

# Pond Maintenance



Images by Alan Price

**Ponds can be real havens for wildlife. Even a small pond can be alive with frogs, dragonflies and colourful plants. It is vital that your pond is properly looked after, as a neglected pond will rapidly become overgrown. If left for too long, it may eventually disappear due to the process of succession.**

## Maintenance of your Pond Through the Seasons

### SPRING

- Skim off excess duckweed from the pond surface with a net. Planting some larger submerged and floating plants will help reduce the number of free nutrients and stop this.
- Tease out blanket-weed with a stick.
- Frogspawn is laid in March so take care not to disturb it.

### SUMMER

- Watch the action. Many species are growing and breeding so disturbance is best kept to a minimum.
- Keep a check on water levels and top up the pond as needed.
- Keep some areas of long grass for young amphibians to hide in and don't cut it until October.

### AUTUMN

- Remove fallen leaves regularly from pond surface with a net.
- Remove some silt and rotten vegetation.

### WINTER

- If the pond freezes over, ensure you create a hole in the ice to allow oxygen to reach the water below. A good way to do this is to place a saucepan of hot water on the ice. Avoid banging holes in the ice because this sends shockwaves through the pond that can kill wildlife and split the pond liner.

### Fact

- Over the past 100 years nearly one million ponds have disappeared.



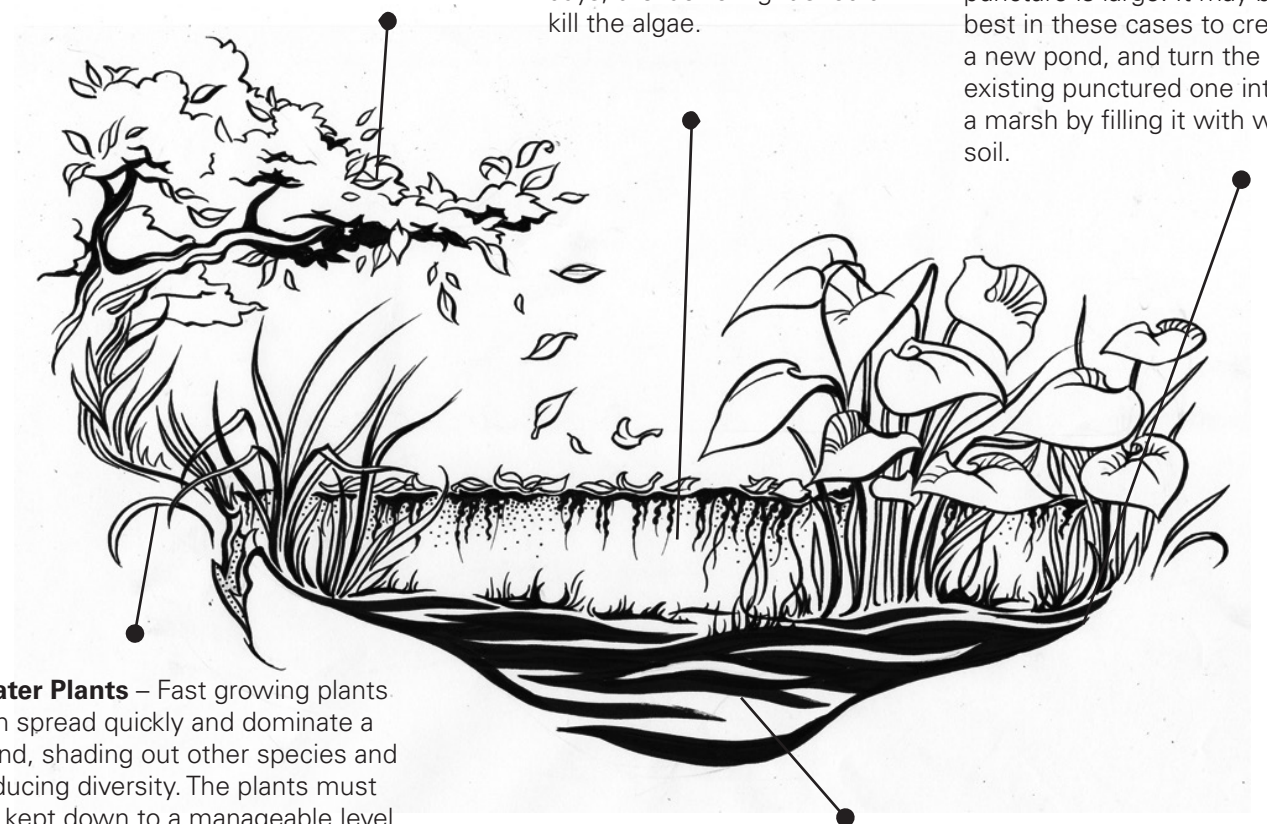
Female Smooth Newt

## Problems with your Pond

**Bankside Plants** – Overhanging trees may need to be carefully controlled. Too many leaves may cause a pond to silt up and too much shade may stop some pond plants from growing. Cut back overhanging branches on a regular basis, but remember that some trees provide essential shelter to the pond and the creatures that live in it.

**Algal Blooms** – New ponds or those with high nutrient levels often suffer from the growth of slimy algal blooms. These can be raked off to maintain areas of open water. Alternatively cover the area with black plastic sheeting for a few days, the lack of light should kill the algae.

**Punctured Liner** – Flexible butyl liners will sometimes get punctured on sharp objects or crack if exposed to sunlight. It is possible to repair a liner by draining the pond and using a butyl patch, however these fixes are usually quite short-term, especially if the puncture is large. It may be best in these cases to create a new pond, and turn the existing punctured one into a marsh by filling it with wet soil.



**Water Plants** – Fast growing plants can spread quickly and dominate a pond, shading out other species and reducing diversity. The plants must be kept down to a manageable level. Remove 75% of a problem plant in one go. This can be done by digging, raking or cutting (take care not to damage the liner). The vegetation must be cleared from the pond, but leave in on the side for 24 hours to allow any animals to crawl back to the water. Add any plant matter to your compost heap.

**Accumulated Silt** – Ponds can suffer from a build-up of dead plant material in as little as 2 years and will need dredging. Late autumn is the most practical time to de-silt a pond and will have the least disturbance on the wildlife. Small ponds can be dredged by hand, but do not remove more than half of the silt in any one year. Many animals eggs and larvae will be within it and the silt remaining will allow the pond to restock itself. A good tip is to continually remove small amounts of silt and plant matter, in this way the pond may never need to be dredged.



Saving **Norfolk's Wildlife** for the Future