

When is it too late to close the pond?

By Jan Schreier

With this year's unbelievably warm fall, it is such a temptation to wait until the very last moment to close down the pond. The fish are still swimming happily about, and even though they're not getting fed, they like to hang out in the sunny shallows during the day. Waterlilies are still blooming despite the fact that they haven't been fertilized in over two months. The parrot's feather and water zinnia survived a few bouts of frost and look vigorous. Despite the fact that the water hyacinth and water lettuce have long been removed from the pond, we still love to hear the sounds of the waterfalls on those lovely Indian summer evenings. So when the weather forecast predicted our 60 degree days were turning into 20 degree days, I figured we could stretch it a few more days with our front fountain since the same weather forecast predicted that by weeks end, it would be back in the 40's.

Our first snowfall started as rain, and the 4-8 inches of predicted snow barely made it to 1 inch. So far, so good. However, coming home about 10pm as the wind was whipping around and the temperatures were plummeting, I came up the front walk to what amounted to a luge run. Our front fountain (a pondless waterfall), though still barely running, had splashed water in such a way that the ice kept building well beyond the banks of the fountain, and slowly spread out down the walkway just about to the driveway.



Now the thought of chipping through ice to get to the pump, when the wind was blowing at 50 miles per hour (no exaggeration – which I've been prone to do) and temperature was 15 degrees, at 10pm at night didn't particularly appeal to me. Instead, I threw 3 buckets of hot water in the fountain, chipped a bigger hole in the ice at the bottom of the waterfall, so it would stop running outside the fountain, threw a little bird bath heater at the bottom of the falls, went to bed & said a little prayer.

Hallelujah! Amen. I awoke to 8 degrees, but as this photo shows, everything was OK. The birdbath heater kept the opening wide enough to prevent water from expanding the luge run, and the forecast for the next few days is to get back up to the mid 40's. So maybe I'll be able to get the pump out this weekend. Maybe I won't wait so long next year to shut it down. Maybe I'll even get the ice off the sidewalk so visitors won't be taking their lives into their hands when they come to the front door. Maybe. Maybe not. I kinda like the way the ice looks.