

The Lily Pad

The Topeka Area Water Garden Society

Published Monthly – February to November

Volume 7, Issue 3

April 1, 2004



Diane Gruver (l) and Donniss Hodges (r) visit with Greg Speichert at the Water Garden Seminar in St. Joe.

Hodges & Gruvers attend seminar

By Diane Gruver

The St. Joseph Area Water Garden Society really outdid themselves March 26-27 when they put on their First Spring Water Garden Seminar, "Water Gardens and Your Landscape." It was truly a fun and informative seminar with lots of good speakers and a neat vendor exhibit area. The meeting started Friday evening with an informal question & answer session with Greg Speichert, publisher of *Water Garden Magazine*. That evening alone was worth the price of the registration because we all got to ask Greg questions that were important to us. Greg's tip of using hydrogen peroxide in a spray bottle to kill string algae in the waterfall is tops on our list of things to try. He said that hard water (phosphate) causes string algae and fish waste (nitrates) cause pea green water. His shocking formula of fish per gallons of water explains why a lot of ponders have green water: a six inch goldfish needs 200 gallons of water; a 12 inch koi needs 800 gallons of water. (Are most of us a little over stocked?) He said that koi usually don't do much damage to plants until they reach 12 inches but once they find out how good a plant tastes it is almost impossible to stop them.

Saturday's programs consisted of:

An introduction to water plants – Greg Speichert

Greg presented about 70 slides of aquatic plants that are available for water gardeners. He also had his recent book *Encyclopedia of Water Garden Plants* available for signing. It was a very interesting

Monthly Meeting

7:00 p.m., Wed., April 21, 2004

Lighting in the Landscape

Ron Pinnell – Landscape Imaging

program.

Chemicals, pond care, water quality & the health of your pond – Mia Keske

Mia is a sales manager for Aquarium Pharmaceuticals and sells Pond Care products. She said that every pond is different so everything works a little differently. There is never one answer for every person. Absorb everything you hear and try it. She stressed that it is important to know how many gallons are in your pond and to add dechlorinator every time you top it off. She said that snow is great for your pond. (I had never considered scooping snow into the pond.)

The number one problem people have with their ponds is hair algae and they guarantee AlgaeFix to work if you follow the directions and use it properly. It has to be used on a regular basis, every three days, until the algae is gone. It stops the algae from re-producing. Its companion, EcoFix breaks down the dead algae and creates a clearer and healthier pond. Other products that Mia talked about were bacteria to jump start the pond, Dimilin for parasites and anchor worms, Melafix to treat sick fish, pond salt for fish health, the correct fish food, and an herbal spray for aphids that can be used on plants in the pond. She said that pondcare.com is a good website for any questions that you might have about products for water gardening.

Sizing pumps for applications & building waterfalls and streams – David Shum

David is a pond contractor in the St. Joe area and was a pitch hitter for a speaker that didn't show up. He stressed that a cheap pump is not always the best buy. The most expensive pump might be the most efficient in terms of dollars spent on electricity. Oil free pumps are the most efficient and they are beginning to make mag drive pumps in larger sizes now which are efficient. David said a good website on sizing pumps is at pumpbiz.com.

Building & budgeting a water feature – Bob Newberry

Bob represents *Gard'N-Wise* of Denver, and is a frequent guest on garden call-in shows. Water gardens

bring nature to your backyard, Bob said. They add a focal point, the water is soothing and enjoyable and it teaches us a lot about fish and living things. A 3,000 gallon pond used to be considered a big pond; now people are building ponds much larger. Consider the location of the pond and try to place it where you can enjoy it from your house or deck. Ponds that have over 6 hours of sunlight usually have more blooms and more algae; ponds with less than 6 hours have less blooms and less algae. Other considerations for the pond are: zoning, electrical access with ground fault, buried utilities and tree and shrub roots. His formula for figuring the gallons in a pond is: Length x Width x Depth x 7.5 = number of gallons.

How to create a bog and planning a filtration system for a healthier pond – Eric Wood.

