

# The Lily Pad

The Topeka Area Water Garden Society

Published Monthly – February to November

Volume 7, Issue 10

November 1, 2004



## VA Pond dedicated

The water garden that TAWGS members built in May at the VA Hospital was dedicated at 11:00 a.m. on Monday, October 18. The short ceremony was held near the beautifully landscaped pond area with short speeches from several dignitaries, including our own TAWGS president Tom Platis.

Craig Howard, Associate Director of Eastern Kansas Health Care System said, "If this pond brings comfort to one veteran or staff member.....it will have been worth the effort."

Hot dogs, chips and pop were served to the fifty some people in attendance following the dedication ceremony.

TAWGS members attending the ceremony were Tom and Helen Platis, Jim Green, Doug Peterman, Becky Coffman, Mary Pat Fischer, Gerald Hodges, Bob Whitehead, Betty Karnes, Deb Spencer and Diane Gruver. Also in attendance were Vicky Walter, a volunteer, and Scott O'Shea who helped with the construction of the pond and Matt Uhlik, Greenleaf, who donated several beautiful koi for the pond.

If you haven't had a chance to see the beautiful pond and landscaping stop by sometime. Horticulture therapist Georgia Abbott and her patients have done a great job of landscaping and taking care of the pond. The pond is near the greenhouse, which is located just west on Road H south of the 21<sup>st</sup> Street entrance.

## Monthly Meeting

6:30 p.m., Wed., Nov. 17, 2004

Potluck Supper

Bring Table Service & Covered Dish

## There's more to the story...



Do frogs know how to hide?

by Diane Gruver

Those of you who have been TAWGS members for awhile will remember the stories about Floyd's frogs in the house a few years ago. I asked Floyd if he would like to write about his frogs this time or if he wanted MY version of the story. So, here goes.....

There were several frogs and a few small fish in the bucket after I cleaned out the small pond on the west side of the house a couple weeks ago. Floyd asked me if he could please have a frog in the house again this winter so dumb me, I said "Okay, you can try, but it had better behave this time."

I didn't watch him as he emptied the bucket into the inside water garden. Big mistake! A few days later I noticed mud spots on the side of the bathtub (we have a sunken one) and I wondered how a clean man could leave spots of mud getting out of the shower. As I was cleaning up the mess and leaving the bathroom I noticed a frog quietly leap behind the bathroom door, like he was trying to hide from me. Well, a net and a bucket later I called Floyd and asked him just where he wanted his frog put! ☺

Floyd says he only put one frog in the pond, but I now I'm wondering just how many more might be hopping and hiding. I haven't found any more mud spots, but I'm always watching for another surprise.

On a more solemn note, we lost a TAWGS member and good man last month. Max Loyd from Hiawatha succumbed to cancer after a long battle. You might remember Max from when Floyd and I brought him and his wife Georgia to a couple of the Member Pond Tours a few years ago. Max had been confined to a wheelchair for the last twenty some years of his life because of a farm accident. The Loyd's home in Hiawatha has a gorgeous pond and waterfall. We extend our sympathy to Georgia and family.

## Fall is here & winter is on the way

by RANDALL TATE, Chief Manager The Water Garden  
Reprinted from 10-04 Water Garden News

For many of our readers the weather is cold or soon will be. With the colder weather come many changes to our ponds. Plants began to die or go dormant and fish slow down and feed less. We are concerned for the pond equipment that may have to spend long weeks or months in near freezing temperatures. Many ask "what do I need to do for my pond during cold weather?"

To quickly recap the fall preparation from last months newsletter:

1. Cover your pond with leaf netting to keep leaves from accumulating in the pond.
2. Feed your fish a lower protein food and less often.
3. Remove sludge from the pond if much thicker than 1/4 inch. Do this by siphoning or vacuuming the pond.
4. Stop feeding your plants.
5. Use beneficial bacteria (such as Microbe Lift Autumn Winter Prep).

The leaf netting will not only keep the leaves out of your pond but will help protect your fish from predators such as birds and raccoons which are more of a problem in the winter when there are no plants for the fish to hide under. We offer leaf netting in two different mesh sizes cut to length or prepackaged. The fish's metabolism is slower in cold water and the fish would have a difficult time escaping predators. If you don't use leaf netting you may want to consider a Koi Kastle. This will provide a place for your fish to hide making them more comfortable and safer.

Remember to feed a low protein food until the water temperature drops below 50. At this time you will want to stop feeding until spring when the water temperature remains above 50. A good pond thermometer will help to gauge when to feed your fish.

Remove any dead and dying plant material from the pond. Any plant material and other organics in the pond end up as sludge on the bottom. Removing dead plant material now is much easier than removing it after it becomes sludge. As organic material decomposes in the pond toxic gasses are produced. These gasses escape harmlessly into the atmosphere unless there is a coating of ice over the pond in which case they can be harmful to the fish. To prevent this from happening keep an area of the pond surface free of ice. You can do this with a small aerator or by using a pond deicer. The deicer has a built in thermostat that will turn the unit on when the water gets cold enough and back off as the water temperature rises.

