Mosquito control in ornamental ponds and dams

Mosquitoes can have a serious impact on the health and comfort of our communities. They interfere with outdoor work and recreation, and can transmit a range of serious diseases.

On the Gold Coast, diseases such as Ross River virus, Barmah Forest virus and dog heartworm are transmitted by mosquitoes.

The City of Gold Coast conducts an extensive mosquito management program on Council and State owned land, however residents are sometimes plagued by mosquitoes that breed in their own back yard.

Mosquitoes will breed in just about any pool of water. This includes water found in pot plant saucers, water holding plants such as Bromeliads, bird baths, roof gutters and any container capable of retaining water. These potential mosquito sources are generally non-permanent and can be easily managed by eliminating the water.

Permanent water bodies such as ornamental ponds and dams have the potential to continually breed mosquitoes if left unchecked. A permanent, environmentally sound solution to this problem is to make sure your back yard pond or dam contains a population of small native fish.

Most small native fish will eat mosquito larvae, however some are better than others. Crimson Spotted Rainbow Fish and Firetail Gudgeons are capable of eating hundreds of mosquito larvae per day. In ornamental ponds with native frog tadpoles, Pacific Blue Eyes are recommended.
Obtaining native fish

Residents that have a suitable environment on their property for releasing fish, can obtain a small number of native Crimson Spotted Rainbow Fish (Melanotaenia duboulayi) by contacting the City of Gold Coast Pest Management Unit on 1300 465 326.

Alternatively, you can buy native fish from some aquarium shops or from registered fish hatcheries.

Unprotected species of native freshwater fish can be collected from local waterways using canister traps, collapsible traps, dilly nets, funnel traps, scoop nets or angling. Always check the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries regulations before collecting fish.

Usually there is no need to provide any additional food for native fish in your ornamental pond. If you wish to feed your fish, the best choices are standard aquarium foods including flakes, pellets and freeze dried products.

Important tips for your pond

• Position the pond away from existing large trees to avoid root problems and minimise the problem of leaves falling in.
• Remember to include plans for water supply, drainage and electricity supply for lights, pumps and filters.
• Allow plenty of shallows around the edges which will allow native plants such as reeds, sedges and ground covers to grow. These plants improve the appearance of the pond, provide shelter for fish and help water quality.
• Cane toads can usually be excluded by designing a 50 centimetre wall around the area of the pond.
• All overflows should be screened to prevent the escape of plants, snails, fish and eggs during heavy rain.
• New ponds should be cleaned before use. Plastic liner ponds can be cleaned with salt and water. Concrete ponds need to be cured by filling, scrubbing and painting with vinegar, followed by several water changes.
• If filling with tap water, allow the water to sit until the chlorine dissipates, or use a commercial chlorine neutraliser.
• Before adding plants and fish, make sure all equipment such as filters, fountains and waterfalls are working.
• Grow in-pond plants in containers, as this will make them easier to remove during routine maintenance.
• Allow at least a week for plants to settle before adding fish.
• When introducing fish, float the bags or containers of fish in the pond to equalise the water temperature. Before releasing the fish, add frequent small amounts of pond water to adjust the fish to other pond water parameters.
• Do not feed your fish initially for two days. Then only feed them once a day with enough food as they can consume in five to 10 minutes.

For more information

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