Eric owns Lily pads in Landscapes and Puddles-N-Pads Water Gardens in Topeka. He supplies aquatic plants to garden centers in 12 states. Eric said that wetlands are giant sponges and they remove toxins. He showed a Centipede and Snorkel that he uses when building bogs which works much better than only using gravel. Bogs can be built beside the pond at the same level, connected to the pond by a stream or used as a waterfall. Large rocks, small rocks and gravel are placed on top of the Centipede and the plants grow in the gravel. Plants that do well in bogs include: sedge, cattails, grasses, rushes, iris, bean bog, marsh marigold and hibiscus. It is beneficial to have plants with different root depths.

Attracting birds and dragon flies to your pond – Todd Howe

Todd owns and operates a retail lawn and garden center Old Mill Garden Center in St. Joe. He also hosts a radio show. Todd said that some people want lots of wildlife in their yards, while others will go at great lengths to get rid of the wildlife. "We all have ideas of who we want to show up in our yard," he said. Ingredients necessary for attracting wildlife to the backyard are: food, water, shelter and space. Evergreens are important for providing shelter in the wintertime. Todd said that he tends to favor organic methods and recommended corn gluten (a pre-emergent) which is safe around ponds.

About 15 vendors participated in the exhibits and we had a great time shopping for some neat stuff. Donniss bought home a darling little girl statuary and Floyd and I got a birdbath, fountain and frog from Twilight Gardens. I also bought a delightful angel lady made out of hypertufa (homemade stone) from Mary Stams. Floyd won a neat hand painted rock from Connie's Creative Creations and Donniss won a pond book from another sponsor. Other vendors had pond products, plants, wind chimes, metal artwork and many other objects for the pond or yard.

Before we left Floyd asked them if they were going to have a seminar next year because he wants to put it on our calendar and start saving money NOW. It's a good thing we took two cars because our Jeep was loaded with our purchases. What fun!

Spring pond projects

by Diane Gruver

"Spring has sprung!" Deb Spencer told TAWGS members at their March meeting. "So, let's talk about getting our ponds up and going."

Deb said that now is the time to bring plants up from the bottom of the pond (if you can stand getting in the cold water.) The light and warmer water temperatures will help them adjust faster and keep them from being weak and leggy. Water lilies are day-length sensitive and are starting to put on leaves. Lotus are very temperature sensitive and will get an earlier start if they are on the shelf with warmer temps.

String algae has been growing all winter and it is best to clean as much as you can out now, Deb said. "Don't waste it; it is pond gold!" Put it in the compost pile or lay it under a plant or bush because it is full of nitrates (fertilizer). Scoop out leaves and silt. Be sure to flush pumps to make sure that baby frogs or snails aren't inside. They could also be hiding in the folds of the liner so try to not squish them. Check fittings to make sure there aren't any leaks. If you have a rotten egg odor and it doesn't go away in a day or two you may have too much muck on the bottom of the pond and that is toxic to fish.

When setting up bio-filters, make sure your bio-media bags spread to the edge of the filter so water has to run through it, Deb said. Filter mat usually lasts a couple of seasons. There is a new ribbon filter media that is much lighter than lava but it will float. A little lava in the bottom of the bag might work to keep it from floating. Deb recommends cleaning the bio filter in the fall.

Bacteria usually occurs naturally in ponds if everything is in balance, but you can jumpstart bacteria in the spring with liquid bacteria. A water garden just recirculates water and is not like a pond in nature that has a flow through system. It's like your fish are literally swimming in their own toilet.

Check your fish now. They are at their weakest point in the spring when water temperature fluctuations can make them less resistant to ick and other diseases. A new treatment on the market is Dimilin for anchor worms and fish lice. Melafix is an antibacterial remedy that accelerates wound healing. Deb warned to not treat a healthy pond if you don't have sick fish. Many times sick fish are caused by a dirty pond or something new that is introduced into the pond.

