

The Lily Pad

The Topeka Area Water Garden Society

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June 1, 2002



Donnis and Gerald Hodges and Becky Coffman try to stay dry at the plant sale.

Yearly plant sale wet

By Becky Coffman

This year was not the best for standing outside enjoying the great outdoors. It rained on us volunteer duckies, on and off most of the day. We had one ducky who was smart and retreated to the enclosure of the truck so that he didn't get his feathers wet. We had one ducky who had to shed its feathers a couple of times to keep dry and warm. Despite the rain we did end up selling quite a bit. People would come in between the rains. At times we would have to bring out the umbrellas so that we didn't get soaked or retreat under the truck window that was up. This one ducky decided to do a little "singing in the rain" to get people to laugh despite the weather.

Now to business, despite the weather, we did bring in \$276.25, which just about matched what we got last year. I think that if the weather had been nicer we would have sold more. The plant sale didn't do very well either this year. Joe ended up taking a lot home with him.

I want to thank the people who came out to brave the weather and help with the plant sale. Hopefully next year will be better weather.

Notice

If you are willing to work a few hours at the Pond Tour, June 22-23, please give Trudy Weir a call at 233-6711.

Monthly Meeting

7:00 p.m., Wed., June 19, 2002

Ward Meade Park

Eric Wood

Streambed Plants

From the President

By Mary Bechtold

TAWGS continues to grow with new members joining the past two meetings. You are all very welcome and we hope you will ask questions. The best way to learn is to just do it. We have four geographic areas identified. Hopefully all of you are getting better acquainted with your closest neighbors. The membership only pond tours are taking shape. I think we will have a better focus and can address a few questions about parking, car pooling and a pre or post dinner afterwards, etc.

Please get your suggestions to Joe Weir about what our fund raiser should be spent on this year. It will be narrowed to three for a membership vote. Joe is looking for volunteers to research the suggestions. Call him.

A big thanks to all of you who helped with potting the plants April 20th.

We have missed some of our regulars at the meetings. You are in our thoughts and we hope to see you again soon.

Don't let the string algae get the best of you!!

Birds and water gardening

By Diane Gruver

"Bird watching and water gardening go hand in hand," Paul Willis told TAWGS members at their May meeting. "Water is a good attractant for birds," he said. "Moving water is even better."

Using slides to show the various birds in this area, most of which spend the year round here, Paul said that beautiful red cardinals are a favorite bird. As in most species, the female isn't as colorful as the male. Goldfinches are taking on their beautiful yellow coloring right now and there seems to be abundance at people's

feeders. Paul said that a lot of people don't recognize goldfinches in the winter because they take on a brownish color, similar to the female, to blend in with their surroundings. The males molt their feathers in the spring and turn to bright yellow once again.

House finches are increasing in numbers and are competing with house sparrows in the area. The males show some red, while the females are more brownish in color. Another year-round bird is the black-capped chickadee, which has a shrill two-note song that sounds like "Hi sweetie". All of these birds like sunflower chips. In fact, Paul prefers to feed the sunflower chips over Niger seed because they don't waste as much of the feed. Related to the goldfinch is the pine siskin, which is only a winter resident in this area. Another bird that comes in the fall and leaves in the spring is the junco.

"The blue jay is a pretty bird, even if people don't really like them," Paul said. "They are aggressive and scare other birds away."

Woodpeckers that we see in this area are the downy woodpecker, which is the smallest in the family - the male has a red head; the red-bellied woodpecker, which also has a mostly red head; and the red-headed woodpecker, whose head is completely red. Another common woodpecker is the flicker, which can eat sunflower chips out of a finch feeder by flicking its sticky tongue in the small feeder holes. If you see a bird going down a tree headfirst it is probably a nuthatch looking for insects.

Carolina wrens are year round residents but house wrens are not. You can tell the difference by the white eyebrow, which characterizes the Carolina wren. House wrens come in the spring and leave in the fall and the males sing incessantly.

Mourning doves, so named for their mournful sound, mostly nest in trees and bushes. They will nest on the ground too and are ground feeders.

The great blue heron has a wing span of seven feet and is an unwelcome guest at many of our ponds as they can clean out our fish in one setting. Since they are territorial sometimes a "fake" heron will help keep them away from the pond. Another fish eater is a snow egret.

If your birds seem to suddenly disappear it could be because a saw whet hawk is in the area. These predators prey on small birds.

