

The Lily Pad

The Topeka Area Water Garden Society

Published Monthly – February to November

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October 1, 2004

Winter preparation of your pond

By Diane Gruver

One of the biggest mistakes people make in the fall is to not net their pond Eric Wood told TAWGS members at their September meeting. Another big mistake is not keeping a hole in the ice during the winter. Eric said instead of stretching a net flat across the pond it should be tented so that the leaves will slide off instead of sagging down into the water. You can make a tent effect by standing a PVC pipe with a tennis ball on top in the center of the pond and then stretching ropes to create the tent. Roll the excess net at the bottom under to keep it from collecting leaves and wildlife.

Another important item for the pond is a thermometer. "It tells so much," Eric said. It tells you when to fertilize plants, when to feed fish and when to stop feeding the fish. Stop feeding the fish high protein food when the water temperature drops below 60 and begin feeding a wheat germ based food, which will digest more quickly. Stop feeding them altogether at 50 degrees. Don't let their begging convince you to feed them on a sunny winter day, because undigested food will cause swim bladder infection, which causes them to be unable to swim upright.

Stop fertilizing plants around the first of September Eric said. You can continue to feed tropical water lilies if you plan to treat them as annuals to be thrown away. Bring tropical marginals in after a light frost because a killing frost will do them in. Water cannas, papyrus and umbrella plants can be treated as house plants if kept moist. They don't have to be in water. Set them in a sunny window or in the basement but don't set them on a concrete floor, which is usually at least 10 degrees colder. Use a pallet or wood to get them off the floor. Cut them back about a month before you take them back outside in the spring when the water reaches 70 degrees. If you want to try over winter a tropical water lily, one method is to bring them inside the garage in the fall and let them dry out. When the leaves are crispy you can un-pot the tuber and wash it. Put it in a paper sack and store in a cool dry place. Check every so often to make sure it is not molding. Place it in a warm sunny window in distilled water in the spring. Do not place in the pond until the water temperature has reached 70 degrees which is usually sometime in June.

Trim back hardy water lilies and lotus after a hard frost and drop them to the bottom of the pond. Cat tail and reeds can be left on the shelf, but do not cut them off

Monthly Meeting
7:00 p.m., Wed., Oct 20, 2004
Bring your pond questions for discussion

below the water line because they will drown. Hardy marginals (iris, arrowhead) can be cut back and left on the shelf, but some zone 4 plants (pickerel, parrot feather) need to be dropped to the bottom of the pond. Water hyacinths and lettuce make great compost so clean them out before they freeze and drop to the bottom of the pond. Be sure that anacharis is not floating – it will freeze, die and fall on the anacharis in the bottom and kill it. Use a small net to scoop the gunk off the bottom of your pond if you have a very big buildup and switch to a bacteria that will work below 50 degrees.

Ammonia will build up in an ice covered pond and suffocate your fish, Eric said, so be sure to keep a hole open. There are several ways to do this – a bubbler, air pump or stock tank heater. You can create a bubbler by setting a small pump on the shelf with a pipe just long enough to break the water to keep it from freezing. Do not equalize the temperature of the pond by sitting a pump on the bottom of the pond but leave the bottom 12 inches undisturbed. A stock tank heater can be placed in the pond and plugged in occasionally when the pond freezes over. Do not leave it plugged in continuously unless you want to pay a hefty electric bill.

"How we care for the pond now will determine how the pond goes in the spring," Eric said. A little maintenance now will save a lot of work in the spring and will probably save the lives of your fish, he said.

A charter member of TAWGS, Eric is co-owner of Puddles-N-Pads and LilyPads in Landscapes, Inc. After nearly a year of traveling, we are happy to have Eric back in town and available to share his watergarden expertise.

VA Pond Dedication

Monday, October 18, 11:00 a.m.

Lunch will be served following the dedication.
Please RSVP to Jim Green 272-7139 or e-mail him at
jrg42637@yahoo.com ASAP if you plan to attend.

TAWGS Minutes 9-15-04

President Tom Platis called the September meeting to order with self introductions. VP Becky Coffman introduced the guest speaker, Eric Wood from Puddles-N-Pads, who gave an interesting presentation on closing your pond for the winter.

Following the speaker, refreshments were provided by Dean Demoss and Floyd & Diane Gruver. The meeting resumed and Duane Eberhardt moved and Mary Pat Fischer seconded that the August minutes be approved as printed in the September Lily Pad. Motion carried. Becky Coffman reported that she was looking for a program for the October meeting because Pat Rokey had canceled because it was too expensive to convert pictures into slides. If anyone has a program suggestion please let Becky know before the next meeting.

