

# The Prairieland Splash

**No Banquet in November due to covid. So sorry. If our fish can't eat, neither can we. Ha**

**Prairieland Koi &  
Pond Society**

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**You can pay your dues anytime now, they are still only \$20 Dues paid this year go towards next year. What a bargain!**

**Please give cash/check to our treasurer:**

**Or Send To: Letriana Cantrell**

**311 Arnold Rd.**

**Want the club to do better? Apply for one of the positions available on the board. Our club can't survive without volunteers!**

# WHY YOUR POND FISH MIGHT DIE OVER WINTER AND WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP PREVENT THAT

Most of the time [pond fish](#) are pretty hardy and make it through winter with no problem. But there are times when that's not the case...and you find one, or two...or maybe even all of your [pond fish have died over winter](#). So what gives...what could be the cause of your pond fish dying over winter?



When the colder weather starts and the water temperatures drop to 55 degrees your fish will start going into their state of semi-hibernation, which means their digestive tract starts slowing way down. This is the point where you need to [stop feeding your pond fish](#), because they will not be able to digest the food. And any leftover food will sink to the bottom, along with any waste produced by your pond fish, which then decompose and release ammonia. Any good bacteria in your pond are using the available oxygen to eat up the ammonia, from here the ammonia breaks down into nitrites and nitrates. [Nitrates are lethal to fish](#). So, in winter, there are usually two main causes of death for fish.

- **Problems**

- **Oxygen Depletion** – With a sheet of ice over your pond, the amount of oxygen in your pond is limited with no free exchange of oxygen like there would be when it's warmer out. Your pond fish need oxygen, you [pond plants](#) need oxygen, and the beneficial bacteria in your pond need oxygen.
- **Poisonous Gases** – Like you read earlier, the beneficial bacteria use oxygen to eat up the ammonia, which is then broken down into nitrites and nitrates. A build up of ammonia or nitrates can be lethal to fish. ...and in winter, when the water turns to ice, there is no way for these poisonous gases to escape.

- **Solutions**

- **Aerator** – An aerator is one of the most, if not *the* most, effective ways to prevent winter fish loss. An aerator produces a column of bubbles, allowing more oxygen to enter your pond. The added oxygen will be used by your pond fish, any plants, and by the beneficial bacteria. An aerator can be used year round, so it's not just a winter thing, in summer when your pond is very active the beneficial bacteria will be able to consume and break down more organic material, with the added oxygen provided by the aerator.

- [Pond Heater/De-Icer](#) – In winter, you should have a hole open in the ice to allow for the exchange, and escape, of gases. However, using a drill, a hammer, an axe, a knife, your shoe, a chisel, a Katana sword, a mace, a scythe, a dagger, a warhammer, a staff...a sickle...whatever your weapon of choice...is a big **NO**, so don't even try. You will only do more damage, and your fish can die from shock, so let's not do that. *But* there is a good way to create a hole in the ice. A pond heater/de-icer will create the hole for you. It works by the unit heating up, which in turn melts the ice around it, creating a hole. Just remember...NO WEAPONRY.

So, let's try and prevent your pond fish from dying this winter by using an aerator and a pond heater/de-icer, both working very well together. Article by R&A Landscaping



Ron and Patty Kramer's pond

## [Steps for Shutting Down your Pond for Winter](#)

Ponds require some extra attention when preparing for Fall and those cold Winter months ahead. Temperatures are dropping which means more and more questions on what to do next are arising. Before you panic, take a look at our steps, and things you should keep in mind, when prepping your pond for Winter. [ Zone 5 ]

If you are shutting your pond down for winter, shutting off and removing your pump should not happen until your water temperatures are between 40-50°F *and expected to keep getting colder*. You should also be done feeding your fish for the year. Winterizing steps are as follows:

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### 1. Clean Out your Pond:

Remove any dead plants, leaves, algae and other large debris from your pond.

*\*\*Decomposing plant matter causes buildup of dangerous toxins and low oxygen levels in your pond, which can affect the health of your fish in the upcoming Winter months.*

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### 2. Plant Care:

**Submerged Plants:** Before the temperatures get too cold, Anacharis should be trimmed down to 2-4" tall. Hornwort can be left or thinned if it is taking over. Now is a good time to re-band them with lead weights if necessary.

**Floaters:** Water hyacinth and lettuce are annuals that can be thrown away or added to your compost.

**Tropicals:** Should be taken to a warmer, sunny location and treated like house plants until Spring.

**Hardy Marginals:** Should be placed in its designated zones. Cut back the foliage as they go dormant or after water temperatures stay below 50° F.

**Hardy Water Lilies and Lotus:** First trim off the dead foliage and then gently place them deep enough where the tuber will not freeze (20-24").

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### 3. Clean/Remove your Pump & Filtration System:

Remove and clean your **pump**. We recommend placing it in a bucket of *distilled water* and keeping it indoors, where it will not freeze, until Spring. Now is also a good time to clean your **skimmer and bio falls**. You can either throw out your filter media or rinse it off and store it indoors until Spring. **UV bulbs** need to be removed, cleaned and placed indoors. Pond **lighting** also needs to be removed and stored where it will not freeze, or can be lowered to below the freeze line (20-24").

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### 4. Important Fish Care:

If you have fish we recommend a few more steps to ensure happy healthy fish for in the Spring. It is a good idea to test your water, before you shut down, to make sure your levels are where they need to be.

**Fish Food:** Feed your fish a [Cold Weather Fish Food](#) (low protein) when your water temperature is between 50°-70°F and stop feeding completely when your water temperature is below 50°F and expected to stay below 50°F. Late October to late November is typically when weather is consistently colder, but be sure to check your water temperature.

*\*\*Do not worry. This is not cruelty to your beloved fish. The fish digestive and immune system slow down as they prepare for semi-dormancy during the cold winter months. A sudden change in weather to colder temperatures just after a heavy feeding can actually harm or even kill fish by late Spring. If your fish are still hungry, they will find algae and other things to sustain them until Spring if necessary.*

**Aeration & De-Icer:** You will want to keep a hole in the ice to keep your fish happy and healthy. Having a [pond de-icer](#) will keep a hole in the ice which allows harmful gases to escape. Having an [aerator](#) running with an air stone half the depth of your pond will provide your fish with the necessary oxygen they need to survive. By Hoffman water x Scapes

Yes, we had to cancel the banquet for this year due to covid restrictions, but think of the extra time we have to look forward to for next year. Yes, this is but a small sacrifice to make to benefit the larger picture. I do not want to be responsible for anyone's unnecessary illness.

I'm starting to plan for 2021. Will I add more fish next year or will I get rid of some that I already have? What am I going to do different next year than what I did this year? I'm going to have more perennials and fewer annuals. Since my yard has more shade now, I'm moving plants around and concentrating on more shade plants. Now that I have all this lovely time on my hands I'm going to use it to do the things I haven't had time to before. It probably won't be cleaning the house, but I'll do more yard and pond work. That makes me happy.

I'm trying to be positive because I would hate to think I wasted what time I have griping about what I don't have.

On another note, do us all a favor and Please send suggestions for interesting articles for the newsletter. Send pictures. If you haven't seen your pond pictures you sent in in the newsletter. I may have misplaced them. Re send them. Send new ones. Growing a different plant, send it in. Are you proud of a special fish, send it in. If we can't meet, at least we can use the newsletter for more interesting articles. Thank you all for supporting us during this weird weird time.

# *Prairieland Koi & Pond Society*

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