



# Information Sheet "Spring Clean-Out"

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## Rejuvenate Your Pond With a Spring Clean-out!

The spring rains fill streams and rivers, which in turn flush out the lakes and ponds. This is nature's way of preparing for a new season of life. Your man-made pond needs your help in order to duplicate this same process.

**The Early Spring Cleanout:** By replenishing the water in your pond, and giving it a good cleaning at the beginning of each season, your pond can begin each new season fresh. Early spring, before your pond awakens completely from its winter dormancy, is the best time of year to perform your cleanout. Ideally, the cleanout should take place before the water temperature creeps above 55°F. As long as your water is cooler than 55°F, the beneficial bacteria that grow in your filter and on your rocks will not yet be established. If a cleanout is done after bacteria colonies form, your ecosystem will be thrown out of balance and your pond will go through a "green phase" before your bacteria colonies reestablish themselves again.

If a contractor installed your pond, they'll almost certainly offer a spring cleanout service. So, if you don't want to tackle this project yourself, you would likely be able to hire them to do it for you. On the other hand, if you've built your water garden yourself, or you're just looking forward to kicking off another pond season yourself, plan on spending an afternoon to complete this project.

**Limiting Fish Stress:** Spring cleanouts should be performed start to finish on the same day. Fish should not be left outside the pond in a holding container in full sun for longer than a few hours. Fish are weak after a long winter, but they'll do just fine if you limit the stress of a cleanout by completing it in a timely fashion.

### What you'll need to clean out your pond:

- Kiddie pool (or large container to hold fish and frogs)
- Fish net
- Two-five gallon buckets to collect leaves and debris
- Wading boots or old clothes you don't mind getting dirty
- Rubber gloves
- 25' of 15 - 2 inch discharge piping
- The pump from your skimmer with a makeshift screen of chicken wire or similar material
- A high-pressure nozzle for your garden hose or a power washer
- Garden shears for trimming plants

## Step-by-Step Pond Cleanout Guide



**1.** To prevent fish from being drawn into the impeller of the pump, a sump pump with a screen, or your skimmer pump with chicken wire around it, should be used to drain your pond. Use a 1.5 or 2-inch flexible PVC pipe or similar material to discharge the water into the surrounding landscape. Simply relocate the pipe two or three times to allow the water to seep into the ground. (Note: this water is excellent for fertilizing plants.) Don't forget to use some of the pond water to fill the container that will temporarily house the fish.

**2.** When the water settles down to about 6 inches deep, unplug the pump and net the fish. Don't waste your time trying to catch the fish when the pond is full. It will create unnecessary stress on you and them by doing so. Once netted, place your fish in the container alongside your pond. If you have koi, make sure you cover the container since koi may jump out. You may also find frogs or other creatures that have overwintered in your pond and they too can be placed in the container with the fish. Once your fish and critters are in the temporary holding tank, begin hosing down the rocks and gravel.



**3.** A high-pressure nozzle on your hose, or a power washer if you have one, should be used to clean the debris off the rocks. Don't try to scrub all the algae away. Some algae on the rocks will prove beneficial in developing your ecosystem. For an average size pond (11' x 16') this should take around 15 minutes.

**4.** The most time-consuming part of your cleanout will be simply washing off, and removing debris from your rocks and gravel. Do not use a power spray to do this. Use the water coming directly out of your hose to wash the gravel. Be sure to keep your pump plugged in while you're doing this. Sediment trapped in the gravel will be channeled to the deepest point of the pond and sucked out by your pump. Clean the top shelves first, and work your way down to the lowest point of your pond. When the water starts clearing up around the pump, you're done with the cleaning. This whole process should take about half an hour.



**5.** Clean out the skimmer box by sucking out the water, and hosing it down. Also, make sure to clean out the net and hose down the filter pad too.



**6.** You are now ready to clean your BIOFALLS® filter, mats, and bags of lava rock. Simply hose these down until they're clear (15 minutes).



**7.** Now that most of the algae is removed and the gravel is clean, remove the pump from the pond, return it to the skimmer, and hook it up. You can now begin filling the pond.



**8.** Once your pond is half full you can prepare to reintroduce your fish and plants. If you're on city water, it's imperative that you add a de-chlorinating agent to neutralize the chlorine in the water. Introducing your fish before de-chlorinating the water will result in their death. City tap water is safe for humans to drink, but not fish. Read the directions on the label, and add the appropriate amount. Dip your five-gallon buckets into your holding tank and fill them with a few inches of water. Add your fish into the buckets and float the bucket in the new water.



**9.** After approximately fifteen minutes, periodically begin splashing pond water into the bucket. By now the temperatures of the pond and the bucket water should be close to the same. You're now ready to spill your fish back into their spring cleaned home.