

**"DO YOU PROCRASTINATE?" or "FLUSH THEM AWAY!"** —*Jerry Kyle*

Is this a safe time to procrastinate? After all, the pond does not look dirty. A few leaves maybe but not much. I can get them easily with the long handled net when it is not so cold. The water is cold, cold, cold, and I am not feeding. Not much anyway. Koi not very active but look good. Just like I was supposed to I did a good fall cleaning to get ready for winter so I'm OK until spring. Right?

Wrong! Was that you I was talking about? If so, do you have any idea how much dirt got washed out of the atmosphere by the rains after your get ready for winter chores last fall? Washed into the pond along with leaves and other stuff. Those who had the good sense to install a bottom drain with a 4" drain (that's most of us) have a potential problem. That and other dirt and even some debris are lying in the bottom of that underground 4" pipe. Not much perhaps but, a nice even layer lying at least four feet below ground level. In this temperate zone the ground temperature below four feet is about 55°F year around. A nice little layer of mulm at a perfect temperature to cling to and live and multiply that is constantly fed with fresh water is a perfect place for Mr. and Mrs. Costia and friends to dwell. In the winter it's akin to heaven. As good as it gets. A place to hide out while the koi immune system shuts down to it's lowest point. Those in the know understand that's just one of many potential problems down there but Mr. and Mrs. Costia make a good illustration since they are such highly ranked killers. Number one among ciliates.

Simple solutions are wonderful. Lower the water level below the skimmer inlet or close it off and then simply close off (plug it up somehow) the bottom drain line to the pre filter. Let the pump continue to run until it sucks the tank dry. Open the plug and get a sudden rush of water out of the bottom drain. Because the velocity of the rushing water is so much faster than normal it will have a flushing action and you will be amazed at the amount of crud that comes out. That water and crud along with the stuff living in the crud needs to go down the drain or pump it out to the flowerbeds. You will probably want to do this two or three times until you are satisfied water is running clear. Having gone this far, you might as well flush and drain everything else and be ready for spring. You do not need a bed of mulm in the filters either.

Many ponders do not realize just how many ciliated pathogens can actually thrive in cool water and hole up in the mulm waiting for spring warm up. We can not get rid of them all but why not flush away the ones that are easy to get. It can only help.

No bottom drain? Get one. There are products that can be retrofitted to existing ponds without tearing them out. For questions about this or other concerns and especially for questions or suggestions for topics for future articles e-mail me. jeroldkyle@yahoo.com