

# Try Using Barley Straw To Control Algae In Backyard Ponds

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — The mother of all problems in ponds is excessive algae growth, according to a water resources specialist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, who recommends owners try a nontoxic method to control the choking green growth.

Backyard and ornamental ponds have become common in the last decade or so as more and more property owners add bodies of water to their landscaping. Pond sizes range from bathtub-sized containers to impoundments covering acres, but they all can suffer from the same malady — algae growth that can cover everything submerged with a thick green mat of goo.

"Traditional mechanical and chemical control methods are not always efficient or economical," says extension associate Bryan Swistock. "In recent years, the use of barley straw has become

more common as an alternative method for controlling excessive algae growth.

This method has been extensively studied by scientists in Great Britain and has recently become widely known in the United States. When applied at the proper time and rate, barley straw is a very successful algae control technique in Pennsylvania ponds, according to Swistock.

"Barley straw does not kill existing algae but it inhibits new growth," he explains. "The exact mechanism is poorly understood, but it seems that barley straw, when exposed to sunlight and oxygen, produces a chemical that inhibits algae growth. Barley straw does not reduce the growth of other aquatic plants."

Barley straw is most effective when applied early in the year prior to the appearance of algae (fall through early spring). When

applied to cold water (less than 50F), it may take six to eight weeks for the straw to begin producing the active chemicals that inhibit algae growth. If the straw is applied to warmer water (above 70F), it may become effective in as little as one to two weeks. In any case, barley straw remains effective for approximately six months after application.

"The most common application is two to three bales per surface acre of pond. The depth of water in the pond is not important," Swistock says. "In ponds that are frequently muddy or those that have a history of heavy algae growth, two or three times this recommended dose may be required for the initial treatment. However, overdosing the pond with barley straw may cause fish kills because straw deoxygenates the water as it decays. This is especially a problem if the pond is

overdosed with straw during a prolonged warm spell."

The straw is most effective when applied loosely in cages or netting. It is best to anchor the straw packages to the bottom and provide a float to keep the straw near the surface of the pond where sunlight and oxygen are more prevalent. Apply the straw at several locations around the pond, especially near the water source if a spring or stream feeds the pond. In small garden ponds, small nets or nylon stockings can

be used to hold the small amounts of straw needed.

"Finding a local supplier of barley straw sometimes can be difficult," says Swistock. "You might consult with private and government agencies that work with local farmers, like farm supply companies, Cooperative Extension offices and Conservation District offices, to determine if barley straw is available locally. In addition, there are several suppliers available on-line (just type "barley straw" in your favorite search engine.)"

## Nominations Sought For Mid-Atlantic Innovation And Leadership Award

PHILADELPHIA — The Mid-Atlantic Food and Farm Coalition seeks nominations for its Innovation and Leadership Award. This annual award recognizes the contributions of an exemplary individual, organization or business that has significantly improved the food and farming system in the Mid-Atlantic region.

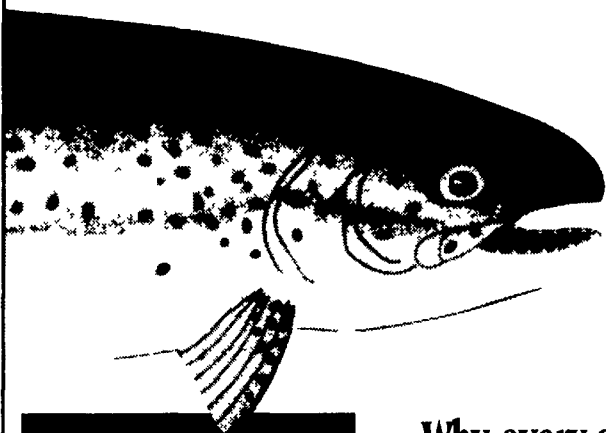
Acknowledging pioneering work, innovation, and leadership, the award will be presented at the fourth annual Future of Our Food and Farms Summit on Dec. 5 and 6, at the Wyndham Wil-

mington Hotel, Wilmington, Del.

Nominees should be from Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania or the District of Columbia, and have made a significant contribution to the region's food system.

To nominate someone, contact Meredith Stone at The Food Trust at (215) 568-0830, Ext. 10 or [contact@thefoodtrust.org](mailto:contact@thefoodtrust.org). The Mid-Atlantic Innovation and Leadership Award nomination form is also available on the Summit Website at [www.foodfarm.org](http://www.foodfarm.org).

## Streams and Lakes



### LOST STREAM MAP

The STREAM MAP OF PENNSYLVANIA was completed in 1965 after a thirty-year effort by Howard Higbee, a former Penn State Professor.

The map is known as the LOST STREAM MAP to some anglers.

Professor Higbee succeeded in creating a map of the highest detail possible...a map that shows every stream and lake. He painstakingly plotted by hand the location of 45,000 miles of streams onto a 3 by 5 foot map.

The map sold extremely well—until it was lost several years later. Incredibly, the printer entrusted with the original drawing and printing plates declared bankruptcy, then carelessly hauled Higbee's 30 years of work to a landfill.

The few remaining dog-eared copies became a prized fisherman's possession. Professor Higbee was offered \$400 for one of his last maps. And state agencies were forced to keep their copies under lock and key.

Experts told Professor Higbee that reprints were impossible, because the maps were printed in non-photographic blue.

Then, in 1991, at the age of 91, Howard Higbee's dream came true. Computers made it possible to reprint the map. Howard said, "I never thought I'd live to see this day."

## Great Gift!

# Stream MAPS

of Pennsylvania, New York, New England, New Jersey, Ohio, & Maryland/Delaware

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Professor Higbee's Stream Maps are the first and only highly detailed maps of their kind.



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"If you're looking for the most definitive maps ever created depicting every single creek, river, stream, pond and lake...then 'Professor Higbee's Stream Maps' are without question the finest."

—Howard Brant, THE NEWARK STAR-LEDGER

"It is in showing where to find out-of-the-way trout streams that makes the map such a treasure to the fisherman."

—Joe Gordon, TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT, Johnstown

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