As the foliage on your hardy plants begins to die back you should remove any dead or dying leaves and place the plant deep enough in the pond to keep the roots from freezing. While it is true that some marginal plants will survive even if their roots freeze solid, it is best to lower all of your plants below the ice zone.

Fertilization of your aquatic plants is not necessary again until spring.

If your pond is too small or shallow to offer protection from freezing temperatures, you still have other options. If your pond is not too large and does not contain any fish, you can place a cover such as plywood over the pond and cover this with bags of leaves or bales

of straw to provide insulation. A tarp should also be placed over the straw to keep it dry and provide better insulation. A basement can provide protection if you remove the plants and store them either in their original containers or in peat moss. You could build a temporary shelter over the pond. Lumber or PVC pipe can be used to construct a framework over the pond. Place clear plastic over this and weight the plastic down with soil or stone. This frame should hold the plastic a few feet above the water. Greenhouse type plastic is best, but construction grade plastic should last through one winter.

This method works very well and is basically like moving the pond one USDA hardiness zone higher. On clear days the sun warms the water and, even if covered with snow, there is good insulation over the pond. Some tropical plants can be wintered over this way in mild winters, even if you live in zone 6 or 7.

Some plants do not like being submerged in the pond through the winter. Iris ensata (formerly know as Iris kaempferi), a Japanese Iris, should be removed from the pond and planted in the yard. When new growth starts in spring it can be placed back in the pond for the summer. Lobelia cardinalis (Cardinal Flower) should be removed from the pond and planted in the yard for the winter. This plant should have a few inches of mulch over it as well. You will have more success wintering over Cannas if you remove the rhizomes from the pot and store in slightly damp peat in a basement or other cool area.

Some tropical water lilies will bloom all winter if kept in a tub container inside and given at least six hours of bright light. You can also winter them over by removing the tuber from the pot after the foliage has died back from a freeze. Then place the tuber in a container of slightly damp sand or peat moss at 50 degrees. In the spring you will need to heat the tuber in an aquarium to about 75 degrees to trigger its growth before moving outside.

One choice with tropical plants is simply disposing of them after freezing weather and replacing them in the spring. This way you get to try new plants and colors next season. If you want to attempt to winter over your tropical plants there are a few methods worth trying. Many tropical plants can be brought inside and treated as houseplants for the winter. Umbrella Palm, Taros, and Calla Lilies will do very well with medium light levels. If these are in no-hole containers no special care is needed. Otherwise keeping the pots in a tray full of water is needed to keep the plants wet. Water hyacinth and water lettuce require more care than they are worth. It is much easier (and less expensive) to replace them each spring. If you still want to make the effort, they require 10 hours of intense light and water temperatures above 70 degrees.

You may or may not want to run your pump and filter system through the winter. This will depend on several factors, including climate. If you live in a climate with temperatures mostly well above freezing, then it will be to your advantage to keep your pump and filter running through the winter. The bacteria in your biological filter will not be active at low temperatures, but it will remain alive as long as you keep it supplied

with oxygen-laden water. When spring arrives and the water temperature is rising, the bacteria can start to work much quicker keeping the water quality good for your fish and helping to control the algae. Should you choose to run your filter through the winter it is a good idea to minimize the water circulation in order to take advantage of the layering effect of the water. (Water temperature is densest at 39 degrees and the water on the bottom of the pond will remain at this temperature even with freezing temperatures at the surface.) Some ways to minimize circulation are to turn off bottom drains, place intakes to pumps/filters at mid water (you do not want to circulate bottom water in the winter), place your intakes closer to the outlets in the pond (waterfall or fountain), and/or turn the pump down. These actions will allow the biological filters to stay alive without interfering with the layering of the water. Massive circulation of water in the winter can super chill the water by exposing warmer pond water to below freezing temperatures leading to death of the fish. One problem with running a pump and filter in the winter, is the potential of major damage to your filter and plumbing system if the power goes off for extended periods and you are not at home to make sure no water is present in the filter and plumbing. If water is allowed to freeze in plumbing, UV's or filters this can lead to breakage and replacement of these units. If your system is designed to allow water to flow back into the pond in the event of a power outage, these problems can be averted. If you have a check valve in your system, you can use a long piece of small tubing or wire to hold the valve open allowing water to drain out.

You can turn off pumps and filters for the winter. Cold water holds much more oxygen than warm water and the fish's respiration is slow. Therefore you should not need the circulation and aeration in most areas. The bacteria in your biological filter does not work in cold temperatures, so the reason to run the filter is to keep the bacteria alive. If you turn off the pump and filter for the winter be sure to drain all plumbing. External filters, UV's, and external pumps will need to be drained. Submersible pumps should be left in the pond or in a bucket of water in a warm place to keep the seals from drying out. If you choose this method be sure to clean the filter before starting up in the spring. With the absence of biological filtration, you may want to add Microbe-Lift's Autumn/Winter Prep, which contains bacteria that will work in near freezing temperatures and enzymes that consume cellulose in the form of leaves.

