have to rinse the pump pre-filter and main filter every day or two to keep the pond clean, you probably don't have a large enough filtration system. Call us, we can recommend a suitable replacement.

### Yearly Maintenance:

Late autumn, after the leaves have fallen, is usually the best time to do the big yearly maintenance. Many people recommend a yearly clean out. Often this entails removing all the fish and plants and completely draining the pond and removing all the accumulated debris. This is a time consuming process, and if you get outside help, it becomes a costly process too.

In our area with our climate, PondScapes Atlanta does not recommend a complete draining and clean out in most cases. We don't feel this is time or money well spent for anyone. A better alternative is to leave the fish and plants in the pond, and execute a 50% water change. This is much less stressful on the fish, and doesn't harm the extensive biological community developed in the pond. A simple deep pocket net and an hour of work can be enough to remove 90-95% of the accumulated debris. Any of the remaining debris is quickly removed by the filter. If you have lots of fish, another minor clean in early spring with a 50% water change is a good idea.

#### Winter Upkeep:

During winter the pond and waterfall will freeze when the weather gets good and cold. The fish can handle the cold temperatures with relative ease. The only major problems you might see are excessive ice build up in the waterfall, and complete icing over of the pond.

As the waterfall does its splashing thing, water will land on the surrounding stones and the water will freeze very easily. This can be very attractive and nice, but this can sometimes redirect your water flow, and cause the waterfall to leak. Even though it is cold and you may be enjoying that nice fireplace, check on the pond periodically to be sure it is not losing water. If you can, it is often good to redirect the flow of water back into the pond, and bypass the waterfall. This will obviously eliminate this potential problem.

If your pond ices over completely in the winter, it is usually no big deal. When the ice covers the water completely, a seal is made preventing any gas exchange. This is not detrimental in the short term, but if allowed to progress, it can kill the fish. With no gas exchange, no oxygen can get back into the water and the fish may use up all the oxygen. With a normal fish load, the fish won't run out of oxygen for a few days as cold water holds much more oxygen than warm water.

To prevent the pond from icing over, several things can be done. Simple water movement is usually enough to keep an area ice free. In the Southeast, this is usually the easiest method. Another excellent method is a small heater. These floating units are specifically designed to keep a small hole open in the ice. These heaters are typically inexpensive and will last for several seasons. Keep your filter and pump running through the winter, and you shouldn't have any problems in spring.

That's most of the important things to remember. It can be lots of fun keeping up with all the pond chores, if you let it!