

Snails by Carolyn Weise

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Inviting snails into your pond can be something you will live to regret. Snails are voracious plant-eating machines. They are sold as "algae" eaters, but for the small amount of algae they actually consume, they will provide enough droppings (snail feces) to fertilize a whole lot more.



I have a small container pond with three water lilies. Somehow, volunteer snails arrived shortly after the lilies were added to the pond. This was a clean pond, never used, filled with "virgin" water from my well, and the plants were tropical lily seedlings. I never thought to examine them for snail eggs. Besides, if they carried any parasites (which I would be more concerned with if these plants were going into the Koi pond) I would have treated them with Potassium Permanganate before putting them into the pond. However, they were not going in with the Koi and the Koi would have eaten them promptly if I had.

Yet, a year later, there are practically no lilies in the pond and it is swarming with algae-covered snails. This is the price paid for not treating ANY and ALL incoming NEW plants before introducing them to the pond. Lilies are sensitive to salt, so you can't sanitize them with a salt dip, like you might with new Koi. The other problem with snails is that the gelatinous mass that covers the eggs will protect them from practically everything. I've found that Potassium Permanganate, used in 3 separate treatments, will remove almost all the organic content in the pond if used in sufficient quantity. If overdosed, you can remove the plants (and Koi, if present) too.

When purchasing new plants, always inspect closely, picking off any hitch-hikers visible, repot into soil-less mix, and do not assume they are "clean" yet. Snail eggs can be hatched out by putting the aquatic plants into a 10 gallon tank with heater, raising the temperature to 82F where you will incubate (basically anything that may be on the plants) for 1-2 weeks and then treat with PP. By that time, anything that was in the egg stage would have emerged where it can be eliminated.

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Carolyn Weise is a lifetime fish & wildlife hobbyist/advocate, with 20+ years of pond care and ownership. She attended the KHA and UGA koi health seminars on fish diagnostics, prevention and intervention. Carolyn has a background in Ornamental Horticulture from SUNY, Farmingdale, NY. She is editor and writer for Mid-Atlantic Koi Club magazine and an active member since 1996, holding VP positions and has been awarded Koi Person of the Year several times. She is the author & publisher of ABC's of Ponds.

