

# The Lily Pad

The Topeka Area Water Garden Society

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September 1, 2004



A Victoria lily was the highlight of Mary & Duane Eberhardt's pond. Admiring the lily are (l-r) Donnis Hodges, Mary Eberhardt, Gerald Hodges, Duane Eberhardt, Floyd Gruver, Helen Platis and Mary Pat Fischer.

## Weather perfect for member pond tour

by Diane Gruver

Surprise, surprise! Like a surprise lily (naked lady) that comes up without warning, Janet Nyfeler wondered what in the world all those people were doing in her back yard on Sunday August 15<sup>th</sup>. On second look, she discovered that they were TAWGS members on the Member Pond Tour that she had forgotten about. Luckily, Janet and Heidi were home, and their yard looked fine, even without advance preparation. I'm wondering, and I'm sure they are too, just where they are going to put their banana tree this winter. (It is nearing some 20 feet tall.) They also have happy hyacinths – some of the biggest I've seen.

Next stop on the tour was the home of Doug and Marikay Peterman, where their garden was of special interest to hubby Floyd. Everything grows UP! Tomatoes, beans, zucchini squash, Italian spinach, etc. are all tied to stakes or frames which give them lots more room to grow things in a limited area. In addition, Doug buries his crappie and other fish remains in the garden for a great fertilizer. The pond sported a huge amount of blooming lilies, the sea gulls were close by on their perches and everything in the yard was well manicured.

Jon and Mary Pat Fischer's pond was the third stop. Jon has cleverly camouflaged his above ground

## Monthly Meeting 7:00 p.m., Wed., Sept 15, 2004

Closing your pond

Eric Wood – Puddles-N-Pads

filter with a wood lattice work that looks very nice. A unique hanging gazing ball by the pond caught my eye since I love gazing balls. They have a neat patio area that is bordered by the pond on one side and a hot tub on the other which makes it very cozy.

Gerald and Donnis Hodges have a large well-kept lot with two raised beds and a neat pond in the backyard nestled at the lower level of their home. Water cascades down a steep waterfall into a pond laden with water lilies, lotus and hyacinths. A spouting fish and frog add to the atmosphere.

The highlight of the pond at Duane and Mary Eberhardt was their Victoria water lily. Three of the pads are over 2 feet across and a smaller pad just opened that morning, according to Duane. It is pretty impressive, although we did not get to see a bloom as they only last one day and we were a day late. The pond also sports a tropical lily as well as several hardy lilies. A gazebo and two formal gardens are near the pond with a Japanese style fountain that Duane made in the center of one of the formal gardens. I wonder how many people spotted the deer peaking out of the hedge as you entered their yard.

Stan and Mary Ann Bechtold have a steeply sloped back yard that lends itself well to a long stream bed flowing into a pond at the bottom near their patio. A lotus, which had never bloomed before, finally put out a flower for all to see. Mary Ann's pride and joy was a Japanese style tiered pond under the stairway to their second story sunroom. Water from three large hypertufa bowls that Mary Ann made out of cement, peat and sand flows into the bottom preformed pond. Mandavilla and hibiscus add to the tropical feeling of the patio area.

A wooded area behind Larry and Barb Shipman's house offers a secluded pond which starts with a bog at their deck which flows down a stream into a lower pond. The bog is made with a Centipede filtering system that Kip Walker talked about at the July meeting. It gave us an opportunity to really see how it

worked. The pond is home to several large and beautiful koi plus many goldfish and frogs. Two beautiful Mandavilla plants climb on an arbor near the lower pond.

The last stop on the tour was at the home of Barrie and Carol Gnagy in Tecumseh. Their pond sits on a base of huge rocks so is only about 2 ½ feet deep but Barrie said it wintered over just fine with a stock tank heater. It is the home for a turtle, fish and a sun fish who entertained us by snapping up grasshoppers as fast as you could throw them in the pond.

We ended the enjoyable tour with a delicious pot luck supper in the Gnagy's yard. Good weather, good food, good fellowship and the end to a perfect day.



*The Gnagy's backyard was a wonderful place for our pot luck dinner after the Member Pond Tour.*



## Attracting birds to your backyard

by Diane Gruver

"You need three things to attract birds to your back yard," Master Gardener Paul Willis told TAWGS members at their August meeting. He said their basic needs are food, water and cover.