"Don't salt your ponds if you want your water lilies to be happy," Deb said. "Use it in a quarantine tank but not with plants. Salt has it's place, but not in a lily pond."

Moving from spring pond chores to re-potting lilies and lotus, Deb said that lotus should be the first to be transplanted. March and April are the best months to re-pot lotus: large size lotus should be repotted about every three years (they will bloom best the second year) and medium size lotus should be divided every other year. Lotus grow around the side of the pot and go to the bottom in the winter time. Dump the pot upside down and

wash the dirt off the tubers so you can see what you are doing. Cut tubers after at least 2 nodes and be sure to not bruise the growing tips. Put an inch of sand in the bottom of the pot, then three to four inches of clay and another inch of sand on the top. Make two labels with the plant name and date of re-potting; one goes in the bottom, the other at the top. Although lotus are heavy feeders, do not use manure or fertilizer at the time of re-potting. Pour enough water in the pot to make mud and make a trench along the side of the pot. Put the lotus in the trench being very careful to not damage the tips. Cover with an inch of soil and then one inch of sand. When you fertilize a couple months later place tabs approximately 1/3 in from the side of the pot since the runners go around the side of the pot. Lotus need at least six hours of sun and will die back in the extreme heat of summer.

Repotting water lilies is similar in that you remove the plant from the pot and hose it off so you can see the rhizomes. If the rhizome is soft or doesn't smell good, throw it away. Cut the rhizome so that it has two or three growing eyes and put the cut edge at a 45 degree angle to the side of the pot. Use heavy clay and mix in a little sand. The fertilizer goes in the bottom of the pot so it doesn't touch the roots. Cut the roots back to about 3 inches and spread them out over a mound of dirt at the side of the pot. Don't cover the growing tips with dirt. Compact the dirt, top with pea gravel and add water to it before lowering it into the pond.



There are several kinds of fertilizer: Landon Aquatic Fertilizer (granule), Pond Tabs or Highland Rim tablets. Wait 60 days after planting to fertilize again. Don't divide lilies after August because they need at least six weeks to get established in their new pot. Lilies don't like a lot of water movement or water splashing on their pads, which can smother them.

Unfortunately, we ran out of time so Deb didn't get to finish "the rest of the story," but we all came away from the meeting with a wealth of information.

Deb is a member of TAWGS and is co-owner of Water's Edge in Lawrence. We want to thank her for the lily and lotus that she donated for doorprizes.

TAWGS Minutes March 17, 2004

President Tom Platis welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. We had self-introductions and were pleased to have several guests and at least one new member, Judge Kay McFarland.

Tom introduced our guest speaker Deb Spencer and asked her to first talk about the

complimentary affiliate membership to the International Waterlily & Water Garden Society (IWGS) that Water's Edge provided to TAWGS. Deb said that IWGS was established in the 1960's because there was no one official for tracking and naming new introductions of waterlilies and lotus, their prime function now. Their annual conference for 2004 will be held in Toronto, July 21-24. Benefits of the membership to TAWGS could include five free waterlilies for members to grow and report their performance back to IWGS, availability of water garden t-shirts and a subscription to *Water Garden Journal*. Thanks to Susan Davis and Deb, co-owners of Water's Edge for the complimentary membership!

Following Deb's interesting talk about opening ponds and demonstration on how to repot lilies and lotus, the group enjoyed refreshments provided by Helen Platis and Donnis Hodges. After the meeting resumed, Mary Ann Bechtold moved and Don Taliaferro seconded that the minutes be approved as published in the newsletter. Motion carried. Jim Green reported that TAWGS had a combined total of \$6,303.06 in our checking and savings accounts.

Joe Breitenstein reported that the Plant Sale will be Saturday, April 24th and encouraged everyone to save their extra pond plants to be sold at the sale. He said that vandals ruined an air conditioner and furnace at Ward Meade to the tune of \$1,700. Rita Arnold will be the guest speaker at the Day Lily Club meeting at 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, April 27th, if anyone wants to attend.

