

The Lily Pad

The Topeka Area Water Garden Society

Published Monthly – February to November

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April 1, 2003

Springtime chores

by Diane Gruver

Vice President Becky Coffman stepped forward to give a very interesting and informative program on opening your pond at the March meeting. Becky said that she did a lot of research on the web and was able to obtain information from there. She said that if you have shut your pump off for the winter to be sure to check the wires and make sure they are in good shape before you plug them in. Watch the waterfall or stream and make sure that you don't have any leaks. Don't clean your bio filter completely – leave some good bacteria. You can clean the top filter about four times a year.

If the water is smelly, you have too much debris in the pond and the water is rotting. Pump out over 25% of the water and clean the debris off the bottom with a vacuum or net; fill the pond with fresh water. Be sure to use a dechlorinator. A good time to do your water change is when the tap water is close to the temperature of the pond water, usually about 55 degrees.

"Everyone will probably have an algae bloom," Becky said. This happens when the plants haven't started growing yet and the pond gets too much sun.

"Bring the plants up and get them growing," Becky said. "This will help keep the algae down." Some water gardeners recommend barley bales to help keep the algae from growing. You can buy bales or mats. April is a good time to put in your bog plants to start the growing season.

Don't cut plants, such as cattails, below the water line, Becky said. They will drown. Repot plants as necessary. Some need to be repotted every year; some can go two years or more. Don't put tropicals in the pond until the water temperature is 75 degrees.

"Make sure the water temperature is at least 55 degrees before you start feeding your fish," Becky said. They are just starting to come up and are coming out of hibernation. Good things to start fish out on are cheerios, frozen peas, lettuce or a spring/fall fish food. Don't feed them too often at first – maybe every three days. Watch your fish in the spring because they are in a weakened state after the long winter and several things can happen.

- Twisted spine – could be caused by lightening or

Monthly Meeting

7:00 p.m. Wed., April 16, 2003

Ward Meade Park

Plant Swap and How to Plant Them

the pond heater – put the fish out of its misery.

- Cloudy eye, looks a little like a cataract - a bacteria problem, treat the pond with an anti-bacteria solution.
- White spots – a fungus.
- Ick – a parasite.
- Dropsy, bloated or swollen - internal problems, try using salt.
- Other things to look for are loss of vigor, split fins and scratching on sides of the pond.
Other items discussed were:
- If you have gravel on the bottom of your pond, be sure that invasive plants don't take root in it
- Tick or flea treatments on animals can kill your fish if your pet gets in the pond
- Frogs seem to stick around until mating – if one doesn't come to them, they will probably leave
- Birds love stream beds, if they are used to you, you will be able to sit and watch them up close
- Dragon flies eat mosquitoes, if you don't have fish be sure to use a mosquito dunk
- Watch for blue herons, especially when your pond doesn't have much coverage where the fish can hide
- Beware of poisonous snakes!
- If you have oil on the water surface, float a newspaper on it to soak up the oil.

Doug Peterman offered a tried and true birth control method for fish – hybrid blue gills. He said they have two and they eat the fish eggs but not the fish. Plus, they don't reproduce. He said they are good for keeping the fish population down. They got theirs through the state.

Thanks Becky for getting us started on spring pond care. I think we're all ready to open our ponds!

Spring is the time to divide water lilies

by Erik Tate, Operations Manager
Reprinted from 3-03 Water Garden News

Each spring we anxiously await the rebirth of our water gardens. We may lie awake at night picturing the time when our water lilies will once again put forth their beautiful flowers (OK, maybe most of you aren't quite as obsessed as we are). That time is getting closer. However, it does take a little preparation on our part.

When water lilies become pot-bound they produce many small leaves instead of a few larger pads and they don't produce as many flowers. After a season of growth you no longer have just one plant in a pot, but many much smaller plants. All these individual plants are competing with each other for the limited amount of nutrients available. To maximize your lilies' growth and flowering potential you may want to divide the plant to have one plant per pot, larger pots could hold more than one. The extras can be given their own pot or composted. As your water lily begins to emerge in the spring you may see several points of growth. Each of these growing points are individual plants.

