

For Farms and Gardens



A weekly column by

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### Plan for Aquatic Weed Control Now!

If you have concerns about aquatic weeds in your pond or lake or along a shoreline during the summer, now is the time to be planning your management strategy for 2025. Why now?

First, aquatic weed growth is very temperature driven. Once water temperatures exceed 60-degrees F, it becomes increasingly difficult to get the situation reined in. A quick internet check found that many of our local monitoring sites are already in the 40's. Some shallow water temperatures will be in the 60s by mid-April here. Treatments after the 4<sup>th</sup> of July are rarely satisfying.

Once water temperatures exceed 60 degrees, you have to be very careful. Killing too many weeds at once will use up oxygen in the water, resulting in a fish kill. Even more upsetting: the bigger the fish, the more oxygen they need per pound of their body weight, which means your big fish die first.

Second, if you want to use herbicides to control aquatic weeds, you must get the plant properly identified. The world of aquatic weeds is complicated. There are at least seven different categories of aquatic weeds in our area, and there is a category of herbicide for each type of weed. Select the wrong product for your weed, and you can waste a lot of money and time. Here are two good sites with information on identifying aquatic plants: <https://shorturl.at/6KjW9> and <https://shorturl.at/eMXbf>.

Most people who call our office just say they have algae, which is not specific enough. That is a signal the person probably should hire the job done!

Third, and maybe the most important, I get nervous when inexperienced people tells me they live on a body of water shared with other people, and they want to treat the water at their site. Why the worry? Water moves. Herbicides will move with the water. How do you keep the product on your site?

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If you don't know what you are doing, or don't select the right product, or do not have the equipment to make the application, you are inviting the wrath of the neighborhood upon you, possibly doing environmental damage and incurring large fines from regulatory agencies.

For those reasons, I strongly suggest that people who share shoreline or streambanks with others hire the work done, and better yet, they should work together on such projects. We have capable professionals in the area who deal with aquatic weeds for a living. Rather than wrecking your summer, turn these jobs over to professionals holding a Category 5 Aquatic pesticide license.

I know hiring a pro is expensive, and for good reason. Aquatic herbicides are expensive to produce and very hard to get legally approved because they need to be thoroughly checked out. It takes specialized skill and equipment to do this job right. Let a professional take the risk!

I even squirm when I hear about some people treating their own ponds that are completely contained on their own property. There are just so many things that can go wrong, and people without experience, proper equipment, poor timing, and bad advice can really cause a lot of issues with a pond.

You can make the professionals' job easier and cut your treatment bills by reducing the nutrients getting into a body of water. One pound of phosphorous can spawn 500 pounds of weeds. That is a crazy number! Nitrogen, too, can stimulate weed growth.

If you have a poorly designed septic system, like a guy I heard about with a 55-gallon drum "septic system" and a tile running off to parts unknown, you are a part of the problem. If you fertilize your lawn right up to the water's edge and see fertilizer granules splashing as you push the spreader, you are part of the problem. If you allow fertilizer to sprinkle your driveway and street, and it runs off in the stormwater or irrigation, you are part of the problem. If you farm near a lake or stream, and soil or manure runs off consistently, you are affecting the water quality for everyone else.

Of course, no one person can control everything. A 500-year storm is going to wreak all kinds of havoc, and no one can do a thing about it. But when people know there is an issue, and do not adjust behavior, that is a disregard for the others around them.

I think the key concept is good stewardship. I believe, maybe naively, that most of us want to leave this world a better place than how we entered it. But as imperfect beings, our self-interests sometimes override our sense of duty.