

Caring for Fish in Ponds



Goldfish in Ponds

Goldfish are an ideal fish to keep in garden ponds throughout Australia. They are small, inexpensive, very hardy and add much colour to the pond. The hardy varieties such as Common Goldfish, Comets, Shubunkins and Fantails are ideal with more care needed for the fancy varieties such as Oranda and Ryukin.

Compatible Species

Compatible fish can include Murray River Rainbow, Golden Medaka, Whitecloud, Silver Perch, and Golden Perch depending on local climate conditions and fish size.

Sizing and Location

Small to large ponds are fine though the depth should be at least 80 cm (30 in) to avoid extreme temperatures during summer and winter. As Australian summers can be very hot, some shade from trees etc can be beneficial. Alternatively the pond can be set up to offer shady areas by overhanging rocks or plants that allow fish areas to escape from strong sunlight. These areas may also offer refuge from birds and other predators as well.

Tips for establishing a new pond or spring cleaning your existing pond

- Spring is the ideal time to drain dirty water, scrub algae from pond surfaces and to do those repairs that have been put off (resealing liners etc).
- Fill the pond up, and add a good quality water conditioner such as Tetra Aquasafe, as well as conditioning salts and pH buffer if needed (the pH should be between 6.8 and 7.4).
- Add hardy water plants such as water lilies, elodea or duckweed (floats on top to provide some cover). The plants are an important part of the ecosystem as they use up nutrients and utilise sunlight that algae would otherwise use to grow.
- Oxygen is vital for any ecosystem, and this can be achieved by the addition of a pond pump which creates water movement. Ensure that the water surface is disturbed by the current/fountain created by the pump. This allows for easy transfer of oxygen into the water and releases CO₂ (excreted from fish constantly, and plants at night)

from the water. Regular cleaning of the filter compartment will prevent the pump clogging (which reduces water flow) and will remove solid wastes.

- Regular pruning of aquatic vegetation, removal of fallen leaves, rotting plants, dead fish and uneaten food will prevent build up of toxins and reduce algae growth.

Tips for warming weather conditions

- Fish are poikilothermic (unable to control body temperature), so in winter their metabolism slows down and they don't eat as much food. As a result, the fish's immune system is weakened over the colder months.
- When the temperature of the pond rises the fish become more active, as does the activity of bacteria in the pond. The immune system of the fish initially cannot keep up with the reproduction rate of bacteria, and can be overwhelmed and the fish may become stressed as a result. They will then produce large amounts of mucus, giving the skin a patchy or rough appearance.
- Ensuring that the pond and filters are kept clean reduces the rate of bacteria growth, and gives the fish the best chance of fighting it off naturally. There are also products (including antibiotics and salt) available that can assist if the fish become more seriously infected, (symptoms include finrot, mouth fungus and red patches on the body and fins). Fungus may develop as a secondary infection which can be identified by cotton wool like growths on the body and fins. This can be treated with commercial pond fungicides.
- In the warmer months water will need to be topped up regularly to compensate for evaporation. You will also need to perform more water changes to ensure that the water quality is acceptable. Another important factor when the temperature rises is that there is less oxygen available in warmer water, so ensure that the water has surface movement to promote gas exchange.

Pond Fish only require feeding once per day as they will also feed on plant matter and insect larvae.