Secretary Diane Gruver reminded people to watch their newsletter label for when their dues are due. Treasurer Jim Green reported that the final tally has been made on the 2004 Pond Tour and we made \$2,170,26. He also reported that we have \$4,623.05 in the bank, but we have spent \$1,662.59 more than we have taken in this year. The reason for this is that we spent proceeds from the last two years pond tours on the pond at the VA project. Jim also reported that he is still waiting on word from the VA about the dedication of the pond. He said the pond is really beautiful with all the landscaping that the VA has done around the pond and the six new koi that were donated by Matt Uhlik from Greenleaf.

Diane reported that she had contacted the president of The Topeka Beautification Assn. to see if we could work together on next year's tours but she has not heard anything back from them about scheduling a meeting of the two committees.

Nomination committee chairman Floyd Gruver reported that he and his committee had not been able to find anyone willing to run for President or Vice President. He said that we are fortunate to have so many people who are willing to volunteer their time on our many projects, and we really appreciate them, but we also need people who are willing to run for office. President Tom Platis said that if nobody else would run he would run for president again next year. Thank you Tom! Donnis Hodges nominated Floyd Gruver for Vice President. Mary Pat seconded. Diane and Jim had already said that they would be willing to retain their offices for another year. With that action the slate of officers to be voted on next month are: President - Tom Platis, VP- Floyd Gruver, Secretary - Diane Gruver and Treasurer - Jim Green.

Garden Council representative Joe Breitenstein said that the Council's major fund raiser, Apple Festival, is Sunday, October 3. He encouraged people to help if possible. He also reported that there is a worm casting farm near Forbes where people can buy good compost. He also reported that Diane Gruver was a guest at the September 13 Garden Council Meeting.

President Tom Platis asked for volunteers who could help him and Helen serve food at the Apple Fest. Please call them at 478-9514 if you can help.

Dean Demoss reported that he and the Eberhardt's had cleaned the fountain the first of the week

and he will clean it again before Apple Fest. He said that he will need help to carry plants to Anna's Pond when they close the fountain after October Fest.

Bob Saathoff said the he and his wife Cheryl would like to volunteer to help with the booth at the Lawn and Garden Show in February. Working with them will be the Taliaferro's and Peterman's. Anyone else that would like to volunteer please get in contact with Bob at 272-7125.

Mary Pat Fischer reported that she is now working at Midland Hospice and has a chance to see and enjoy the pond every day that TAWGS built a few years ago. She said that Pat & Dick Rokey take good care of the plants around the pond. She also inquired as to why the plaque that was promised by the TBA for our \$2,500 donation to the water feature has not been put in place at Lake Shawnee. Diane reported that the last she knew they were still trying to figure out where to put it. Mary Pat will call Jerald Binkley to see if she can get some answers.

Duane and Mary Eberhardt and Joe Breitenstein volunteered to bring refreshments next month.

Three door prizes were provided by Puddles-N-Pads. Lynn Pelton won a thermometer; Barrie Gnagy won fish food and Michael Bradley won a horsetail plant. Thanks to P&P for donating the plants! Dean Demoss said that he had several gourds that were available to who ever wanted to take them home.

Jim Green moved the meeting adjourn. Floyd Gruver seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned.

Plants that can not freeze solid in the winter time.....

Information provide in October 1999 Reflections

Hardy water wisteria, golden buttons, melon sword, houttynia cameleon, New Zealand jumping rush, azure carpet, cardinal flower and the lobelias, water clovers, parrot feather, water parsley, pickerel plant and lizard tail.

Lower all of these semi-hardy marginals to the bottom of the pond to assure that they live through the winter. Some winters you might be lucky enough for them to survive on the shelf, but don't count on it being a sure thing!

How many fish are safe for winter

Reprinted from 10-10-01 Splash

The most basic requirement for your fish during the winter months is oxygen! If there are too many fish in the pond and the water starts to freeze over or there are many cloudy days in succession the oxygen level in the pond can get dangerously low. The easiest way to prevent this is to make sure that there are not too many fish in the pond (this problem can be seen in reverse in the summer, when the hot, still weather can cause drops in oxygen in the water.)

The general rule of thumb is one inch of fish per one square foot of surface area. More fish can be kept in the pond, but adequate measures have to be taken to make sure the pond can sustain them.

The easiest way to get oxygen into the pond is by letting a pump bubble. Be sure to set the pump on a plant shelf or on a couple of bricks so the warm water at the bottom does not get sucked to the top.



