

What Can I do about Harmful Algae Blooms in my Pond?

Excessive nutrients entering your private pond can encourage blue-green algae blooms. Runoff that includes lawn fertilizers and livestock waste are two main sources of nitrogen and phosphorous that algae use to reproduce rapidly thus causing a “bloom.” As stated in the Q & A section of the website, you could treat your pond with chemicals as a **reactive** measure to improve the look of your pond but may cause more harm in the future. The toxins released from blue-green algae can be present within the water column even if the pond looks better.

There are several **proactive** measures that may help uptake excessive nutrients in the pond. One measure is to increase the macrophyte- submerged plant- diversity in the pond. Some of the more common submerged plants are coontail, pottamogeton, water naiad, lotus and water lilies. Cattails are another option although they can grow rapidly and may soon cover the shoreline necessitating frequent maintenance. Other perennial plants such as marsh (swamp) milkweed, blue-flag iris, pickerelweed, swamp hibiscus, *Justicia americana* (water-willow) and *sagittaria* are good alternatives for shoreline plantings that would increase the uptake of nutrients in the water and provide a buffer to help reduce runoff from entering the pond after heavy rains.

There are plants that are not appropriate for watershed ponds. Water hyacinths, although nice to look at, will soon completely cover a pond and are not recommended for this reason. Hydrilla and Eurasian milfoil are highly invasive plants which are illegal within the State of Kansas. Curly pondweed can also become highly invasive and can require a considerable amount of maintenance to control growth.

If the primary purpose of the pond is to enjoy the beauty of a water feature rather than for livestock watering, a floating garden may be an option. Although potentially expensive, floating gardens provide food and habitat for fish, waterfowl, birds and other water-loving species. There are several websites that provide information about floating gardens and companies that specialize in their construction.

Listed below are websites with information on appropriate plants that help control excessive nutrients within a pond thus perhaps preventing or reducing blooms over time.

<http://www.kdwpt.state.ks.us/news/Fishing/Special-Fishing-Programs-for-You/Pond-Management-Program/Producing-Fish-and-Wildlife-in-Kansas-Ponds/Pond-Problems/Aquatic-Vegetation>

<http://www.wisconsinlpr.com/management-services/aquatic-plants.html#Emergent>

<http://www.tapms.org/Links/aquatic%20plants%20of%20texas2.pdf>

<http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-7841/NREM-9210web.pdf>

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