Mary Ann Bechtold reported that she is still looking for four or five ponds for the Pond Tour, which will be held June 26 and 27th. Thanks to guests Jim and Gale Kresge, who graciously offered their pond for the tour.

The Potting Party for the pond plants at Ward Meade Park will be at 9:00 a.m. Saturday, April 17th. Dean Demoss agreed to head up the party so let's all please plan to meet and help him with this project. Wear your old clothes and shoes and bring your shovel, gloves, knives and other garden tools to assist with repotting the many lilies that will be used at the fountain and Anna's Pond. Not only is this a lot of fun and fellowship, it is a great opportunity to learn more about repotting lilies and lotus and to maybe take home a rhizome or two for your own pond. The larger the group the less time it takes to pot about 30 lilies, some of which will be sold at the plant sale on the 24th. If you have extra 2 gallon pots that you are willing to donate, please bring them along as well. Also, if anyone has access to good clay soil or pea gravel, please let Dean know (272-1525) or drdemoss2000@yahoo.com.

Jim Green reported that the VA has responded to his request for a new agreement for the pond that we want to build at the VA hospital. We should have a signed agreement by next month. The bid selected from Water's Edge last fall went up 5% – 10% but we should still be able to stay within budget.

We will probably try to build the pond sometime in May.

President Platis thanked Helen and Donnis for providing the "green themed" St. Patrick's Day refreshments. Dean Demoss and Diane Gruver volunteered to bring refreshments next month.

Guest Jan Stallbaumer won the lotus that Deb Spencer generously provided for a door prize. Bob Saathoff won the water lily. Meeting adjourned.



Pillars of stacked stones with water cascading down their sides was quite impressive.

Wichita Lawn & Garden Show

by Diane Gruver

Boy, if the Wichita Lawn and Garden Show doesn't put you in the mood for spring, nothing will!

It's hard to describe what it's like to walk into two large buildings and feel like you just walked into a huge garden. It takes 56,000 square feet of six mil plastic to protect the floors under the gardens, 26 rolls of duct tape to hold the plastic down and about 32 semi loads of mulch to build the gardens up. It also takes around 400 tons of boulders, plastic liners for ponds, water pumps, an inconceivable numbers of flowers, blooms and trees and about 400 people to create the wonderful sights, sounds and colors of the 13 beautiful gardens. Contractors have one week to build the Great Gardens and smaller businesses have 3 days to construct the Mid Gardens. You can't believe it until you see it!

The Hodges and Floyd and I got to Wichita around 3ish on Saturday afternoon and, along with our Wichita Eagle newspaper reporter daughter Deb, caught a shuttle bus to the Convention Center. We hoped that the crowd was somewhat thinned out by the time we got there but I'm not sure that it had because it was still somewhat elbow to elbow. (This is a small town gal talking you know. I like my SPACE!) Themes of the Great Gardens included "Touch the Rain," "Spirit of 1883," "Simply a-MAZ-ing," "A bow to the Chinese Garden," and "Defenders of Freedom." My pick for the top honors was "Touch of Rain" – it was a hike in a temperate rain forest of the Northwest. Everywhere you looked it was green – it was beautiful and just like being on a mountain. Floyd liked the "Simply a-MAZ-ing" garden because it had a huge waterfall built of