Evening grosbeaks are rare in this area and are so named because of their huge beak. Gross meaning huge.

Other birds that Paul captured on film were many varieties of sparrows, killdeer, pelicans (which spend their summer in Cheyenne Bottoms near Great Bend), tree swallows, blue birds, robins, meadowlarks, wood ducks and mallards, several species of owls and a snipe. Yes, there really are snipes, in spite of the fact that a lot of us were left holding the bag as a joke when we were teenagers! Paul's last featured bird was the majestic bald eagle, which has come back from near extinction and now has 12 known nesting sites in

Kansas.

Paul, who is a retired high school biology teacher, is President of the Topeka Audubon Society. He said that the society isn't just about birds, "but birds are the glue that holds the society together." Other interests of the society include conservation and natural resources that support our plant and animal life.

TAWGS May 15, 2002 minutes

President Mary Ann Bechtold opened the May TAWGS meeting with self-introductions. We had several guests, including Arlene Webb and Ken and Christeen Owensby who paid their dues. Other guests included Nancy Noble, Gary Knudson, Kathy Slimmer and Dave Chase. Joe Weir introduced Paul Willis from the Audubon Society who gave a very interesting talk about bird watching.

The meeting resumed following delicious refreshments served by Trina Wood and Dale and Earleen Jirik. The April minutes were approved as printed in the May Lily pad. Tom Platis gave the treasurer's report listing receipts of \$716.25 from dues, ads for the tour map, plant sales and petty cash and disbursements of \$461.15 for postage and printing, Secretary of State (incorporation fees) and bills from Puddles -N- Pads (gift certificates) and Puff Water Gardens (fountain supplies). We have \$1,450.43 in the checking account, \$2,088.42 in a money market and 43.34 in petty cash for a total of \$3,582.19.

VP Joe Weir distributed a list of ideas that have been submitted for the 2002 community project, which included: Stormont-Vail Courtyard, Ronald McDonald House, SARP Drug & Alcohol Treatment Center, Lake Shawnee, VA Hospital, maintaining previous ponds, a lump sum donation to charity of choice, and other Hospices. He asked for more input from members concerning the project for this year. No action has been taken yet.

Joe Breitenstein reported that even though everyone at the plant sale was soaked the Garden Council had a successful sale. They sold \$4,500 worth of plants at the sale and \$2,000 more plants out of Joe's back yard the following week, for a total of \$6,500 profit from the sale. The remaining plants were donated to be used at the Charles Curtis home and Midland Hospice. He said that Ray Schroeder has told him that the vandalism at Ward Meade is terrible. In addition to the damage they do at Anna's pond they also pull up plants and ride their bicycles through the flowerbeds. They are planning to post signs making it illegal to be in the park without an adult if you are under 14 years old.

Dave Puff reported that the plumbing for the fountain still has not been repaired so the bacteria has not been added yet. He also reported that Linda Newman has assumed responsibility for the Midland Hospice pond and he and Ruth have worked with her on the care and maintenance of the pond. The first pump quit and has been replaced. Trina is looking up information on what items were purchased so

replacement part information can be included in the Hospice files. Linda wanted to thank Pat and Dick Rokey, Becky Coffman, Mary Ann Bechtold and Joe Breitenstein who have all worked hard to plant the donated plants. Joe said that he and a friend of his have agreed to take care of the front flower bed at Hospice.

Diane reported on the pond tour and said that they still need one more pond and asked if anyone would like to volunteer. She said the reception for the pond tour hosts will be 7 – 9 p.m., June 20, at Puddles-N-Pads. TAWGS members are also welcome to come get acquainted with the hosts. Mary Pat Fischer, Debbie Durall, Trudy-O'Shea Weir and Earlene Jirik volunteered to bring cookies for refreshments.

Becky Coffman thanked everyone who helped at the very wet plant sale, especially Gerald and Donniss Hodges who picked up the plants that morning and stayed the whole morning to help.

Dale Jirik reported that he and Jim Green had checked out the pre-form ponds and decided that the one at Sam's would be the most satisfactory. The manger was gone so they weren't able to go ahead and get it when they were there.

Volunteer hours were discussed, especially those that were not specifically designated as TAWGS projects, such as planting flowers at Hospice after the pond was built. It was to be noted in the minutes that projects such as Hospice, Lake Shawnee, Apple Fest, Anna's Pond and the Pond Tour should be included in the recorded hours because they are community projects that TAWGS helps with. Mary Pat Fischer volunteered to keep track of the hours if people will turn them in to her.

