

MORE ABOUT AQUATIC PLANTS

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Without aquatic plants, lakes would be biological deserts akin to swimming pools. As a lake ages, the aquatic plants become more and more numerous. It is a natural phenomenon that cannot be stopped and we must accept that reality! However, excessive proliferation of aquatic plants is usually brought on by over fertilization (i.e. nutrient loading) and warming of the water caused by deforestation around the lake. Lawns are particularly problematic as they inevitably cause run-off which encourages the excessive growth of aquatic plants.

It is human intervention that causes the excessive growth of aquatic plants. Why blame nature when we are most often the ones responsible for the problems?

Can we control the growth of aquatic plants?

Aquatic plants are an integral part of a lake environment. Cottagers can slow down the growth of the plants by keeping the shoreline and forestial border intact.

Should harvesting machines be used?

Those machines are very effective in the short-term in removing aquatic plants. However, it is a rather pointless exercise because the plants grow back, like any other weed or plant found on land. Not only is it not effective in controlling the growth of aquatic plants but it might also have the opposite effect and encourage a more rapid propagation

of the plants. Also, the procedure must be repeated every year and can become a costly affair. This operation also creates the illusion that a lake can be saved without making the necessary effort to solve the problem at the source.

What about raking on a regular basis?

The results are the same whether the job is done by a machine or laboriously by hand. The aquatic plants will keep growing back and the job will never be done. Why be so stubborn?

What if weed killers are used?

Weed killers are very toxic. If they are used, the lake will have a serious water quality problem. Anyhow, the use of those substances is forbidden in Quebec. Forget about it!



Are there other techniques that could be used to control aquatic plants?

Research has been done to try to destroy aquatic plants by freezing them. The water level of the lake was lowered late in the fall and the plants froze during the winter months. The plants were damaged but nevertheless they came back the following spring. Frost does not alter the natural environment of a lake. The fertilizing elements continue to increase and nature will follow its course if pollution and deforestation around the lake are not remedied. The plants will grow! Consequently, this technique is just as ineffective as the others. Moreover, lowering the level of a lake on a regular basis is a very bad practice.

If the problem is corrected at the source, will the plants disappear?

No! Of course, it is difficult to accept the fact that the aquatic plants are there to stay, that it is impossible to eliminate them, and that the only thing that we can do is to slow down their growth. We cannot step back and rejuvenate a lake any more than we can rejuvenate ourselves! The fact remains that the only way to slow down the growth due to human activities is to correct the problem at the source. Consequently, it is very important to differentiate between natural growth and excessive growth due to human activities in order to effectively deal with aquatic plants. We must stop considering natural growth of aquatic plants as a nuisance and must forget about recreating suburbia on the shores of our lakes.

Is aquatic plant coverage the same in all lakes?

No! Usually the greatest coverage is found in shallow lakes that are rich in nutrients and in clay bottom lakes. Deep lakes and rocky or sandy bottom lakes have fewer aquatic plants.