

Bubblers, Deicers, & Heaters

What's Your Best Choice?



If you live in the Northern part of the US, you can bet that Mother Nature will once again show us her cold shoulder this winter. If you live in the northernmost tier of states like Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, etc., you can expect a long spell of freezing weather which will cause excessive ice on your pond.

In a small body of water, this ice formation can be deadly to the fish because it not only blocks out sunlight from getting into the pond but it also prevents gases from escaping.

There are three main ways to keep your fish happy and healthy throughout the winter months: Using a bubbler, a deicer, or a heater. The following explains the differences between the three for you to figure out what's best for you.

Bubblers

An air bubbler, or aerator, is generally the best choice for ponds and pocketbooks. They are economical to operate and are more reliable than deicers and heaters. Typically these systems have an onshore air compressor that pumps air through tubing to an air diffuser on the bottom of the pond. Many sizes and styles are designed for small water gardens up to large earthen ponds.

The bubbling action is caused by the air rising to the surface which creates and maintains an opening during freezing temperatures. In cases of extreme cold, honeycomb-shaped ice will form on the



Bubbler/Aerator

pond, and due to its unique structure, the gases will still be allowed to escape even though the pond appears frozen over. Because the compressor is onshore, maintenance is made easier than fishing out equipment from a frozen pond.

Bubblers and aeration systems can also be used year-round. During the summer months, they help increase oxygen levels and improve overall water quality.

BUBBLERS, DEICERS & HEATERS

Deicers

Deicers are small, floating heaters that work on the pond's surface. An internal 100-300 watt heating element, that provides just enough heat to keep a small portion of the surface thawed, can be found in most deicers. This heat creates a small hole in the ice that allows toxic gases to escape the pond and help keep fish safe. Almost all deicers are thermostatically controlled, meaning they only operate as needed to keep a hole open in freezing temperatures.

A significant drawback to deicers is their electrical usage. At 100-300 watts of power, deicers use more electricity than air bubblers in most cases. Some units can be as high as 1200 watts. Should a deicer experience failure, the units are difficult to remove from the ice to be replaced.

Heaters

Heaters are similar to deicers. They also generate heat, but are primarily used to raise temperature of the entire pond to keep it from freezing. Pond owners who house their fish indoors or create structures over their pond may use a heater to keep water temperatures higher – sometimes as high as in the 60's (F). The heating element sits on the bottom of the tank to keep water temperatures high enough to prevent the fish's metabolism from slowing too much.



Heater



Deicer

Choosing to put a heater outdoors in a pond during freezing temperatures can prove to be quite costly. Not only will the unit run continuously, but the fish will not have a chance to slow their metabolism. If the water cools, unexpectedly, this can cause significant harm to fish health. Monitoring proper working order of this type of equipment becomes very critical.

All three types of equipment will work well when used correctly and in the right circumstances. By determining your specific needs, you can select which product is right for you and keep your fish happy until the last snowflake falls.

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