To divide your hardy water lilies start by removing the plants from the pot and rinsing away the soil so you can see the rhizomes. Separate each plant with a sharp knife. Have your aquatic planting containers ready (the bigger the better, should be a minimum of a 10" diameter pot.) Fill each pot about 1/2 full with your aquatic soil. Place the fertilizer tablets down into this soil. Then place the rhizome with the cut edge against one edge of the pot at a 45-degree angle towards the center. Fill around the rhizome with more soil and pack tightly, making sure you do not cover the growing tip of the lily. Top with a thin layer of pea gravel, add a little water to saturate the soil. You are then ready to slowly lower the plant back into the pond.

While there are many variables (such as which hybrid and pot size) that determine how often water lilies should be divided, it will usually be recommended to do so once every two years. Once you have taken these steps your water lilies will be ready to offer you the splendor you have been anticipating all winter.

Hardy marginal plants may also need to be repotted every 2-3 years. If they are in a small pot then you may be able to simply lift them from the old pot and move them up to a larger pot filling in with new soil and fertilizer. The size of the container will vary depending on the type of plant, but most will want at least a 10"-14" diameter pot. Most grassy plants can be cut through with a machete or large knife. Using one third to one half of the original plant will generally provide a good size plant and still leave room for

growth. For other plant types it will help to use a water hose to wash away the soil enabling you to see the root structure. Use the same soil as with water lilies, but only about half the fertilizer.

You can place your plants closer to the pond surface for a few weeks to gain access to more light and the warmer water for faster growth. Continue fertilizing throughout the season for best plant performance.

Biggest Blooms Recipe

(David Puff's Special Recipe)

Editor's Note: If you want huge beautiful blooms, try this special recipe provided by David Puff. Many club members have used it the last few years and know that it is a proven recipe.

Starting at the bottom of the tub, I use the following steps:

1. 1" of mostly clay soil finely tilled. A little sand is okay.
2. 1" of composted (bagged) cow manure mixed with the soil from step 1.
3. 2/3 cup of bone meal spread around the outside perimeter of the tub, on top of the manure and soil mix.
4. Using a 3 lb. coffee can, mix one can of tilled clay soil and one can of composted cow manure in a separate container. Spread the mixture on top of steps 1-2-3 in the tub without disturbing the bone meal placement.
5. 3 Tablespoons of Fertiloam New Lawn Fertilizer 9-13-7 spread evenly over the top of steps 1-2-3-4.
6. 5 Pondtabs 10-14-8 (planttabs Aquatic plant food). Use a wooden dowel or small broomstick to push the tabs to the bottom, spaced evenly around the outer perimeter of the tub. Pack the hole tightly with clay.
7. 1" of finely tilled clay on top of steps 1-2-3-4-5-6.
8. One Hardy Lily rhizome of your choice. Make sure you wash off any soil from the previous pot, coat any cuts or division with an anti-fungal powder. Trim off excess roots. Plant the rhizome in the container and firm down soil and rhizome firmly.
9. 1" of pea gravel pressed firmly over the mix and rhizome. Place a stone or half brick over the rhizome or it will float out. Water heavily with pond water before placing your plant in the water. Firm it again. This will help to keep from floating out unsettled mix.



Springtime fish care

Reprinted from 3-03 Water Garden News

This is the time of year when our goldfish and koi are generally under the most stress. When the water temperature is below around 63 degrees, the fish's immune systems are not functioning. The fish have spent several weeks at the bottom of the pond, possibly in debris that may be harboring parasites and harmful bacteria. They have been living on stored fat and are at their weakest at this time.

Spring is typically the worst time for disease outbreaks from gram-negative bacteria. These bacteria can cause several deadly diseases that can be hard to treat. Lymnozyme is a product that creates an environment that is hostile to these disease-causing bacteria and can keep an otherwise contagious disease from spreading. At the very least, it would be advised to keep an eye on your fish this time of year so if there are any problems you can spot them early. This way you can treat with medications or medicated food before the problem is irreversible.

