

Aquatic Plants and Their Control

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Many are struggling with an excessive unwanted plant growth in their pond or lake. There are very few natural ponds or lakes in Shawnee County, Kansas or close by. They have all been built. There are natural wetland areas with mostly native plants of which for the most part is self-balancing and do not have unwanted plant growth.

Knowing most ponds and lakes are built is to understand these areas start with little or no vegetation. In a healthy pond vegetation that develops generally will be in balance with the water body.

An imbalance many times develop because much more water runs into these structures than goes out. Yes, during rainfall events water flows through the structure. But day in and day out water evaporates from the surface. As the water evaporates it leaves behind substances, in particular nutrients, that are in excess to a balance of healthy plant growth. The nutrients come from leaves, soil erosion, applied fertilizer from lawns and pastures, cropland, livestock, pets and wildlife.

Here are a few methods to help “manage” the vegetation. The key word is “manage.” It is an ongoing effort. There are plenty of videos on all of these methods. Opposed to an option, don’t use it.

- **Nutrients:** Control what you can to reduce nutrients from running into structure. Again the sources of these nutrients are: leaves and other organic materials, soil erosion, applied fertilizer from lawns and pastures, cropland, livestock, pets and wildlife.
- **Chemical:** Read instructions carefully. Generally, treat no more than a forth or less of surface at time. As vegetation dies it consumes oxygen that fish rely on to live. Use with caution.
- **Mechanical (Manual Labor):** There are devices you can drag through vegetation. Some are used to pull underneath to cut loose vegetation others to pull it out.
- **Mechanical (Powered):** This uses a trash pump or something similar that can handle chuck coming with the vegetation being pumped from the water. Having the wind or a surface dragline helps move the vegetation to the pump. There are devices you can drag through vegetation. Some are used to pull underneath to cut loose vegetation others to pull it out.
- **Aeration:** These come in the form of powered bubblers, fountains or wind driven devices. Of most importance is to get water movement from bottom of water to top. This adds oxygen to the water.
- **Water dyes:** These shade the water and helps in some instances.
- **Grass Carp:** Mixed results. They only eat leafy vegetation and not the slime. At high water they leave the structure.
- **Dredging or rebuilding:** Shallow areas, less than two foot in water depth are more prone to vegetation problems such as cattails or other vegetation anchored to the bottom is a couple examples. Dredging or rebuilding could be in order.