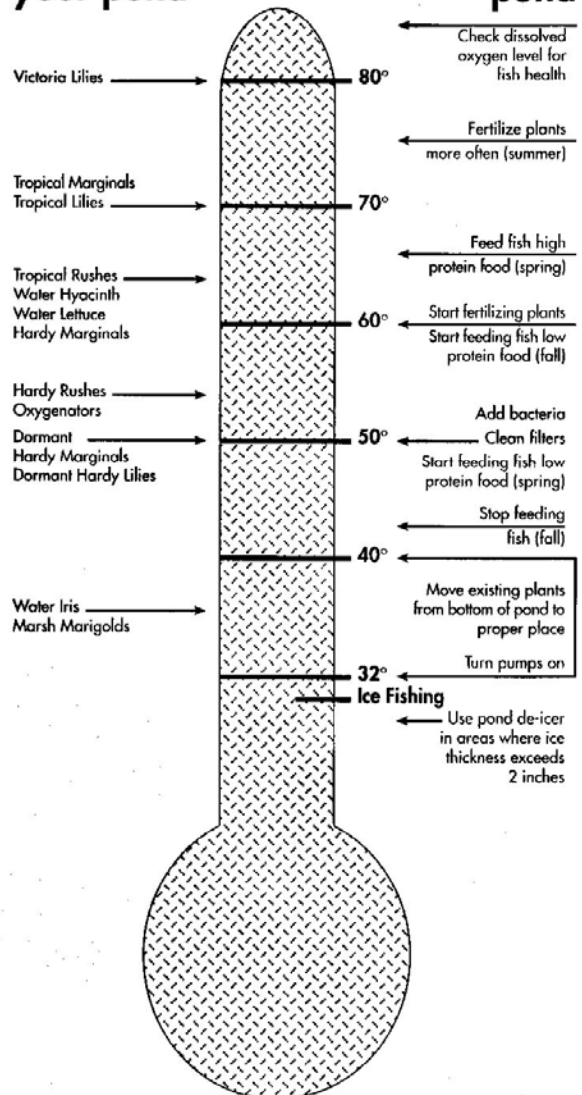
separate stones expertly stacked with columns of water billowing from the giant stone pillars. The Kansas Pond Society built a very nice "Young at Heart" garden in the Mid Garden category and I especially liked the "Spring Along Murphy's Lawn" where everything that could go wrong, did go wrong on one side of the house and everything on the other side of the house was just perfect.

If you haven't had a chance to visit the Wichita Lawn and Garden show yet, be sure to put it on your calendar for next year. It is one of the top ten shows in the United States and is usually the first weekend in March. It's a "must see" as far as we are concerned.

THE POND THERMOMETER™

When to put new plants in your pond

Taking care of your pond



Average Weekly Temperature of Pond Water

Warmer weather & water will be here soon

by Randall Tate, Chief Manager

Reprinted from 3-04 The Water Garden News

This time of year many of us can't tell if winter is coming or going. For a great deal of the country it can be below freezing one week and in the seventies the next. We do know that warm weather is not too far away and our ponds will soon be waking up from its winter dormancy.

Water temperature

One of the first things that you will notice as the water temperatures increase are your fish are slowly becoming active. Your first inclination may be to feed them. I recommend waiting until your weather is somewhat stable and you are not expecting prolonged periods of below freezing temperatures. If your water warms near 50 and is expected to stay there for a few days you can feed a little low protein food. A small amount of Cheerios or puffed rice will be a welcome treat. Wait until the water temperatures are stable at 50 or above before beginning low protein fish food for both your goldfish and koi.

Another early change that you will see in your pond is algae growth. Your water may be turning green or you are noticing bits of string algae in clear water. Even in an otherwise well balanced pond algae growth in the late winter and early spring is normal. Algae starts to grow with the increase in temperatures and available sunlight. Normally, with the correct number and types of plants and with a proper sized biological filter operating, algae growth can be kept under control. We can't expect our biological filter and plants to be much help in combating algae at this time because it will grow at much cooler temperatures than the filter and plants will function in. Many of the algae types that we see in our pond will grow well in water temperatures in the 40's whereas many of the beneficial bacteria that work in our ponds need warmer temperatures.

If you need to replace your filter media do it now before the water warms enough for the bacteria to be active again in the filter.

What can we do to limit the algae growth while we wait for warmer temperatures?

If we remove the nutrients and the light then the algae will die. We can't expect to totally remove the nutrients and light but we can reduce it dramatically. Remove any dead or decaying organic matter from the pond. Use a pond net to remove leaves and other debris from the pond. An algae net is fine and can be scooped through the water to remove filamentous type algae.