We now have an indoor water garden all year round and really enjoy the continuous sound of water! We bought this pond at the Wichita Lawn & Garden Show last year and thought it would fit our needs very well. The elephant ear never made it outdoors this summer and neither did Bubble Butt!

Indoor watergardening

by Randall Tate, General Manager, Water Garden News

The cold weather has now set in for most of us. That means we're stuck inside away from our beautiful water gardens. But wait, what about that extra space in the living room or that little nook off the hall. It sure would be nice to have a pond inside.

Setting up an indoor pond not only allows enjoyment of a water garden year round but also provides a place to winter some plants that may be a little too tender to leave outside.

The first step when considering an indoor pond is obviously where to put it. The main thing here is maximizing your enjoyment. Make sure that the water garden is where you will be able to get the most out of it. Near windows is a big positive as nothing beats natural sunlight. This is not mandatory however as we can use artificial lighting. You will also want to make sure that the floor of the area you select is strong enough to support the weight of the water. Most new homes should have no problem with this but you will want to make sure that additional support is not needed.

Tropical Water Lilies and other tropical aquatic plants can be wintered over and provide flowers all winter long indoors. Low light tolerant tropical aquatic plants can easily be wintered indoors. Taros and Umbrella Palms will grow with very little direct light and most homes can find natural light enough for these plants. Most other tropical aquatics require lots of bright light to grow and bloom indoors. Unless you have large south facing

windows or a sunroom you will need bright artificial light to encourage these plants to bloom throughout the winter. Even if the foliage of your tropical plants have already died back they should still be alive if the water temperature is not much below 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

A tub or other container can be used to hold a water lily or other aquatic plants for you to enjoy through the winter. You can also use a piece of PondGard Rubber Pond Liner and create an indoor pond any size that you want. A framework of lumber can be constructed to support the rubber liner. Two by fours and plywood will make a simple support for a liner. The frame can be constructed with screws to allow you to dismantle the pond during warmer weather. The outside of this frame could be covered with siding or plywood and then stained or painted. Plywood could also be faced with tile or stone if you want your pond to be permanent. Four by fours can be used in Lincoln log fashion to construct a support that may not need additional cover to be attractive. You may want to consider lumber that is not treated if you plan to build in your living space.

If you plan to build an indoor pond in a garage or basement where appearance is not as important then you can simply dry stack 8" x 8" x 16" concrete block two layers high to create a pond approximately 16" deep. As long as you only build two layers high then the weight of the block will be enough support. Place pond underlayment in the container over lapping the top of the block and then place the pond liner in place. If there is overhang on the outside of the pond then the weight of the liner will hold it in place. The rubber liner can also be used to provide a finished edge.

As previously stated, artificial lighting may be required. Your first thought may be to install fluorescent lighting over the pond. Fluorescent lighting, even grow lights, would need to be within six inches of the water. Several fixtures would be required each side by side to provide enough light for tropical water lilies. Because of the distance required, Fluorescent lighting is not practical for most marginal plants.

The question of water quality may be on your mind. Anacharis (underwater plant) can be brought in along with your ornamental plants and used to keep the water fresh. You can also add a small pump and filter system if you want but this should not be necessary unless you also want to keep some fish in the pond. If you do add moving water to your indoor pond please keep the movement of the water away from your water lilies because as you know water lilies do not tolerate excessive water movement or having their leaves sprayed on continuously from a fountain. If you do decide to add a pump and filter to the pond you can get good circulation of the water and a nice sound without excessively moving the surface of the water. Just place the water return in a corner and place your plants away from this.

I can't think of a more pleasant winter time activity than sitting near your indoor pond smelling the hypnotic fragrance of a tropical water lily, listening to the sound of moving water, watching a few fish swim around and sipping on a cup of hot chocolate.

Winter storage of summer bulbs

Reprinted from October/November Shawnee County K-State Extension News

It is time to start thinking about storing bulbs that will not survive our Kansas winters. The bulbs of gladiolus, caladium, dahlia, tuberous begonia, calla lily, and canna lily need to be dug and stored so they can be planted next year. Actually, the storage organ of the above plants is not a true bulb. Canna and calla lilies are rhizomes, caladium and tuberous begonias are tubers, gladiolus is a corm, and dahlia is a tuberous-rooted plant.

All of these plants should be dug after frost has browned the foliage. Then allow them to dry for about a week in a shady, well-ventilated site, such as a garage or tool shed. Remove any excess soil and pack them in peat moss, vermiculite or perlite. Make sure the bulbs don't touch, so that if one decays the rot doesn't spread to its neighbors. Dusting them with fungicide before storage will help prevent them from rotting.