**Food** – you can provide food at bird feeders or you can plant shrubs, trees and plants that grow berries, nuts, fruits and seeds. Consider the plants size and shape and their placement in the landscape. Although we think insects are bad, they are a good source of food for some birds. Bees and wasps are generally only aggressive if you bother their nests.

**Water** – moving water does a better job of attracting birds and a heated bird bath helps in the winter. Water gardens and fountains are good attractions for birds.

**Cover** – birds feel safe when they can hide from predators in nearby shrubs, trees and plants. Cover also provides nesting sites for the birds. You will generally find more birds at the edge of a wooded area.

Using slides, Paul shared pictures of various species of birds at his feeders as well as some of the native plants that he grows in his yard to provide a natural habitat for them. Some native plant suggestions

were: Eastern red cedars, black cherry trees, roughleaf dogwood, American and sand hill plum, elderberry, smooth sumac, gooseberry, Virginia creeper and bittersweet. Other suggestions included sunflowers, purple coneflower, gay feather, butterfly milkweed, bee balm and native prairie grasses.

Paul said that birds are more aggressive when they are protecting their nest and are more territorial during the breeding season. There are many species of birds that spend the entire year in our area, Paul said, while others migrate through or only spend the summer. Some people only feed birds in the winter time but Paul said it doesn't hurt to feed them year round.

"I feed birds year round for my own enjoyment," Paul said. He recommends sunflower chips for gold finches because it is cheaper and more efficient.

Paul is a retired biology teacher and became a Master Gardener almost 15 years ago. His specialty deals with wildlife, birds, snakes and butterflies.

### TAWGS Minutes August 18, 2004

President Tom Platis called the August meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with self introductions. An interesting program on bringing birds to your backyard by Paul Willis was enjoyed by everyone. A brief refreshment break was taken following the program. When the meeting resumed, President Platis thanked Colleen & Kent Hampton and Mary Blubaugh for the delicious refreshments. Dean Demoss and Diane & Floyd Gruver agreed to provide refreshments in September.

Floyd Gruver moved and Donnis Hodges seconded that minutes be approved as printed in the Lily Pad. The minutes stood as approved. VP Becky Coffman reported that Eric Wood will give the program next month on closing your pond. She also gave the treasurer's report in the absence of treasure Jim Green. We have a total of \$4,308.12 in the bank. Newsletter editor Diane Gruver reminded everyone to watch the label on their newsletter to see when their dues are due. She also tries to put the due date reminder in the e-mail to those that receive their newsletter by e-mail. She stated that a lot of dues are due in September because that is when the club was chartered.

President Platis asked for volunteers for the nomination committee for officers for the upcoming year. Floyd Gruver, Dean Demoss and Donnis Hodges volunteered. Tom named Floyd chairman. They are to report a slate of officers to be nominated at the September meeting. If you have an interest in serving as an officer, please contact one of the committee members. Some of the current officers have served for several years and it is hoped some new people will get involved in the leadership of the society.

Discussion about the 2005 Annual Pond Tour was held. Mary Ann Bechtold moved and Michael Bradley seconded that the 2004 Pond Tour committee meet with representatives from the Topeka Beautification Assn. to see if we could work together on

the 2005 Tours. Motion carried. The Pond Tour will most likely be held the last weekend in June. Diane will contact TBA president Dave Hedstrum to see if we can find a suitable meeting date.

Joe Breitenstein reported that Ray Schroeder has not been able to find the leak in Anna's pond yet. He tried to keep it topped off every morning. He also gave a brief update on Ruth Puff, who is undergoing radiation and chemo treatments.

Diane thanked the pond hosts for sharing their ponds for the Member Pond tour which was held August 15<sup>th</sup>. She said it was a beautiful day and lots of fun.

Michael Bradley won the door prize of a year free subscription to the Water Gardening Magazine. Meeting adjourned.



*A newly emerged black swallowtail butterfly crawls on my fingers.*

## **Butterfly emerges from cocoon**

*by Diane Gruver*

My daughter in Garden City gave me a cocoon when I visited her a few weeks ago because she wanted me to have the same unique experience they had watching a caterpillar turn into a beautiful butterfly. I faithfully babysat that jar with the cocoon for nearly four weeks. In fact, I hauled it to Wichita a couple weeks ago when we went to do "Daddy-Do" jobs and then last weekend I took it to Rock Port, Missouri on our first camping trip with our travel trailer.

