K-STATE Research and Extension | Wildcat District

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Problematic Pond Weeds

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, vegetation in and around ponds is valuable for fish and wildlife habitat. When aquatic plants become too prevalent and start to overtake a pond, they become a problem and are referred to as aquatic weeds or pond 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 problematic is easier than controlling them once they become established. Reducing fertilizer runoff and the amount of silt running into your pond are two of the best prevention strategies. Grass is an excellent sponge for absorbing fertilizers like nitrogen and phosphorus, helping to prevent these elements from entering the pond from run off from surrounding lawns, pastures, or fields that have been fertilized recently. Maintaining a grass buffer strip around your pond is a great way to help intercept soil particles and nutrients as they wash off surrounding areas. 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 correctly identifying the weed. Aquatic weeds are classified into five categories: floating plants, submerged plants, emersed plants, and 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" regarding aquatic plant

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

• Herbicides - There are several aquatic herbicides for controlling pond 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, remember that prevention and quick action are the best defenses against pond weeds overtaking a pond. It is also important to remember that aquatic plants are part of the natural ecosystem and provide many benefits to the surrounding aquatic life.

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