

## Information Sheet 5

### Ongoing Management of Restored Ponds



Once a pond has been restored there are some on-going activities that you should undertake to ensure that the pond thrives and survives. Perhaps the most important thing to stress is that more plant cover in a pond is better for wildlife than too little. This may mean that greater skill is required to see the wildlife that is hiding in the pond.

It is, however, important to make sure there is an area of open water in midsummer to allow oxygen to dissolve into the water. Herbicides should not be used to clear pond vegetation due to the many pollution problems that could be associated. Management of different types of vegetation is given below.

#### Algal Blooms and Duckweed

Do not be worried if you get an algal bloom soon after working in the pond. This often occurs because nutrients are released from the pond sediments when disturbed. This is best left to stabilise itself with time. If conditions such as warm weather or excessive nutrients cause algal growth, this can become a problem if it blocks drains or covers the entire surface of the pond, thus reducing the light penetration and amount of oxygen dissolving into the water.

Short-term control can be achieved by scraping algae and duckweed off the surface. Longer-term control can be maintained by increasing the surface shade by allowing tree and shrub growth on the north side, circulating the water, reducing the nutrient pollution entering the pond. The best method for controlling algal growth is the use of barley straw since it gives off an algal inhibiting substance as it decomposes. **Do not use chemicals; even those that are said to be “environmentally friendly”.**

The following technique for barley straw application is recommended by the BTCV:

- Use an application of about 10 grams (a handful) of barley straw per square metre of water.
- Apply in late autumn or very early spring.
- The straw works best if it is floating, so a light mesh bag with a bottle as a float will keep it off the bottom while still remaining underwater.
- The straw will lose its effect after about six months so it is advisable to put new straw in before this time, so the algae does not have time to recover.
- Always remove the old straw and if possible the removed bundles should be suspended above the water or left close by for a couple of days to give the inhabitants a chance to return to the pond.

#### Management of the Buffer Zone

The land around the pond will determine the size and features of the buffer zone, which is needed to protect it from nutrient run-off and any pesticide drift.

- Cutting, hoeing and hand digging can achieve plant clearance. Care must be taken as to where any spoil is dumped since, under the right conditions, remains of some plants may re-grow.
- Areas of grass and wildflowers should be cut after August. If possible a variety of heights should be maintained e.g. mow a different section each year.
- Areas of scrub can be left as a buffer.
- Hedging could be planted at the edge of a buffer if it is large enough.
  
- Grazing around ponds can be beneficial, but may not always be appropriate to the location. The domination of large species is prevented and trampling creates a mixture of bare soil and water filled puddles, which are an important habitat for some species. However, overgrazing and trampling is damaging, as it can remove all vegetation and result in a muddy puddle with a high nutrient content. A balance can be achieved by fencing off parts of the pond to retain the habitat in these areas.

## Surrounding Trees

- It should be remembered that woodland ponds surrounded by trees are as important for wildlife as ponds in open areas or ponds that are partially surrounded by trees. Trees help to stabilise the environment around the pond in terms of light and temperature, which many species need. Too much shading in a pond with a history of being more open can, however, reduce the wildlife value of a pond, so thinning can be necessary.
- Coppicing or pollarding is often a much less damaging way of clearing the surrounding trees. One advantage of this is that the roots remain, often vital in holding the bank together and preventing soil erosion and pond infill. This can be done on a rotational basis so that there is always some new and some mature pollards or coppice stools. Willows are best pollarded on a 20-year rotation and it helps to extend the trees lifespan. Any sort of tree maintenance should be done between October and February before the birds are nesting and the sap is not rising to avoid damaging the tree.

## Problem Plants in Ponds

If you believe that you have a problem plant in or around your pond you should:

- **Not touch**, ill thought out management is much worse than none at all. Some problem plants can also be highly invasive, such as Australian Swamp Stonecrop or contain toxic irritants, such as giant hogweed.
- Consult an identification book and confirm what the problem plant is – again **do not touch**.
- Seek advice before undertaking any action. For some plants such as Japanese Knotweed the soil may have to be specially disposed of – or retained on site and treated with herbicides.
- The Environment Agency may have to be consulted before undertaking any management.

## Where can I go for further advice?

The Natural & Historic Environment Team at Peterborough City Council are happy to provide more specific help on pond management. The City Council also services a growing network of voluntary Pond and Tree Wardens who might also help with your ideas. The local Wildlife Trust (01733 294543) may also be willing to offer some assistance.

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