Caladium should be stored between 50 – 60 degrees F. The rest of the bulbs mentioned should be stored near 40 degrees. Finding a good spot may be difficult. Some people place them against the basement wall farthest from the furnace, and insulate them so the wall keeps them cool.

Pond tips by Mike Kandt

Reprinted from 9-04 Kansas Pond Society Newsletter

Note: I thought that Mike had some interesting tips in the newsletter from the pond club in Wichita so I thought I would pass them on to our members.

Repairing holes in the liner

Occasionally, a liner might develop a puncture or small tear. This can happen when an animal struggles to get out of a pond it has fallen in, or maybe when a sharp-edged rock is dislodged and falls on a shelf. Assuming you can find the hole, drain the pond so the damaged area is high and dry. Scrub the area at least 2 inches away from the edge of the puncture to remove all algae and dirt. Wipe the area with a rag soaked in gasoline. This will prime the surface. Apply a liberal amount of Marine GOOP sealant (available in hardware centers in small tubes in blister packs.) Lay a round or oval patch of scrap EPDM liner at least one inch larger than the damaged area. Apply a neat bead of the sealant around the edge of the patch. Let dry overnight. Be sure the area to patch is flat. Flatten folds or creases on a board if you can until the sealant is completely set.

Over-wintering a shallow pond

If you have a shallow pond (24 inches or less) and you are concerned that your water lilies or favorite fish might not survive a hard winter, consider tenting the pond with clear plastic. This will act as a small solar greenhouse and keep the pond a little warmer. The plastic will also shed small leaves or pine needles. Be sure the plastic slopes like a tent. You can get creative on the tent poles or maybe just use a rope stretched between trees. Weigh the edges with rock or bricks and

you're all set. Just be sure not to set this up too early or leave it up too late. These can collect a lot of sun and overhead the water.

Koi and goldfish birth control

While visiting Duane Van Dolah's beautiful pond (in Garden City) this weekend, we talked about baby fish. He never has any! He keeps hardy minnows in his ponds to keep down mosquito larvae, and they apparently also love to eat fish eggs before they hatch. This may be a solution for all those loving folks who just can't seem to destroy baby fish once they are hatched. Just remember that as a hatch of fry grows, they produce waste and consume oxygen. In a crowded pond, the first fish to die are the largest and oldest (usually, the ones you have named). If you do try this method of birth control, consider keeping the minnows in a tank for a while to see if any diseases show up. Might add a little salt to this holding tank to kill parasites.

Hazards of loss of power, loss of circulation

By Joyce Tsuji

Reprinted from 6-04 Water Works, North Texas Water Garden Society

Losing circulation in your pond can be hazardous to your pond and fish for several reasons. In winter, if temperatures are below freezing, your pipes may freeze, or worse, burst. If your pond is heated, then the nitrifying bacteria in your filter that detoxify the ammonia from the fish will be knocked down if the filter becomes anaerobic (oxygen deficient.)

Losing power in the summer is also not unheard of, even in the most urbanized areas. Loss of power at this time can be even more disastrous because the fish are actively feeding, metabolizing and producing more waste and, at higher temperatures, water holds less oxygen than at lower temperatures.

The bacteria must also be more active to keep up with the fish waste production and will also die quicker from lack of oxygen. Therefore, although we are not likely to lose power for days in summer, even a few hours may be enough for the bacteria to start dying off.

How long your filters and fish can go without circulation is a function of fish load in your pond and the size and type of filters you have. Under gravel filters and filter tubs may be more resistant to temporary loss of circulation than bead filters but their resilience also depends on how clean they are.]

An under-gravel filter that is in great need of cleaning will quickly go anaerobic (it probably already has a lot of area that is anaerobic) than the one that has been maintained. So this is another good reason to regularly maintain your filters, regardless of which type you have.

Thus, having an alternate power source becomes very important to koi keepers. While some

battery systems exist, the most common emergency power comes from generators sold at hardware stores and building supply stores.

Add some fun to fall bird feeding

Reprinted from 9-04 Birds & Blooms newsletter

Here are some great ideas from readers for feeding feathered friends through the fall.

When flowers are finished blooming, many people put away their hanging baskets. But Terry C. of Northfield, Minnesota finds they make excellent fall and winter bird feeders that can be hung near windows. "Come fall, after I remove the spent annuals, I pour birdseed over the dirt and wait for the birds to fly in for dinner," says Terry. "I also fill my other deck containers with seed to attract even more birds. It's an easy way to add more feeders without spending a lot of money."