Under new business, David Puff moved that we try to locate TAWGS property by passing a list around at the next meeting to see who has what stored where. Motion was seconded and carried.

President Mary Ann reported that a new member, Jim Haugh, has volunteered to assume the webmaster duties from Eileen Schmidt since Eileen didn't feel that she had the time to continue maintaining the site. Jim told the group that he has experience in web design and does web sites after hours from his job at Compu Tech. He said he knew it was a non-paid job and was still willing to take on the job. He also commented that if people want to send pictures of their pond that jpeg is the best format for the website. Mary Pat Fischer moved that we allow Jim to take over the website. Motion was seconded and carried. It was also noted that the Schmidt brothers company might have to relocate their server because of power problems so there is a possibility that we might have to look for a different server that we would have to pay for. Cost could range from \$10 – \$25 a month.

The member pond tours were briefly discussed. The first one will be July 21 covering the Southwest part of Topeka. They are to have more information available at the next meeting.

Jim Haugh and Arlene Webb volunteered to

bring refreshments next month. Meeting adjourned.

Pond dos and don'ts

Keep these location dos and don'ts in mind as you plan your next pond project.

Reprinted from Country Gardens Summer 2002

Locate your water garden where you can enjoy it. Build a pond where you will see and hear it; near a patio or visible from a window, for example, not in a corner of the yard you rarely visit.

Choose a sunny location. Most water plants require at least six hours of fun sun each day. If you're planning a small or shallow pond, or if you live in an area with a hot climate, give your pond some shade. High water temperatures can encourage excessive algae growth and increase water evaporation. Consider placing the pond where it will be partly shaded by buildings, fences, plants or shade cloth.

Avoid overhanging trees. Fallen leaves can harm plant and animal life, clog pumps and filters, and give the water a brown, murky appearance. If you have no alternative or you prefer some trees, place netting or a screen mounted on a wood frame over the pond to catch falling leaves.

Prevent damage from tree roots. Leave plenty of room between your pond and any trees. Some trees, including willows, can lift a preformed liner, puncture a flexible liner and crack a concrete pond. Placing a pond too close to a tree also can damage the tree's roots.

Check below the surface. Don't build your pond above underground pipes, cables, sewer lines or septic fields. And don't place it next to building foundations.

Protect your pond from strong winds. Choose a location that is sheltered so debris doesn't blow into the water.

Choose a level site with well-drained soil. The more level the site, the less work you'll have constructing the pond. Waterlogged soil can shift or settle, causing a pond liner to crack or break.

Avoid low-lying areas. Water can accumulate and surface runoff can wash mud and other contaminants, such as lawn fertilizers and pesticides, into the pond. If you can't avoid runoff, build a trench or gutter around the pond, and use a pipe to divert runoff under the pond or to another low area in your yard.

Provide access to the edge of the pond. Leave enough space for a walkway around the pond and room for benches, borders, or surrounding landscapes.

Locate your pond near water and power sources. You'll need water for filling or topping off the pond and electricity for operating lights and equipment, such as the pump that re-circulates water.

Pick a site that will make pond maintenance

easier. If a pond is too close to a wall or other obstructions, you could have trouble reaching the pond's entire surface for cleaning and removal of dead leaves. If you plan to include tropical water lilies or other non-hardy plants in your pond, consider placing the pond near a storage building or a level hard path leading to the structure.

Is it a filter...or isn't it?

Reprinted from 5-10-02 Splash

Few things create as much confusion as the term "Pond Filter." Often, new pond owners have pumps with sponge pump protectors that the pump manufacturer calls a "filter". Rightly so, but...it is a filter that filters the water of debris to protect the pump. It is NOT a pond filter.

This "Pre"-filter is often sufficient for very small ponds with just a few fish, because the pond itself (and the plants, etc. in it) provide enough beneficial bacteria to keep the water healthy.

Larger, and more crowded ponds, however, need a "real" pond filter to keep the water and the fish healthy. If only a pump "Pre"-filter is used in the pond, then the following precautions should be taken:

- 1) Keep feeding the fish to an absolute minimum
- 2) Keep the pH as close to neutral as possible
- 3) Do not clean this filter in chlorinated tap water (chlorine destroys the beneficial bacteria)
- 4) Keep the fish population very small
- 5) Add lots of plants

Fountain Maintenance List

The following volunteers have said that they would do the maintenance at the fountain at Ward Meade Park.

