



Lake Care Fountains and Aeration

by Bethany A. Giles

How high do you want the shot? How big do you want the splash? Do you prefer pod jet and rings, or an elegant cascade? Or, do you simply need aeration?

Unless your pond or lake smells like something died in it, the word 'need' may be a little strong, but sometimes oxygenating the water with a lovely fountain is precisely what's needed indeed. While Gayl Williams, of Lake Fountains and Aeration in Sanford, FL, has built her business on the aesthetic points of lake ownership, there is function beyond the foam.

Stagnant water can be full of life, but not the kind you want. Algae, mosquitoes, and other pests can make your pond or lake inhospitable for the fish and flora you want to flourish within it. With stagnation comes unwanted insect pests, which can lead to health risks, especially for the very young and very old.

Gayl says that the simple bubbling of air to the surface adds life-giving oxygen to the water and creates a vital circulation pattern. The result is healthier fish, reduced algae growth, fewer dissolved toxic gasses, less odor,

elimination of stagnation, and lower lake management costs. She says aeration is possible in as little as six inches of water with a floating device, or in an average of six feet of water with a bottom diffuser.

Gayl suggests that potential customers need to think about what kind of equipment they may need to achieve the result they want, whether simple aeration or an elaborate fountain. Basic systems include a 1/3, 1/2, or 3/4 HP air compressor, cabinet, weighted tubing, and diffuser (air-stone) assemblies.

Now, would you like a fountain with your oxygenation?

Fountain shoppers need to think horsepower. The power of the fountain determines the size and height of the spray, and her company's fountains typically come in 1/2 to 40 hp, which correspond to spray heights of 3 feet to 60 feet or more.

Along with horsepower, think about the overall look—do you want the fountain lit at night? Some options include 120-volt lighting packages with a variety of lens colors and wattages, as well as wind level controls, sequential lighting, and multi-pump displays.

"The appeal of our pod jet/spray ring fountains lies in their geometry; a large stream rising straight up surrounded by a lower tier of smaller jets set at an angle; the delicate floral-like pattern is very attractive and illuminates well," Gayl says.

Such fountains are equipped with a durable float assembly, submersible turbine pumps, and a complete fountain control center.

Gayl adds that cascade fountains have been a popular mainstay due to their "strong, bold statement and their fascinating white, frothy activity." They grab attention during the day and are beautiful when illuminated in the evening. Their popularity continues to rise since they have the ability to aerate the water.

Before you decide too soon, also keep these questions in mind to make an informed fountain buying decision:

- What size and shape is your pond or lake?
- Where in the pond should the fountain(s) be located?
- How deep is the pond where the fountain will be located?
- Do you need to allow for fluctuating water levels?
- What is the primary purpose of the fountain (aesthetics, aeration, attention-getter, etc?)
- What is the best spray height? What is the minimum and maximum for your situation? Will an especially high jet get in the way of something you want passersby to see?
- What's your price range or project cap? If price is no consideration, say so.
- What type of display would you like? Do you want to see the water at night?
- What options did you have in mind (lighting, wind level controls, etc.)

- What will the monthly power bill be (comparisons are available)?
- What power supply is required for installation and how long will the power cord(s) be?
- What additional costs are there for shipping and an electrician to prepare the site?
- What kinds of control units are needed? Are remote controls necessary?



For some, the aesthetics of shooting water are not an issue—but plant and insect pests are. Gayl says when shopping for an aeration system; first determine the depth of the lake or pond so you can devise the proper combination of products. A bottom bubbler needs at least six feet of water to operate optimally, while a floating aerator can work in as little as six inches of water. The bottom aerator works much better, but the floater helps in shallow circumstances. Either way, your aerator system should operate 24 hours a day.

Gayl says to also keep in mind that aeration is not the exclusive means of ridding your pond or lake of pests. Some floating and underwater weeds will not be killed or eliminated by aeration, and lesser amounts of algae may sometimes need occasional treatment. Sometimes the combination of aeration and weed-eating fish such as white amur or grass carp will keep the pond in good condition with no herbicides or algacides required.

Also keep in mind, Gayl reminds, that water quality improvement with aeration takes time, so don't expect immediate results. It could take two to twelve months before the best results are witnessed. ■