I had been watching the cocoon the morning we left and knew that things were probably going to happen soon. The cocoon had turned black and I had been told that was the sign that it would soon open. I set the jar on the floor of the warm pickup while we spent about a half hour at the camper repair place in St. Joe after lunch. When I got back in the pickup the cocoon was open and a beautiful black butterfly was in the jar!

But what was I going to do for the next hour in the pickup until we got to the campgrounds? I knew that you couldn't leave it in the jar very long because it would eventually hurt itself trying to get out, so I finally opened the lid and let it crawl out on my fingers.

It was an awesome experience with the butterfly in my hand for the next hour. I could feel the dampness

of its wings as it crawled on my fingers. With a camera in one hand and the butterfly in the other, I tried to take a few pictures, but most of them were pretty fuzzy because of the motion of the pickup.

When we finally arrived at the campground I was happy to see it had lots of petunias in containers, so while Floyd checked in I set the butterfly free on the flowers. It was still sitting there when I checked back 30 minutes later, but the next time I looked it was gone.

I'd have to say that the beautiful butterfly was worth the wait and I might be more inclined to plant some dill or parsley to see if I can raise some caterpillars of my own sometime. Ah, the wonder and beauty of Mother Nature. It was an incredible experience!

*Footnote: I saw a black swallowtail butterfly on my phlox yesterday. Do you think it followed me home? ☺*

# **Leaf me alone**



## **Or how to keep leaves out of the pond**

*By Greg Speichert, Water Gardening Magazine*

Ponds are like magnets for dirt and leaves. Tree leaves will find a way to your pond even if you live in the middle of a corn field and the nearest tree is a mile away. When it's not tree leaves, it's leaves from something else – bushes, perennials, even annual plants. And the worst season; autumn, of course.

You can try to go out every day for half an hour or so and skim them from your pond. Unfortunately, the leaves don't care about your schedule, tumbling into the water all day and all night, whether you are home to rake them out of the pond or not. In-ground skimmers help, but they can get clogged from leaf overload in the fall.

A more temporary solution is to put netting over the pond to keep out the leaves. Although it's not very decorative, netting will ensure that the leaves stay out of the water and don't muck up the pond. Letting those leaves stay in the pond all winter is not a good idea. They slowly decay, robbing the water of oxygen and dumping their nutrient load into the pond like a giant tea bag. Come spring, you'll still have to clean them out of the pond, when they've become a slimy, smelly rotten mess. What's worse, they provide a fertile breeding ground for parasites and bacteria to lay in wait until early spring, when they attack fish whose immunity is reduced from winter's sleep.

### **Netting**

The purpose of netting is to keep the leaves out, but let the air and sunlight in. Most important is the size of the weave. If you're fighting off small, narrow leaves (like elm, ash or pine needles), you'll have to have a narrow-holed netting. If you're only dealing with large leaves (like maple or oak), then a more open weave is suitable. The second thing to look for is durability. If you're only going to use it for a few weeks in mild weather, and you have a tub garden that's just a few feet wide, you might be able to use a few feet of open weave fabric from a sewing center. If you're going to use it for several weeks, even though the autumn

weather is cold and wet, then you have to select something more durable made of nylon or polyethylene. What size should you get? Ideally, you'll want a single piece of netting that will fit completely over the area you want to cover. Sometimes, though, it is not possible to find just one piece. Multiple pieces can be sewn together with nylon string. Fishing line is another good choice to hold together two or more pieces of netting.

Here are some of the more common nettings used by pond keepers to protect their water gardens from leaves in the fall.

#### **Tree netting, fruit netting, bird netting**

This is the netting used to keep birds out of fruit trees and bushes. It usually has an open weave with holes half an inch to an inch wide. Made from nylon or polyethylene, it's often black or dark green and, as a rule, lasts for more than one season. Use it for large leaves like sugar maples or oak tree leaves. If you have a corkscrew willow, move on to something with a closer weave. Because of the more open weave, it can unintentionally trap frogs and small birds. Make sure to check it often so you can help any wildlife that gets hung up while visiting your pond.