May Joe & Trudy Weir, Doug & Marikay Peterman, Dean Demoss

June Hi Stockwell, Michael Bradley, Dean Demoss

July Tom Weinbeck, Dale Jirik, Dean Demoss

Aug. Bob & Becky Coffman, Dick & Pat Rokey, Dean Demoss

Sept. Jim Green, David Puff, Gerald Hodges, Dean Demoss

Many thanks to all of you!!

Programs for 2002

June 19- Eric Wood, Puddles-N-Pads, Streambed Plants

July 17- -David Puff, Puff Water Gardens, Proper Coverage

Aug. 21 - Jeff Yeckel, River City Koi, Koi/Fish Disease

Sept. 18 - Cameron Rees – Landscape Design/Plants

Oct. 16 - Deb Spencer, Water's Edge, Hydraulics

Nov. 20 - Pot Luck Supper & Social

Fish, fish, and more fish

by Randall Tate

Reprinted from May 2002 Water Garden News

As your pond water warms, your goldfish and koi will become active looking for food. Soon after you notice them browsing for food and the water temperature has risen to around 60 degrees, you will see them grouping together and several fish will chase another. As the water continues to warm to near 70 degrees you may notice your fish spawning. Usually spawning begins early in the morning and may continue until around noon.

Goldfish may spawn throughout the summer depending on water temperature and other factors. Koi usually only spawn once a year and this may be a month or more after goldfish begin to spawn. The spawning activity may become quite violent with one fish actually pushing another out of the pond. Koi especially may become damaged with scales being knocked off and there may even be bruising.

Koi and goldfish lay many thousand eggs. The female looks for a secure place to lay her eggs. Most often this being floating or submerged vegetation that has growth near the surface. As soon as the eggs are deposited the fish will begin eating them. If your vegetation is thick many of the eggs will survive and hatch.

The fry will emerge from the eggs in about 3 - 7 days depending on the water temperature. When first hatched, the fry are less than 1/4 inch long. They will still have their yolk attached and this will be their food for the first few days. After the yolk is gone, microscopic organisms will become their food source. The fry can move about some but not really swim for the first few days. They may be seen lying about the plants or hanging on the sides of the pond.

Most goldfish fry will become dark almost black in color and may remain that way for several weeks or months. This is a natural defense to help avoid predators. Their natural color will gradually come in. Koi begin showing their colors much sooner. All goldfish can and will interbreed. If you have several types of goldfish you will find all sorts of colors and body shapes from a spawning.

The growth rate will depend on many factors: water temperature, the amount of available food, and number of other fish in the pond. With sufficient cover in the pond, you should have several fry reach maturity. This process is very interesting to watch but you may soon find that you have more fish than your pond will support.

If this happens, you may want to build more ponds to make room for these new arrivals but eventually you will have the problem of getting rid of excess fish. There are several ways to accomplish this. You can give some away; you can release some in a willing friend's farm pond (as long as this pond does not overflow into a stream or other natural body of water) where they are likely to be eaten by predator fish. You may choose to euthanize them. The best method is to place the fish in a

plastic bag of water with a little salt and place them in the freezer. The fish will gradually go to sleep and then be killed by the freezing temperatures.

PLEASE NOTE: Under no circumstances should you release non-native fish in natural bodies of water such as streams, lakes, or rivers.

Test the water in your pond

Reprinted from May 2001 Water Garden News

PH

The values of pH will change throughout the day. You could get a vastly different reading if you check your pond water first thing in the morning compared to a pH test done in the evening. You should check the pH at approximately the same time each day to make your comparisons more meaningful. Another option is to check twice each day and average the two readings.

A pH range of 6.8 to 7.6 is ideal for goldfish and koi but I would not be too concerned with a reading as low as 6.5 or as high as 8.2. Anything outside this range may require some adjustment. Buffering agents are available to help stabilize the pH as well as pH up and pH down to adjust it accordingly.

AMMONIA

Ammonia tests should provide a reading of zero. Anything more than this will require water changes and possibly some additional filtration unless this is a new pond. In that case you may only need to add some beneficial bacteria and give the filter enough time to mature. It can take as long as several weeks to a few months for a filter to become fully mature.

NITRITE

Nitrite tests should also provide a reading of zero. A reading greater than this will require water changes and some additional filtration. Add approximately 5 lbs of salt for each 1000 gallons of pond water to help reduce the toxicity of nitrites. This amount of salt should not harm your plants.