Many people are probably anxious to begin feeding their fish again. You want to make sure you don't start too soon and that you begin with the right food. You can begin feeding a low protein food, such as Pond Care's Spring & Autumn Food, when the water temperature will be consistently above 50 degrees. If a cold snap is in your forecast soon, err on the safe side and do not feed. As the water temperature rises above 60 degrees, you can start back on your regular summer feeding.

A note on water temperature: When measuring the water temperature, you should get your reading from mid-water (about halfway down).



Wichita L&G show

By Diane Gruver

Those of you that didn't make it to the Wichita lawn and garden show this year missed another great show. Some of us that did go agreed that it wasn't quite as "spectacular" as previous years, but it was still well

worth the drive and effort to go. There were water features in almost every display and they were humongus! I read in the Wichita Eagle that the powerful waterfall in Sunshine Nursery's "Winds of Time" display put out 21,000 gallons of water an hour and had 30 tons of rock in the waterfall alone!

The theme of this year's show, "Winds of Spring," put wind in every garden display, from the Great Gardens to the Mid-Size gardens. The Kansas Pond Society Mid Size Garden was "Storm's A-Comin'" and it was complete with wind, thunder and lightening. Baby ducks swam in ponds, pecking away at the water hyacinths, while mature ducks lazed along the water in other displays. One booth even offered an incubator where you could watch eggs hatching. Vendors offered gardening tools that are bound to make garden chores a breeze. Azalea hybrids, Temple of Hinoki cypress, hibiscus, tulips, hyacinths, flowering trees, pansies, ranunculuses, cannas, calla lilies, roses, orchids and many more interesting and beautiful plants filled the building. If you've never been there it is hard to describe.

I had trouble taking a decent picture with my digital camera and the "Potty Falls" was the only one that turned out. I guess it goes to show you that water features can be made out of just about anything!

Minutes TAWGS Meeting, March 19, 2003

President Tom Platis called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. We began with self-introductions. Becky Coffman gave an interesting and informative program on opening your pond. The meeting resumed following refreshments. It was moved and seconded that the minutes be approved as printed in the March Lilypad. Motion carried.

Treasurer Jim Green reported that we have \$2,570.38 in the checking account, \$2,105.61 in the savings account, and \$43.34 in petty cash, for a total of \$4,619.33. He said he is still working on getting the books on Quicken.

Diane reminded everyone to watch the label on their newsletter so they would know when their dues are due.

Vice President Becky said that the tentative programs for the year are:

April – Plant Swap and how to plant them

May – Field trip to Skinners – meet at Skinners at 6:00 p.m. Return to Ward Meade for regular meeting

June – Becky will talk about container ponds

July – Possibly about lighting in and around the pond

August – TBA

September – Deb Spencer will talk about dividing iris and putting your pond to bed

October – Closing the pond

November – Pot Luck

Under committee reports, Joe Breitenstein said that the Garden Council plant sale will be Saturday, April 26th at Hillsdale Shopping Center. It starts at 8:00 a.m. but people start coming at 7:00

a.m. so be there early! TAWGS can keep the proceeds from the sale of their water plants, which are in a separate area from the other flowers. Becky offered to be in charge of the plant sale. Joe also said that when he cleans out his pond he will have lots of nice shubunkins to give away.

Jim Haugh reported that pictures of the last two pond tours are on our web site and he is working on the process of bringing pictures of the member's ponds from the old web site. He said he has set up a message board where we can post messages to exchange plants and fish. Becky suggested that possibly the pond tour application could be posted on the web site and Jim said that would be possible. Be sure to check out the web site at www.tawgs.org. Jim is doing a good job designing the site.

Becky reported that the fountain at Ronald McDonalds house is in place and that Patty, a lady that works there, is thrilled to death with it. A platform needs to be made to catch the splash when the pump is full speed though and Bob and Becky will do that sometime this summer.