Make sure that rain runoff cannot flow into your pond. This will carry lots of nutrients and cause algae growth.

This is a good time to begin using Microbe-Lift Spring/Summer Cleaner. This will help break down the organic waste and reduce the nutrients feeding the algae.

Proper tools & supplies

Now is the time to obtain some of the tools and supplies that will be needed when we once again have an active pond. A large tub around 20 to 100 gallons is very useful for housing fish while cleaning, remodeling,

or making repairs to a pond. Larger ones also make good quarantine or hospital tanks.

You will want to monitor water chemistry. You should have water test kits for pH, ammonia, and nitrites at a minimum. Ammonia and nitrites can spike very quickly during the spring when our filters may not be working at maximum capacity. A pond thermometer will let you know when to be feeding your fish.

Cold water equals fish stress

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. One common sign of a parasite infection is "flashing". Flashing is when the fish dart around in the pond often against surfaces trying to rid themselves of the parasite. If you see this occur, using ProForm-C may be advised.

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. Koizyme 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.

Fish pond owners should always have dechlorinator

Always have a dechlorinator on hand. You never know when you may have to add a lot of water or do a water change. This can save your fish.

From the President

by Tom Platis

Pond

*Spring has dawn
So, how is your pond?
Now is the time to spruce up and bond.
So that you can enjoy your wonderful pond!
J.R.*

*Spring is here.
The grass is riz.
How your pond is?
My wife*

Because our next meeting will not be before April 17, I want to remind everyone about the potting party planned for that day. No, this is not a pot party, but a potting party in which members and guests can repot lilies for the fountain and Anna's Pond in Ward Meade. The time is 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 17, at Ward Meade. I'll be there, but late since I have to work until 10:00 a.m. Hope to see you all of you then.

*Here comes Spring.
Here is Summer.
If I do nothing
What a bummer!
Mine*

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

Calendar of Events

Apr. 10 – 21	Binkley Tulip Days
Apr. 17	Potting Party at Ward Meade
Apr. 21	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
Apr. 28	Garden Council Plant Sale
May 19	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
June 16	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
June 26-27	13 th Annual Topeka Pond Tour
June 26-27	St. Joseph Pond Tour
June 26-27	Wichita Pond Tour
July 10-11	Kansas City Pond Tour
July 21	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
Aug. 18	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
Sept. 15	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
Oct. 20	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
Nov.17	TAWGS Pot Luck Supper

Water Garden Tip

During this period of transition as your pond begins to warm, parasites become more active. Monitor your fish for unusual behavior to catch this potential problem early.

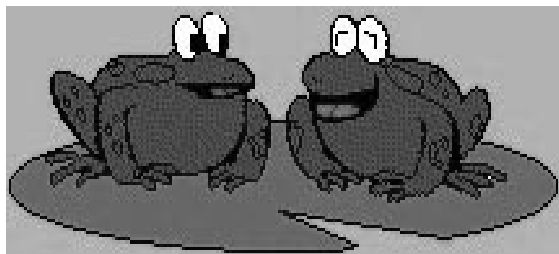
**Your Dues are Due if your label reads
 2-04, 3-04 or 4-04**

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

THE TOPEKA AREA WATER GARDEN SOCIETY

OFFICERS:

Tom Platis	President
Topeka	785-478-9514
Becky Coffman	Vice President
Topeka	785-272-6568
Diane Gruver	Secretary
Holton	785-364-3046
Jim Green	Treasurer
Topeka	785-272-7139



Check it out - www.tawgs.org

The Lily Pad

Published Monthly, February to November by the Topeka Area Water Garden Society (TAWGS), a non-profit organization. TAWGS does not warrant the information in this newsletter. The opinions expressed are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Topeka Area Water Garden Society.

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:

Diane Gruver, The Lily Pad Editor
 408 Emerald, Holton, KS 66436
 785 364-3046 (w) 785-233-4085
fdgruver@holtonks.net

We reserve the right to edit input to meet publishing requirements. Copy cannot be returned.