

## Chemical Control of Pond Water

Chemical products are available that actually kill string algae; however, it is important to mechanically remove as much algae as you can before you use these products. If you don't, the dying algae will quickly decompose and load the pond with a new wave of nutrients, but what is even worse is that the breakdown process consumes the pond's oxygen supply. If there is too much dead algae the fish can succumb from oxygen depletion.

The least invasive treatment is the use of barley straw. In the spring, you simply place a bale of straw in a part of the pond that has flowing water. There are microorganisms that colonize the straw after a few weeks and they produce a substance that destroys the algae. I have clients that swear by this and get great results, but it does not seem to work in all ponds. You have to try it to see if it works for you. I like the idea that it is natural and very safe. If you don't like the idea of straw in your pond, they now make a concentrated liquid extract.

Salting your pond to .3% (3 Lbs. non-iodized salt per 100 gallons applied over a period of 3 days) will get rid of string algae, but beware that many of the aquatic plants cannot tolerate this level of salt.

There is a product that gets instantaneous results by literally dissolving the algae. It is called D-SOLV and it works well for many pond owners, but you have to treat your pond on a regular basis in order to stay on top of it. I like to use it to treat the pools of water that remain in the waterfall if I am drying out the waterfall. My favorite 'chemical' solution to keep string algae in check is a product called Pond Balance. You have to do three treatments 10 days apart, but by the end of the third treatment it's a done deal. Everyone that has tried it is impressed with the results. It gets rid of their string algae and it is safe for fish, plants and birds.

There is also a device that beats string algae. It is called an ionizer and it works by passing a weak electrical current between two copper electrodes. This process liberates copper ions into the water which kill the string algae. You have to monitor the concentration of copper in the pond and adjust the voltage accordingly to maintain safe levels of ions that will not harm the fish. I particularly like this system for pondless water features that don't have fish. There is a lot more to say about ionizers, but I will save that for another article.

My clients who had called about the string algae decided to reduce their fish feeding to once a day. They added a couple of water lilies, a dozen or so water hyacinths and a couple of cattails in large planting baskets. They let their waterfall dry out for a couple of hours. This was followed by weekly sessions of hand removal of the string algae and regular use of Microbe-Lift. Within a month the balance was restored and they were proud and happy to have gotten through the teenage pond.

I hope that you now have a better understanding of how this green string-like stuff grows and know different strategies to keep it under control. Remember that every pond is unique and it may take some experimenting before you find the right combination that works for your pond. With some perseverance on your part you will learn to tame your pond's behavior and it will reward you with much enjoyment.