#### **Pool or pond cover netting**

Netting designed specifically to cover pools and ponds is often made with narrower holes, so it will keep out smaller leaves. It is made from nylon or polyethylene and often lasts for an entire season or more. Some will even last for several years. If you want a netting that you'll use for a long time, make sure that it's treated so it won't be damaged by the sun's ultraviolet rays. Don't use the pool tarp, since it won't let air pass through.

#### **Window screening**

When all else fails, use metal or nylon window screens. You can even use chicken wire or woven shade cloth. It's all a matter of how large the holes are and how you want to hold the screening off the pond water. Window screening is excellent for keeping all sorts of leaves and debris out of the pond. Unfortunately, it's hard to see your pond under all that metal. It will also prevent any wildlife, whether frogs, toads, birds or dragonflies, from reaching any part of your pond that's under cover.

#### **Support for netting**

There is no use putting netting over the pond if it's simply going to fall into the water. In that case, both the netting and leaves will just sink into the pond. Algae can build up on the netting as well, increasing its weight and making it more difficult to remove from the pond. Worse, your fish can easily get tangled in the netting, with dire consequences. The solution, of course, is to use something to hold the netting up out of the water. The netting should be flat or elevated, so leaves don't collect in the center and weigh it down. By keeping the net higher in the middle, leaves slide to the edges and, hopefully, off the pond completely. Don't stretch netting tightly across the pond. Many nettings tear easily if stretched taut, since they are

designed to tent loosely over objects. One choice is to put a few large plastic balls in the pond. They'll float on the water and keep the netting afloat too. These work in smaller ponds where netting won't drape between the plastic balls that are out on the water. Since the balls will float around the pond, the netting may drape once the balls have moved from their ideal spot. Draping the netting over wooden boards placed up on concrete blocks outside the pond will also keep the netting from laying on the water. Inner tubes and pool pillows used to keep pool covers out of the water work well too. They can be tied to the edge of the pond to keep in place. An inner tube can support a board or pipe run across the pond. It can also cradle a beach ball and tent the netting.

The problem with keeping the netting flat with plastic balls or wooden slats is apparent once you think about it, or once you've tried it and seen the results. As soon as leaves hit the netting, the leaves and netting simply sink into the water. The netting acts like a tea bag holding the leaves as they steep in the pond water. This isn't a good thing. Leaves decompose, releasing nutrients into the water that can still cause an algae bloom. It's also a lot harder to clean wet leaves out of the netting than it is to remove dry leaves. If you do use a flat method to hold netting out of the water, make sure to keep the netting taut across its support. Otherwise you're going to spend a lot of time cleaning it off before the leaves sink into the pond. One way to tent the netting over the pond is with a pole in the middle of the pond. The pole or stake is attached to a plate that's held firmly in place. You don't want it toppling over in a heavy wind or rain storm. A more elaborate solution is to make hoops or v-frame forms from PVC tubing. These can be affixed with stakes into the soil around the pond, and the netting can then be tied to the tubing. Wood frames work on a similar principle and we are especially good if you use metal screening to cover the pond. For small ponds, simple PVC hoop frames made of one-half to one inch PVC works just fine for leaves. This method won't work with heavy snow, though. Fine netting holds too much snow and ice and can easily collapse. In larger ponds, use steel tubing instead of PVC. It's important not to leave fountains running, especially if they spray water onto the netting and give leaves something wet to stick to. If you have a waterfall, make sure to cover it as well, and keep the netting out of the water.

#### **Net result**

Using netting to protect your pond from falling leaves and debris may not be an ideal solution from an esthetic point of view, but it is a necessary evil in autumn if you want to make sure your pond and its inhabitants stay healthy through the winter. Not doing so could 'net out' with some unwelcome surprises next spring.



## Give fish protection in fall

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 gold fish 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 pot 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.
4. A five gallon bucket works fine too.

## Lotus seed sprouting

*Reprinted from Aug. 2000 Reflections*

*New information on lotus seed sprouting from Babs Ellinwood, Florida – September 25, 2000*

Seeds must be nicked with a sharp knife (be careful here) or rubbed with a file or scrapped across concrete to break the hard seed coating. You can file top or bottom, just stop when you see the crème colored inner core. This allows water to enter the seed faster.