In Birmingham, Alabama, Pat S. attracts colorful woodpeckers and flickers to her backyard with a simple homemade feeder. "Just find a small fallen tree and cut a 5- to 6-foot section from its trunk," she suggests. "Then drill several 1/2-inch holes along the trunk and fill them with suet or peanut butter. It won't take long before lots of woodpeckers and flickers show up for dinner!"

Kenneth S. of Reading, Pennsylvania knows that birds really enjoy wild hickory nuts...with a little help cracking the rock-hard shells. "All you have to do is take a minute to break them up," he explains. "Just hold the nuts with pliers and hit them with a hammer. (Wear goggles to protect your eyes.) I put the broken nuts--shells and all--in my bird feeders. The birds carry away the pieces and pick out the nut meats from the shells. I collect hickory nuts in the fall and feed them to the birds all winter."

Winter fish food storage

If you have fish food left over be sure to store it in your freezer for the winter. It is recommended that the food be packed in double plastic bags or in re-closable plastic containers and stored in a freezer to help retain its quality.



Don't clean up too good

Reprinted from 1015-01 Splash

Raking leaves and cleaning up the yard is a chore most of us are starting to perform now. But WAIT! Getting the yard and garden too clean deprives many critters of habitat for winter survival! To keep the environment in and around your pond balanced care has to be taken to provide adequate shelter from one season to the next:

- Put a few handfuls of leaves on the sheltered side of medium to large rocks around the pond to provide shelter for toads, newts, etc.
- Leave a few weeds (grasses) to go to seed. This is

a valuable food source.

- Do not scrub all the string algae off the sides of the pond. String algae provides nutrition for your fish if they get the "munchies" on an occasional warm day.
- Do not use herbicides, fertilizer, etc. close to the pond where it could wash into the pond with the next rain or be carried into the pond by the breeze while you are applying it.

Give fish places to hide

Reprinted 9-03 Splash

When the plants in the pond start dying down for the winter they leave your precious fish pitifully exposed to predators! Hawks, owls, etc., consider koi and goldfish a Gourmet Dessert! Take steps to prevent them landing on the predator dinner plate, give them places to hide:

- 1) Take large terra cotta flower pots and put them in the bottom of the pond turned on their sides (the fish can scoot into them). Be sure the pots do not contain residue from fertilizer, etc.
- 2) Cover the pond with a net even if there are no large trees nearby.
- 3) Use two foot sections of white PVC pipe and put them on their side in the pond so the fish can hide in them.

Fall pond preparations

by ERIK TATE, Operations Manager, The Water Garden

Parts reprinted from 9-04 Water Garden News

Sludge on the bottom of the pond should be removed as best we can. If it is about 1/4" thick or so, it is normal and should not be a concern. This sludge is a combination of decaying plant debris, leaves, fish waste, and more. Some of this can be removed with a net. The finer debris can be removed by siphoning or by using a vacuum such as the Mini-Vac or the PondoVac 2.

Remember to continue use of beneficial bacteria. Microbe Lift Autumn Winter Prep is made for cooler weather and can continue to be used throughout the winter. These bacteria will reduce maintenance by breaking down sludge and debris as well as sustaining biological activity throughout the cold winter months.

You should have stopped feeding your plants by this point. As the foliage on your hardy plants begins to die back you should remove any dead and 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.

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

Calendar of Events

Oct. 3	Apple Festival
Oct. 20	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
Nov. 17	TAWGS Pot Luck Supper
December	No Meeting
2005	
January	No Meeting
Feb. 16	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
Feb. 18-20	Topeka Lawn & Garden Show
March 3-6	Wichita Lawn & Garden Show

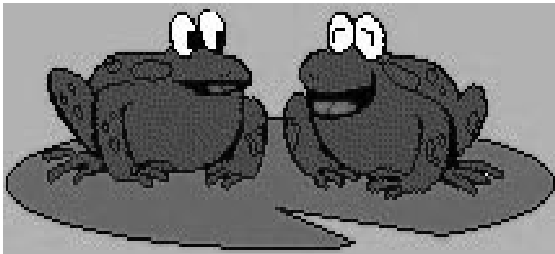
Pond Tip

Submersible pumps that are turned off for the winter should be kept in water. Allowing the pump to dry can reduce the lifespan of the pump.

Your Dues are Due if your label reads 8-04, 9-04 or 10-04 (or anything prior to 8-04)
Please renew as soon as possible to continue receiving the newsletter.

THE TOPEKA AREA WATER GARDEN SOCIETY OFFICERS:

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Topeka	785-272-6568
Diane Gruver	Secretary
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Jim Green	Treasurer
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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 third weekend of each month. Address input and/or questions to:

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