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**NURSERY, GARDEN CENTER, GREENHOUSE & PATIO**

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**Fish in a Garden Pond**

Many kinds of small, hardy fish thrive in a modest-sized pond. Cold-water fish range in size from small, young goldfish to giant koi, which may reach a length of 3 feet in a large pool.

**Preparing your pond for fish:**

Before introducing fish to the pond, please note the following survival tips: a) Allow your freshly-filled pond to stand for 24 hours to settle, b) add Tetra Pond Aqua Safe to tap water to remove chlorine compounds, c) if pond is concrete a pH reading of the water will reveal any problems (a pH reading of 8.5 mostly likely contains dissolved concrete—too alkaline for the fish to survive). A pH reading between 7.0-8.0 is needed to sustain healthy fish.

Use a de-chlorinator such as Stress Coat or Aqua Safe. This will eliminate chlorine and other harmful elements while adding needed nutrients for fish and nitrifying bacteria. Add Aquazyme or Biofilter Booster to establish the nitrifying bacteria that dissolve ammonia and nitrite. Sale will protect the fish from burning that occurs when ammonia is present. Add 3 pounds per 100 gallons of water- salt is good medicine.

Hardy fish can adjust to a range of temperature, but a sudden shock to cold water may harm the fish. Wait until water temperatures warm into the low 60’s before adding fish from indoor tanks to an outside pond. Small fish have little chance of surviving a drop of more than 15 degrees.

**Introducing Fish**

Go slowly! Begin with just a few fish to test the water (example: 2 small goldfish). An *established* pond can support 1” of fish for every 3-5 gallons of water. Add fish over several months, and remember your fish will grow fast and reproduce.

Fish are usually sold in plastic bags. Before releasing fish, allow the opened bag to float in the water (out of sunlight) while slowly adding water from the pond to the bag. This allows both the pH and temperatures to equalize. After 20 minutes, release the fish. Your fish will dive for the bottom looking for shelter, but will soon surface looking for food.

**Caring for Pool Fish**

In Colorado, with at least 30 inches of water depth and care, koi and goldfish can be left in the pond year-round. During the summer they are very active and eat often. If you have more than just a handful of fish, you will want to help supplement their natural food of leaves, algae, and insects. You can feed frequently; every day feedings help to tame your fish. As a general rule, feed no more than what can be consumed in 5 minutes. New fish may not eat for several days as they are getting accustomed to their new surroundings.

As fall approaches and water cools, the metabolism of the fish slows, and at 45 degrees they will stop eating, then go to rest at the bottom of the pond, waiting until the water warms again in the spring.

Never do a super-cleaning of the pond- the fish eat the algae. In the fall, remove old leaves and silt from the pond bottom by running a net along the bottom. In the spring, when the fish start to swim and the water warms, skim the net along the bottom of the pool to remove debris. You may use a sump pump to remove silt and up to 50% of the pond water. Be sure to add water conditioner when adding more than 5% of the water’s volume.

As long as ice doesn’t cover the pond for weeks at a time, fish can survive the winter. Placing a water pump just under the water’s surface can keep the water open all winter for oxygen exchange. In a pinch, set a pot full of boiling water on the ice. Never break the ice as you may harm the fish below. Floating stock-tank heaters will also keep the surface open.