The Ward Meade lily re-potting party will begin at 8:00 a.m. at Ward Meade on Saturday, April 19th. Dean Demoss and Becky will be in charge. Dean will check with Ray to see if the fountain will be repaired and filled by then. Park in the main parking lot of Ward Meade and walk to the pond area because we are not to park on the street east of the pond.

Jim Green reported that he and Mary Pat Fischer went to visit the VA about a pond and they are very excited about doing it. In fact, they would like it done yesterday! Security is no problem and there is a possibility that they might even be willing to help with the construction. Jim moved that we put a pond in at the VA and Jeannine Miller seconded the motion, which carried. Jim is going to check with the horticulturist that works there to develop a site plan so they can start getting estimates on costs.

Diane said that the pond tour committee had met in February and plans are under way for the Pond tour June 21 and 22. She said that unfortunately the Topeka Beautification Association had changed their tour this year to June 21st, but that the committee had decided that too much advance advertising had already been done to change our dates. We have a few ponds committed so far and are still looking for a few more ponds. Please let Becky or Diane know as soon as possible if you are interested in being on the tour.

Jeannine presented a logo that she had designed to use on club T-shirts. Tom moved and Jim seconded that we adopt the design. Motion carried. Jeannine will check on the cost of T-shirts and give costs next month.

Dean Demoss and Jim Haugh will provide refreshments next month. Meeting adjourned.



Fountain at Ronald McDonald House

Be forewarned about displays

Editor's Note: The following is from a letter that I received from John Mirgon, the gentleman in Denver that was instrumental in starting water garden societies many years ago. He receives our newsletter and read the story about our Lawn & Garden Booth and wanted to share a story that happened to him many years ago in Denver. I think that we might learn from his experience and make sure that we don't make the same mistake.

"Back when I first started setting up for the Garden and Home Show displays for the Colorado Water Garden Society, I'd work and put in a pool and plants and all of the stand up displays and pictures, fountains and all that jazz. After about the second year, I started from this to only setting up a half-barrel, then plus all of the stand up displays and info sheets and all that goes with trying to make ourselves noticed and known. Course, I'd usually always have a tropical lily and other plants such as duckweed and azolla, plus cyress, cattails and what have you. Anyway, to get to the experience where I wish I could have died.

This half-barrel set up was in the basement

of the convention center here. The floor was concrete. This listed as the horticultural room and displays. All the different plant societies were in this area. Here people could come and see and I'd answer their questions and of course, encourage water gardening.

This one particular show I was enjoying everyone and all that I could tell and show people to educate them. The young lady with her daughter came by with her little girl, I'd guess to be around 3 years old. The young lady was intrigued and taking it all in. So I squatted down by the barrel and the little girls next to me and her Mother on the other side of her. So she could see and learn a bit, I thought, I placed a duckweed on her finger so she could see it close up and to feel it as most children like to do. Feel for children is much of learning it seems.

So, what was so strange about this? I never gave it a thought at the time, but sure have later. Most little girls dress shoes have slick leather soles. She was dressed to the hilt and very, very cute. While I had placed the plant on her finger and being squatted down and speaking with her Mother at the same time, I failed to notice that she was very stiffly leaning over to place the plant in the water and off her finger. What happened next was when I could have died. With her slick soled shoes and the smooth concrete floor, without warning her feet slipped out from under her and into the water and half barrel she went! Needless to say, she was a pretty wet little girl at the top side. I thought, Oh! My God, now what? So the Mother took the girl and located her husband from the crowd and as they went by going home to dry the little girls out now doubt, her Father said nothing to me, but sure did give me a dirty look. I couldn't blame him for it sure ended their evening out at the Garden and Home Show. Guess you know, I never did that again.

From that time on though, when setting up and deciding on what to set up, I made sure this kind of accident would not happen again. Course, later other members of the society took over this chore and this let me off the hook. Good thing too, for anymore with the breathing problem I have I couldn't set up anything. I'm losing my eyesight too so I can't do what I could when I started it all 20 years ago."