Take a clean, empty 2-liter soda bottle, put the seeds inside, add hot but not boiling water, and place in an area that you frequently pass during the day. Kitchens are good. When you pass the bottle, give it a brief shake. Change the water daily, use any clean water that is not softened by chemicals. Seeds that float usually will not sprout, but give them a chance.

Seeds sprout quickly once the water is absorbed inside the seed. But, it may take a week or so, so don't give up. My best time has been 24 hours.

Remove the seeds as they sprout. Put them in a dishpan with about 3 inches of sand on the bottom and 3 inches of water covering the sand. Press your finger in the sand and put the seed in the hole...don't cover with sand. You can sink this in your pond, or just place it in full sun next to the pond.

If something should happen to the first stem, just leave the seed alone and it will fork out and grow another stem. Or, place it in a slurry of potting media in a 3" pot, cover the surface with pea gravel and place in water to cover over at least 3", and it will continue to grow and produce leaves and form a tuber. If the seed drops off, don't panic, that just shows you that your baby lotus is growing up.

The tuber which is now the food for the baby looks like a darkened colored stem. Carefully sit this in a depression you have made with your finger and

snuggle sand around it.

Roots are probably already growing out of where the seed used to be. These will grow to hold the lotus upright as it grows.

It will probably be the second growing season before it blooms, but you could get lucky with lots of TLC. Fertilize with a water soluble fertilizer once the lotus has three leaves. Then every two weeks feed again. Get ready to have a beautiful lotus water garden – you can't just raise one!

Winter Care: Bring the baby lotus inside and place in a dishpan to spend the winter. Cut the drying pads and leave it alone. The other choice is to wrap the tuber in sphagnum moss and place ins a cool spot, keeping barely damp till spring.

There, that was easy, you can do it!



## Fatten up your fish

*Reprinted from 9-4-01 Splash*

Where did they summer go? Here we are, ready to go into September already! Most of us will be seeing a decline of temperatures soon, so it is time to get the fish in the pond ready for their dormancy.

The fish should be fed a good and plentiful diet right now, because they need to accumulate body fat to live off during the winter and the pond should have a good bacterial culture by now that can easily handle any increased "output" from a little heavier feeding. Do keep an eye on nitrite levels as usual and watch the fish closely during feeding for parasites.

## Thin out oxygenators

*Reprinted from 9-4-01 Splash*

Many ponds have nice, thick growth of oxygenators, Parrots Feather, etc. by now. Some of that needs to be thinned out as the days and nights start getting cooler because it will partially die down and the decomposing organic matter will put too much of a load on the bacterial culture in the pond as the bacteria start to go dormant when the temperatures fall.

When it is time to thin out (not eliminate!) depends on the part of the country where the pond is located and how deep the pond is. Warmer layers of water in the bottom of the pond will support these plants longer than the colder layers near the top. As the temperatures start to get lower and the days get shorter these minor chores can be done a little at a time.

Don't forget to use a sturdy net to fish out leaves that have blown into the pond and soon it will be time to cover it completely with a net to prevent too many leaves falling into it.

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

## Calendar of Events

Sept. 15	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
Oct. 20	TAWGS Monthly Meeting
Nov.17	TAWGS Pot Luck Supper

### Emergency Oxygen

*If you lose power and your fish start sucking at the surface (a sign of oxygen deprivation), put some hydrogen peroxide in a spray bottle and spray across the water surface. This will temporarily add oxygen to the water.*

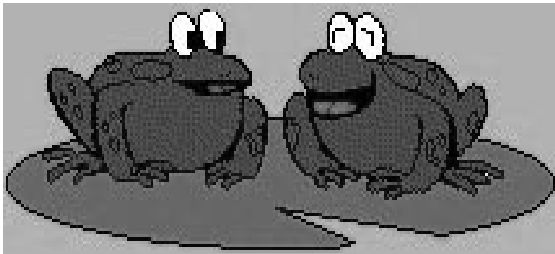


**Your Dues are Due if your label reads 7-04, 8-04 or 9-04 (or anything prior to 7-04)**

**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](http://www.tawgs.org)**

## *The Lily Pad*

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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:

Diane Gruver, The Lily Pad Editor  
408 Emerald, Holton, KS 66436  
785 364-3046

[fdgruver@earthlink.net](mailto:fdgruver@earthlink.net)

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