If you choose to run the pump all winter and you have an Aqua Ultraviolet UV sterilizer, it would be advised to remove the lamp, ballast, and quartz sleeve. You can use a Winterizing cap on the UV sterilizer and avoid removing the whole unit from the plumbing.

## **TAWGS October 20, 2004 Minutes**

President Tom Platis called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with self introductions. Mary Pat Fischer moved and Mary Ann Bechtold seconded to approve the September minutes as printed in the October Lily Pad. Motion carried.

Tom reported about the dedication of the pond that TAWGS members built at the VA Hospital on Monday, October 19<sup>th</sup>. He said it was a nice affair even

though it was a dreary and nippy day. Several dignitaries spoke and they had a band and food as well. He also said Georgia Abbott was really taking good care of the pond.

Treasurer Jim Green reported that the club has \$2,457.50 in the checking account and \$2,127.47 in the savings account.

Don Taliaferro reported that our space for the booth at the Lawn and Garden show, which is February 18 – 20, is larger this year. Duane Eberhardt reported that the pre-formed pond that the club had stored at the Sheet's shed has disappeared. We won't plan to replace it at this time. Doug Peterman said that Bob Whitehead has agreed to let the committee build a mock pond in one of his buildings. Bob has all the rock that is needed for the pond as long as we don't return it.

Don also reported that he and Bob Saathoff, Tom Platis and Doug Peterman visited the new state office for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks which it on the old Menninger property. TAWGS has been asked to build a small pond near the entrance of the office building. Doug said that there will be walking trails on the 40 acres and it is expected that the pond would have good exposure to the general public year around. The state would maintain the pond. Bob was asked to put together some figures for the next meeting. If anyone else has ideas for community projects, please present them at the next meeting so we can make a decision on next year's project by February at the latest.

Mary Pat Fischer said that she finally located the sign that the Topeka Beautification Association put at Lake Shawnee recognizing TAWGS' \$2,500 donation to the project. She said it is in an unacceptable location and nobody would ever see it. She will pursue getting it moved to a better location.

Joe Breitenstein reported that the Garden Council visited the Great Overland Station for their October meeting. He said that Apple Fest was a tremendous success. Tom and Helen Platis were in charge of serving the food and had great help from Doug & Marikay Peterman, Gerald and Donnis Hodges, Jon and Mary Pat Fischer, Dean Demoss, Lynn Pelton and Joe. Tom thanked all the volunteers and said that a Ward Meade representative told him that TAWGS really had some good workers.

Becky Coffman announced that the November meeting will be a Pot Luck supper beginning at 6:30 p.m. on November 17. Please bring your table service and a covered dish.

Mary Blubaugh won the free subscription from the Water Garden Magazine and Eberhardt's won the cute frog cup donated by Mary Pat Fischer.

Following delicious refreshments provided by Joe Breitenstein and Mary and Duane Eberhardt the meeting resumed for a question and answer session about pond problems before adjourning.

## **Carbon pads and brown water**

*Reprinted from Swans Water Garden 10-04*

This time of the year and also in the spring, when leaves are falling, your water can turn a tea brown. Oaks leaves, especially, are notorious for turning your pond's water tea in color. Carbon pads, placed in your filtering box, work very well to help clear your water. It can take several weeks before you see much difference however.

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

## Calendar of Events

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Nov. 17     | TAWGS Pot Luck Supper                                 |
| December    | No Meeting  |
| <b>2005</b> |   |
| January     | No Meeting  |
| Feb. 11-13  | Metropolitan L&G Show, American Royal Center          |
| Feb. 16     | TAWGS Monthly Meeting                                 |
| Feb. 18-20  | Topeka Lawn & Garden Show                             |
| Feb. 25-27  | Johnson Co. H&G Show, Overland Park Convention Center |
| March 3-6   | Wichita Lawn & Garden Show                            |

## Pond Tip

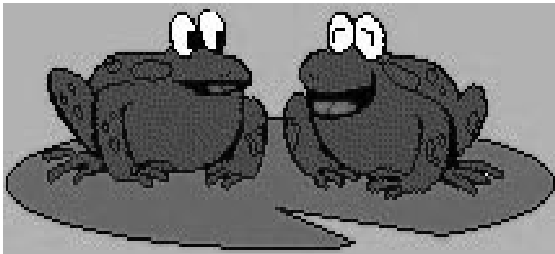
*For your fish to be healthy and also to help with the control of algae, the pH of pond water should be between 6.6 and 7.8 with the ideal being 7 to 7.2. However, unless the pH is below 6.5 or above 8 then it is usually best to not try and adjust it with additives.*

**Your Dues are Due if your label reads 9-04, 10-04 or 11-04 (or anything prior to 8-04)**

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 |
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| Diane Gruver  | Secretary      |
| Holton        | 785-364-3046   |
| Jim Green     | Treasurer      |
| Topeka        | 785-272-7139   |



Check it out - [www.tawgs.org](http://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 third weekend of each month. Address input and/or questions to:

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