Floyd's frogs are happy

By Diane Gruver

Floyd's frogs sure sounded happy last night when we went to bed. They were singing at the top of their lungs – well, maybe I should say they were croaking at the top of their lungs, or whatever frogs have. There's a small water garden right under our bedroom window and we were serenaded with their croaks until we went to sleep. Now, I know, some people find frogs croaking a bit annoying, but we have always thought it was a bit on the fun side.

For those of you that are new to TAWGS, you



probably don't know that Floyd (me too) has this *thing* about frogs. In fact, we even keep some in the house during the winter and they provide hours of entertainment, let me tell you. None of them got loose this winter but Floyd did try to pull an April Fools Joke on me by telling me that two of them had escaped in the house while he was transporting them outside to freedom that day. (Frogs loose in the house is another story!)

Our three unnamed frogs in the house this winter (No names? We're slipping this year, aren't we?) had a nice 10 gallon aquarium with plants, bark and a huge water dish to bathe in. They relished their weekly dinner of two-dozen crickets and it was lots of fun to put the aquarium on the dining room table and sit and watch them eat crickets. Those tongues are fast! I told Floyd there must be something wrong with us when we can be entertained by sitting and watching our frogs eat crickets. ☺ I even went all out and bought a few dozen mealworms that they got for desert in between their weekly meals. Sometimes they would croak in the house when they had full tummies. We thought it was cute.

We upset the apple cart one Sunday when we found "Big Bud" the bullfrog, in our skimmer and brought him inside. The three residents suddenly became quite intimidated. After a few hours we decided that Bud was too big for the bathtub (his skin has to stay wet) and he might eat the other smaller frogs, so we released him again to the pond.

I just hope he made it through the winter.

It's stringy -- it's puffy -- it's green

Reprinted from Splash 4-12-02

Filamentous algae (string algae, blanket weed) comes in several forms: Sometimes it looks like puffs of light green swimming on top of the pond, sometimes it is dark green strands attached to the sides, rocks and plants. It is, however, always some shade of green :-)

In the spring, the pond often has an overload of organic waste and the pH has a tendency to be too high.

It is a good idea, to either take a close weave net and fish the as much "gunk" out of the bottom, or to vacuum it out. Balancing the pH is also important, to prevent the algae from growing back faster than it can be dissolved.

It is important to use a product that will dissolve the algae that will not hurt your aquatic plants. Algaecides will damage most pond plants (algae is also a plant).

We have found "Pond Balance" to be highly effective without hurting any plants. It dissolves the algae slowly (it does take several days).

Topeka Area Water Garden Society
 9900 SW K-4 Highway
 Topeka, KS 66614

2003 Calendar of Events

April 16	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
May 21	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
June 18	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
June 21-22	Topeka 12 th Annual Pond Tour
June 21-22	Wichita Pond Tour
June 28-29	Lawrence Pond Tour
July 12-13	Kansas City Pond Tour
July 16	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
August 20	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
Sept. 17	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
Oct. 15	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
Nov. 19	TAWGS Monthly Meeting

Fun (Pond) Fact

Koi and Goldfish will breed with each other. This does not generally produce pretty offspring. Koi and Goldfish should be kept separate if color and pattern are important to you!

Your Dues are Due if your label reads

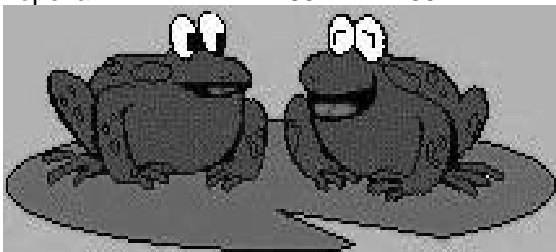
2-03, 3-03 or 4-03

**Please renew as soon as possible to
 continue receiving the newsletter.**

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Check it out - www.tawgs.org

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The Lily Pad encourages submission of articles pertaining to water gardening from the membership and other interested parties. Deadline is the last weekend of each month. Address input and/or questions to:

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