NITRATE

Nitrate levels should be kept below 60 ppm. Higher levels will result in excessive algae growth and some stress on any fish in the pond. Add more plants and or do a partial water change (10% to 20%) to dilute the nitrates if your Nitrate tests readings are above 60 ppm.

Improve pond appearance & water quality

by Randall Tate

Reprinted from May 2002 Water Garden News



If you would like to add a small addition to your pond that will also improve your water quality you may want to consider adding a stream section to your pond.

For approximately \$100 you can add a small stream or pool to your existing pond. All you will need is a rubber pond liner, some liner under layment, stone, and a little plumbing.

The stream should be built to flow into your existing pond. Make the stream or pool at least ten or

twelve inches deep. If you cannot tie a new pool or stream into your existing plumbing consider adding a plumbing tee to divert some of your pond water into the stream. You could also add another pump to run water through the new stream.

Placing a lot of plants in the stream section will improve your pond water quality. The plants should be floating or potted in porous containers such as fabric pots. This will allow the plants to draw nutrients directly from the water improving the water quality of the pond.

Make the stream section wide and allow plenty of liner above the water level to make sure that the roots of the plants will not stop the flow of water into the pond.

Some good plants to add to a stream for plant filtration are: pickerel rush, variegated water celery, umbrella palm, dwarf papyrus, giant papyrus, cannas, cattails, iris and water hyacinth.

You will be surprised to see how lush the growth will be on the plants in your plant filter/stream. With the water constantly bringing fresh nutrients through the roots of the plants in the stream, growth is much better than plants in the pond.

Enjoy the beauty of the plants and also enjoy the improved clarity of your pond.

Notice

Please be sure to check the date on your mailing label. It will tell you when your dues are due and how much they are. If you are over two months past due, you will be dropped from the newsletter mailing list.

Also, if you would prefer receiving the Lily Pad by e-mail please e-mail the editor at fdgruver@holtonks.net or diane@kansascop.coop. Thanks!

Tough Spring for Pond Fish

Reprinted from 5-22-02 Splash

Generally, in the spring, the pond water gradually warms and the fish slowly become more active and feeding increases steadily.

This spring, however, the weather has seen even more of a swing in temperatures as usual and in many areas of the country the fish have suffered by water temperatures that have gone above and below the hibernation point several times (sometimes within days). This is especially true for smaller ponds, in which the water temperature warms and cools relatively fast.

These temperature swings put a lot of stress on the fish and care must be taken that the water quality at least is as close to perfect as we can make it. Test pH, ammonia and nitrites on a regular basis. Feed good quality food and add pond salt at the rate of 1 cup per 200 gallons (only ONCE a season – be sure the salt is safe to use: Table Salt for example is not safe. Pond Salt, Aquarium Salt, Sea Salt are acceptable. Salt must not contain YPS - Yellow Prussiate of Soda- or other additives, which can be toxic).

Feed a good quality food that is easy to digest and does not put too much of an organic load in the pond (the waste produced - high quality foods are digested better by the fish and not as much waste is produced).

Keep a close eye on the fish at feeding time and check for parasites and other injuries.

The Topeka Area Water Garden Society
4111 NW 16th
Topeka, KS 66618

2002 Calendar of Events

June 19	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
June 22-23	Topeka Pond Tour
June 29-30	Lawrence Pond Tour
	KS Pond Society Tour, Wichita
July 13-14	Kansas City Pond Tour
July 17	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
July 21	SW Members Only Pond Tour
July 26	Garden Council Flower Show
August 11	NE Members Only Pond Tour
August 18	Garden City Pond Tour
August 21	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
Sept. 15	SE Members Only Pond Tour
Sept. 18	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
Oct. 6	Apple Fest
Oct. 16	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
Nov. 20	TAWGS Monthly Meeting

Your Dues are Due if your label reads

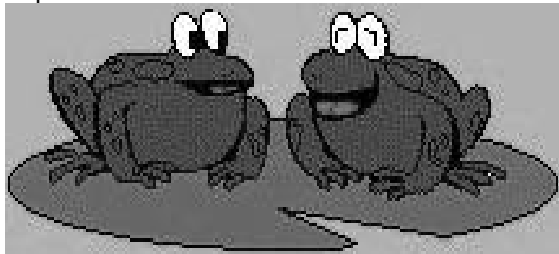
4-02, 5-02 or 6-02

**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 first of each month. Address input and/or questions to:

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