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Managing Aquatic Plants

As the weather starts to warm up algae and other aquatic plants will become more prevalent in ponds. While aquatic plants are a natural part of the pond ecosystem and vegetation in and around ponds is valuable for fish and wildlife habitat; it can also help reduce stream bank erosion. When aquatic plants become too prevalent and start to overtake a pond they become a problem and are referred to as aquatic weeds. When considering aquatic weed control, remember these two points; prevention is always better than treatment and weeds need to be identified to determine the best option for control.

Prevention: Keeping weeds from becoming a problem is much better than trying to control them once they become established. Reducing fertilizer runoff into your pond and reducing the amount of silt running into your pond are two of the best prevention strategies. The grass is a great sponge for absorbing fertilizers like nitrogen and phosphorus, helping to prevent these chemical elements from running off from surrounding areas and into the pond. Maintaining a grass buffer strip around your pond is a great way to help intercept soil particles and nutrients as they wash off surrounding fields or lawns. It will also help limit sediment washing into your pond, which causes decreased water depth and increased weed issues.

Control: The first step in controlling aquatic weeds is to properly identify the type of weed that is in the pond. Aquatic weeds are classified into four categories

- floating plants
- submerged plants
- emersed plants
- marginal plants

If you are unsure what type of aquatic weeds are in your pond, you can bring a sample to your local Extension Office for identification.

When it comes to aquatic weeds there are many options for control. These options are described below.

• **Mechanical and physical control** - Pulling, raking or physically removing weeds. This can be a good way to control small quantities.

• **Biological** - Grass carp are a non-native, plant-eating fish that will reduce the abundance of some aquatic plants. However, grass carp are not the "fix-all" in terms of aquatic plant

management because they prefer certain types of plants over others which can limit their usefulness.

• **Herbicides** - There are a number of herbicides that control aquatic weeds, but you must match the correct product with the correct weed. Always read the label for specific rates and application instructions, and follow any restrictions that apply.

When managing a pond, it is important to remember, that prevention and quick action will be the best lines of defense when it comes to controlling aquatic weeds. It is also important to remember that aquatic plants are part of the natural ecosystem and provide many benefits to surrounding aquatic life.

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